

Project ICT Fiery Soul

Evaluation



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Conclusions and recommendations

During this spring 15 immobile elderly from Hedensted Municipality received ICT training in their own home by 17 volunteers older than 65 years as part of iAge project. This evaluation is based on responses from users and the volunteers who participated in the project and aims to pick up on the effort and its results.

Project benefits

"I'm not afraid of the computer anymore. I'll use it, and I dare to go on a course. When you are at home, you are more confident. The teacher is a guest."

The quote summarizes in its simplicity the benefits that have been associated with the project for the users.

The projects main objective has primarily been to build a corps of volunteer and resourceful elderly citizens who introduces and teaches a number of immobile elderly in a variety of ICT skills. The objective is largely reached. 17 volunteers has been recruited and all of them wants to continue working with ICT training. The project shows that there is a potential in finding resourceful and qualified elderly who both have the desire and aptitude to take up this challenge.

A further objective of the project has been to teach users a variety of ICT skills. This aim has been achieved, especially considering the users' lacking ICT capabilities before the training.

In general, there is satisfaction with Project ICT Fiery Soul. Both the users who received training and the volunteers who have been responsible for this training are positive about the course.

In addition to the achievement of the stated objectives, the project has had a number of benefits to both users and volunteers.

For the users, the evaluation has shown that the project particularly enjoyed the following benefits:

- Increased confidence in the use of ICT
- Increased self-confidence and greater independence on the basis of the newly acquired knowledge
- Increased learning through the personal meeting with the teacher at home

Project volunteers are not pointing to the same degree of tangible benefits, but it is the hallmark of the group that volunteers gain satisfaction by being able to share their knowledge with a group who need to acquire different ICT skills. Most of the volunteers hope to continue their work this autumn.

Effect of the project operation

It was generally assumed that the volunteers held a number of ICT skills. And so they did, but the evaluation outlines a number of technical challenges that are rooted in the volunteers' lack of knowledge of certain ICT systems. This is elaborated in the following sections.

The personal meeting between teachers and volunteers is considered to be of great importance to the implementation of project activities. This evaluation shows that the individual and personal cooperation has neither been confusing or transcendent to the user, but rather it has a positive effect on the overall results. It has also been central to the project that it has been possible to recruit both users and volunteers. The study shows that the users already widely recommended the course to others while virtually all volunteers wishing to participate in similar activities again.

Challenges

Although the project's overall results are positive, both users and volunteers are pointing out a number of challenges in the process. The main challenges are:

- Technical obstacles caused by different ICT systems acquainted to the volunteers and users between - especially when using the DUKA PC and Windows 8
- Need for follow-up action in relation to keep up the users' newly acquired ICT skills.
- Users want more than 10 educational sessions.
- Need to strengthen the volunteers' ability to address technical challenges - especially in relation to the abovementioned systems, and also to strengthen their teaching skills.

The evaluation questionnaire shows as mentioned that the participants in general have been pleased with the project. Users have benefited greatly from the individual training in their own homes. It has given reassurance and confidence to the elderly and they have now reached a level of understanding of the use of ICT. In this context, acquired the ability to act independently, including in relation to practical public functions, such as online banking and Tax.

What is Project ICT Fiery Soul?

Project ICT Fiery Soul carried out in collaboration between Hedensted Municipality, DaneAge and University College Lillebælt. The project is part of the EU project iAge, which aims to promote development in rural areas. This is being achieved by motivating resourceful citizens older than 65 years to be the driving force in the development of their own local community. The different parties are represented in a steering committee for the project.

During the spring 2013 Project ICT Fiery Soul collected 17 elderly volunteers with good ICT skills in Hedensted Municipality. Through a course of ten sessions spread over two months these volunteers taught 15 immobile or less resourceful elderly in the use of a number of ICT skills, in particular quite basic skills such as turning on and off the computer, use the mouse and keyboard, but also in the use of essential public services such as NemID and borger.dk. The user group also had to learn how to send and receive emails. The users were offered ten personal lectures in their own home. The duration of each lecture was between one and two hours which several volunteers describe as the maximum in terms of what the users have been able to concentrate on. The volunteers have prior to the sessions attended a course in order to equip them with ICT skills, communications skills and the ethical perspective of having to visit a user in their own home.

The cast - both volunteers and users - is primarily recruited through advertisements in DaneAge magazine and publicity in various local newspapers and on Hedensted Municipality's website.

