Tools
FOR LEARNING

ÉDITO

WELCOME TO OUR TOOLS FOR LEARNING MAGAZINE!
AS YOU CAN SEE, THINGS HAVE DEVELOPED A LOT SINCE THE LAST EDITION!

■ Salto EuroMed team

As we have had lots of feedback about the strategy employed over recent years, we decided to share some ideas about:
- bringing the Toolbox into the new era
- how critical friends can help practitioners think about their work
- what it's been like to organise the Tool Fairs since the beginning
- and how to ensure the strategy continues to contribute to the youth field

We also look at where theory and practice meet:
- when engaging with young people and their learning needs
- when we work with dance as a tool
- when we find our tools don't work for us

Excitingly, there are some great pieces looking to the future, offering lots of food for thought:
- how will learning badges help with recognising learning?
- can we avail of "reverse engineering" as a concept to help us design better tools for learning?

All surrounded by some nice "did you know that?" questions and some tips on looking further afield for inspiration.

As you'll see, we have used the work of graphic harvesters and a cartoonist from the last Tool Fairs to help illustrate the magazine. In fact we were so impressed by their work that we are organising a training course around the Tool Fair this year, which means that around a dozen participants will get the opportunity to try their hand at graphic harvesting and facilitation during the session in Delphi. Should be great! We also plan to produce a user manual showing how to incorporate this into your own activities. Watch out for further details on the SALTO EuroMed web site.

Enjoy your reading!

Mark E. Taylor

SUMMARY

The little "Did you know that?" boxes throughout the magazine were contributed by Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR IDEAS CLEAR TO OTHER

salto|youth

TOOLBOX

■ Andrea Messori

SALTO Toolbox was set up in 2003. During the introductory phase, all SALTO centres published the tools used by their trainers during their institutional activities. This practice has been dropped in the last 4-5 years in favour of a more hands-on role by the trainers, youth workers and social workers in uploading tools they consider worth sharing. Interestingly, one of the interesting effects of this change has been a decrease in the number of uploads and activated tools per year.

The Tool Fair, together with the European strategy on Tools for Learning, has become an official and regular meeting focused on tools, which is beginning to influence the quality of the uploaded tools. The decreased number of uploads per year corresponds to a more structured format for those that are inserted, nearer to the definition of a tool as elaborated by the working group on Tools for Learning.

In 2010, the first meeting of the working group of experts reflecting on Tools for Learning took place during Tool Fair V in Venice (Italy). Coordinating the experiences, knowledge and skills of experts, trainers and national agencies is the most effective way of capitalising on shared experiences and defining a common strategy to realise SALTO's aims. The working group is composed of experts who act as a consultative group and scientific committee, setting up the strategy to meet the identified needs of National Agencies and SALTO Network. Benefiting from its decade of experience and its human capital, SALTO EuroMed would like to meet the following objectives on behalf of the whole SALTO network:

• Take stock of the outcomes achieved so far, particularly with regard to the Tool Fair and the Toolbox;

• Improve the overall quality of the educational tools developed and adopted during SALTO training activities;
• Boost the role of non formal education in general, more particularly by also making the Tool Fair and Toolbox venues and occasions for sharing good practices and ideas with educators external to Youth in Action programmes.

This led in 2012 to the start of a process of transformation of the Toolbox from an online database to a learning community, aimed at establishing links between researchers, trainers and practitioners, stimulating their professional relationships based on mutuality and on the development of common content tools for the educational field in general. Attention was focused on the wider humanisation of the Toolbox and on the reinforcement of tool ownership as a common resource developed by groups of researchers, officers, trainers, youth workers and social workers. Multilinguism was also included as a fundamental condition for easier accessibility and facilitating the spread of non formal education practices at national levels.

The Toolboxproject (this is the working title given to new Toolbox beta version) starts by considering the current Toolbox as a repository of tools, into which youth officers, trainers and youth workers have so far uploaded more than 1,100 tools. Although the toolbox is one of the most used references for finding, comparing and inspiring activities, the approach of most of its users remains passive, limited most of the time to extracting what is useful, without contributing to its development. This diffused disengagement could be the outcome of the 2 main
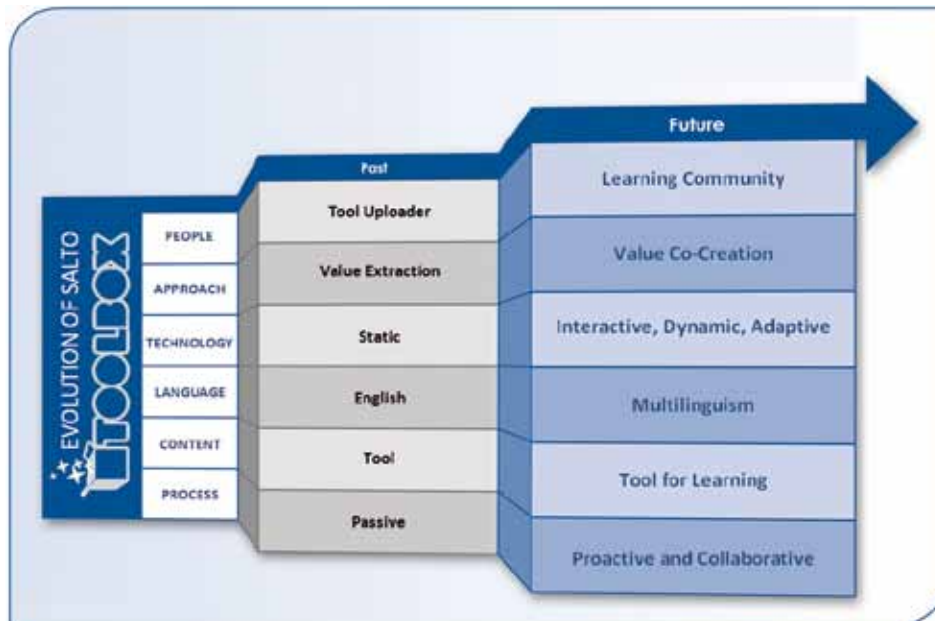
difficulties the Toolbox regularly encounters. Due to the enormous amount of tools available, users tend to get non specific answers to their queries, obliging them to select possibilities from among many tools that are not always relevant and rarely finding the one that is at the top of the list. Moreover, the limited possibilities for sharing variations in the materials used or in the text of the original online tool are not in line with the requested take&give approach.

In order to promote greater interactivity, users of the new Toolbox will be able to play different roles, corresponding to the different possible contributions to its development. Uploading a new tool will be one of the active roles played in the Toolbox community, being a condition also for adding a variation to the original tool (a change in the structure or in the materials associated with it) or publishing a translation of the tool and its associated materials in a language other than English. The developers have chosen Drupal for the Content Management System (CMS) and, as it is an Open Source CMS, the available languages should cover all those needed.

The multilinguism dimension will open the door to easier accessibility to Non Formal Education tools developed at International level, and will also facilitate access to youth workers, social workers and trainers with limited English. They are generally extremely committed to their work in the field, so they should be very interested to have access to a Toolbox that can be used at national level, collecting and offering tools in their mother tongue through the search function. In this way, all the tools uploaded primarily in English can be further disseminated via the translated version.

This proactive and collaborative approach will stimulate the community not only through the informal recognition of its own work, via the addition of variations and translations of the uploaded tool, but will also foster the added value represented by the process of co-creation of a tool for learning.

Innovation in the Toolboxproject technology is already visible in its user-friendly dimension and in some other ways that will expand the existing structure. In addition to the website that will be closely interfaced with social networks to allow users to be directly in contact with the uploader/contributor/translator of a tool in case of need, an App (application) for the most common smart phone operating systems is also in the works. The uploaded tools will not only provide a method that can be used in an activity session, but the take&give approach will stimulate the possibility of obtaining peer support in designing the possible working agenda.

The assumption is that, as happens with open source software, the free share approach behind Toolbox will evolve into what can be defined as an open content tool (content that commits users to the right/duty to develop more uses than those currently planned). The primary characteristics and commitments for using the tools are set out in the "4Rs Framework":

1. Reuse – reuse the content in its unaltered form
2. Revise – adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself (e.g., translate the content into another language)
3. Remix - combine the original or revised content with other content to create something new (e.g., incorporate the content into a mash up)
4. Redistribute - share your revisions or your remixes with others (e.g., upload a copy of the new content to the Toolbox).

