



UNITED - Inclusion and Diversity of Learners with Diverse Backgrounds

No: 2022-2-DE02-KA210-VET-000092335

Analysis of the focus group interviews



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Methodology

During Action 3 ‘Training Program Evaluation’, three focus-group interviews were conducted in both Germany and Luxembourg with 37 respondents in total, representing the main and sub-target audiences of the ‘Inclusion and Diversity’ training program. These participants have undergone local training sessions and are well-acquainted with the content of the eight training modules of the blended training program. Here's an overview of the process:

- **Participant Selection:** Participants were carefully selected to ensure representation from the main and sub-target audiences. The main target audience includes staff members, peers and students. Since our university aims at developing its Inclusive student recruitment strategy, all staff members need to be involved. It was decided by the consortium to conduct three focus group interviews instead of the planned two. The first one with faculties and administrative staff in Germany, the second session with students enrolled in various study programs at XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences and the third focus-group interview was conducted with representatives of our target audience in Luxembourg.

Conducting a separate focus group interview exclusively with students was considered by our consortium being driven by several specific reasons:

- Student-Centric Perspective:** Students are often a critical stakeholder group in educational initiatives. They are end-users of educational services and programs, and their perspectives can significantly impact the success of these initiatives. A dedicated student-focused session allows for a deep dive into their unique needs, expectations, and feedback.
- Tailored Student Insights:** Students may have distinct concerns, preferences, and expectations compared to faculty and administrative staff. By conducting a separate focus group, the consortium can obtain more focused and detailed insights into the student experience, which can inform program improvements and better meet student needs.
- Student Engagement:** Engaging with students directly through a dedicated focus group can demonstrate a commitment to include them in the process of development of the

training program. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration, making students feel valued and heard.

- iv. **Balanced Representation:** To maintain a balanced representation of stakeholder perspectives, it was necessary to have separate focus groups for students, faculty, and administrative staff. Each group can provide unique insights from their respective roles and experiences within the educational institution.
- v. **Privacy and Comfort:** Students feel more comfortable sharing their candid feedback and concerns in a session exclusively dedicated to them. This session led to more open and honest discussions, facilitating the collection of valuable insights.
- vi. **Efficiency:** Separating students into their own focus group can be more efficient in terms of time and logistics, as student schedules and availability may differ from faculty and staff.

In summary, conducting a separate focus group interview with students allowed the consortium to prioritize their perspectives and needs, fostered student engagement and input, and obtained tailored insights for student-centric improvements regarding our blended training program 'Inclusion and Diversity'

However, all participants were chosen based on their experience and relevance to the program's goals.

- **Introduction and Familiarization:** Prior to the focus-group interviews, participants were introduced to the training program's content and structure with on-site and online training. This included a thorough overview of the eight training modules, ensuring that participants were familiar with the program's topics and objectives.
- **Scheduling and Logistics:** Focus-group sessions were scheduled at times convenient for participants in both Luxembourg (Schifflange, 05.10.2023) and Germany (Potsdam, 10.10.2023 and 11.10.2023). Adequate arrangements were made to ensure that participants could attend the sessions in person.
- **Facilitated Discussion:** Skilled facilitators led the focus-group discussions. The sessions were structured to encourage open and candid conversations. The session in Luxembourg was moderated in Germany by Prof. Dr. Petyo Budakov from XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences and in Luxembourg by Mrs. Kristina Chavdarova from Luxembourg Creative Lab a.s.b.l. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences related to the training modules.
- **Exploring Specific Topics:** Participants were guided through specific topics related to the training program. This could include asking participants about their perceptions of module effectiveness, areas for improvement, relevance to their needs, and suggestions for enhancing the learning experience.
- **Sharing Insights and Feedback:** Participants shared their insights, feedback, and recommendations in two main directions: general – addressing some overall and generic issues about the program structure and particular advice – recommending some concrete improvements in the training content. All in all, the respondents discussed their experiences with the training content, highlighted aspects they found particularly impactful, and provided suggestions for refining and enhancing the program.

- **Note-taking and Documentation:** Detailed notes were taken during the focus-group sessions to capture participants' responses accurately. These notes documented the discussions, key points, and any significant observations made by the participants.
- **Transcription and Analysis:** Following the focus-group interviews, the discussions were transcribed and analyzed (below). Common themes, recurring suggestions, and valuable insights were identified across both sets of participants.
- **Incorporating Feedback:** The feedback received from the focus-group interviews was used to inform program improvements. This involve adjusting content, refining delivery methods, and enhancing the overall learning experience.

General Information

A comprehensive analysis was conducted based on the three focus group interviews, with 37 respondents from diverse backgrounds, conducted in Germany and Luxembourg. The primary objective of these focus group interviews was to assess the effectiveness and quality of the UNITED Inclusion and Diversity' blended training program.

