# Unleashing the Power of Community Animators

## *Challenges in the Digitalisation of Society*

*Edited by*

VALERIJ DERMOL

ANICA NOVAK TRUNK

ToKnowPress

## Unleashing the Power of Community Animators

# Unleashing the Power of Community Animators

## Challenges in the Digitalisation of Society

Edited by
Valerij Dermol
Anica Novak Trunk

ToKnowPress
www.toknowpress.net

*Unleashing the Power of Community Animators: Challenges in the Digitalisation of Society*

*Edited by* Dr. Valerij Dermol and Anica Novak Trunk
*Reviewers* Dr. Kirk D. Anderson and Dr. Anna Rakowska

*Published by* ToKnowPress
Bangkok · Celje · Lublin · Malta
2023

*Editor-in-Chief*
Dr. Nada Trunk Širca

*Editors*
Dr. Pornthep Anussornnitisarn
Prof. Luigia Melillo
Dr. Zbigniew Pastuszak

*Editorial Board*
Dr. Michele Corleto
Dr. Valerij Dermol
Dr. Dušan Lesjak
Dr. Anna Rakowska
Dr. Bordin Rassameethes
Dr. Punnamee Sachakamol
Dr. Agnieszka Sitko-Lutek

*Senior Adviser*
Dr. Kongkiti Phusavat

*Managing and Production Editor*
Alen Ježovnik

*ToKnowPress is a Joint Imprint of*
Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand
International School for Social and Business Studies, Celje, Slovenia
Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland
Pegaso International, Malta

*www.toknowpress.net*

© 2023 Authors

The publication of the monograph was financially supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency from the state budget funds, tender for the co-financing of scientific monographs.

ISBN 978-83-65020-43-7 (pdf)
ISBN 978-83-65020-44-4 (printed)

CC BY-SA https://doi.org/10.53615/978-83-65020-43-7

# Contents

# Chapter Ten

# Digital Learning Arrangements

**Stephanie Reiner**
Verein für sozialwissenschaftliche Beratung und Forschung, Germany
reiner@sowibefo-regensburg.de

**Veli Kreci**
South East European University, North Macedonia
v.kreci@seeu.edu.mk

**Burim Ismaili**
South East European University, North Macedonia
b.ismaili@seeu.edu.mk

**Shpresa Alija**
South East European University, North Macedonia
s.alija@seeu.edu.mk

**Susana Amalia de Juana Espinosa**
University of Alicante, Spain
susana.espinosa@gcloud.ua.es

**Matilde Brotons-Martínez**
University of Alicante, Spain
matilde.brotons@ua.es

**Maria del Carmen Pérez Belda**
University of Alicante, Spain
mc.perez@gcloud.ua.es

**Valerij Dermol**
International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia
valerij.dermol@mfdps.si

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in digital learning. However, integrating digital technologies into educational processes has created challenges and disparities. Notably, there is a growing divide between individuals with adequate digital access and strong digital skills and those without, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, teachers and technology developers must understand digital media users' digital abilities and competencies.

To effectively navigate the digital world, Europe needs increased dig-

ital capacity from systems, institutions, and individuals. The development of a digital society calls for active involvement from various actors to support universities, industry, and civil society. Collaborative efforts are essential to address the existing challenges and ensure that the benefits of digital learning are accessible to all (European Commission, 2021c).

To identify success factors and address local challenges, it is recommended to explore valuable resources like the European Commission's 'Digital Skills & Jobs Platform' or the Erasmus+ programme. These platforms provide insights and best practices for analysis. Over recent years, the European Union has established clear objectives and country-specific initiatives, resulting in support structures and digital aid for educational institutions. This focused approach aims to enhance formal learning processes. Simultaneously, civil society organisations are crucial in promoting non-formal and informal digital literacy programs for vulnerable communities, aiming to improve their digital participation.

A fundamental component in this endeavour is the knowledge of DigComp.[1] The EU Science Hub provides essential resources, including the competence model, implementation guide, assessment, and monitoring tools, along with additional assistance and learning materials. Utilizing these tools contributes to a more comprehensive understanding and effective implementation of digital skills initiatives.

