E-Learning for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

A guide for design and implementation

THE MHPSS COLLABORATIVE

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Authors:
Kathy Trang, Victor Ugo

Editor:
Louise Juul Hansen

Photos and illustrations:
Frontpage photos from Unsplash by: Annie Spratt, Brett Jordan, David Pennington, Emily Underworld, Myriam Jessier, Nasim Keshmiri, Patrick Perkins and Thomass Lefebvre.

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About the MHPSS Collaborative
The MHPSS Collaborative is a global hub for research, innovation, learning and advocacy in the field of mental health and psychosocial wellbeing for children, youth and families facing adversity. We build connections between local civil society and key academic and humanitarian actors to create knowledge and new ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children, youth and families facing adversity.

The MHPSS Collaborative is hosted by Save the Children Denmark.

Learn more at www.mhpsscollaborative.org

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GLOSSARY

Disability-adjusted life-years	The total years of life lost due to living with poor health conditions, having a disability, or premature death[1]
Low and middle-income countries (LMIC)	A group of countries with Gross National Income (GNI) per capita between $1,136 and $4,465[2]
Massive open online course (MOOC)	An online learning program that is available for anyone[3]
Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)	Any type of support that focuses on nurturing and promoting psychosocial well-being while actively addressing mental health challenges[4]
Prototype	A more complete version of the storyboard created for testing and evaluation before developing the final version of the e-learning course[5]
Simulation	A learning tool that uses realistic models or situations allowing learners to apply their knowledge to address real-life scenarios in a controlled and safe environment[6]
Stakeholder	Individuals, groups of people or organizations affected by or having any benefit in a particular project, activity, or decision[7]
Storyboard	A presentation method/tool, including text and graphics, supporting designers to convey content in a general way[8]
Task shifting	The redistribution of tasks among healthcare workers in the same organization or health workforce team[9]
Toolkit	A collection of tools providing the necessary materials and information designed for specific tasks[10]

[1] World Health Organization. (2020). Global health estimates: DALY methods 2019. World Health Organization. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/gho-documents/global-health-estimates/ghe2019_daly-methods.pdf?sfvrsn=31b25009_7
[2] World Bank. (n.d.). Middle-income countries overview. World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview#:~:text=Lower%20middle%2Dincome%20economies%20are,Bank%20Country%20and%20Lending%20Groups
[3] McKay, E., & Lenarcic, J. (2015). Macro-Level Learning through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): Strategies and Predictions for the Future: Strategies and Predictions for the Future. IGI Global.
[4] Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2007). IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Geneva: IASC.
[5] Arshavskiy, M. (2024). E-Learning design on a shoestring. ATD Press.
[6] Landriscina, F. (2013). Simulation and learning: A Model-Centered Approach. Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-1954-9
[7] Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Stakeholder. In Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stakeholder
[8] Clark, R. C., & Mayer, R. E. (2016). E-Learning and the science of instruction: Proven Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
[9] World Health Organization. (2007). Task Shifting: Rational Redistribution of Tasks among health Workforce Teams: Global Recommendations and Guidelines. World Health Organization; Geneva, Switzerland.
[10] Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Toolkit. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/toolkit

INTRODUCTION

About one billion people worldwide suffer from mental illness, affecting roughly 7 in 1,000 families. Every 40 seconds, someone dies by suicide. Mental disorders contribute to 4.9% of global disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs), a rate unchanged over the past 30 years. Despite this, governments spend only 2.1% of their health budgets on mental health. This leaves about 85% of people in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) with mental, neurological, and substance-use disorders without treatment.

Mental health education and research are concentrated in wealthy nations, while LMICs struggle with underdeveloped infrastructure. Less than 2% of physicians and nurses in LMICs receive mental health training, and these countries face a shortage of 1.18 million mental health workers. To address just the most critical mental disorders, 239,000 additional mental health workers are needed across 58 countries. Community health workers —local individuals without formal mental health training—help bridge this gap by allowing specialists to focus on more complex cases. Research shows that training community health workers in mental health care is both feasible and effective, with positive results even in wealthy countries.

However, training continues to fall short of healthcare needs. Projections for 2030 show a shortage of 15 million health workers globally. In wealthier countries, this shortage comes from rising demand, while in poorer countries, both demand and supply grow too slowly. Online courses (MOOCs) were initially seen as a solution for expanding educational opportunities worldwide. However, most MOOC participants tend to be well-educated professionals from wealthy countries seeking to enhance their knowledge or advance their careers. Additionally, very few people who start MOOCs actually finish them.

This toolkit compiles resources to help develop, adapt, and evaluate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) training, particularly for online courses targeting low-resource settings. It's designed for organizational staff, program managers, educators, and instructional designers planning MOOCs for MHPSS workers in LMICs. Each section provides key considerations and resources for planning and implementation, with best practices where available. These steps help users understand how to develop, adapt, implement, and evaluate new online courses.

