NEEDS

Testing the Online Community

Evaluation Report

Testing the Online Community - Evaluation Report

NEEDS Intellectual Output 6 Online Community– Evaluating test-runs

Co-funded by the
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Introduction

This report presents an evaluation of the NEEDS online community, using user feedback obtained from questionnaires with a focus group and discussions with individual users. The report and the process of gathering the feedback aims to assess various aspects of the community, including accessibility and user-friendliness, networking tools, information sharing, cross-dissemination, and suggestions for improvement.

For gathering the user feedback, a questionnaire was distributed to a total of 10 participants, and additional feedback was collected through individual discussions with the focus group. The feedback data was collected in the spring of 2023. The questionnaires with the focus group are used as a base for this report, with additional feedback from the individual users.

Accessibility and user-friendliness

Feedback of the course technical accessibility was overall positive. Users found Canvas rather easy to use and the structure of the online community is simple and clear. The online community is based on participating and sharing information and users found discussion forums easy to use. Through the questionnaire the users felt that it is quite easy to access and use the online community on different devices. One individual commented that it is bit complicated to access the NEEDS online community for the first time because you first need to register and create a profile in Swedish Defence University Canvas. The online community user also needs to sign in every single time to access the community. However, the same individual commented that that is quite a normal procedure in every online community and reduces the amount of the false accounts.

Network of practitioners, experts, and academics

All participants responded that NEEDS online community in Canvas can serve their organization´s needs. It can be utilized quite well for networking, recruiting interns or new colleagues to the organizations they represent. However, one user commented that it first requires this online community to gather more users and there are quite many other online communities existing as well.

Information sharing and professional development

One user commented that it is very good that online community is simple, and they found the discussion board topics very useful. Overall users were thinking that their organizations can utilize the online community for information sharing and announcing events. The access to the online course was easy for the participants but one user commented that it would be good to add short introduction of the course in the online community.

Cross-dissemination

Feedback showed that participants and their organizations are already active in other online communities. The individual users reported that they are currently using platform like LinkedIn and some more unformal like Facebook. Their organizations are using the same platforms and they have their own internet pages for dissemination. Also, the organizations are in their way disseminating through various platforms what their employees are using in their work.

Feedback and suggestions for improvement

The individual users gave some additional suggestions to develop the online community:

One user pointed out that materials under the module named Additional reading, would be better to include to the information sharing module. It would still simplify the structure of the online community.

Otherwise, there were not more suggestions for improvement and the online community was considered to be quite clear and easy to use.

Conclusion

Overall, the feedback for the online course was positive. Participants liked the potential of the online community and participated in developing the community by providing some suggestions to improve the community. However, the feedback showed that there are many other existing online communities and NEEDS online community needs to get enough publicity and users to reach its full potential.

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