Project ICT Fiery Souls importance for the volunteers

The primary aim is to gather a group of resourceful volunteers with the ability and motivation to teach other senior citizens ICT. This section examines the motivations that underlie their involvement, their experience of the specific processes and their benefits.

The volunteers' motivation

All volunteers were asked how they first heard about the project and what made them want to help. Most have read about the project in the DaneAge magazine. Some have heard about the project from friends, while others have read about it in the local newspapers Horsens Folkeblad or Hedensted Avis.

For the majority of the volunteers the motivation to contribute is first and foremost an expressed desire to share an existing knowledge with others who need it. Several of the volunteers have been involved in ICT for many years in their working life and are aware of the necessity of ICT skills to cope in the digital world. A volunteer expresses what underlies the desire to participate as follows:

"I have taken early retirement and I have got the time to help others and my knowledge that older people have difficulties in using ICT."

More than a third of the volunteers have been volunteers before, while the remaining group also performs other volunteer activities, including culture and sport. A single volunteer teaches voluntarily in ICT in parallel with the project.

The meeting between user and teacher

There has generally been a risk that the volunteers would primarily end up as a visiting friend for the elderly. The survey does not ask directly for this, but the volunteers are asked to describe how the sessions progressed. These descriptions form the impression of practical, teaching-oriented process where the volunteer and the user together work their way through an agreed topic or repeats what has been learned from the previous session and then examine new material. One of the volunteers describes a typical sequence like this:

"Typically, we started talking about whether he has "done his homework" and the experiences he has had lately. After that a brief repetition of the topics from the previous session. Then we addressed new things, either from the users wishes or from my program. The meeting is completed by me suggesting some things he could work with / try for next time. It lasted 1-1.5 hours depending on the user's desire / concentration."

In addition to the practical content of the sessions, there is also a social aspect of the meeting between the user and teacher. All volunteers describes the involvement of the user as "very good" or "good", and several of the volunteers tell how they drank coffee and talked about "this and that", but the descriptions are characterized by the fact that it is the technical content and not the social factor that had the greatest impact in the sessions.

Benefits from introductory course and teaching material

As mentioned the volunteers attended a course prior to the start of the project. Virtually all the volunteers were able to see the course's relevance, but got different benefits. Many of them point out that especially the communicative part of the course around Windows 8 has been rewarding. One of the volunteers develops further the benefits from the course as follows:

"Very useful because it helped to realize how users starting from scratch are."

Some volunteers are used to be in other people's homes and therefore this part of the course has been irrelevant to them. Despite the differential benefits almost all volunteers indicated that there has been a positive outcome in one form or another.

In connection with the introduction course for volunteers are provided and have reviewed the training material used in the sessions. The same material is also provided to the users. The volunteers were asked to evaluate this material. The answers are mostly positive. More denotes material as OK, but some believe it is alright or perfect. Several points out, however, that the material has been superficial or has been too extensive for the user.

Through the teaching the material in many cases served as the main thread in the organization of the content, but several disclose that it has been good to "lean on", without necessarily used directly.

Use of the volunteer resources

For the project, it was essential to determine whether the volunteers are too resourceful, and if their activities makes sense for them. The survey asked the volunteers directly whether they feel that their resources have been used meaningfully. Of those who answered this question, there is only positive feedback. Several of the volunteers explain that it has been meaningful, because they have been able to learn their user what was required. On the whole, the picture is that it has been meaningful and fulfilling for the volunteers to help others in terms of skills that the volunteers already have. One of the volunteers puts it clearly:

"It's nice to be able to use my experience to help others."

More volunteers points out different technical challenges as a hurdle to the optimal use of their resources. A volunteer says that resources have been exploited meaningful when we exclude:

"... Problems with crashes of NemID and Internet, and my poor knowledge regarding Windows 8."

This is seen not as an obstacle, which means that the volunteers do not want to participate in the project again. Most of the volunteers wish to participate in the next round in the autumn. The few who did not answer "yes" to this question answered "maybe" or "do not know." Some have even concluded agreements with their user to assist with the purchase of a new computer or in relation to issues that may arise in the future. The volunteers also perceive the extent of ten sessions as appropriate.

Project ICT Fiery Soul benefits for the users

In addition to assemble and motivate the volunteers another aim of the project was to teach a group of immobile elderly a number of ICT skills. The skills are:

- Basic skills: turning on / off a computer and use the mouse and keyboard
- Using the Internet to search information, including borger.dk
- Use NemID
- Send and receive emails

In the evaluation, the 15 users were asked to assess whether they are better at these properties than before. Looking at the overall assessment of skills, there was some success on improving the users ICT skills.