ANALYZE, DESIGN, DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE – ADDIE

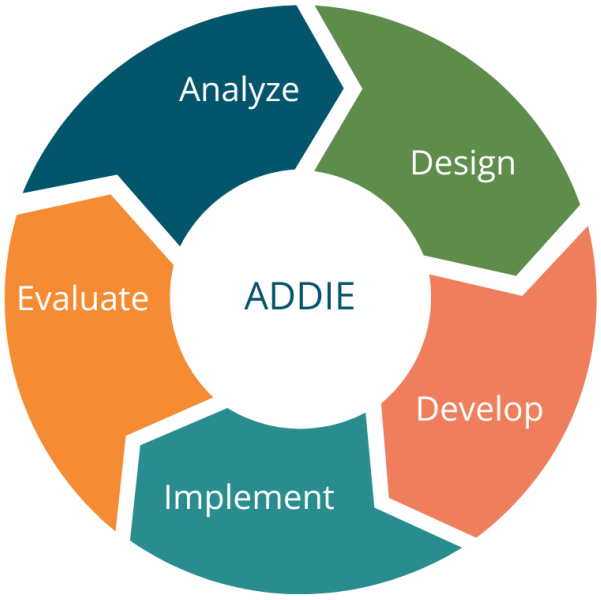

Figure 1. The Addie Model

One of the most widely used frameworks for instructional design is **the ADDIE model**. ADDIE – Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate – offers a structured approach to develop and assess the effectiveness of learning programs. It ensures instructional activities align with learning objectives, promotes data-driven decision-making, and facilitates effective stakeholder communication.

With an emphasis on continuous improvement, the ADDIE model allows for the iterative refinement of learning experiences, helping to create effective and impactful educational programs. Below each phase of the ADDIE model is outlined, alongside other relevant frameworks and curriculum, for instructional design and assessment. Resources for the implementation of each phase are provided. The steps outlined follow a Backward Design process,[11] where learning goals are created first and serve as a means of organizing the design of instruction and assessment materials. This approach is associated with better student outcomes.[12]

Analyze

[11] Wiggins, G. (2005). Understanding by design. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
[12] Richmond, A. S., Boysen, G. A., & Gurung, R. A. (2021). An evidence-based guide to college and university teaching: Developing the model teacher. Routledge

In the **Analyze** phase, your goal is to clearly identify the problem, determine if training is the right solution, identify the target audience, and define any requirements for the instructional design.

The problem refers to the gap between a target group's current and desired knowledge or performance. Only in defining **the problem** can you evaluate whether a MOOC is a suitable solution. To identify the problem, you can conduct a performance needs assessment to identify performance gaps and determine steps to address them. A performance needs assessment involves the following steps:

- **Defining desired performance:** Establish what learners should be able to do in their job roles and under specific conditions.
- **Describing actual performance:** Assess the current performance of the target audience to identify the gap.
- **Identifying the cause:** Investigate reasons behind the performance gap by interviewing stakeholders such as providers, supervisors, and clients.
- **Selecting interventions:** Determine the best solution to address the gap. If it stems from insufficient skills or knowledge, training may be the appropriate intervention. If the problem is rooted in more structural issues (e.g., lack of funding), then other solutions may be necessary.

Using personas to determine target audience

At this phase, you must also determine who the target audience for the MOOC is. For example, this might be community health workers, doctors or nurses without specialized mental health training, or teachers. To understand the target audience, personas—that is, profiles of potential students that reflect their varying backgrounds, prior knowledge, skills, and experience, and learning preferences—can be created.

To create a persona, you must first understand the characteristics of potential users. This requires research. You might conduct interviews with members of the target audience or conduct a survey. You could also look at other data sources (e.g., records of performances) to inform your crafting of possible personas. In addition to personal characteristics, it is important to understand the situational factors that may impact students' participation and outcomes in the course.

These situational factors might include, for instance, the workload of the target audience, family demands, intrinsic motivation, management faith in the training, and so forth. Situational factors affecting training can be assessed using the Situational Factors Worksheet from the Training Evaluation Framework and Tools.[13]

[13] International Training and Education Center for Health (I-TECH). (n.d.). Training evaluation framework and tools (TEFT). I-TECH. https://www.go2itech.org/resources/training-evaluation-framework-and-tools-teft/

After conducting initial research, you want to categorize possible users into larger overarching groups based on common characteristics such as age, occupation, learning goals, learning expectations, etc. Choosing the right layout is essential and ensures that all personas follow a consistent template. Each persona should include a name, an attractive image to make it memorable, demographic details, some backgrounds, characteristics, and learning-related information.

One of the key points of a persona is to figure out the motivating and distracting factors that contribute to participating in the e-learning course, which will shed light on what you can do to improve the course. Adding a short biography to a persona can help the e-learning development team understand user/learner needs for better design decisions.

