

iMOtion

iMOtion - Framing Informal Moments (IM) in Trainings

Evoking informal moments in digital environments

The video meeting platform Mibo

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All images from: www.getmibo.com

this article,

- **invites adult educators to look for virtual training landscapes beyond traditional conferencing tools like Zoom.**
- **gives you an introduction into the Mibo platform (www.getmibo.com) and presents some screenshots from the Mibo virtual worlds.**
- **supports adult educators to rethink online-trainings.**

Adult educational online settings are often structured in ways that mimic traditional classroom stylings. The setup centers around one central person with high status – the trainer or the trainer team. This trainer has privileges in terms of the use of a whiteboard of sorts, chat functions, (un-)muting of participants, granting/denying access to the “room” and the like. This can be seen e.g. in the tool Zoom. While this caters to many adult learners’ (in Western/white contexts) expectations of how “online learning” should look, it also outlines a central axis of contradiction in regard to learner’s autonomy. Thankfully more elaborate digital solutions are beginning to emerge on the horizon, and they challenge the classical power distribution in on- and offline classrooms by enhancing learner’s agency and by broadening our understanding of what it means to join a group or event online. One such tool is Mibo.



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Entering the Mibo world...

Mibo (www.getmibo.com) is an online platform where people can meet on various occasions. This can have different purposes, e.g. it is possible to celebrate a digital party there, but also to work together on a presentation. The occasions are varied and the possible uses as well. There are different “worlds” in which you can meet.

Tropical Island:



This also depends on what kind of account you use from freeware to paid packages, depending on how many people participate. There is a larger selection of worlds for the paid accounts.

Zen Garden:

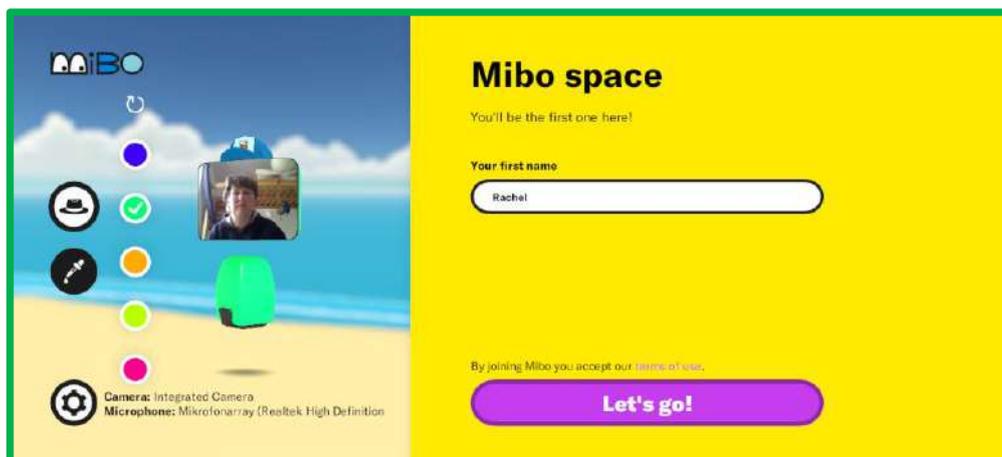


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Townhall:



Through a shared link, people are invited to enter the Mibo-world. You move with an avatar, for which you can choose some features, from headgear to colour to name tag. It's worth to mention, that different options can be selected. The avatar accesses both the microphone and the camera, so the camera picture serves as the "head".



What the camera films is up to you. The idea is probably that you recognize the other people and thus have your face filmed. Certainly, it is also possible to put something in front of the camera if you do not want to be filmed. However, activating camera and microphone is a requirement for entering Mibo.

In certain places in the world, there is an information board that tells you how many people there with you now are. Depending on whether you are moving towards or away from someone else or "walking" in the area, the sound changes.



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For example, if you walk towards a waterfall, the water splashing gets louder the closer you get. If you turn away from a person who is speaking, they become quieter. Therefore, like in real life, the sound changes with your position towards people or things making sounds.

To be able to move around the world, you use the arrow keys on the keyboard and the mouse. When you arrive in the world, Mibo takes control of your mouse. Depending on how you move them, the image you see changes. For example, you use the mouse to indicate the direction in which you want to move, and then use the arrow keys to take the path. This originates from gaming practice and can be understood intuitively after some trial and error. You can always regain control and look at the menu by clicking the ESC-key.