A re-organisation of the tools for learning currently present in 3 main categories (exercises/activities, energisers & icebreakers, documentary resources) comes up beside the possibility for the Toolboxproject CMS to offer a prioritised list of results linked to the research query, showing first the tools that have been most visited by other users, with more contributions or translations, having more comments and higher rates. This search feature mediates a qualitatively increased search system based on a tool classification carried out by the learning community. In other words, the Toolbox platform empowers the learning community to self-evaluate its tools, making this action explicit and useful for any search query.

All these improvements will be available soon, after a testing phase involving the learning communities participating in the last 5 Tool Fairs. More than 500 trainers, officers and educators, all motivated to share and develop it further, will contribute to fine-tuning the tool before opening the new Toolbox to the more than 15 million visitors of SALTO-YOUTH.NET website.

TOOLBOX IN GERMAN

The German National Agency offers a toolbox on its website *(http://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fortbildung/methodenbox/)* dedicated to non formal education tools in German, from 5-minute icebreakers to simulation games lasting several hours, all of them linked to the thematic area European dimension. Methodenbox Europa is an online database with more than 80 tools in German organized into 11 tool types: discussion/debate; simulation; creative techniques; information/mediation; quiz; group dynamics; diversity; game; warming-up (energizer); perceptual exercise; media. It has an open character, continuously developing through user contributions: new methods can be added, older methods can be commented on and the link can be shared through social networking. A registered user can also choose to be notified when other comments have been added, which should encourage dialogue and exchanges. It should be noted that the use of the methods uploaded comes with some important restrictions: use is only allowed while respecting *"the given objectives, the existing framework of the target audience and the users' own abilities"*.

TOOLBOX IN ROMANIAN

Nonformalii Portal (www.nonformalii.ro) is a Romanian portal dedicated to non formal education. Since its launch in 2012, the portal has become a real reference point for the non formal education field Romania, covering not only in methods, activities and useful resources, but also giving updated information about Romanian non formal education contexts, programs and events. With an attractive graphic design that translates the non formal education imaginary while keeping the creative play mode connected to important key words and concepts, the web platform is a source of inspiration for those passionate about NFE, while also aiming to enlarge this community. Anyone can contribute to the website content, by adding or developing non formal education tools in Romanian. This portal offers also the unusual possibility of intervening directly on the original tool uploaded and changing it, after acceptance by the administrator. Full of images and videos describing non formal education tools, alongside well organised information, the portal has been a necessary answer to the growing interest for non formal education in Romania. The mission to raise awareness about non formal education concepts, experience and learning outcomes is concretized by the possibility of having concrete examples of methods or resources. They do not always coincide with the definition of a tool for learning as given by SALTO working group. The portal functions also as a principle source of communication regarding non formal education projects and events, facilitating and increasing the participation and involvement of youngsters and older people, encouraging them to become active actors in the field. The portal is still under construction so not all the sections have been yet finalized. It foresees the creation of a section for a non formal virtual community, a virtual interactive space for all those involved in or interested in NFE, aiming at the recognition of contributions in the field. *Nonformalii* was born as a result of the NONFORMAL (Networking On New Forms Of Recognition and Mainstreaming Active Lifelong Learning) project, promoted by the Foundation for Civil Society Development in collaboration with ANPCDEFP (Romanian National Agency for European Programmes in the field of Education and Professional Training) and the Institute for Science Education in Romania.

TOOLBOX IN SWITZERLAND

The Swiss branch of C.E.M.E.A. - Training Centres for Active Education Methods - offers the example of an online database gathering different methods and activities in the field of active education, in both Italian and French (http://www.cemea.ch/users/bd/index.html). The database is an archive of hundreds of files describing organisational and theory aspects and activities of various kinds (environmental activities, songs and dances, expression, games, manual activities). Useful drawings/sketches accompany the written descriptions where necessary, adding further information for the tools' implementation. The database serves as a tool for group leaders, educators, teachers and other operators leading activity sessions for children and adolescents, in workshops, holiday centres or schools.

TOOLBOX OF PARTICIPATION PROJECTS

SALTO YOUTH PARTICIPATION has created an online compendium (http://yic.salto-youth.net/) of projects realized within Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2) and Youth Democracy (Action 1.3), which reflect best practices. It contains a collection of hundreds of projects carried out by young people all over Europe. A very simple structure makes best practice projects available to anyone looking for inspiration or searching for partners. It facilitates fast search through various key elements and offers contact details, useful for additional in-depth analysis directly with the person(s) who implemented the project.

Being a critical friend

■ Jonathan Bowyer

HOW DO YOU LEARN THE BEST

In the last two Tool Fairs, those who were invited to present a Tool for Learning were assigned a "Critical Friend". The idea was to have someone who would help the presenter to think critically about the Tool and the workshop and get more from the process as a result.

The Tools For Learning Strategy includes the concept of the "Journey of a Tool". The idea here is that Tools for Learning go through different stages of development and adaptation. The strategy envisages the publication of Tools in the online Toolbox, with the opportunity for peers to comment on and use them; it envisages that Tool users will **comment** on how it went and what **changes** might be made to develop the Tool. The strategy envisages events such as the Tool Fairs, where peers gather to share Tools, critically evaluate them and collaborate on their development and adaptation. Those who present Tools for Learning, either face-to-face or online, are called "**originators**" (when they actually are); "**curators**" (people who take care of the Tool on this part of its journey) or "**developers**" (people who see the potential of the Tool and work on changing, growing or adapting it for different audiences). They can be a combination of all three. A **Critical Friend** in this context is someone who helps the originator/curator/developer during the process of **presenting, developing, reflecting and documenting**.

FRIENDS

I'm assuming we are quite at home with the term "Friend". In this context I would emphasise the role of friend as someone who travels with you, who cares about how things are going for you, has your best interests at heart and who is prepared to "tell it like it is". In other words, a friend who respects what you do but isn't afraid to **challenge** you, a friend as a support.

CRITICAL

But what about the word "critical"? It could be taken to mean negatively judgmental, but that of course is not what we have in mind here. Other definitions include the idea of **careful evaluation and judgment**, which is constructive rather than destructive. Often the adjective is associated with **turning points**: scientifically, it is used to describe "a point at which an abrupt **change in quality**, property or state occurs" (for example, a critical point for water is 100 degrees at normal atmospheric pressure). It can, of course, also be used about a turning point in **thinking** or opinion.

When marking Masters level assignments, a common problem is that there is too much **description** and not enough **critical reflection**. The student has described what happened, what they saw and maybe even how they felt, but there is a lack of attention to **processing** that experience; not enough effort is made to "**unpack**" what happened; to ask – and **answer** - critical questions about it. It's exactly the same in experiential learning. Without the **reviewing** – the critical reflection – of the experience, much of the **potential learning** is lost. That's where the challenge often is: taking the time and finding a process to draw out learning. Critical Friends help us to be more disciplined and thorough through their impact on our reflection.

> "What the hell are you bugging me about this for? I've still got to prepare my workshop!"
>
> Often the benefits of critical reflection are not appreciated until the investment of time is made!

CRITICAL FRIENDS AT THE TOOL FAIR

Going back to our presenters at the Tool Fair: they have volunteered to present a tool that they have originated, developed or are currently looking after (curating). They have the option to simply **present** and start a discussion or they can get the assembled group of peers to **engage** with the Tool as any other group of learners would. When this happens, the presenter is offering to carry the Tool into the next stage of its journey. He or she is shining a light on the Tool, voluntarily putting it under scrutiny. Generally, the presenter has already **invested** considerable time, energy and thought in this Tool and now a group of peers is going to learn about it and hopefully take it away and use it. Those peers are probably also going to evaluate it and make a judgment about it. There will be a lot for the presenter to think about – not only the practicalities of running the workshop, but also the follow up thinking. What to make of the **reactions** to the Tool?