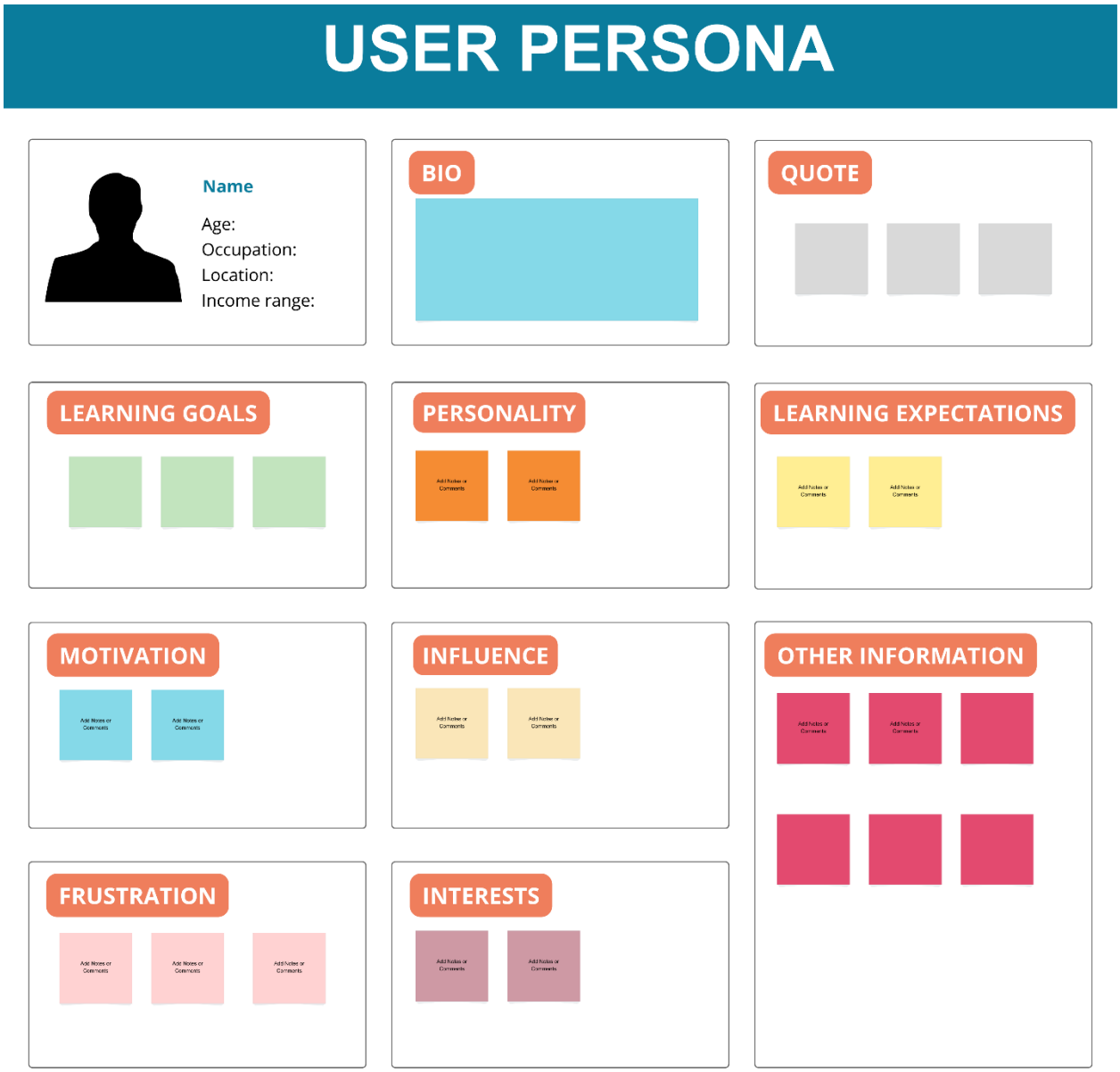

Figure 2. Example of a persona

Determining learning goals and learning objectives

After determining the target audience, you will want to assess potential **learning goals** and **learning objectives**. Although the two sound synonymous, they are different.

Learning goals refer to overarching—more general—aims of what students will gain from the course. Examples of learning goals may be to develop a deeper understanding of the changes unfolding during adolescence, or to strengthen capacity to conduct culturally sensitive mental health research.

Learning objectives are measurable outcomes aligned with the overarching goal of the training. They are the specific skills or knowledge that students should acquire during training. Example learning objectives, for instance, might include students knowing how to design a needs assessment to understand mental health and psychosocial support needs in a given context by the end of the course.

Afterwards, you will want to evaluate the necessary resources to deliver the training, including budget, technical tools, personnel, and time constraints. This might involve holding several meetings with relevant stakeholders to determine the budget, staff, and time allocatable to the MOOC. These factors will constrain what can be done in subsequent steps. As part of this process, you will want to assess which delivery methods (e.g., online, in-person, hybrid; synchronous, asynchronous) will be most appropriate given student profiles, learning objectives, and resource availability.

Data relating to these factors can be gathered by perusing existing data (e.g., performance data) and conducting a needs assessment with the target audience, using a mixture of interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Interviews and focus groups can be useful for understanding what the target audience perceives of as major gaps in their current training that impact their job performance, barriers and facilitators towards participation in training workshops, and preferences for the presentation or implementation of the workshop.

Key questions to answer in this phase:

1. What problem are we trying to solve?
2. Can training address this problem effectively?
3. Who is the intended audience?
4. What change or outcome do we want to see after the training?
5. What resources (budget, tools, people) are required to make it happen?