## Support Structures and Digital Literacy Initiatives

This section explores digital literacy initiatives in Spain, Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Germany, focusing on enhancing digital literacy, bridging the digital divide, and promoting digital inclusion in these regions. The aim is to support digital coaches, including teachers, informal trainers, social animators, and mentors engaged in sports groups, music, art education, and cultural activities. Digital learning and transformation organisations from partner countries are highlighted as members of support structures. Support structures are typically established by political leaders or through finance and development programs, often in collaboration with universities. Alternatively, support structures may also be developed bottom-up by individuals from civil society, science, or companies who are affected or concerned.

[1] https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp_en

### *Spain*

Spain has undertaken several initiatives to enhance digital literacy and inclusion:

- *MigraCode Europe.* This network, supported by non-profits, provides free tech education and job search assistance to youth refugees and migrants. It is part of a broader European effort.[2]
- *Digital Agenda 2025* prioritises strengthening digital skills for workers and citizens, aiming to reach 80% of the population with essential digital skills. The National Digital Skills Plan[3] outlines specific measures to achieve these goals.
- *Centro Digital Colaborativo.* This project, part of the Strategic Plan for Digital Transformation of the Generalitat Valenciana, aims to create a flexible and inclusive virtual learning environment for teachers, students, and communities to develop digital skills.[4]
- *Fundación Cibervoluntarios* fights the digital divide through initiatives like volunTIC Valencia, which brings together institutions, companies, and NGOS to address digital vulnerability.[5]
- *Digitalización Sostenible* aims to recycle electronic equipment waste and promote a circular economy, reducing the digital divide.[6]

### *Slovenia*

Slovenia's initiatives focus on various aspects of digital literacy:

- *LAG Prlekija* project aims to create 'digital villages for tomorrow' and offers rural digital technology support, including digital training for seniors.[7]
- e*UPRAVA.* The Ministry of Public Administration in Slovenia supports eUPRAVA, which provides a single portal for various public services, simplifying access to essential information.[8]

[2] https://migracode.eu/about-migracode
[3] https://portal.mineco.gob.es/RecursosArticulo/mineco/ministerio/ficheros/210127_plan_nacional_de_competencias_digitales.pdf
[4] https://portal.edu.gva.es/gvait3du/es/centro-digital-colaborativo
[5] https://www.cibervoluntarios.org
[6] https://digitalysostenible.com
[7] http://www.las-prlekija.com/en
[8] https://e-uprava.gov.si/si

- *Coding Initiatives.* Several initiatives encourage coding among youth, such as the annual Slovenian University Hackathon and Coding Giants, an international programming school.[9]
- *Digital Literacy Workshops.* Programs like POMP and DIGI school aim to boost digital literacy, especially among vulnerable groups. They provide essential digital skills for integration into Slovenian society.

### *North Macedonia*

North Macedonia has implemented initiatives to enhance digital skills in various sectors:

- *Covid-19 Response.* The Covid-19 epidemic has underscored the importance of digital skills, leading to increased online services, including online shopping and delivery, NGO services, and government interactions.
- *Truthmeter.* A portal that holds political parties accountable by analysing promises made to citizens.[10]
- *Digital First Aid.* A free resource for first responders, trainers, and activists with technical expertise to protect themselves and others from digital issues.[11]
- *Kariera.mk.* The most extensive service network for employment and advanced IT solutions in North Macedonia, providing resources for career development.[12]
- *EU Code Week.* An initiative that promotes coding, creativity, and digital skills. It engages schools and students in digital activities.[13]

### *Germany*

Germany has a range of digital literacy initiatives:

- *Medienfachberatung.* This service in Upper Palatinate helps youth produce media content and improve media literacy.[14]

[9] https://codinggiants.si/index.php/courses?active_type=Brezpla%C4%8Dne+delavnice+CwG+Online
[10] https://truthmeter.mk
[11] https://digitalfirstaid.mk
[12] https://kariera.mk
[13] https://codeweek.eu/search/?country_iso=MK
[14] https://www.medienfachberatung.de/oberpfalz/ueber-uns

