IDEAL- INCLUSIVE DIGITAL EDUCATION FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE LEARNING

Project nº - 2021-1-ES01-KA220-VET-000033204

IDEAL PROJECT: EXPERTS CUALITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Contents

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from the quality evaluation of the **IDEAL (Inclusive Digital Education for Autistic People Learning) project**, a collaborative initiative focused on developing an innovative online platform. The **IDEAL CONNECT platform** is designed to support autistic individuals, their families, and educational professionals by providing a **centralized hub of interconnected applications** that enhance learning experiences and facilitate communication.

The **quality evaluation process** was conducted in multiple phases, incorporating **comprehensive feedback from a diverse group of Vocational Education and Training (VET) professionals**. This evaluation is crucial in ensuring that the platform meets its intended objectives and provides effective, accessible, and user-centred solutions tailored to the needs of autistic individuals.

The **significance of this project** lies in its commitment to inclusivity and personalization, addressing the unique challenges faced by autistic users. Assessing the platform's quality allows us to measure **its effectiveness, accessibility, and overall impact** while identifying key areas for enhancement.

A thorough evaluation is also essential for ensuring the **platform's long-term sustainability**. By involving project partners and stakeholders in this process, we gather valuable insights that contribute to continuous improvement. This report provides a **clear overview of the platform's status**, highlights **areas for refinement**, and establishes a foundation for its ongoing development, keeping in mind the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders involved.

2. Evaluation by VET Professionals

The evaluation of the IDEAL CONNECT platform by **VET professionals and key stakeholders** is essential to ensuring its success and long-term relevance. Engaging these individuals enhances the **quality, usability, and effectiveness** of the platform, as their expertise provides critical insights into its strengths and areas for improvement.

The evaluation process involved **teachers, researchers, therapists, and other professionals** who have a deep understanding of the **unique challenges faced by autistic individuals**. Their feedback helps assess whether the platform meets its intended objectives and delivers **meaningful, practical solutions** for users.

Beyond assessing usability, **stakeholders play a crucial role in bridging the gap between platform design and real-world application**. By participating in the evaluation, they help

identify discrepancies between **user expectations and platform functionality**, offering feedback that is essential for continuous improvement. Their involvement fosters a **sense of ownership and investment**, encouraging them to support and integrate the platform into their daily practice.

A diverse group of professionals ensures a **comprehensive evaluation** across different **use cases and environments**. This approach not only highlights best practices but also uncovers **innovative strategies** to enhance the platform's usability and educational impact. By **collecting and integrating feedback** from various sources, the IDEAL CONNECT platform can **continuously adapt** to meet emerging needs, remaining a **relevant, inclusive, and effective tool** for autistic individuals, their families, and professionals in the field.

Section 1: USER INTERFACE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Items	M
No specific knowledge is required to use the platform.	4,3
It is possible to choose different languages for using the platform.	4,9
The icons are related to the content and the user can easily recognize them.	4,3
The font style and size are legible for users with diverse needs.	4,1
The colours used are clear, attract attention, but they do not distract the user from the content.	4,2
There is a possibility of changing the size and font of text and used colours, background ratio and the main plan and the number of information on one side, in accordance with the needs of users.	4,2
The platform allows users to easily select their preferred language from a variety of options, and the change is seamlessly reflected	4,3

Note: Range is 1 to 5

Section 2: EASE OF USE, NAVIGATION AND NOTIFICATIONS

Items	M
Applications displayed on the platform are clearly sorted by categories (areas).	4,6
Each area indicating the purpose of the application is marked with the same, clearly recognizable colour.	4,6
Clarity of information	4,4
There is no redundant information.	4,2
For each application, a description in shorter and longer form and other additional information is provided.	3,9
It is possible to sort applications according to different criteria.	4,7
It is possible to select applications based on whether they are free or not.	4,9
There is a notification option on changes on the platform.	3,3
The platform can be used without revealing personal information about the user.	4,4
Each page on the platform is organized in a similar way.	4,7
The platform presents information in a way that minimizes cognitive overload for users	4
There is an option to restrict access to some parts of the platform (parental control).	3,6

Note: Range is 1 to 5

Section 3: CONTENT

Items	M
The contents of the platform are suitable for people who provide formal and informal support for people with autism.	4,6
The contents of the platform are suitable for people with autism with different needs.	3,8

Note: Range is 1 to 5

Section 4: PROFESSIONAL USE

Items	M
The features allowing professionals to suggest new apps, specify their characteristics, and provide a rating are valuable and effectively contribute to improving the platform's app selection.	4,4
The process for professionals to suggest new apps, including specifying their characteristics and providing a rationale, is clear…	4,4

Note: Range is 1 to 5

Section 5: OTHER FEATURES

Items	M
There is no time limit to use any part of the platform.	4,9
There is a tracking option (e.g. how many users have accessed the platform, how long they used it, from which regions, etc.)	3,1
There is an option to assess the platform and leaving suggestions (it does not need to be visible to other users).	3,3
The social functions are easy to use and effective, facilitating communication between users.	3,8
The platform offers a diverse range of applications that cater to a wide spectrum of autistic users' needs and interests	4,4

Note: Range is 1 to 5

3. Key Strengths

The **IDEAL CONNECT platform** demonstrates strong performance across multiple evaluation areas, highlighting its accessibility, ease of use, relevant content, and adaptability for professional use. The following sections outline its key strengths based on user feedback and ratings.