The users were also asked about their ICT skills prior to the course, and their responses indicate that their starting point of education has been for the most part virtually no knowledge of ICT. A few have experience of typewriting, while some have limited experience with basic computer use.

Looking at the assessments of their skills after the course in the light of the limited starting point, the answers get a more differentiated meaning.

In several cases the users assess that they are now "much better" to every skill because now they manage it to a certain extent and certainly had no knowledge of the subject before. Others answered "no" to any improvement because they had the knowledge in advance and therefore has not moved significantly in this skill. A large group believes that they got "better" skills because they master them on a fairly level but on the other hand still believe there is much more to learn.

In any case, their responses show that they have achieved a higher level in all skills than their starting point.

User experience and motivation

As mentioned earlier, users have widely read and taken an interest in the offer via the DaneAge magazine. Some have heard about the project from friends or in places where they spend time in their daily life.

This survey did not ask directly to the users' motivation for participating in the project, but several points out the need to use ICT for practical and official purposes. Some describes it as, "be forced to do so" and "the bank has been pushing me for a long time." These statements should not be seen as requirements for the project, but more as a motivation for user participation.

More than two-thirds of users have been using their computer in between educational transitions. Most of them have been practicing daily and at least several times a week. Only a few have not thrown themselves in to use the machine on their own hand. Some users got homework, but the computeruse between sessions is very differentiated.

Many users use it to search for information on the Internet. They are looking for recipes, knitting patterns or holidays and they read the news and watch the TV listings. Others have spent time searching for places where they have previously been on trips. Several benefit from Krak map and directions, while others primarily play solitaire. Several users have also worked with official purposes, like using NemID, mainly for banking, pension, tax and medication and appointments by the doctor. Others have used the machine to practice how to typewrite and to typewrite old recipes. The computer will also be of some use to send and receive emails. Some users have also purchased their own computer after the project completed.

The personal meeting

It is an essential element of Project ICT Fiery Soul that the meeting between the user and the teacher has taken place in the home of the user. It is therefore also essential if this has had an impact on users' experience during the process. In the interviews, users are asked about their experience of the introduction and the first meeting with their teacher. Overall most users describe this meeting as "okay," but do not seem to remember it as something special. One user describes it this way:

"I was a little nervous and afraid to seem stupid, but my teacher was very patient."

Additional most users describe this meeting as "fine" or "nothing out of the ordinary." One user says:

"I do not remember anything unusual. It was like when you meet people for the first time in general."

The launch, according to user statements did not leave deep traces. But the importance of individual instruction that takes place in the user's own home has been quite large.

All users - with the exception of one - describes the involvement of teachers as "good" or "very good". One user develop the good cooperation further:

"We both had a good time and got a lot out of it. I would not have gotten the same results if it had been on a course with many others. I would have felt alone with it."

Generally the users described their teachers with words like "patient", "participating", "careful", "do not despair" and "good at explaining." This says necessarily nothing about the importance of the user being taught at home, but more about the mutual understanding between the individual teaching and the fact that the teacher was a "home guest". Which are discussed later in this section.

Some users explain that they may well feel that the teacher does not have teaching experience, while others say that the difference between the operating computer systems did make the teacher "get stuck".

All users have been asked to respond to what part has been the best of the project. The interviews demonstrated that the personal meeting in the home has had a major impact. One user says as mentioned in the 'Introduction:

"I'm not afraid of the computer anymore. I'll use it, and I dare to go on course. When you are at home, you are more confident. The teacher is a guest."

Others also said that it is good to be "up and running" with the computer. One had many times thought of learning ICT prior to the course, but do not like to get out among other people, and has only really been given the opportunity to gain knowledge of ICT through this project. Another says that it would be too easy to cancel if the training took place on a course with many others outside the home. This course is more binding in a good way.

More expresses enthusiasm for gaining knowledge of computers and an insight into the electronic and digital world. A user describes what the best part have been:

"It begins to dawn a little, what kind of a world this is. This is a whole new language you have to learn. When you read about it, all the time you encounter new terms that you must learn. "

Multiple users emphasize that it is important that they are now able to use the computer on their own and that the machine is nice to have, for both practical and more entertaining purposes.