- *Digitaler Engel.* A project by Deutschland Sicher im Netz (DSiN) that helps older people use digital tools effectively and personally.[15]
- *Digitaler Kompass.* DSiN trains online advisors to help older people explore digital offers.[16]
- *Digitale Nachbarschaft.* This initiative focuses on safe internet use for associations, initiatives, and citizens.[17]
- *Bavarian State Effort.* 'Digital verein(t)' provides manuals, workshops, and online seminars to support volunteers and associations in digitisation.[18]
- *Skala Campus.* A digital learning and exchange platform for socially oriented individuals. It offers webinars and self-learning courses on various topics.[19]
- *Better Place Academy.* Offers free online courses and webinars on digital issues for social organisations.[20]
- *Open Transfer.* A movement that promotes knowledge transfer and scalability of positive social ideas through various initiatives.[21] *Vereinfacher Podcast.* Covers topics like taxation, association legislation, fundraising, and digitalisation for non-profit associations.[22]
- *Regional Initiatives.* Local initiatives in Regensburg and Wiesbaden support clubs' digital transformation.
- *Digital Education Meets School (DigiBitS).* This project helps teachers integrate digital subjects and methods into their classes.[23]
- *#wirfürschule.* An initiative that aims to create a vision of the school of the future through hackathons and forward-looking projects.[24]
- *Politische Medienkompetenz.* Provides information on democracy,

[15] https://www.digitaler-engel.org/materials
[16] https://www.digital-kompass.de/materials
[17] https://www.digitale-nachbarschaft.de
[18] https://digital-vereint.de
[19] https://www.skala-campus.org
[20] https://www.betterplace-academy.org/online-kurse
[21] https://opentransfer.de
[22] https://www.vereinfacher.de/podcast-vereinfacher
[23] https://www.sicher-im-netz.de/digibits-%E2%80%93-digitale-bildung-trifft-schule
[24] https://wirfuerschule.de/ueber-uns

media, data science, and more, with online tools, glossaries, and game recommendations.[25]

- *Leidmedien*. Promotes inclusive media design and reporting, particularly about disabled people.[26]

## UnInLeCo Coaching Frameworks: Mutual Learning Integration

The UnInLeCo project championed an inclusive and comprehensive approach to learning, emphasising expanded and integrated learning experiences grounded in informal and situational learning principles. The project was guided by several key premises that shaped its educational philosophy. Firstly, it recognized that learning is a social activity, emphasising the importance of collaborative and communal learning experiences. Additionally, the project acknowledged that knowledge is intricately woven into the fabric of community life, and learning thrives in the context of shared experiences. Emphasising the principle of participation, the UnInLeCo project highlighted that active engagement is crucial for effective learning outcomes.

Moreover, the project emphasised the interdependence of empowerment and participation, recognising that an empowered learner actively contributes to their learning environment. The project also identified exclusion from participation as a significant barrier to learning, underscoring the importance of inclusivity. Lastly, the UnInLeCo project embraced the idea that learning is a continuous and lifelong process, emphasising that everyone is a perpetual learner, continually acquiring knowledge and skills throughout their lives. Through these guiding principles, the UnInLeCo project aimed to foster an inclusive, participatory, and lifelong learning environment (Araf, 2020).

In UnInLeCo, the *learning scenarios* represent real-life digital challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, requiring active learning for solutions. The interaction between facilitators (multipliers) and the digital coach fosters self-directed learning through conversation. The process involves combining practical, everyday knowledge with intentional learning to gain creative insights. Participants receive support through encouragement, tools, and reflective questions to enhance their learning experience.

The *coaching framework* serves as the project's central concept, built

[25] https://www.politische-medienkompetenz.de
[26] https://leidmedien.de

upon certain principles. This framework is designed for three key groups: digital coaches, multipliers, and recipients. Digital coaches are IT professionals from universities and corporations seeking to expand their knowledge of IT by engaging with new people and immersing themselves in digital experiences. Hailing from universities or businesses, these coaches possess excellent digital skills. They excel in communication, counselling, empathy, and perspective-shifting. Digital coaches are passionate about learning new IT tools and technologies, boasting a network that allows them to explore and seek technical assistance. However, it is noted that while IT specialists often focus primarily on technological solutions, there may be a gap in understanding the lives of potential consumers.