QUESTIONS

The Critical Friends at the Tool Fair have the role of **supporting** the presenters in their preparation and reviewing of the experience. In some ways they are like a **personal facilitator, a coach or mentor.** And what do these Critical Friends actually do? Well, they might bring a cup of coffee when preparation time is running out or give a high-five when the peers respond well to the presentation, but most importantly they ask probing questions…

The briefing for the Critical Friends includes suggested questions for before and after the workshop. For example…
• **What are your success criteria for your workshop?**
• **What do you see as the potential areas for development of your tool?**
• **Which areas of the tool or your presentation would you particularly like some feedback on?**
• **Which areas of the workshop or the tool itself are you least confident about?**

And for after the workshop…
• **How did it go from your perspective? - What did you do well?**
• **What did you learn about your tool and its application?**
• **What changes would you now make to your tool?**
• **What particular competencies do users of the tool need to develop?**
• **How could you develop your written presentation of the tool (including the upload to Tool Box)?**

Being a Critical Friend requires some specific **skills**: the ability to **listen** and ask effective **questions** and the ability to develop rapport quickly. The Critical Friend might also offer some specific, constructive **feedback**. They might provide some evidence to support or challenge the conclusions. In order to do that, Critical Friends need to be **present** in the workshop, they may need to take notes and they need to balance engaging in the experience with observing what is happening for the presenter.

> **"OK, now I can see things in a different light, you've given me some things to think about"**
>
> The questions are designed to help people think and see different perspectives. The feedback needs to be specific, accurate and relevant.

POTENTIAL

The provision of Critical Friends at Tool Fairs is a simple process to support and develop individuals and the Tools they present. Perhaps it has other potential? For example, the idea is already being used by one **trainer pool** for peer support.
Could it be used outside the Tool Fair for Tools for Learning? If you have put a Tool into the online Toolbox, you could also ask to have a **conversation** (by email or Skype) with a volunteer peer who could ask you some challenging questions about it.
Perhaps you could **video** record your Tool being used, upload it and invite selected peers to comment on both the Tool and on your use of it?
Perhaps there is some scope for encouraging our **participants** to be more like critical friends when they 'do' the evaluation at the end of events or training courses?
Perhaps I need a critical friend to help me come up with more ideas about Critical Friends!

> **"Phew, its difficult to find the time to really talk about these TFL criteria - but it's worth it"**
>
> The benefits are for the presenter, their critical friend and for anyone using the Tool for Learning in the future

"A great adventure!" Organising the Tool Fair over the years

■ Compiled and edited by Mark E. Taylor

In the first edition of the Tools for Learning magazine Bernard Abrignani wrote an article about the history of the Tool Fairs – there have been seven so far and the eighth will be held in Delphi, Greece. In this edition we thought it would be illuminating to have a follow-up article asking organisers what they felt about their involvement, what surprised them, what they learned and even what their wishes would be for the future. Most of this is in the original voice with a few guiding comments.

Many thanks to all the organisers who responded so generously to a short questionnaire with their thoughts, analyses and suggestions: Stéphanie Henry, Clement Dupuis, Andres Abad, Bernard Abrignani, Zeynep Tugce Ciftcibasi Guc, Branca Pimenta, Saro Rossi, Ülly Enn, Anna Kuzina, Davide Tonon, Andrea Messori and Dominika Jagiełło. Apart from where absolutely necessary to understand the context, quotations are given without reference to the actual fair. All the responses put together would fill around 15 pages!

■ So, what is the task facing an organiser?

With the support of lots of others, they have to create a 3-4 day event with over 100 participants, National Agencies, SALTO's, local partners and... and... and... It has to be educational, innovative, cultural, fun... The list of expectations is long and even a bit challenging. Everyone referred to a feeling of great responsibility when approaching their task. As one organiser wrote, his mandate was like the dishes proposed for a big meal:

more involvement of the National Agencies

◪ *clearer details and guidelines for selection of participants*
◪ *strong participation by SALTO representatives*
◪ *more and diversified tools to be presented*
◪ *more and diversified slots to present the tools*
◪ *an equal involvement of senior and junior trainers*
◪ *a tool coaching system*
◪ *a dedicated website guaranteeing smooth management and real time dissemination*
◪ *a relevant evaluation and feedback system online*
◪ *enough staff dedicated to the Tool Fair*
◪ *a significant venue*
◪ *a well equipped structure where workshops can be run without outside interference*

■ To what extent did their expectations match reality?

Especially at the beginning, the organisers were working in "unexplored territory" and most of them had never been to a Tool Fair before. So let's see to what extent their experience matched their ideas beforehand...

I had no idea! In fact, it was the first Tool Fair to be organised and we didn't know where we were going. But we knew it was relevant; it was answering needs expressed in different places such as (international) courses and seminars.

Before, I figured it could become a chaotic mess with interesting inputs, but

in the end it turned out to be organised chaos, which is the starting point for any creative process.

It was what I had in my mind; the reality was never different; a good concept is not corrupted but always enriched by the reality of what each partner is able to offer.

It was a truly inspiring but also challenging experience to work in such diverse and big co-ordination team for the event on an international level, to co-ordinate the programme in all of its diversity and to see in reality all those funny little aspects we included in the programme, to bring some specific "Estonian" touches to the event (from visual identity and reflection approach to a communal singing event where approximately 100 participants were all trained to sing a famous song in Estonian, under the guidance of a 19-year-old conductor).

The event was used by the host organization as a political opportunity to show what they were doing for young people, not as an educational event for young people, youth workers, youth associations, etc...

■ What surprised them the most about running the Tool Fair?

Mostly there were pleasant surprises...

The biggest surprise is that it still exists and is so much requested! It is clearly an answer to a need.

The unflagging interest and commitment of everyone: people were 'plugged in' all the time, participating, contributing, giving feedback, running from one activity to another, almost restless. I didn't expect so much energy, interest and generosity from all the actors involved.

It is like a Think Tank with a BIG heart and a limitless fantasy. For me, this is a beautiful example of an activity format, a module that has no risk of stagnation. It's good that the Tool Fair module is under constant development (and that the organisers are not just staying in their comfort zone).

But not always...

My lack of confidence about my duties as organizer, the absence of communication by the NA in the preparatory phase. It resulted in a lack of coherence between the draft programme and the final programme.

And one even had to contend with this:

The change in the venue from the university to a hotel!

And there were even some quite strange things...

I remember quotes that were put everywhere by a person called "Paavo". I didn't know him, but I felt it was such a great idea. After, once I got to know Paavo, I understood better his innovative competences.

The first night at the welcome cocktail we asked participants as dress code to wear a Tool Fair mask. A great number of participants showed up wearing a mask with the face of one of the trainers. For a moment I started to believe in trainer cloning!

(One thing was) strange in a good way: to have a non-formal education activity in an amphitheatre of a university - which is not the easiest place to move and to interact.

For one, it was just so long ago that I don't remember!

■ **If they had to describe the Tool Fair as a colour or a smell, what would they choose?**

In terms of colour, green and red are the clear favourites! Rainbows and apples and orange and stone brown and warm purple and white are also represented And there were even more poetic images, such as:

We decided to choose light blue as the core colour for the Tool Fair in Estonia when planning its visual identity, to bring in the associations with the senses of fresh air, blue sea as a living organism, inspiration from dreams (in Estonian there is an expression: like a light blue dream….).

A fresh fruit waterfall of smells and taste

And with the colours come the evocative smells:

A Kasbah market smell!
Warm and spicy!
Ginger!

■ **What do they think has been the major development made by the Tool Fair?**

Firstly, the Tool Fair is seen as having a wider impact than on just the people directly involved:

During the Youth In Action Information Officers Staff Training Awards, the Tool Fair was cited as an outstanding example of DEOR ("dissemination and exploitation of results").

A contribution to the non-formal education field by showing the know-how and the creativity of its actors.