The respondents in these interviews represented two distinct categories within our target audience:

- **Staff Members:** Participants from this group were staff members, faculties and freelancers from our organizations, e.g. XU Exponential University of Applied Sciences and Luxembourg Creative Lab a.s.b.l. who actively engaged in evaluating the blended training program. Through their involvement, these staff members acquired new skills and invaluable experience in various key activities, including:
 - Conducting thorough training feedback surveys to gauge the effectiveness and relevance of the program.
 - Assessing training programs with the aim of addressing the specific learning needs of trainees.
- **Students**

In the evaluation phase, representatives from this target audience provided their valuable feedback and insights, which were meticulously examined. This sub-audience encompasses respondents who:

- First-years undergraduate students enrolled in various study programs. The involvement of first-year students in a focus group interview focused on examining the quality of a blended training program devoted to Inclusion and Diversity offered the consortium with unique insights and contribute to improving the program by providing a fresh perspective on the UNITED blended training program, especially in terms of smoothing the transition from High School to academia and adjusting their workload and learning behaviors.
- Graduate students contributed significantly to the improvement of the blended training program devoted to Inclusion and Diversity with their advanced academic and practical experience which offered a unique perspective on various aspects of related to inclusion and diversity. Their familiarity with the academic

environment allowed them to provide us with constructive feedback about the program's effectiveness and its alignment with established goals and objectives.

Through these focus group interviews, it was evident that the blended training program had a positive impact on participants from both categories. Staff members not only contributed to the program's evaluation but also gained expertise in various critical areas. Meanwhile, the sub-audience representatives benefited from relevant skills and knowledge aligned with the program's competences, equipping them for success in their respective endeavors. This analysis highlights the program's efficacy in catering to diverse needs within the cultural and creative landscape, reflecting its alignment with the goals of Erasmus+ funding.



Analysis & Recommendations

Analyzing the answers to the question, "How would you describe your overall experience with the 'Inclusion and Diversity' training program so far?" reveals a positive sentiment among the participants. Here's a very positive analysis of the responses:

- **High Engagement:** The majority of participants expressed extremely positive or positive experiences with the "Inclusion and Diversity" training program. This indicates a high level of engagement and satisfaction with the program content and delivery.

- **Strong Affirmation:** The fact that most participants reported extremely positive or positive experiences suggests that the program is effectively achieving its goals in promoting inclusion and diversity. Participants seem to appreciate the program's objectives and approach.
- **Positive Learning Environment:** The positive sentiment reflects a favorable learning environment that is conducive to exploring topics related to inclusion and diversity. This suggests that the program is fostering a safe and supportive space for open dialogue and learning.
- **Effectiveness:** The overall positive experiences also imply that the program's design and content are effective in addressing inclusion and diversity issues, and participants are finding value in the training.
- **Engagement:** Participants' positive experiences suggest that they are actively engaging with the program and its materials, which is crucial for achieving the intended learning outcomes related to inclusion and diversity.
- **Potential for Growth:** Since participants have reported positive experiences, this feedback can be used to identify the program's strengths and build upon them for continuous improvement. It also demonstrates that the program is on the right track in terms of meeting its objectives.
- **Motivation:** Positive experiences can motivate participants to continue engaging with the program and encourage their peers to do the same, creating a ripple effect of interest and participation in inclusion and diversity initiatives.

Analyzing the responses to the question, "What are your thoughts on the content and materials used in the program?" reveals a positive assessment of the content and materials in the "Inclusion and Diversity" training program. Here's a positive analysis of the feedback:

- **Engaging and Informative:** Many participants found the content and materials to be engaging and informative. This suggests that the program effectively captures their attention and imparts valuable knowledge on inclusion and diversity topics.
- **Reflecting Diverse Perspectives:** Several participants noted that the content represents diverse perspectives. This is a positive sign, as it indicates that the program is making a concerted effort to provide a well-rounded view of inclusion and diversity issues.
- **Practical Relevance:** Some responses highlighted the practical relevance of the content. This is a key indicator that the program is addressing real-world situations and challenges related to inclusion and diversity, which is vital for participants.

Analyzing the responses to the question, 'Are there specific topics or areas related to inclusion and diversity that you believe the program should cover but hasn't?' with the positive feedback that students suggested including more extensive information about reducing student anxiety and the usage of inclusive language reveals valuable insights. Here's an analysis of the positive suggestions:

- **Student Engagement:** The positive suggestion for including more extensive information about reducing student anxiety indicates that participants are concerned about the

well-being and engagement of their peers. This shows that participants are not only focused on academic content but also on the holistic experience of their fellow students.

- **Holistic Approach:** The recommendation to address student anxiety suggests a holistic approach to inclusion and diversity. It acknowledges that well-being and mental health are essential components of creating an inclusive and diverse learning environment.
- **Practical Application:** The suggestion to include more information about reducing student anxiety highlights the practical application of inclusion and diversity concepts. Participants recognize the direct impact that addressing anxiety can have on a student's ability to fully engage with the program and benefit from its content.
- **Inclusive Language:** The recommendation to include more information on the usage of inclusive language is a positive sign that participants are attuned to the power of language in promoting inclusion. It demonstrates a sensitivity to the nuances of communication and the impact it has on individuals from diverse backgrounds.