Digital coaches may work with *multipliers in target areas* to digitally improve activities and help members learn. Multipliers are dedicated members of educational, civil, social, political, and church organisations. They share digital transformation and skills training funding and insufficient internal digital competence. Each multiplier is part of an initiative, active in one of the areas of action, and knowledgeable of regional digital learning opportunities. Multipliers are crucial in empowering and encouraging beneficiaries to self-learn through volunteer efforts and in a non-hierarchical relationship. Multipliers value the idea of learning together and avoid adopting the traditional 'teacher-student' model. They maintain direct contact with beneficiaries, which could include vulnerable demographic groups, and have connections with other initiatives and individuals who can link them with civil society organisations or support groups.

The Erasmus+ project UnInLeCo identified several vulnerable populations. seniors, individuals with disabilities, women, and mothers from rural areas with little economic options, children, and young people from migrant and/or socially disadvantaged homes will be beneficiaries. The project aims to create mutual learning experiences between IT-affine 'digital coaches' from universities and companies and socially engaged 'multipliers' who work directly with the above-mentioned vulnerable groups. These shared learning experiences offer value for everyone.

*Why do digital coaches benefit from the project?* Engaging in this initiative offers digital coaches the opportunity to gain insights into new digital living environments. Integrating these experiences into their work

contributes to creating more inclusive IT applications. As a result, vulnerable groups experience long-term benefits from the project. Digital coaches can access IT networks and professionals, enabling them to tackle challenging use cases or raise awareness about digital barriers among key stakeholders. This ongoing effort contributes to gradually removing digital barriers, developing new IT applications, and enhancing existing applications to be more user-friendly and accessible.

*Why do multipliers benefit from the project?* Initially, multipliers can leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the lives of disadvantaged groups and streamline their work. This involves capturing common technical challenges in video format and making them accessible to beneficiaries. The demand for IT support for vulnerable populations is expected to increase as society becomes more digitally oriented. Social mediators and digital educators are crucial in bridging the digital divide. The UnInLeCo project specifically focuses on educating social mediators, including social workers, community developers, migrant organisation workers, church and youth workers, and community group facilitators, about opportunities for digital learning for their clients. The goal is to empower and support them in utilising these opportunities within their respective fields. Training programs will be conducted to enable them to create, produce, and publish digital instructional resources.

The coaching framework highlights the importance of mutual learning achieved through non-formal methods, face-to-face interactions, and the exchange of valid information. Despite being an IT specialist, the digital coach does not take control of the conversation, and the multiplier does not play the role of a 'student.' Instead, the coaching framework fosters an equal dialogue with the following key assumptions:

- They both contribute to the discussion – one possessing information and knowledge about digital technology, while the other offers insights into their personal digital experiences. Acknowledging that each person may perceive aspects the other might overlook, the goal is to empathize and explore various perspectives. The shared belief is that learning serves as an opportunity for personal and collective growth, with an understanding that individuals are putting forth their best efforts within their respective circumstances (Araf, 2020).

- Participants must be open to sharing relevant information and able to use practical examples and simple explanations to make the situation understandable to the ignorant counterpart. As a tandem, they co-create the intervention and knowledge exchange. During the conversation, the interlocutors focus on the common interest rather than the individual.

The project's main aim was to reach learners in their current situations. Many people have already engaged in some form of formal learning, like primary or secondary school, university, vocational training, or other educational programs. Additionally, individuals have a social environment that contributes to their learning. In today's activities, such as using media, banking, or connecting with others, a digital aspect is involved. Hence, possessing digital life skills becomes crucial as essential competencies are needed to navigate daily life.

Apart from developing and funding such initiatives, it is also worth mentioning that it is crucial to connect these activities, support organisations, and offer digital assistance to civil society groups, schools, and various public and private institutions like retirement homes. This ensures the inclusion of everyone in Europe, enabling their participation in the ongoing digital advancements.