This phase lays the groundwork for designing a targeted and effective training program.

Design

At the **Design** phase, you will translate findings from the **Analyze** phase into a structured design for the training program. This design includes the learning goals, learning

objectives, delivery plan, lessons, estimated course duration, student assessment, and feedback process. During the Analyze phase, you started assessing possible learning goals and objectives. Now with the data gathered, you will craft learning objectives to orient the design of the course curriculum and student assessments to ensure they are aligned with learning objectives.

Learning objectives

Learning objectives can be crafted using Bloom's Taxonomy. In the original taxonomy created by Bloom and colleagues,[14] learning objectives were classified into a hierarchy with six levels, ranging from basic knowledge recall to more complex analysis and creation of original work. These six levels were knowledge (bottom), comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (top). In 2001, this taxonomy was revised by Anderson and Krathwohl,[15] shifting away from the nouns in Bloom's taxonomy towards action words to describe how students might engage with the knowledge taught. Examples of verbs at each level are shown below:

- **Remember:** retrieving, recognizing, and recalling knowledge
- **Understand:** Creating meaning of written, oral, and visual materials through interpreting, inferring, classifying, summarizing, comparing, or explaining
- **Apply:** Demonstrating knowledge of the material by implementing, executing, or using it in some task
- **Analyze**: Breaking the material into constituent parts and identifying how they are related through differentiating, organizing, or attributing
- **Evaluate**: Judging the material based on some criteria
- **Create:** Putting the information into a coherent whole and generating some new work based on what was learnt.

The training designer will need to align the learning objectives with the performance gap such that the objectives can fill in the gaps identified.

Where can reliable MHPSS resources be found?

The person designing the course will need to identify reliable resources (e.g., manuals, books, exercises) to inform the design of the curriculum. From there, training materials can be developed or adapted alongside evaluation instruments. Some websites for finding reliable MHPSS resources include:

- MHPSS.net: www.mhpss.net
- The MHPSS Collaborative: www.mhpsscollaborative.org/resources/
- The RCRC Movement MHPSS Hub: www.mhpsshub.org/

[14] Bloom, B. S.: (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: the classification of educational goals; Handbook I: Cognitive domain. New York: David McKay
[15] Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Abridged edition). Allyn & Bacon

- Inter-agency Standing Committee: www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/iasc-products
- World Health Organization: www.wkc.who.int/our-work/health-emergencies/knowledge-hub/mental-health-psychosocial-support-(mhpss)/mhpss-related-guidelines
- Mental Health Innovation Network: www.mhinnovation.net/
- United for Global Mental Health: www.unitedgmh.org/

How should learning materials be designed and presented?

Learning materials should be presented in both verbal (e.g., text) and pictorial (e.g., images or graphs) form to promote active engagement in learning.[16] Having transformational and organizational graphics can help learners understand the materials than just having decorative or single-object presentational graphics (see graphic descriptions in Table 1). Furthermore, avoiding cramming too much information into a slide or lesson is best. According to Clark and Mayer,[17] presenting lean text with audio narration or breaking content into smaller sections is useful for learning. Furthermore, integrating interactive quizzes and practice activities can significantly enhance learner engagement and reinforce the overall learning experience.

Table 1. Graphic types[18]

Graphic Type	Description	Example
Decorative	For aesthetic appeal or humor	Visuals of parents and children in a course about parenting
Representational	Illustrate the appearance of an object	A screen capture
Organizational	Summarize qualitative relationships among content	A tree diagram
Relational	Summarize quantitative relationships among content	A bar chart
Transformational	Illustrate changes in time or over space	A video showing the development of a baby during pregnancy
Interpretive	Illustrate a theory or cause-and-effect	A flowchart illustrating the steps of a crisis intervention process

E-learning courses should be designed to be as friendly to as many individuals as possible, including those with visual or other learning disabilities. The design can be referenced from the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, first introduced by CAST in 2008. Based on those guidelines, the course should be presented clearly and concisely, avoiding jargon and complex sentences. Alt text descriptions should be added to all images to convey the content to learners with visual impairments. Content should be organized with headings and subheadings. Easy-to-read fonts and colors should be prioritized. Specifically, large Sans-serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Helvetica) are encouraged to maximize readability.

Additionally, bright colors (e.g., bright yellow or neon green) should be avoided, and the color contrast of the font and background should be considered (e.g. avoid using brown

[16] Mayer, R. E. (2009). Multimedia learning (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511811678
[17] Clark, R. C., & Mayer, R. E. (2016). E-Learning and the science of instruction: Proven Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons
[18] Clark, R.C., & Lyons, C. (2011). Graphics for learning (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Pfeiffer

text on a red background). A light colour for the background and a dark colour for the text is recommended. When delivering knowledge, transcripts should be provided for all video content so those with auditory difficulties can follow along. Learning materials should be provided in various formats, such as PDF, HTML, and audio, to ensure everyone can access them.

