



Executive Summary
Insight Report: Contexts of use of Learning Design
Support Tools

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The Learning Design Support Environment Project

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Executive Summary

The **aim of the study** was to provide an external perspective on the extent to which the LDSE project had proved its concept. The study thus set out to review:

- Whether a learning design support tool for teachers could support collaborative and sustainable development of innovative and effective applications of learning technologies.
- And if so, under what circumstances.

The approach used was an adapted version of scenario planning, and started with interviews with members of the LDSE team. The transcripts from these were used to develop an online questionnaire that asked respondents to rate key scenarios and uses of learning design support tools, the value of a range of features for different stakeholders, and likely influences on uptake for different stakeholders.

Respondents to the questionnaire were mainly from Higher Education, although Adult Education, Corporate learning and development, Further Education, Schools, and Work-based learning were represented. There was a wide range of professional roles, though more than a quarter were learning technologists. Over half of respondents had no prior knowledge of the LDSE project. The results of the study are thus less about whether the LDSE project had proved its concept and more about whether the concept of learning design support tools was considered feasible in a wider sense.

IDENTIFYING THE MOST FAVOURABLE CONTEXTS OF USE OF LEARNING DESIGN SUPPORT TOOLS.

Nine scenarios, or potential contexts of use, were derived from the interviews and wider discussions with LDSE team members. The scenarios were:

- **Scenario 1:** An Educational Institution is undertaking extensive course redesign, it provides support for a tool, and requires course teams to use it.
- **Scenario 2:** An Educational Institution is undertaking extensive course redesign; staff are made aware of the tool, but no specific support is provided.
- **Scenario 3:** A course team is developing a new course; its members freely decide to use the tool for sharing their designs to aid working together.
- **Scenario 4:** Staff developers deploy the tool in professional development programmes to help teachers use digital technologies more effectively within their teaching.
- **Scenario 5:** A staff development programme offers the tool alongside personal support for improving teachers' design practice.
- **Scenario 6:** Individual teachers turn to the tool for advice and guidance on planning and designing their courses and sessions.
- **Scenario 7:** Individual teachers use the tool to look at the learning designs created by other teachers, in order to get ideas and inspiration for their own.
- **Scenario 8:** Teachers use the tool to share their learning design for a course with learners, to make the curriculum more transparent to learners.
- **Scenario 9:** Teachers use the tool to collaborate with learners in developing the learning design for a course.

Respondents rated the likelihood and value of the range of scenarios. The average ratings for these variables were plotted against each other to help to identify those scenarios or contexts of use that the LDSE and future such projects should focus on.

The most favourable contexts in terms of perceived likelihood and value were **Scenarios 4 and 5, where learning design support tools are used in a staff development context.**

Indeed, respondents seemed to suggest that for a learning design support tool to be used, staff need to be supported in its use. One respondent stressed that the *“uptake and integration of the tools in staff CPD would be crucial to any wider take up”*. Thus, if the focus of future projects is on optimising uptake, they should concentrate on how tools can be used effectively in the staff development context.

Some respondents had expressed doubts about whether there is a culture of sharing ideas and resources. Nonetheless, Scenarios 3 and 7, both of which involve sharing of learning designs were also rated relatively highly.

Respondents saw some value in teachers using learning design support tools with learners, Scenarios 8 and 9, but the likelihood of this happening was **considered to be low.** This suggests that future projects either should not focus developments around this context, or should consider alternatives, for example, developing outputs from learning design support tools that are tailored towards learners. Indeed, one respondent suggested *“the end result is of more use to students than being involved in the design process”* and went on to say, *“feedback should be the route through which students are involved”*

Generally, there was a sense that the use of learning design support tools is still aspirational, as highlighted by the comment, *“responses reflect the current environment, rather than what we want it to be”*.

THE VALUE OF DIFFERENT FEATURES OF LEARNING DESIGN SUPPORT TOOLS TO DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS.

From the range of features, **‘A learning design tool that is informed by models of what makes a good learning experience’** was unique in being seen as having considerable value across all stakeholder groups. The groups were Learners, Teaching staff, Departments, and Institutions.

In relation to the value of particular features, respondents did not differentiate between Institutions and Departments. The **ability to calculate the costs of course delivery** and to **calculate the effect of changing class sizes** were seen as having **considerable value for Institutions and Departments.** The potential of using learning design support tools to **produce accurate and detailed course documentation** that might also be **exported into validation documents** was also seen as **valuable for Institutions and Departments, as well as Teaching staff.** Features relating to **experimenting with or sharing different learning designs** were seen as **valuable for Teaching staff,** but less so for Institutions and Departments.

FUTURE INFLUENCES ON THE UPTAKE OF LEARNING DESIGN SUPPORT TOOLS.

Recommendations from peers were clearly seen as the strongest influence on whether or not individual teachers might adopt learning design support tools in future. Whereas, for

Institutions the strongest **influence related more to the functionality of such tools** and whether learning designs from the tool could be exported into other institutional systems, such as Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).

The need for '**evidence**' was picked up on consistently in respondents' open comments. For Institutions, it was felt there was a need for "*Evidence that the tool provided significant benefits e.g. cost savings, time efficiencies*" or "*increased learner engagement*". There was also a request for costs to be identified "*both in terms of the product but also the technical and pedagogical support needed to run/implement its usage*". While for teachers, several respondents suggested that "*evidence of time-saving and improved teaching*" would influence uptake of a learning design support tool.

THE LDSE AND FUTURE LEARNING DESIGN TOOL PROJECTS.

The final section of the questionnaire was devoted to open questions. Respondents were asked what key contribution they felt the LDSE project had made. Responses were grouped into categories, overall suggesting that the LDSE project had:

- Increased awareness of learning design support tools, and of pedagogy.
- Enabled the move from research to practice in the use of learning design tools.
- Provided learning design patterns that have been proven to work.
- Advanced the visualisation of designs.

Respondents were also asked for recommendations of what future projects should address in the development of learning design support tools. Responses were again categorised. With suggestions pertaining to characteristics of learning design support tools, such as usability, 'sharability' and interoperability; others focused on encouraging uptake; while others were more to do with the way or context in which tools might be used.

The LDSE project's key contribution has been "*drawing together some of the best research of the [past] decade into a usable tool*" although "*future projects should 'sell' the point of [learning design support tools] hard*".