## Digital Learning Methodology

The coaching technique strongly emphasises fostering digital skills among all participants. The goal is to engage participants in discussions and learning experiences centred around the digital challenges they encounter in their daily lives. To achieve this, digital learning arrangements should be crafted with a focus on principles like self-regulated learning and action competence.

Self-regulated learning is essential in the context of digital education, and learning settings should be designed to encourage a sense of 'complete action.' This involves breaking down learning scenarios into sequences, allowing students to independently navigate them while the facilitator provides guidance. Facilitators play a crucial role by offering information, suggestions, and assistance, empowering learners to shape their own learning process and enhance their competency. This approach is particularly significant as the UnInLeCo initiative delves into informal learning for the digital lives of vulnerable groups.

The complete action principle involves the steps shown in Figure 10.1.

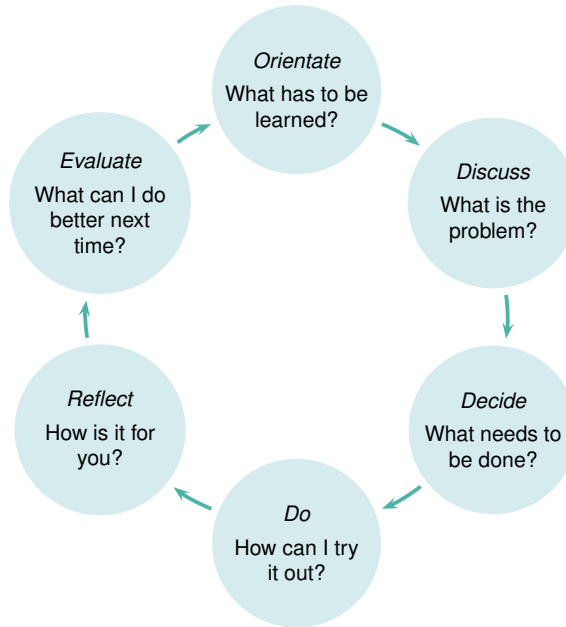


FIGURE 10.1
Complete Action Principle (adapted from Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (2021))

The multiplier can serve as an information platform for the client by explaining digital technology ( function 'inform'). In the first step, the multiplier aims to 'Orientate' the client on why collecting information from the Internet is necessary. To achieve this, the multiplier discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Internet research. Pros include timeliness and multimedia content, while drawbacks involve the risks of disinformation and subjectivity. Additionally, the multiplier gains insights into the client's life during the 'Inform' phase. This may involve activating the client's past knowledge or inquiring about their interests, such as preferred information sources and how they have used them. The multiplier may also address the client's existing disinformation and fake news situations.

Moving to the 'Discuss' step, problems such as concerns about disinformation and false news are openly addressed. The learner needs to be guided toward understanding the study area and recognizing its benefits, emphasising the importance of connecting the learning material to the learner's life and needs. Empathy is crucial for the multiplier, who must understand the client's world, making this task more manageable. In situations involving disinformation, it is common for individuals to hold different opinions or be surprised by each other's

perspectives. Therefore, observing, listening, and comprehending the client's needs and viewpoints during this phase becomes necessary.

In the 'Decide' step, a solution is reached through dialogue. For example, the multiplier can showcase IT competence through source critique, fact checks, and critical thinking. Following this, the multiplier introduces problem-solving methods and concludes by explaining various answers, backgrounds, and contexts in simple terms. Practical examples from the counterpart's life are provided to enhance understanding. This step aims to empower the learner with the skills needed to navigate and make decisions in the digital realm.

The fourth step, 'Do,' is crucial in implementing the acquired knowledge. The multiplier guides the client to check digital content sources and conduct fact checks, encouraging active learning through hands-on practice. The multiplier should provide an example and encourage the client to assess the source critically. This guidance is offered as a suggestion, fostering receptive peer feedback rather than a lecturing approach. The focus is creating an environment conducive to learning low-threshold digital skills through engaging and relatable conversations.