Develop

In the **Develop** phase, storyboards and prototypes from the **Analyze** and **Design** phases are transformed into instructional content and materials. Storyboards are often created early during this phase to provide a visual outline of the course and can be useful to map the overall flow and structure of the course. Some main components should be included in an e-learning storyboard: a title providing a brief description of the slide; a slide number with a specific naming convention for keeping consistency throughout the course; content, including on-screen text and instructions for learners; audio, including voiceover text or file references; graphics and animation; and programming instructions or developer's notes for translating everything on the storyboard into the e-learning course content, including navigation approach.[19,20] Storyboarding tools like Microsoft PowerPoint, Lucid chart, or Miro can aid visualization.

How do you create a storyboard?

There is no fixed or best way to create a storyboard; the steps and content can be modified according to organizational needs. Nonetheless, the five primary steps typically used to design an e-learning storyboard are as follows, according to Slade[21]:

1. **Collect and organize your learning content:** Gather course materials from other sources and collaborate with experts to review the e-learning content. Then create an outline of your course to visualize the structured way of content and the flow of transition among topics.
2. **Choose the storyboard format**: Determine captivating ways to present the content and materials, whether it is a text-based or visual storyboard (see Tables 2 and 3).
3. **Draft the storyboard** to transform initial ideas into something that could be developed and improved later.
4. **Review the storyboard**: The storyboard should be circulated to relevant stakeholders to review, setting appropriate timelines for potentially multiple rounds of review and edits.

[19] Dicht, L., & Jasmin, S. (2016). What's a storyboard? Walking faculty new to online education through the course design process [Slide show]. https://engineering.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/2018-11/Whats-a-Storyboard-OLC-PPT-Presentation-2016_2.pdf
[20] Arshavskiy, M. (2024). E-Learning design on a shoestring. ATD Press
[21] Slade, T. (2020). The ELearning Designer's Handbook: A Practical Guide to the ELearning Development Process for New ELearning Designers (2nd ed.). Independently published

5. **Edit the storyboard** after getting feedback from stakeholders and subject matter experts.

Table 2. Text-based storyboard example

Screen #	Screen title	Content	Audio	Graphics and animation	Developer's notes

Table 3. Visual storyboard example

Screen #:	Screen Title:
On-Screen Text:	Audio: Video:
Graphics and Animation:	Developer's Notes:

Checklist for developing a storyboard[22]

- ✓ Make an attractive opening, or introduction, to the course to create a positive first impression.
- ✓ Create a coherent and well-organized flow of content.
- ✓ Break the content into smaller parts.
- ✓ Create engaging and persuasive scripts, using an active voice.
- ✓ Include some interactions, activities, and assessments.
- ✓ Add photos, images, graphics, or other pictorial forms.
- ✓ Develop a smooth transition from modules to modules.
- ✓ Ensure consistency in branding and design.
- ✓ Proofread and correct grammar and spelling errors.
- ✓ Evaluate the scripts' timing carefully and adjust if needed.

[22] Arshavskiy, M. (2024). E-Learning design on a shoestring. ATD Press.

From storyboards, prototypes can be designed to help test feasibility and functionality. Prototypes are similar to storyboards in that they provide a visualization of the course content, except everything is clickable. Interactive materials such as quizzes, discussion boards, and games can be integrated to enhance engagement. At the prototype stage, not everything may be functional. For instance, the graphics may be draft versions; the course videos may not be created, but a script may be available. What is important is to give relevant stakeholders a preview of the entire course to assess initial reception.

Interactive content can eventually be created using platforms like Articulate 360, Adobe Captivate, or iSpring Suite. Graphics and multimedia can be designed with Canva, Adobe Creative Cloud, or Powtoon. Video editing tools like Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere Pro, or iMovie ensure professional-quality materials. Accessibility can be checked using tools like WAVE, Axe, or built-in accessibility features in programs like Adobe.

Soliciting feedback from relevant stakeholders

Once developed, the course should be tested to ensure content accuracy, accessibility, engaging presentation, and intuitive navigation. For online courses, usability across devices (e.g., mobile, tablet, computer) and platforms must be assessed. Having target audience members test-drive the course and provide feedback is beneficial. Possible areas to solicit feedback on include:

- Alignment of course content with the learning goals and objectives
- The feasibility and clarity of learning objectives
- The accessibility, accuracy, flow, and cultural appropriateness of course content
- Navigation on the platform, accessibility, and ease of use
- Alternative formats to enhance accessibility and overall course satisfaction
- Level of engagement with and utility of pre-post-tests, group discussions, and so forth
- Learner motivation and retention strategies

Designing for scalability and learning

Considering the course's scalability and learning support experience is helpful when designing and implementing MOOCs. Based on past MOOCs, several strategies for enhancing student-content interaction, student-student interaction, and student-teacher interaction are recommended.[23,24,25]

Create simulated learning tasks with feedback: The course should provide quizzes, games, simulations, and other learning activities with elaborate formative feedback for learners to remember, understand, and apply their knowledge. All the feedback should include information for choosing a specific answer and explaining why an answer is correct

[23] Julia, K., & Marco, K. (2021). Educational scalability in MOOCs: Analysing instructional designs to find best practices. Computers & Education, 161, 104054
[24] Nujid, M., & Tholibon, D. A. (2024). A review of engagement strategies for massive open online courses. Int J Eval & Res Educ, 13(5), 2825-2834
[25] Wei, W., Liu, J., Xu, X., Kolletar-Zhu, K., & Zhang, Y. (2023). Effective interactive engagement strategies for MOOC forum discussion: A self-efficacy perspective. Plos one, 18(11), e0293668

or incorrect. In this active learning way, learners can also flexibly track their improvement throughout the course's modules.