Secondly, some of the organisers see the development in the internal working of the Tool Fair itself as being very important, how all the different actors and elements are combined in an intricate Tool Fair "machine" as one of them put it…

For me the climax of Tool Fair was the improved quality and the impression of a balanced combination of the recipe's ingredients: the workshops (useful, creative and inspiring tools for learning were presented, with the support of critical friends' coaching and feedback, plus peer evaluation), the market (free learning environment for sharing organisational tools and experiences), the Open Space Technology (energetic space for brainstorming and discussing new ideas and tools), the inputs of the tools for learning strategy working group (sharing-reinforcing a common understanding and a stronger learning perspective) and, last but not least, the group activities that tried to combine the local atmosphere with the participants' energy.

Ah, there is so much more that one could report here! Unexpected outcomes like the impulse given to the creation of the EuroMed Centre in Turkey… the enormous growth in organising experience and skills for all concerned… Maybe we can check in again with the organisers in 2020 – and see how they rate their participation in *A great adventure!*

Did you know that?

Transformational learning emerged with the study works of Jack Mezirow (1981, 1994, 1997). Three common themes characterized Mezirow's theory of the mechanism of transformational learning: experience, critical reflection and rational discourse. Could/should those three elements be part of our Tools for Learning?

Learning as Transformation, by Jack Mezirow & Associates, 2000, published by Jossey Bass, San Francisco

What's new with the Tools for Learning strategy?

■ By Federica Demicheli and Bernard Abrignani

The Tools for Learning strategy has developed quite a lot in the last year, ensuring greater coherence between its different parts.

The Strategy travelled a lot during the last year, going from harbour to harbour, visiting different cultures and meeting different people. The crew travelling with the strategy had the great pleasure of finding inspiration and being inspired by many encounters during these trips around the territory of the Youth in Action Programme. The overall strategy is based on a group of experts and National Agencies that with the support of Salto-Youth EuroMed has been able in the last year to consolidate the achievements and to test the innovations presented last year. The 2012/2013 period has been very intense in which many possibilities and opportunities were tested to better understand the real needs of the strategy and how to improve quality. There is an obvious and definite need to share and facilitate assess to educational tools in the field of non-formal learning. Trainers, youth workers and multipliers are looking for more opportunities to meet and test their tools with other professionals and get feedback, create new tools and new networks to develop new educational frameworks.

The tools for learning are strongly linked to the culture and language of their "creators": innovation at international level often starts at national or even local level. For this reason, the new Tool Box is trying to facilitate access to tools in either the original language in which to tools for learning were created or to translate the tools for learning into different languages. A Tool Box that makes it possible to have the tool for learning translated into several languages is a very important advance in the strategy. It renders tools more accessible to youth workers and multipliers at national level and the impact of the strategy is reinforced.

The reflection on quality criteria of Tools for learning and how these can find their place not only in the non-formal educational framework but also in the formal one has become a major area of reflection since last year in Poland and is continuing within the framework of European Training Strategy. Today there is intense interest in Europe in the possible interaction and cross-fertilisation between the formal and non-formal fields. The tools for learning are deeply involved in this reflection and it is important to see and understand the value of non-formal educational tools within the framework of formal education and how and to what extent the two "worlds" can influence each other.

To summarize the achievements and developments of 2012/2013 Tools for Learning Strategy we can identify these milestones:

1 - EVENTS

TOOL FAIR VII in November 2012 in Poland (watch the video here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x14fPz3qhiM&feature=youtu.be). 110 participants were present during the last Tool Fair to discuss and experiment the "Tools for changes" 'with a specific focus on possible bridges between formal and non-formal education.

The Training Course entitled "Tools for learning in EuroMed" held in Rome provided an opportunity for sharing and discussing European strategies for training and talking about the concept of creativity in educational tools with a specific focus on working and creating tools within the Euro-Mediterranean framework

2 - PUBLICATIONS

In the "Study and Research" collection, we published **"Tools for learning in non-formal education"** (in English, French, Russian and Italian). The publication was officially presented during the Tool Fair in Poland. This publication was based on contributions from several experts who are active in Formal and Non Formal educational frameworks and also on inputs from the Tools for Learning Working groups.

In the "Practical Guide" collection, we published "Tool for learning: how to create and develop a tool": a tool for supporting the development and creation of new educational tools.

3 - TOOL BOX

We are working on the strategy and coherence for the Tool Box with a new tool that would be important step forward in the multilingual use of the box, including more and more tools in their official language with the possibility of including the English version and translations into other languages.

I'M OPEN TO SEE HOW TO PUT IT IN PRACTICE

Learning tools: the internal/external dynamic of young people's lives in contemporary Europe

■ By Miriam Teuma

In a previous article "From tools to non-formal learning tools" I considered a possible definition of what a non-formal learning tool might be, of how we could view and characterise it theoretically and how we might use it in practice. However, such considerations give rise to others. Having attempted a working definition of a non-formal learning tool and how it might be used, the question might be posed as to the context and outcome of employing such learning tools. Of course, the context can be what I described in my last article as the non-formal learning environment and the outcome a specific non-formal learning outcome. In the example I gave, the learning tool was employed creatively to initiate and support a learning process that would help youth workers to try and measure the quality of learning outcomes.

The question I pose now is a broader one in terms of both context and outcomes. What is the broader socio-economic context in which youth workers and youth leaders are now working and employing non-formal learning tools? What are the challenges, concerns and issues facing the young people they work with in contemporary Europe? What are youth workers' and youth leaders' aims and objectives in seeking to support young people in meeting these challenges and in addressing the concerns and issues that currently impact on their lives?

The present socio-economic environment across Europe is more than challenging, it is positively daunting. The impact of the economic downturn on young people presents many challenges, particularly in such areas as youth unemployment, the increasing risk of exclusion and the potential for the well-being of young people to be adversely affected. The unemployment rate for young people in the EU aged 15 to 24 rose sharply from 15 % in February 2008 to over 23.6 % in January 2013. The NEET cohort (young people not in education, employment or training) comprised 7.5m young people aged 15 to 25 in January 2012. In some of the Member States bordering the Mediterranean, the youth employment rate is alarmingly high.

In such a challenging environment, what are the non-formal learning outcomes for young people that will help them to meet these challenges and face the future with confidence and hope? How best can youth workers and youth leaders help young people achieve these outcomes? How can the prevailing socio-economic environment and challenges that young people face on a daily basis be factored into and underpin the use of non-formal learning tools?

One way of approaching these questions is to consider what might be described as the internal/external dynamic of young people's lives today. The internal factors can be conceived of as needs and aspirations: the external factors can be characterised as influences and impacts.

Young people's needs are basic (safety, shelter, food, clothing) and social/environmental (family and peer relationships, role models, education, culture and community). However, it is in their personal and developmental lives (the need to be valued and respected, to be informed and consulted, to participate meaningfully, to be involved in decisions that impact on their lives, to define themselves and forge their own futures) that young people can most readily achieve their aspirations through self realisation.

The external influences and impacts on young people's lives not only reflect and interplay with their needs and aspirations but also present both opportunities and challenges. Family relationships and those with friends and peers crucially impact on and influence the lives of young people. The pervasive impact and influence of the social and economic conditions in which young people live, learn, play and work, is well documented. Standards of education in the family (that of the mother in particular), the level of family income and family health issues can also impact positively or negatively on the lives of young people. However, no less important is the living experience of young people: where they live; the school, the neighbourhood and community in which they grow up; their ethnic background and cultural heritage; their gender and sexual identity. Influences and impacts can be both direct and indirect, seemingly obvious or nuanced (such as work and learning opportunities, the safety and security of the neighbourhood they live in and the level of community support available to them).

■ Internal-External Dynamic

Internal - Needs and Aspirations	External - Influences and Impacts
Basic Needs: • safety and security • shelter • food, clothing	Relationships: • Family • Parents • Siblings • Friends • Peers
Social and environmental Needs: • family and friends • peer relationships • mentors • education • culture • community	Social and economic conditions: • education • income • health and well being
Personal and developmental Needs: • valued and respected • informed and consulted • participate meaningfully • involved in decisions that impact on their lives • define themselves and forge their own futures • Achieve their aspirations through self realisation.	Environment : • the school • the neighbourhood • the community • ethnic background • cultural background • cultural heritage • gender • sexual identity

But what do the dynamics of these internal and external factors, the interplay of needs, aspirations, influences and impacts mean and what is their significance and implication for the non-formal learning environment? What is their value when devising specific learning tools to achieve particular learning outcomes?