In the next step, 'Reflect,' the multiplier engages with the client by asking about their thoughts and feelings regarding the solution. Together, they critically evaluate the proposed solution. The multiplier may seek additional examples or explore related topics to understand the issue at hand better. This reflective process enhances the learning experience and allows for a more comprehensive problem analysis.

In the final step, 'Evaluate,' the multiplier undergoes an evaluation process. This involves continually receiving feedback or engaging in self-reflection to enhance discussion skills. This evaluative phase contributes to improving the multiplier's ability to effectively communicate and support clients in navigating digital challenges.

Creating and sharing digital learning scenarios proves beneficial when certain learning content is likely to be revisited between a multiplier, client, and digital coach. These scenarios can include up-to-date learning materials or relevant learning media, providing a structured framework for ongoing discussions and learning interactions.

## Open Educational Resources

Over the past decade, various organisations and individuals have contributed to developing digital skills, resulting in a wealth of videos, ar-

ticles, podcasts, and similar multimedia resources addressing digital issues and offering solutions. However, navigating and selecting suitable material can be challenging. Here, multipliers and digital coaches can complement each other's strengths. Digital coaches can assess learning resource content for technical accuracy, while multipliers can gauge its suitability for their clients (considering language, scope, depth, and digital media comprehension). Even suboptimal resources can inspire digital learning, as demonstrated through face-to-face interactions where multipliers convey the content of relevant videos.

Open Educational Resources (OER),[27] which encompass freely accessible, open-licensed educational materials, offer opportunities for free access, use, modification, and redistribution with minimal or no restrictions. Examples include course materials, entire courses, books, curricula, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia apps, and podcasts. The nonprofit Khan Academy[28] serves as an international illustration, providing free, high-quality education to a global audience.

Open Educational Resources (OER) have gained prominence in various European countries, reflecting a commitment to democratizing education and fostering digital inclusivity. Here is a brief overview of OER initiatives in select European nations:

- INTEF projects in Spain provide access to various online educational resources, including the EDIA Project for classroom innovation, Adventure of Learning for non-academic learning, Procomun for pre-university learning objects, Image and Sound Bank for multimedia resources, and Educational Resources for Online Learning with didactic itineraries. Autonomous communities also have developed open educational resource repositories, such as Contenidos Medusa in the Canary Islands and academic portals in Extremadura, Andalusia, and Aragon.
- In Slovenia, online platforms like ucimse.com,[29] the Digital Competence Enhancement portal,[30] Astra.si,[31] and online classrooms developed by a private TV network.
- In North Macedonia, the Unique National Platform for Online

[27] https://open-educational-resources.de
[28] https://de.khanacademy.org
[29] https://ucimse.com
[30] http://projekt-ddk.si
[31] https://astra.si

Learning,[32] EDUINO,[33] and various digital resources, such as Think Equal[34] and Druzinata MELA,[35] support education.

- The Anton App[36] offers curriculum-based tasks in Germany, while YouTube channels like SlideCampus[37] and Easy German[38] provide educational content. The 'Silver Tipps' campaign helps seniors navigate the digital world, and platforms like PIKSL[39] offer digital literacy courses. Bavarian universities provide non-curricular 'OPEN vhb courses,'[40] and serious games like 'Fake It to Make It,'[41] 'Bad News,'[42] and 'Orwell'[43] promote media literacy.
- These initiatives across the four countries aim to enhance education through open educational resources and digital learning opportunities.

[32] https://chat.openai.com/c/www.schools.mk
[33] https://www.eduino.gov.mk
[34] https://issuu.com/unicefmk
[35] https://issuu.com/unicefmk
[36] https://anton.app/de
[37] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC153TuWMm-M_Mz6GZprj6FQ
[38] https://www.youtube.com/@EasyGerman
[39] https://piksl.net/bildungsangebote/ausbildung-digitale-teilhabeberaterinnen
[40] https://open.vhb.org
[41] http://www.fakeittomakeit.de
[42] https://www.getbadnews.de/#intro
[43] http://www.surpriseattackgames.com/portfolio-items/orwell