1. **Apply personalized learning:** An online course should be designed based on each student's learning pace. This makes it convenient for most learners to pursue their studies without leaving or sacrificing their other tasks to complete the course, thereby increasing the learning engagement rate.
2. **Include peer feedback activities:** Besides feedback from lecturers, receiving feedback from peers is also a good way to learn. The course should give opportunities for learners to provide peer feedback to others through systematic activities. Ensure learners are informed about the deadline, the approach, and some hints for giving feedback.
3. **Add discussion prompts:** Encourage learners to share their ideas or discuss any topics in the course. This can enhance learners' engagement in learning as they feel they are part of the course community.
4. **Invite guest speakers:** Sometimes learners need to learn from different people to have more views of the same issue, so inviting an expert to teach a small part of a module in the course or simply answer a few questions is also recommended.

Adapt

Approaches to **adapting** MHPSS materials increasingly strive to balance fidelity to source materials with localization. This middle-ground approach bridges two extremes: the view that programs are universally applicable without modification and the belief that they are culturally specific and non-generalizable. Early cultural adaptation efforts were often unsystematic and criticized for risking fidelity and effectiveness. Over time, more structured frameworks have been developed to guide the adaptation of MHPSS materials (largely, interventions).

In the framework advanced by Bernal and Saez-Santiago (2006),[26] for instance, eight primary components are recommended for adaptation in MHPSS materials:

1. **Language**, or tailoring of the language to match the cultural and linguistic background of target participants, considering subgroups that may exist.
2. **Persons**, or consideration and address of potential cultural differences that may exist between the individuals designing and/or delivering the training and students
3. **Metaphors**, or the symbols and concepts shared by the target cultural group
4. **Content,** or integration of cultural knowledge about values, customs, and traditions of the target student population into all stages of the curriculum content and design
5. **Concepts,** or the underlying concepts and values of the training and the degree to which it is aligned with those of the target student

[26] Bernal, G., & Sáez-Santiago, E. (2006). Culturally centered psychosocial interventions. Journal of Community Psychology, 34(2), 121-132

6. **Goals,** or establishment of learning objectives agreeable to both the learner and the individuals designing the course
7. **Methods**, or the procedures to follow for the achievement of the learning objectives
8. **Context**, or consideration of the target learner's larger sociocultural, economic, and political context.

Key considerations for adapting MOOCs

Beyond translating the content of the course into another language, what else may need to be translated to better fit the cultural context of the target audience? In practice, this means revisiting the earlier stages that informed curriculum design to understand **the problem, target audience, situational factors influencing course enrollment and experience**, and **resource availability**. Depending on the problem, the learning goals and objectives may need to be adapted to meet the needs of the target audience.

The target audience for the adapted course might be very different from those for the original course, requiring some adaptation of course materials. For example, a course made for healthcare workers in the United States to help them recognize mental health issues and support sexual minorities would need changes if used in Vietnam. The course goals, lessons, and content might have to be adjusted based on what Vietnamese healthcare workers already know, the resources they have to provide care, and the ways people in Vietnam show distress and cope with problems.

During the **Analyze** phase, different methods like group discussions, surveys, one-on-one interviews, and looking at existing information should be used to learn more about the people who will take the adapted course. This information can help create user personas that show what members of the target audience need and want.

During the **Design** and **Develop** phases, it's important to consider cultural differences in how ideas are explained and how course materials are presented. The course should be adapted in meaningful ways, not just by changing language or pictures. For example, some examples or comparisons used in the original course might not make sense in a different culture and should be changed. Suggestions, like where to get help, should fit the local culture and available services.

In a mental health course, for example, students might have different beliefs about mental illness than the course creators. If the course doesn't match local beliefs and practices, they might lose interest or even learn and/or apply information that can cause harm. Also, if the course suggests solutions that students can't use in their workplaces, they may feel frustrated and stop participating. To make sure the course is useful and engaging, people from the target audience should be involved early by helping to plan the course or giving feedback as it is developed.

Implement

The **implementation** phase focuses on the delivery of the course and management of the course, ranging from course promotion to communication with students, if any, and evaluation of the course. Several factors to consider during this phase are what extra guides or manuals may be needed to standardize delivery, if the course is offline. If the course is a MOOC, then the question becomes how technical difficulties will be monitored and resolved during the training. Furthermore, alongside the course itself, might there be additional activities to enhance the learning experience for students? This might include, for instance, group discussions, reflection activities, and so forth. You will also need to decide on the platform for content delivery. Training materials alone are often inadequate to improve professional outcomes.[27] Supervision with audit-and-feedback techniques (that is, assessment of performance against some standard and summary feedback) is often more efficacious, providing students with opportunities to analyze and implement real-world problems in real time and receive feedback.[28] [29]

Commonly used learning management systems for organizations to deliver, manage, deliver, and track training programs internally include Moodle, Canvas, and Blackboard Learn. Online course marketplaces where organizations can create, publish, and/or sell courses to a wider audience worldwide include Udemy, Teachable, Thinkific, and Coursera. Each of these may provide different options for passive and active student data tracking, including engagement with the course (e.g., time spent on each lesson, over the entire course) and performance.