At one level, this internal-external dynamic could be seen as a framework that encompasses the non-formal learning environment and the use of non-formal learning tools. In devising specific learning tools aimed at particular learning outcomes, youth workers and leaders need to take into account the basic living conditions in which the young people they are working with live; their home and community environment; their level of educational attainment; their ethnic background, in addition to meeting their need for respect, participation and recognition.

At another level, the internal-external dynamic can be seen as a profile of the young people – at either individual or group level - with whom youth workers and youth leaders engage. Effective individual or group profiling could prove to be an invaluable aid in determining a non-formal learning environment and in utilising appropriate learning tools.

Lastly, the internal-external dynamic could act as a barometer in gauging the impact of change and transition in young people's lives. The internal-external dynamic is particularly prone to the adverse impact of current socio-economic conditions in Europe. A parent's unemployment, a sibling's health problems, ethnic tensions in the neighbourhood, early school leaving in the community can all act disproportionally on everything else.

This internal-external dynamic also points to other aspects of the non-formal learning environment and their importance for both determining learning tools and achieving learning outcomes. Insuring safety, security and well-being; recognising ethnic background and cultural heritage; valuing and respecting; including and consulting are all vital in helping young people to discover themselves, gain confidence, build quality relationships with both adults and peers, discuss conflicting values and form their own, as well as expanding their knowledge of and capacity to enjoy life and to succeed: to relate, to be respected and to be recognised.

Did you know that?

Case Studies are 2500 years old... Something very similar to the learning tool that we now call case study was already used in the 5th-century BC, by the philosopher Lao-Tse. A member of the study group would present a paradox, which would be in the form of a parable. They would then discuss it and explore possible resolutions.

http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/history/chinese.html

Dance as a tool for creativity with young people

■ By Claudio Kogon

Art is an ever-changing mixture of the intellectual and the emotional, the physical and the spiritual, which makes a virtue of subjectivity. It offers a unique means by which we can explore ourselves and our position in the wider world and is a way to exchange with other people about what we see and feel and think and sense. Art is a way of opening dialogue within and between individuals and communities.

Dance is a fully-fledged art form, belonging to the 'performing arts', a goal in itself and a means of allowing a human being to express his inner feelings, thoughts and experiences. Dance is a natural form of self-expression: the body expresses itself naturally and so therefore does the spirit. We are all free willed beings, no matter what our personal situation may be. Through dance, our body expresses how free we actually are, while also highlighting the restrictions our minds impose on it.

Dance is the art form in which human movement becomes the medium for sensing, understanding, and communicating ideas, feelings, and experiences. Dance has its own content, vocabulary, skills, and techniques, which must be understood and applied to be proficient in the art. The elements of dance are the fundamental concepts and vocabulary for developing movement skills as well as understanding dance as an art form. All these elements are simultaneously present in a dance or even in a short movement phrase.

But is this the only 'use' of the art forms? Their "higher expression" in the performing arena? Or is it the time to reconnect ourselves to our bodies and come back to dance as an integral part of our life?

In ancient times, people used to constantly dance, since dance has always been one of the intrinsic expressions of human beings. Natural events, community gatherings, family moments, war and peace, the seasons of the year… – all these were moments and events to be expressed through collective, family and individual dances. Dance is still present in many people's daily life, especially in rural areas.

To what extent is dance present in formal and non-formal educational systems? To what extent is dance a tool in the hands of practitioners? Is it legitimate to 'use' dance not as an art form or as a way to express oneself but rather as an educational tool?

Dance provides a way of learning, one that develops communication abilities, problem-solving techniques, and creative and critical thinking skills along with kinaesthetic abilities. At its core, the goal of dance education is to engage students in artistic experiences through the processes of creation, performance and response.

Dance, as a rich modality for learning, can be utilized not as a goal in itself but as a means and/or a tool in formal and non-formal education, for developing individual and group problem-solving skills, learning concepts and understanding subjects, linking movement activities to academic themes enabling practitioners to draw upon young people's deep-rooted bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence.

Dance activities allow participants to tackle a wide variety of theme-based subjects, (possibly all of them) as well as being effective for dealing with all kinds of human behaviours. Guided explorations can be transformed into concrete forms. Dance education offers a vehicle for holistic teaching that cultivates the human characteristics needed for society. Dance integrates mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of education. Dance has a life impact.

The EuroMed Center for cross-cultural dialogue creativity, active participation, self-directed learning, equal partnership, initiative as the principles of non-formal education. Many curricula define space, body, time, dynamics, relationships and actions as the principles of dance. Can all the above principles be combined logically? Can dance be de-contextualized from the performing arts and utilized as a tool in youth work? The answer is a resounding YES!

The Community Outreach Project in *Sweden utilized Hip Hop to provide the foundation and method to create local meeting places that stimulate creativity. This process encouraged individuals and gave them opportunities to make positive changes in their lives. The aim was to prevent discrimination and alienation, to promote learning, diversity, participation and community involvement.*

By using non formal participatory education, young people were given an arena to develop themselves and their interests. Hip Hop provided an opportunity for them to channel their energy and creativity and by so doing to influence their own situation in a positive way. Hip Hop culture was used to encourage young people to make changes in their own lives and in society.

In 2005, as part of my training in the Training Course TATEM – Training Active Trainers in Euro-Mediterranean Youth Work (organized within the framework of the Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and in cooperation with the SALTO EuroMed Resource Centre), I had the opportunity, along with colleagues from Italy, the Palestinian Authority and Portugal, to develop and implement the Training Course "Arts in Human Rights Education", which was held in Ermesinde, Portugal.

This TC used art and performing arts workshops,

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group dynamics, discussions, experience sharing and creative learning to guide participants into discovering the HR Declaration and the path to find and develop new ways, tools and methods to implement HR Education. The TC concluded in a creation (through the arts) of a campaign (on HR) that was implemented in the city.

I had the opportunity to present and share some of the tools during Tool Fair V, in Venice (Italy). The aim for the trainers was to learn how to utilize dance and movement within the context of a theme, in this case, Human Rights Education; to introduce the Human Rights Declaration to young people in an experiential way.

Dance education is a profession; the current situation, in which literally anyone can hire a studio and accept students, does not reflect what is in fact a rigorous profession. Past experience as a dancer, no matter how accomplished, may not provide a guarantee of good teaching skills and the 'how' of teaching deserves as much attention as 'what' is being taught.

The danger of misuse has to be taken in account: as we enter the second decade of the XXI century, western society is overwhelmed by digital media, a world of free access to information and tutorials on every subject. Not 'everyone can do everything'. Knowledge and experience in dance, as well as knowledge and experience in education are a must. The use of a tool requires proficiency.

Dance needs to be brought back into our daily life, as well as being included, along with other art forms and sports, as an integral part in both formal and non-formal education systems.

We need to focus on the on-going development of creativity in children, young people and adults, in every moment of our lives. We are all 'creative' and practitioners hold the key to releasing that creativity.

> *"Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system, and may have differing duration."* UNESCO, 1997

> "We should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once." Friedrich Nietzsche

> "Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting. Dance in your blood. Dance when you're perfectly free." Rumi

> "Dance is the hidden language of the soul." Martha Graham

> "It has taken me years of struggle, hard work, and research to learn to make one simple gesture, and I know enough about the art of writing to realize that it would take as many years of concentrated effort to write one simple, beautiful sentence." Isadora Duncan

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Dance elements

SPACE: WHERE THE BODY IS MOVING. A dance affects the way the audience sees the space where the dance takes place. The dancers may travel through space or move in one spot. When they move through space they go in different directions such as forward, backward and sideways and on various levels – high, medium and low. They make different shapes with their bodies and transfer their weight so that they are balanced or unbalanced. The path they follow on the floor is called a floor path.

BODY: WHAT THE BODY IS DOING. Sometimes the dancers move their whole bodies and sometimes only one part - a small movement called a gesture or isolation.