3.1 User Interface and Accessibility

The platform is designed to be highly accessible, ensuring ease of use for a diverse range of users.

- **High accessibility rating (4.33)** – No specific technical knowledge is required to navigate the platform.

- **Multiple language options (4.89)** – Users can seamlessly switch between languages, improving accessibility for different linguistic backgrounds.

- **Legible and customizable text (4.11 & 4.22)** – Font style and size are clear, and customization options enhance usability for individuals with varying needs.

3.2 Ease of Use, Navigation, and Notifications

The platform is structured to facilitate a smooth user experience, reducing cognitive overload, and enhancing efficiency.

- **Clearly categorized applications (4.56)** – Content is systematically organized, making it easier for users to find relevant applications.

- **Color-coded sections (4.56)** – Visual markers improve navigation and quick recognition of different areas.

- **Flexible sorting options (4.89)** – Users can filter applications based on different criteria, such as free vs. paid options, fostering greater autonomy.

- **Consistent page layout (4.67)** – Standardized design across pages ensures familiarity and ease of navigation.

- **Minimized cognitive overload (4.00)** – The platform presents information in a way that reduces complexity and enhances user comprehension.

3.3 Content

The platform effectively serves both professionals and caregivers by offering content tailored to their needs.

- **Strong relevance for supporters of autistic individuals (4.56)** – The materials are well-suited for both formal and informal support providers, ensuring accessibility and applicability.

3.4 Professional Use

The platform provides useful features that empower professionals to contribute to its improvement.

- **Effective feedback mechanisms (4.44)** – Professionals can suggest and rate new applications, ensuring continuous platform enhancement.

3.5 Other Features

Additional platform features contribute to a flexible and inclusive user experience.

- **No time restrictions on use (4.89)** – Users can access content without limitations, allowing for a more personalized learning experience.

- **Diverse application range (4.44)** – A broad selection of apps ensures that the platform addresses the varied needs of autistic users.

By excelling in these key areas, the **IDEAL CONNECT platform** establishes itself as a **reliable, accessible, and user-friendly tool** for autistic individuals, their families, and professionals supporting them.

4. Opportunities for Improvement

While the **IDEAL CONNECT platform** demonstrates strong performance in several areas, certain aspects require refinement to enhance user experience and functionality. The following sections highlight key areas for improvement based on evaluation feedback.

4.1 Ease of Use, Navigation, and Notifications

Improvements in **platform notifications and parental control features** can enhance security and user awareness.

- **Low notification effectiveness (3.33)** – The system for informing users about platform changes is underperforming and needs to be more reliable and visible.

- **Parental control limitations (3.56)** – Strengthening these features can help caregivers feel more secure when allowing autistic individuals to use the platform independently.

4.2 Content

Ensuring that the platform meets the needs of a broad range of autistic individuals remains a priority.

- **Content inclusivity (3.78)** – Some resources may not fully address the diverse needs of autistic users, indicating a need for further adaptation and expansion.

4.3 Other Features

Several additional features require enhancements to improve engagement and user experience.

- **Limited tracking and analytics (3.11)** – The current user engagement tracking system is underdeveloped, preventing a deeper understanding of platform interactions. Enhancing data analytics could improve functionality and decision-making.

- **Low utilization of feedback features (3.33)** – The system for user assessments and suggestions is not widely used, suggesting the need for more visible and engaging feedback mechanisms.

- **Moderate social function effectiveness (3.78)** – Community-building features are present but could be improved to foster more meaningful user interactions.

By addressing these areas, the **IDEAL CONNECT platform** can further **enhance usability, engagement, and overall effectiveness**, ensuring it remains a **valuable resource for autistic individuals, their families, and professionals**.

5. Conclusions

The evaluation of the **IDEAL CONNECT platform** highlights significant strengths in accessibility, ease of use, and content relevance. Users benefit from intuitive navigation, clear categorization of applications, and multiple language options, making the platform accessible to a broad audience. These features contribute to a user-friendly experience, supporting both autistic individuals and the professionals and caregivers who assist them.

Despite these strengths, certain areas require further refinement. Features such as **notifications for platform changes and parental controls** were found to be either difficult to verify or not easily accessible. Improving the integration and visibility of these functions could significantly enhance the overall user experience. One specific recommendation is to implement **notifications for incoming messages**, which would help autistic users by ensuring they are aware of new messages without needing to check their inbox manually.

Another area for improvement is the **font size on the homepage**, which some users found too small. Increasing font adjustability would improve accessibility, particularly for users with visual impairments or specific learning needs.

By addressing these concerns, the **IDEAL CONNECT platform** can further improve its functionality, ensuring it remains an **inclusive, adaptable, and effective tool** for autistic individuals, their families, and the professionals who support them.