Mibo offers opportunity instead of fixed to dos

Within the worlds, there are different things to do. Depending on the topic, you can move about in a Zen Garden or go fishing on an island. The things that you do something with change colour as you approach them. You "activate" them with a mouse click. As an example: you can start a quiz with ice-breaker questions.



The object can be a Polaroid camera that you use to take a photo of the other people, or rather their avatars, in the world. You can look at the image in the world and share it directly with other people via social media as for instance Facebook.



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There are radios that you can turn on and carry with you to listen to different broadcasting stations. You can click on a bird that makes a sound or put on a headdress. You can get a nametag or give someone else a gift that will set off little fireworks or there is a piano you can strum on.



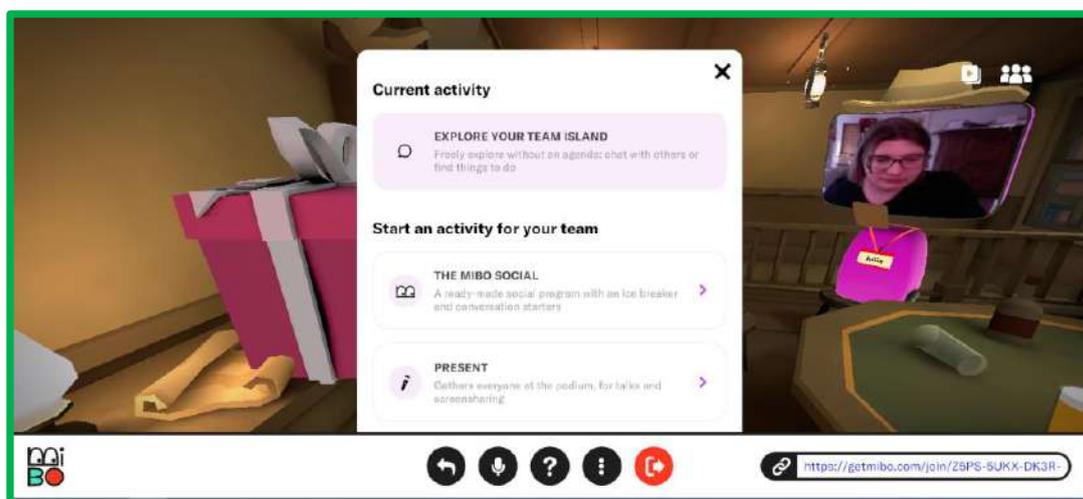
Due to their character, the worlds invite you to discover and try out different things. You are encouraged to look around the next corner, to walk up the stairwell and see what is hidden on the next floor. Like in a computer game, you complete various tasks, even though you do not have to, simply because your curiosity has been piqued.



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Gamification – A potential asset for adult learning settings

Here you find an access point into adult education: The keyword is gamification. Fun and work can be easily combined in such a playful environment. If you encounter somebody while fishing, in the next step, you can sit together around the campfire and hold a meeting. There are meeting rooms throughout the worlds, which also provide the possibility to present screen content. This can be, for example, seating areas with a screen and a projector. As with other online video meeting tools, your screen can be shared and the screen content appears on the virtual screen. The advantages of such a program can be seen in the applicability, both to create informal moments and to work together.



Encounters appear more naturally, if you see and hear a person more clearly the closer you approach them instead of seeing all the persons at once on your screen. If you want to communicate with someone directly this makes it feel more like everyday life as you approach only this person.

Surely, the first time in Mibo would be quite bumpy (if you are not an experienced gamer): You do not really know how to move and navigate by mouse or keyboard and how to use objects. Therefore, it makes sense to send the link to the participants beforehand of the meeting so that everyone has the chance to try out the platform. The game character stimulates the creative processes and the feeling of sitting in a strict video meeting decreases. The idea of strolling along the beach with the seminar leader or sitting around the campfire may seem strange at first. However, this experience can have a relaxing



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effect to meet each other on an equal level as it might also happen in real life if you sit together in the seminar house after dinner and enjoy the evening.

This type of online tool uses elements of gaming for adult education by evoking informal moments in digital space through gamification approaches (Gaming).



Incentives make use of the natural human's curiosity to try things out, to move your avatar or to get active in the scenario and meet other people.

The punchline and realization that in the end it is a digital environment is when leaving the Mibo world. Your own avatar begins to bubble and takes off like a rocket with a steam tail into the air until you can't no longer see it.



See you next time at the campfire!

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