TIME: HOW THE BODY MOVES IN RELATION TO TIME. The speed at which the dancer moves – slow, fast, speeding up, slowing down – is called the time, or tempo.
Dance, like music, theatre and film, exists in linear time. Unlike a painting or sculpture that doesn't change over time, dance moves through time as well as space. Choreographers often use repeated motifs to make it easier for the audience to "read" the dance.

DYNAMICS: HOW THE BODY IS MOVING. When we talk about the dynamics of a dance we mean the kind of energy with which the dancers are moving. It might be strong or light; tense or relaxed. The dancers may seem to flow or their movements may be staccato or jerky.

RELATIONSHIP: WITH WHOM OR WHAT THE BODY IS MOVING. Every dance involves a relationship. Even in a solo the dancer has a relationship with the space. Dances may be made in any kind of grouping: apart, connected, solo, duet, ensemble, formations and so forth.

Don't tool me wrong

■ by Matina Magkou

Dear fellow trainers and youth workers,
Don't tell me it has never happened to you as well. Whether you are an experienced trainer or you are just embarking on this adventure, I bet you have had this moment when you felt that the tool you chose just wasn't working...

Different things can go wrong when using a learning tool. I've listed a few below and I have to confess - some of them have actually happened to me!:

− you mix up the order of the instructions, or even forget some of them;
− you forget to bring some of the material needed and you either find out at the beginning and you seek an alternative or you find out in the middle of the session- and what can you do then?
− your group doesn't understand what you have asked them to do, or why, and you end up with a dozen puzzled eyes looking at you, waiting for clarification;
− you choose a tool without taking certain sensitivities among the group into consideration and you end up with reactions from the participants that might even interrupt the process and disorientate you from your initial learning goals. In a sense, you are being asked to debrief and guide the learning process in another direction;
− feel like adding more examples here from your personal experience?

The level of messing up with a tool can vary a lot. It can be disastrous, or you might be the only one who actually noticed. Even if it hasn't happened yet to you, trust me, it very probably will one day. Now, ask yourself how prepared you are for such a situation and what you would do. Can you see an opportunity to learn when a tool goes wrong?

While thinking about what to write on the theme of a tool going wrong, I decided to share my soundtrack for such moments with you. Play it at full volume as you read!

① *I am weak* (by Nina Kravitz) You feel weak when you blame yourself for what went wrong. You should have chosen another tool, you should have made sure that you had all the materials you needed, you should have asked someone to help you, you should have gone through the instructions once again. You could have told your co-trainers that you were not prepared or you didn't feel really comfortable using this particular tool. But now it has happened and you just feel weak, don't you?

② *Oops, I did it again!* (try it by Max Raabe and Palast Orchester rather than by Britney Spears) Admit it- it might not be the first time that this has happened. Last time you might have been lucky and no one noticed, or you dissimulated, or your co-trainer saved you somehow. Now, you can admit it or keep it to yourself - or better still, use it as an opportunity to learn.

③ *I'm a loser* (by Beck) You might even think you are a loser, you are not worthy of your role, people will not trust you again and you just made a fool of yourself. Don't expect anyone to ask you to deliver a training session ever again. You just messed it up, loser! But if I am not mistaken, you have tried hard to become a trainer, haven't you? Can you just give up and live with this feeling of defeat?

④ *Bulletproof* (by La Roux) What if you start by thinking that no one is bulletproof? That no matter how much you prepare, a tool might just go wrong. Training is an activity that takes place in the present tense. No matter how much of a fortune teller you are, you cannot always predict everything. And by saying that no one is bulletproof, this also means that you should be open to receive criticism from participants or co-trainers- - I mean, at the end of the day, you were the one who just messed up, weren't you?

⑤ *Getting away with it (All messed up)* (by James) Now, disappearing is always an option. You can just run away, having messed everything up and leaving even more mess behind. This is often called the ostrich approach. But experience has taught me that you don't gain anything by retreating into a shell. And take a moment to think: how would you feel if you were a participant and your trainer just left closing the door behind himself? Or if one of your co-trainers did it to you?

⑥ *Blame it on the boogie* (by Jackson Five) It is our natural instinct to try to justify our choices and our actions. When something goes wrong, the initial reaction is to blame someone else. Well, in our case, don't blame it on the tool. It is the use of it that makes the difference. The same tool might have worked perfectly in another environment, with other participants or with better preparation on your side. Most of the times we tend to blame others for our mistakes for the sake of our ego, but a responsible trainer always looks inside first.

⑦ *Nobody's fool* (by Parov Stelar). This applies especially to the people you train. Don't count on their ignorance - they might even know more than you. They have the critical thinking and emotional

intelligence to read your reactions. They will understand if something went wrong, don't try to fool them. Participants look up to you. Would you prefer to leave them puzzled or to do something about it?

8 *The right thing* (by Moby) There is no one single right thing that you can do in these situations - it depends on what went wrong and at which stage of the process you realised you'd messed up. Different things call for different responses. You just need to find what feels right for you at that particular moment.

9 *Can we start again?* (by Tindersticks) In some cases you can, in others you can't. It depends at which point in the use of the tool you realised that it is just not working. If you try to start again, you'll need to explain why. Avoid interrupting a process by asking people to start again just like that. You are not a director in a rehearsal. Your "play" is actually "on stage" when you train.

10 *With a little help from my friends* (by the Beatles) This song applies almost to everything. In our case it means that you can seek your co-trainers' help. They might be in a position to save you. When trainers work together, they develop a specific kind of code to communicate with each other - it might be with their eyes or with a simple word. Ask for their help without feeling ashamed - next time they might be the ones in need of being "saved".

11 *Sorry seems to be the hardest word* (by Elton John) Sometimes you can simply say "sorry". It is hard most of the time (in real life and in training as well), isn't it? However, remember that a dignified apology can go a long way to restoring trust. And that's what you are trying to do here, right?

12 *Enjoy the ride* (by Morcheeba) Laugh about it, don't turn it into a tragedy. Remember that a training exercise should be an activity that brings out the best in people- and that includes you as well.

13 *Nothing really ends* (by Deus) followed by An end has a start (by Editors) Your training doesn't end when a tool goes wrong. The tool is part of a

larger process, isn't it? You need to find the courage to go on. You can also think of using the same tool in another part of the training - it might work better there. In this case, make the connection with the moment using the tool went wrong. It will help participants develop a certain kind of learning that you couldn't reach otherwise, could you?

14 *What if* (by Coldplay) Now, think about your options. Yes, you need to react fast, to be prepared for such moments. So what if you just turn this little failure into a learning experience? Think about it. Especially when you are in a Training for Trainers session - this is a very good moment to actually discuss this. You might have not planned to include this session in your program - but trainers are flexible human beings, aren't they? And trainers should be prepared for the unexpected, right?

15 *Everybody's got to learn somehow* (by The Korgis) When something goes wrong, it is a perfect opportunity to learn, isn't it? Every tool is a risk. If you feel the need to avoid mistakes at all costs, then you're putting up barriers for yourself. Don't avoid transforming this moment into an opportunity to learn. Even If you managed to hide your mistake during the training, you can still bring it up during the debriefing or in the reflection groups at the end of the day. Did anyone notice? Did they feel awkward because of something? What would they do in a similar situation? Can they think of examples in real life to which this could be applicable? How would they react to error and failure? Think of it as a learning experience for yourself too and take the time to reflect on it (alone or with the participants and/or co-trainers). What could you have done better in a similar situation? What exactly went wrong? Was it the choice of the tool? Your lack of preparation? The reaction of the participants? Keep this experience in your mind. It will help you in your future training activities.

We often say that youth work and especially youth training sessions are spaces where errors are allowed. Most of the time we're thinking of the participants when we say this. But what if we actually began this safe environment by starting from a trainer's perspective? Mistakes are an essential part of self improvement. Don't be overwhelmed with guilt and regret- analyze how you can learn from them.

I started attending a theater improvisation class recently. We use many tools that have made me rethink my role as a trainer. From day one we learnt that when something doesn't come out as you planned (although in improvisation, you don't really have a lot of time to actually plan), you just bow to the public and with a big smile you say "I failed". This is the moment when the public applauds you, not just as a sign of encouragement to go on, but more as a sign of accepting failure, which is part of life and needs to be accepted as such. Can you see yourself as a trainer doing something similar?