Key considerations for delivering training materials include:

- **Establishing and maintaining credibility:** Ensure the trainer or platform is trusted and respected.
- **Responsive and collaborative training:** Engage participants actively and adapt to their needs.
- **Creating a supportive learning environment:** Foster a positive, inclusive atmosphere for learning.
- **Providing supportive feedback:** Offer constructive, encouraging input to participants.
- **Effective communication and presentation:** Clearly convey material and facilitate meaningful discussions.
- **Incentives and reinforcement:** Motivate participants to engage and complete the course.

[27] Rowe, A.K., et al. (2005) How can we achieve and maintain high-quality performance of health workers in low resource settings? The Lancet, 366, 1026-1035. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(05)67028-6
[28] Fritzen, S. A. (2007). Strategic management of the health workforce in developing countries: what have we learned?. Human resources for health, 5, 1-9.
[29] Bach, S. (2001, December). HR and new approaches to public sector management: improving HRM capacity. In Workshop on Global Health Workforce Strategy (pp. 9-12).

- **Practical application opportunities:** Incorporate hands-on exercises to apply knowledge.
- **Monitoring training progress:** Track participation and engagement to ensure effectiveness.

During the implementation, asking students about their intended learning outcomes can help to engender initial interest. Research indicates that students react positively to being asked about their learning outcomes and having explicit conversations about how their learning goals can be aligned with the training objectives. Throughout the training, it is possible to revisit what the original learning goals and outcomes are.

Key questions to consider during this phase include:

- Are the instructors, tools, and materials prepared and accessible?
- How can learners' engagement and participation be optimized?
- What strategies will be in place to address challenges during delivery?
- Are there means to gather immediate feedback on the training session?
- What resources or support will learners need post-training?

Evaluate

During the **Evaluation** phase, the focus is on assessing the effectiveness of the training on learning outcomes. Data from this phase are used to determine whether the training met its desired objectives and to identify improvement areas. During this phase, you must define evaluation goals, that is, what aspects of the training need to be evaluated. Examples include whether learning objectives were met, whether students were satisfied with the training received, and whether students retained knowledge from the course and can apply it in real-world settings. Examples of evaluation methods that might be used at this stage include pre- and post-tests, 360-degree feedback, knowledge assessments, and observations of student engagement. Based on the learning objectives crafted during the **Analyze** and **Design** phases, particular assessments may be more appropriate than others.

Second, it is important to use a framework to guide evaluation. One commonly used framework for conceptualizing effectiveness is Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model. [30] This model outlines impacts at four levels.

[30] Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). Evaluating Training Program—The Four Levels. San Francisco, CA: Berret-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

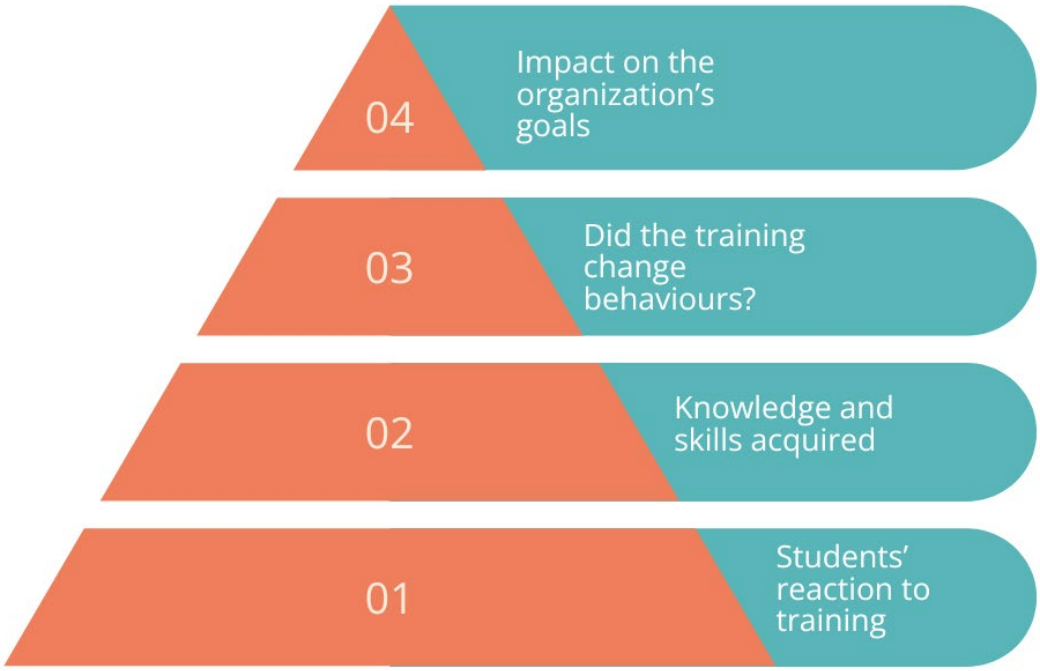

Figure 3. Adaptation of Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model

