



SNBI

Schweizerisches Netzwerk für Bildungsinnovation
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Vulnerable Learners

How to reach the most vulnerable groups.

This working paper documents the exchange within the ICT4VET Community of Practice (CoP).

Urs Gröbhel, 16.11.2020

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Version history

If you make changes to this document, please describe them in a few words here. Thank you!

Version	Date	Author	Comment
0.1	26.10.20	Urs Gröhbiel	Draft approaches to guide the discussion
0.1	9.11.20	All	Adding questions and experience
0.2	9.11.20	Urs	Draft of findings to be published
	21.11.20	All	Review of draft. Revision.
1.0	16.11.20	Urs, Marina	Finalize the document, upload to the public CoP-page

1 Vulnerable Learners

1.1 Finding a common understanding

As the topic of this session is very broadly defined, we have shared who we consider to be a “vulnerable learner”. There is a great variety of vulnerable target groups that are strongly affected by COVID-restrictions:

- **Children** in conflict, street children, malnourished, abandoned children (parents abroad)
- **Youth** in prisons, teenagers without prior education (=> hard to enter the education system, particularly the formal one)
- People with **various characteristics** that influence the participation in education and training: disabled people, internal refugees, ethnic minorities, single mothers.

1.2 Challenges

These target groups struggle with a variety of challenges that are relevant for the design of education and training under COVID-restrictions and the implementation of ICT-solutions, such as ...

No/restricted access

- Restricted/no access to training (e.g. living where training offers have been closed or restricted.)
- Not allowed to access training (for example ethnic reasons, lack of basic education, social structure).

Learning pre-requisites

- Low literacy /IT literacy (digital skills)
- Cannot follow/understand (training not adapted to the target group)
- Prior knowledge and learning – often low/ heterogeneous
- Lack of self-directed learning competences
- Lack of language skills (e.g. local languages vs. English or national language)

Organisational/institutional challenges

- Low level of information about learning offers
- Flexibility required regarding timing of training
- People/youth not integrated in an education system (e.g. refugees)

Technology and its cost

- Lack of infrastructure and equipment
- No online access in rural areas
- Cannot afford access to (online) training (digital tools, connection costs)
- Cannot afford training

2 Approaches

On the one hand, ICT-solutions can contribute to overcome some of the challenges described above. On the other hand, our design of ICT-solutions will be restricted by some of these challenges.

In our context analysis we need to evaluate, if ICT-solutions can support the learning needs (access to learning content, support of participatory learning, communication with trainers etc.) and can help to address the above challenges better and/or at a better benefit/cost-ratio than other media.

We have discussed several approaches how to reach vulnerable learners in spite of COVID-restrictions.

2.1 Using «light» technologies with a broad coverage: radio, TV, SMS

Potential: Reaching remote areas which lack mobile networks. Cheap devices (radios) that are already used for other purposes. → Broad dissemination of basic learning content is possible.

Restrictions: one-way communication (radio/TV), limited possibility to foster participatory learning (e.g. with SMS-feedback features or instructional design of broadcasts with assignments to reflect and apply learnings)

2.2 Improving access, funding existing offers

In areas in which the population does not have personal access to the internet, services which offer internet access can be involved, such as internet café's, community (learning) centers, youth centers (e.g. in Moldova).

These services can be engaged as partners in different ways: paying airtime for learners, extending their online offer (e.g. access to MOOCs, OER, offers for playful learning, for example using social platforms etc.) or training employees to support students accessing these offers (search for relevant learning content, support of self-directed learning etc.).

2.3 Local solutions, local connectivity

If the learners do not have internet access and if there are no such services, local servers with mobile devices that are connected to the server via WLAN can be provided. This allows a targeted provision of learning content and interactive features (e.g. drill&practice, collaborative writing). However, the cost for purchase and maintenance of hardware and software, as well for the support of learning activities (e.g. through learning coaches) are high.

2.4 Working with go-betweeners / learning coaches

ICT solutions as described in the previous three points will usually be integrated in learning/teaching settings with some degree of learner support. If there are no teachers available in a local situation, learning coaches can be recruited, trained and coached (online), for example graduates of a school, students on higher levels, or people in the community with some basic pedagogical skills.

Example of Roma in Moldova: coaches have been selected by the social department and trained by the project to mobilize young people (in this case not in the context of ICT-solutions)

2.5 Giving recognition

If learning offers are not provided in the context of a formal education, learning achievements that can support access to formal education can be recognized with certification.

3 Questions and comments

In addition to the systematic discussion of the five approaches above we have touched on two specific questions.

1. Is the content of the online materials also an issue especially for farmers? Is there an experience of online VET teaching in agriculture? (Nino)

- Best would be to work with video material. In agriculture it is quite easy to record useful videos. But they need internet and YouTube access or a specific platform to share. (Robert)
- There have been large SMS-based projects (long before COVID) to train farmers in India in the area of basic knowledge, plant diseases and basic entrepreneurial skills. (Urs)
- Many mobile Apps ([example](#)) support the farmers recognising and treating plant diseases (Urs)

Example: In **Albania** a variety of tools and services have been used to overcome COVID restrictions, such as social platforms, “infoteques” in schools and School TV (where the national TV broadcasts selected lectures from teachers) (Erka)

2. What are possible benefits of using ICT under COVID restrictions:

- Individualized approach as a measure against exclusion. (Franz)
- Giving learners, who cannot go to college because they live in remote villages, access to learning content via internet or local servers (Urs)
- Preparing for practical phases with the presentation of concepts to be applied, demonstration of practices (scaffolding). Reflecting on practices/placements before COVID, connecting experience with new concepts (Urs)
- Supporting socio-cognitive learning by creating small local learning groups, for example with students who cannot go to college. Students get support with assignments from a local coach. (Urs)
- Connecting students via social media, supporting repetition of learning content, distributing links to learning content on (systematic) learning platforms, addressing social and psychological issues etc. (Urs)