Don't get me wrong: training is not like improvising. In training you need to plan, to control your tools, to know your target group, to keep in mind what your starting point is and where you want to go. In training you are responsible - you are not there to amuse or entertain. You are there to facilitate learning. But it is important to learn that in every life moment, failure is with us. What if we just accept it and learn something from it?

Can you think of moments that you used a tool and it went wrong? Most of the time we don't talk about such things, but I would encourage you to share examples from your personal experiences or pass on tips for trainers on what to do when something goes wrong. Maybe this could be the beginning of a discussion at the next Tool Fair...?

UNIQUE Learning Badges to Recognise Non-formal Learning in European Youth Work

■ By Nerijus Kriauciunas and Laimonas Ragauskas

"Learning today happens everywhere. But it's often difficult to get recognition for skills and achievements that happen online or out of school. Mozilla Open Badges help solve that problem, making it easy for any organization to issue, manage and display digital badges across the web." Mozilla Foundation

■ Digital badges for life-long learning

Badges are not a new idea. Scouts have been using badges to recognize various skills and achievements of their members for years. Players of video games unlock various trophies by completing game missions. Web developers use badges to encourage wanted behaviours of Internet users.

Similar ideas lie behind the use of digital badges for life-long learning. They should help to recognize knowledge, skills, attitudes and achievements of learners in various learning contexts. They should bring game features into the learning process and encourage wanted behaviours.

Digital badges are visual representations of learning outcomes and achievements.

badges = visual representations of a **skill** or **achievement**

■ Putting badges in practice

Any educational organization can design their unique system of badges online and issue them as part of their educational activities. Mozilla Foundation offers free software[1] and an open technical standard[2] that any organization can use to create, issue and verify digital badges.

Doug Belshaw works for Mozilla and has a couple of videos[3] on how to make badges work for your organization. In his blog post[4] he suggests a plan to follow when starting with badges for your non-formal learning activities:

1. Decide on the behaviours, skills or attitudes you want to promote.
2. Think of some criteria for a badge that would begin to promote those behaviours, skills or attitudes.
3. Consider if the criteria for the badge

you've come up with can be broken down in more granular ways.
4. If (as is likely) you end up with multiple badges, think about multiple (potentially interest-based) pathways through your badge ecosystem. Ask yourself, which badges depend upon other badges? What are the relationships between these badges?
5. Get someone to design an awesome-looking graphical badge for you or use the Open Badge Designer tool[5] online to do it yourself and use a badge-issuing platform such as badg.us[6], ForAllBadges[7], WPBadger[8] or BadgeOS[9] to issue badges.

■ Early bird example from the field

We are taking the first steps in developing badge-based recognition systems for non-formal learning in the European youth work context. At the beginning of 2013, in cooperation with the Finnish National Agency, we launched the pilot project "Turn the Youth Exchanges On(line)" that used badges to support non-formal learning in European youth exchanges.

The whole concept of this project was based on the methodology of blended learning: a residential non-formal learning activity, complemented and supported by the online learning environment[10] and tools before and after the activity. The participants were youth workers, accompanied by young people (15-18 years old). The residential activity brought together 38 participants from 10 European countries.

The participants welcomed the general idea of using badges for recognition of non-formal learning. Given that the project is in its early development stage, the experience of working with badges brought many valuable insights to the organisers of this project.

The following online conversation may be interesting to reflect upon when starting to

play with the idea of badges:

Participant: *Already made a presentation about it in my school! Great stuff!*

Facilitator: *And what were the reactions during or after the presentation?*

Participant: *A lot of questions, but the most common was, why do we need to prove our achievements in a digital way, if we can do it in normal one...you know, it was hard to explain, that we need a recognition of non-formal learning, outside schools and universities!*

Facilitator: *Both are true: for people who are getting formal recognition of their achievements in schools, everything else seems unnecessary, but for those (and there are more and more of them!) who do not follow formal education curricula, badges can be both attractive to complete formal education and benefit from recognising their informally or non-formally gained competences. Perhaps your school pupil should check how employers currently look for candidates - many of them take social networking into consideration as a source of information. Here, badges could be a means to help candidates stand out from the crowd.*

Participant: *Totally agree with you. The best explanation for badges is that they can make the person more special in some way, while at the same time proving his competences and ability to stand out, using badges as a tool. But the*

truth is that there are enough employers who are satisfied with the formal education of their candidates and enough workers who don't want to have extra-recognition of their competences until they become job-seekers and are trying to get new qualifications to improve their chances on the labour market…..

The full report can be downloaded online[11].

■ Future developments

The Association of Non-formal Education in Lithuania together with the partner organisations of the European UNIQUE Network received a grant from the European Commission to develop UNIQUE Learning Badges for Recognition of Non-formal Learning in European Youth Work.

UNIQUE Learning Badges is a new development in the European pathways towards better recognition of non-formal learning within and beyond the European youth work field.

New developments seek to develop a web-based accreditation platform and build capacities for using it. The platform should enable those involved in youth work to design unique recognition systems and implement them in their non-formal learning practice with young people.

This initiative takes into account the most recent developments[12] in the recognition of non-formal learning at European level. The project has the specific objective to transfer the best practice of the Youthpass recognition system by disseminating and using the project results beyond the current programme in non-formal education contexts on national, regional and local levels.

The methodology of Learning Badges is grounded and complementary to the best practice of the Youthpass recognition tool used within the European Youth in Action Programme. Learning Badges will make it possible to better support young people in their learning process, to encourage reflection in a playful way and make the process of self-assessment easier and more exciting. Digital solutions make it possible to choose any competence framework such as the 8 Key competences for Life Long Learning or any other. We expect that UNIQUE Learning Badges will be a great tool to make Youthpass certificates richer, well thought of and credible.

Specifically, Learning Badges will:
• Support personal reflection on non-formal learning through online guidance

• Offer new online feedback and self-assessment opportunities for the dialogue process
• Introduce game-like solutions to make the recognition process more interactive and dynamic
• Open possibilities to add evidence in any digital format to better describe learning outcomes
• Visualize the learning progress and learning outcomes to monitor achievements more easily
• Introduce online tools for learning facilitators to strengthen the recognition dimension
• Develop solutions for learners to share their achievements with the outside world

Moreover, Learning Badges will take the best practices of Youthpass beyond the European Youth in Action Programme. Learning Badges will be piloted within the national youth programmes and youth worker qualification programmes.
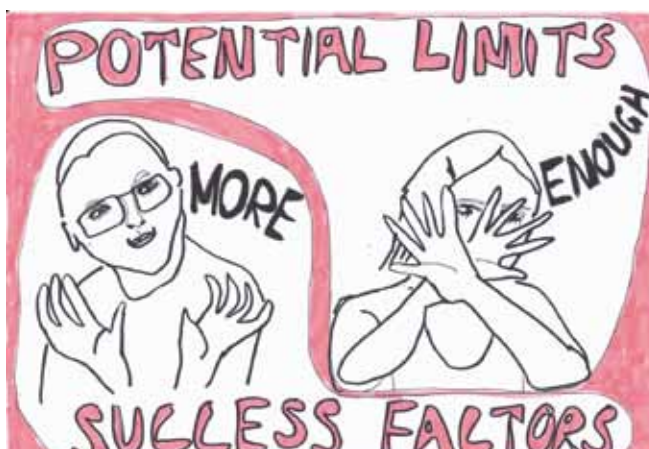
The project activities include: an international training course for 24 youth workers in June 2013 in Lithuania; innovation transfer workshops for 144 youth workers in 6 project partner countries; piloting badges in 25 youth programmes and 9 youth worker qualification programmes; research and promotion activities.