However, analyzing the responses from both staff and students regarding their feelings about the blended delivery format of the program at XU University and LCL reveals a positive assessment of this aspect of the training program:

- **Flexibility and Accessibility:** The positive feedback from staff members indicates that they appreciate the flexibility and accessibility that the blended format offers. This format allows for a combination of in-person and online delivery, accommodating diverse learning preferences and schedules. The positive feedback from students indicates that they appreciate the flexibility and convenience of the blended format. This format allows them to access materials and participate in discussions at their own pace and according to their schedules.
- **Innovation:** Staff members' positive feelings about the blended format suggest that they view it as an innovative approach to education. This indicates that the university is proactive in embracing modern teaching methods.
- **Engagement:** The favorable sentiment from staff highlights the program's ability to keep both in-person and online learners engaged. This indicates that the program design and delivery methods are effective in maintaining a high level of interactivity. Students' positive feelings about the blended format suggest that they feel included and have equal opportunities to engage in the program, regardless of their location or personal circumstances.

In addition, positive feedback from students who interacted with professors from XU Exponential University and trainers from Luxembourg Creative Lab during the piloting of the modules reveal a highly positive assessment of the program's interpersonal dynamics:

It indicates that students found the program to be effective in facilitating interactions and discussions with both peers and instructors. This suggests that the program of 'Inclusion and Diversity' has successfully created a collaborative learning environment.

Instructor Involvement: The mention of interactions with professors from XU Exponential University highlights the instructors' active role in fostering discussions. Their engagement in meaningful conversations can significantly enrich the learning experience and pave the way for new discussions in the upcoming semester.

Analyzing the responses to the question, "To what extent do you believe the 'Inclusion and Diversity' training program has influenced your understanding and practice of inclusion and diversity in your academic or professional life?" reveals a positive impact of the program in both Germany and Luxembourg, with some distinct areas of interest.

- The respondents in both Germany and Luxembourg express a belief in the positive influence of the program on their understanding and practice of inclusion and diversity. This indicates that the program has been effective in providing valuable insights and skills to participants in both regions.
- Commitment to Inclusion and Diversity: The positive sentiment in both locations reflects a shared commitment to the principles of inclusion and diversity among the participants. They acknowledge the program's role in enhancing their understanding and promoting inclusive practices.
- Cultural Relevance: The program's content and approach are relevant and adaptable to the cultural contexts of both Germany and Luxembourg, contributing to its positive impact. Respondents in both countries recognize that the program has influenced their practices in academic and professional settings, emphasizing its practical significance.

For Luxembourg:

Desire content focused on Conflict Resolution and Addressing Exclusionary Behaviors: The fact that 77% of respondents in Luxembourg expressed the need for more content on conflict resolution and addressing exclusionary behaviors indicates a proactive approach to resolving issues related to inclusion and diversity. This reflects their desire for practical tools to foster an inclusive environment and resolve conflicts effectively.

For Germany:

- Interest in Organizing Inclusive Events: Respondents in Germany express an interest in learning how to organize inclusive events, which shows a commitment to promoting inclusion in a more proactive and community-oriented way. This reflects their aspiration to create inclusive spaces beyond individual interactions.
- Customization Opportunities: The program's ability to address specific regional needs, such as conflict resolution in Luxembourg and event organization in Germany, demonstrates its adaptability. This suggests opportunities for customization and expansion of program content to cater to the unique preferences and challenges of participants in different regions.

In the pursuit of fostering an inclusive and diverse learning environment, the "Inclusion and Diversity" blended training program has proven to be a significant success. Our positive analysis of participant responses from Germany and Luxembourg reveals a program that has effectively influenced understanding and practice across academic and professional spheres.

- **Global Impact:** Participants from both Germany and Luxembourg expressed a strong belief in the program's ability to positively impact their engagement with inclusion and diversity. This signifies a shared commitment to these crucial principles, showcasing the program's global relevance.
- **Customization for Regional Needs:** Remarkably, this success extends to the recognition of specific regional needs and preferences. Respondents in Luxembourg expressed a desire for content focused on conflict resolution and addressing exclusionary behaviors, demonstrating a proactive approach to addressing inclusion challenges. On the other hand, German participants expressed an interest in extending their knowledge in terms of organizing inclusive campus events, showcasing a keen desire to create inclusive spaces.
- **Program Adaptation:** in response to these findings, we have undertaken a commitment to enhance the program. Two new training modules have been created to match the expectations of our respondents, addressing the specific needs identified in each region: "Organizing Inclusive Campus Events" and "Conflict Resolution and Addressing Exclusionary Behaviors."

These additions signify our dedication to continuously improving the program's relevance and impact, making it a more dynamic and versatile tool for promoting inclusion and diversity. We recognize that the ability to customize program content is essential, as it ensures that our training remains tailored to the diverse preferences and challenges encountered in different regions.

In conclusion, the "Inclusion and Diversity" training program has demonstrated its ability to be both a unifier and a local catalyst for positive change. We celebrate the program's success in influencing understanding and practice while eagerly looking ahead to its continued evolution to meet the ever-evolving needs of our participants. With our new training modules in place, we are well-positioned to make an even more profound impact on the journey towards a more inclusive and diverse world.