- At **level one**, the bottom level, the focus is on how students directly respond to the training—for instance, how receptive are students to the materials? In Bloom's taxonomy (explored in the Design sub-section), this might correspond to the "Recall" and "Understand" levels. These levels can be assessed by having students retrieve, recognize, or recall knowledge through weekly quizzes or reflections; or having students discuss key ideas within a group, write long responses in quizzes, or solve problem sets.
- The focus at **level two** is on the knowledge and skills that students acquire during the course. This corresponds loosely to the "Apply," "Analyze," "Evaluate," or "Create" levels in Bloom's taxonomy. First, students' ability to apply the concepts they have learnt could be assessed either through stimulation activities, where participants are asked to respond behaviorally to a fictive situation they might encounter in their context of work, or through written or group discussion activities in which students reflect on how what they learnt might apply in various scenarios. Second, students' ability to evaluate materials based on some criteria and critique that information can be assessed by having students' critique, for instance, an example protocol or program. Third, students can also evaluate the history of their organization or themselves, for instance, in engaging in a particular line of work (e.g., working with and meeting the needs of adolescents). Lastly, students might leverage what they learn to create, generate, or modify something; this can be assessed through group projects, student portfolios, or student presentations.

- At **level 3**, assessment focuses on behavior change as a result of the training. The focus here is on assessing real-world change, which is often challenging for MOOCs. One possibility is to assess through both quantitative and qualitative questions after the course. Another possibility, if the MOOC is embedded in or specifically targeting an organization, is to have the students' colleagues, supervisors, or peers provide feedback on observed behavioral change. Still, the absence of behavioral change does not necessarily indicate that the course was ineffective; other factors (e.g., lack of environmental support) may impact translation of learning into everyday work.
- The top level – **level 4** – assesses how the goals for an organizaton or field are impacted due to students' participation in the course. How this is assessed depends on what the problem, or the gap between needed and actual organizational performance, is. For example, if a MOOC was created to strengthen the ability of healthcare staff in LMICs to better work with adolescents in disaster-impacted settings, then this level might be assessed by examining changes in project-level engagement with adolescents, number and experience of adolescents involved in co-designing programs, and so forth.

Aside from Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation, which is reviewed above, Brinkerhoff's Success Case Method[31] can be used to understand the experiences of extreme cases (most and least successful) of the course to understand what worked, what did not work, and why. This information can be used to inform future revisions to the course. Another evaluation model is the Learning Transfer Evaluation Model, which emphasizes the application of content to changes in learner's real-world performance and ability to meet organizational goals. The eight levels of evaluation, going from most superficial to deeper levels of assessment are attendance (i.e., who is attending the training), activity (engagement and participating in the training), learner perception of the training, factual recall and conceptual understanding, decision-making in realistic scenarios for instance through case studies or simulations, task competence required on the job, transference to work performance, and effects on key results that contribute to organizational goals. This is similar to the Four-Level Training Evaluation Model reviewed above. The main take-away is that you will want to incorporate multiple levels of assessment, depending on what is feasible for the course.

Aside from assessments of student outcomes, you will also want to consider when and how you will solicit feedback from students and what the timeframe for integrating change will be. After course roll-out, students will likely have immediate feedback. However, whether that feedback can be fed back into the course to inform immediate revisions depends on available resources. Once a MOOC is already live, it may not be possible to continuously incorporate feedback students provide. However, every few years, the content of some courses may need to be updated regardless of feedback. In which case,

[31] Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2005). The success case method: A strategic evaluation approach to increasing the value and effect of training. Advances in Developing Human Resources, 7(1), 86-101

you should consider how feedback will be collated in the time between the initial MOOC launch and the next revision and provided to whomever will oversee the course update.

Key questions to answer during the evaluation phase include:

- Did the training meet its learning objectives?
- Were students engaged and satisfied with the training they received?
- Are learners able to apply the skills or knowledge effectively in real-world settings?
- What impact did the training have on larger / overarching outcomes of interest?
- What barriers did students encounter in taking the course?
- What improvements can be made for future iterations of the course to increase the number of students meeting learning objectives?

CONCLUSION

Effective online learning can open new avenues for reaching more learners and facilitating stronger capacities, particularly in low-resource settings. Designs that emphasize accessibility, cultural awareness, and genuine learner engagement are especially important. There are many approaches, methods, and tools to choose from, and combining them thoughtfully can bring fresh perspectives and enhance learning outcomes.

Developing and implementing MHPSS e-learning courses is a dynamic undertaking that that calls for creativity and attentiveness to local contexts. This toolkit covers key stages in the process and offers ways to create online training that is relevant, supportive, and responsive to diverse needs.

The collective hope is that this resource sparks new ideas, encourages dialogue, and reaffirms our shared commitment to delivering accessible, high-quality MHPSS training.