User satisfaction is also reflected in the users' recommendation of the course to others. In connection with this evaluation, users have been asked whether they would recommend others a visit from an ICT teacher at home. Users correspond in large numbers, they have already recommended the course to family and friends. One user says:

"I would, and have done so for my brother and sister. This is a great opportunity to get education at home."

Also in these replies enters the benefits of the individual lessons forward. A user answers the question whether to recommend the course and explains:

"Yes, definitely. It has been really good. You get the help you need, compared to if you had to be on a course with many others."

Technical challenges

The responses of this evaluation indicate that the largest immediate challenges associated with Project ICT Fiery Soul has been of a technical nature. Both volunteers and users pointing to the technique as the cause of problems during the sessions. To some extent this is due to newly purchased computers are using Windows 8, which teachers only to some extent have knowledge about. In general also the difference between machines and operating systems is causing problems. In addition, different kind of crashes including NemID led to some challenges. Some time was taken from the ten sessions to deal with various technical difficulties.

It has also been a challenge that some users have purchased the so-called DUKA PCs that would be particularly senior-friendly, but also limited in the user interface. One volunteer talks about his experience with this machine:

"The system is a centrally managed very limited Windows7 version. One time, we wanted to reduce the speed of the mouse pointer. It was not possible that we could even do so. We had to contact support, which of course helped us after 10 min. waiting on the phone. Attachments to e-mails can be printed but not saved. A new contact for support (this time only 5 min. Waiting time) resulted in the message that it could not - yet. It was in the process of upgrading the system so that in a few months it would be possible to save attachments to e-mails. Whether it at the same time will be possible to attach appendices to emails sent, we did not reach clarity about."

Relevans in future work?

One objective of this evaluation was to provide input to the development of a second round voluntary ICT training. This section picks up on the participants - both users and volunteers - suggestions for improvements and wishes for the future.

It is a clear demand from some users that they need more teaching hours. More volunteers also indicate the need of follow-up work with current users. Several users have pointed out that it is hard for them to remember the different skills when sessions are over. One of the volunteers propose to set up proper ICT training a few hours a week, the volunteers who are not concerned with home schooling, can offer assistance to the former students. This could for instance - Suggest the volunteer - take place at the nursing home Bøgely.

Several volunteers also suggests that teaching instead of taking place in the homes, could take place in classes, so the volunteers in this way can teach several users at once. From the results of this evaluation and the users expressed benefits from teaching in

the home, it could be important to clarify the domestic importance of education to the volunteers.

Several volunteers also indicate that the material has been too extensive or overwhelming for the users and that consideration might be handed out from session to session. Some calls for a higher level of experience between the volunteers.

Through this evaluation a picture of good cooperation between all parties in the project emerges. The volunteers find that both the level of information and collaboration with the partners (Hedensted Municipality and DaneAge) has been "good" or "very good". In-depth details a single volunteer is pointing that there have been too many obvious details of information and that cooperation has almost been "curling-like".

Opportunities to recruit more users

The responses to this survey points towards the fact that most - both users and volunteers - have become familiar with Project ICT Fiery Soul through the DaneAge magazine or through advertisements in local newspapers.

The volunteers were asked to come up with proposals on how to reach out to more users.

Several propose more massive press coverage over the summer in local newspapers as Horsens Folkeblad and Hedensted Avis, but also points to a feature in the radio P4 as an opportunity to reach more. Others suggest the possibility of personal contact, e.g. via letter distributed by home care. A volunteer points to the ability to reach potential users with a flyer at the post office or the bank, where non-digital users come, and where the problem of computer illiteracy and digitization becomes visible.

Evaluation method and purpose

The purpose of this evaluation has been to examine the achievement of Project ICT Fiery Soul objectives and operations, and also to provide input into the development of yet another round of ICT courses. The written collection is organized according to this purpose.

The evaluation information was collected through interviews with project users and through a written survey among the project's volunteers. Interviews with users were made on the basis of a pre-designed interview guide, while the volunteers have answered a questionnaire distributed by e-mail. Overall, the two groups assessed using the same themes, but questions have been different.

For the part of information gathering based on interviews there have been the opportunity to ask more detailed and clarifying questions. Answers to the questionnaire

are left to the individual respondent's interpretation and understanding of the issues. It would have been reasonable to evaluate the volunteers' efforts through interviews or focus group interviews, since the interpretation of the questions are not to the same degree left solely to the individual respondent.

The evaluation was based on 13 of the 15 possible interviews with users and 14 responses from the volunteers.