You can follow project developments online at http://www.learningbadges.eu

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12) Recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning within the field of youth, SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/recognition/

Reverse Engineering for Tools

■ By Jan Lai

When you were a kid, between 5 and 10 years of age, you most probably were more aware of the power of Reverse Engineering[1] than the average adult (geeks excluded). In fact, Reverse Engineering is nothing less and nothing more than a process of breaking down a mechanism into its individual parts to better understand how it works, regardless of what you plan to do with such new understanding (copying the mechanism, improving it, using it more effectively…)

Started as a military intelligence practice to uncover the secrets of innovative German weapons during WW II, Reverse Engineering has become better known as the computer master's best tool to reach the hidden code lines of software that is not released in an open source version ("open source" meaning that the programming code behind the software is available to anyone). So, if you have kept a little bit of that childlike curiosity and just knowing "how to use" something does not completely satisfy your thirst for knowledge, well, you might just want also to learn "*how it works*". Reverse Engineering may just prove to be your best shot at it.

Even in the case of open source software (or *"open source"* anything complex…), the learning outcomes of studying its functioning using a Reverse Engineering approach are obviously greater than a simple reading of the "user manual".

In our specific field this translates into the idea that any valid or interesting tool for learning can be a source of much greater potential if we are able to go from "using it" to "truly knowing it" by understanding how its single pieces fit and interact one with another. Why does a tool need a specific setting? Why does it need to be used in either smaller or bigger groups? Why do we need (or not) specific materials, timing, music, and so on…

Following precise instructions, written or not, doesn't necessarily give us a clear understanding of the reasons behind them. In the same way, when we "benefit" from a tool as participants, the mere fact of following any given role or command, together with the trust in the trainer/facilitator, usually keeps us from asking ourselves the "why am I doing this" question, and we just focus our attention on carrying out the task in the best way possible. Even when we are the person using a tool that some colleagues (or publication) have explained to us, with a clear, step by step description, our complete mastery of the tool's detailed functioning, whys and hows is not a given.

The *curious trainer* should always have lots of questions about a tool, as questions and their relative answers, when examined using a step by step Reverse Engineering process, can trigger a "Lego effect" allowing us to transform the separate components into which we have dismantled the tool into a set of Lego bricks. And just as when playing with Lego bricks, we will be able to re-assemble (which is referred to in geeks jargon as "re-engineering") the tool, maybe slightly changing it, adapting it to our context or to our target or just to our training style and, who knows, maybe even improving it!

A simple model for the iterative improvement of a tool holds that the person applying it and analyzing its outcomes must also be the one who designed it as he or she is the person who's most aware of the original ideas behind its development. Thanks to the Reverse Engineering process, anyone using the tool can join the cycle of testing and re-designing as if they were the original crafter. By using Reverse Engineering, we can understand the designing process that drove the tool creators to make certain choices and decisions and we can make the tool a little bit more ours, giving ourselves full rights to constructively criticize it and to tweak it into a customized new instrument better fitted to our needs and goals.

If we refer back to the "Journey of a Tool For Learning" article and its conclusion, it will become clearer how Reverse Engineering can help us travel this road. The sentence «The [Tools for Learning] Strategy not only aims to facilitate the sharing of Tools, but also to provide opportunities where peers in the field on non-formal learning can reflect on and suggest developments» clearly illustrates the kind of role a greater awareness of the Reverse Engineering approach[2] can play.

Of course applying an idea such as this one to a new and different field from the one where it was first developed will involve a lot of "trial and error" to define a structured approach on how to apply Reverse Engineering to non formal education tools for learning. It's a matter of "categorizing the types of parts you might discover when Reverse Engineering a tool for learning (e.g. sequence of steps, materials, target audience)"[3] and of understanding how each "brick" can bring new outcomes depending

on how it is re-assembled.

So now all we need to do is to design a Reverse Engineering workshop to try it "hands on" in the upcoming VIII Tool Fair!

1) Reverse engineering is the process of discovering the technological principles of a device, object, or system through analysis of its structure, function, and operation. It often involves taking something (a mechanical device, electronic component, computer program, or biological, chemical, or organic matter) apart and analyzing its workings in detail to be used in maintenance, or to try to make a new device or program that does the same thing, without using or simply duplicating (without understanding) the original. Reverse engineering has its origins in the analysis of hardware for commercial or military advantage. The purpose is to deduce design decisions from end products with little or no additional knowledge about the procedures involved in the original production. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_engineering. The Wikipedia page is probably the most complete, user-friendly and rich in further references when explaining RE as a scientific process.

2) "Journey of a Tool For Learning" by Federica Demicheli in Tools for Learning, Salto-Youth EuroMed and Good Practice's Magazine, November 2012 issue, page 5

3) Thanks to Jonathan Bowyer for his valid suggestion.
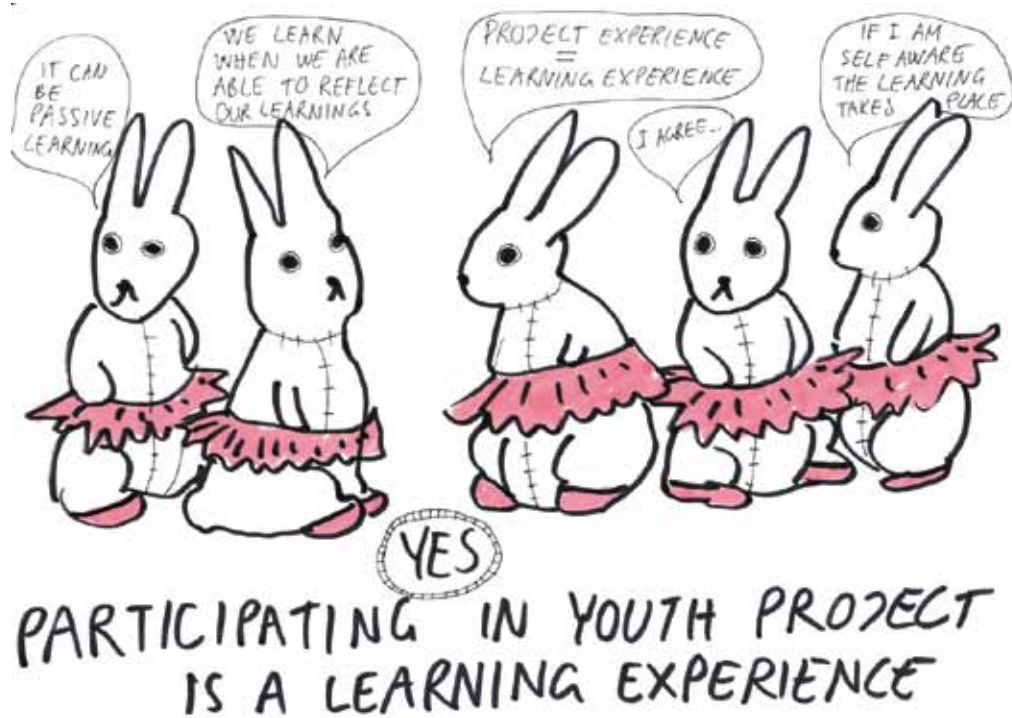
Did you know that?
BYOL (Bring Your Own Learning) strategy
What is BYOL?

BYOL (Bring Your Own Learning) strategy in an organization is not about designing personalised training nor managing people's learning for them, but rather supporting their own personal learning strategies. For some people, this may simply mean getting out of their way; for others it may involve providing some guidance and assistance on how to be an effective BYOLearner.

http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/blog/2012/04/20/is-it-time-for-a-byol-bring-your-own-learning-strategy-in-your-organization-byol/

CONTRIBUTORS

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The Tools for Learning Magazine would like to foster the reflection about tools for learning in non-formal education and is targeted at youth workers active at national and international levels.

Did you know that?

Sales agents run as well morning energisers: "I run 2 morning energisers with a group of 20-30 B2B inside sales professionals per Hjek. My favourite one: Airplane Fight - Each delegate gets a sheet of paper and is asked to write a question on the piece of paper that they would like to ask someone in the group. Once they have done so, get everyone to make a paper airplane from the piece of paper. Get those who know how to do this to help those who do not (make sure they don't see each others questions). Then get everyone in a group and tell them to throw the paper airplanes at each other, leave them for about 30 seconds. Then get everyone to pick up an airplane and stand in a circle. One at a time they must read their question out aloud and then answer it." (Testimony in the Trainers Network LinkedIn Group"

http://www.glasstap.com/trainerslibrary/category_docs.aspx?id=25&area=4