

Seniornett Norway's issues with the Czech proposed ICT skills research form

(Extract of an e-mail addressing the overall issues):

1. You stated in your initial cover e-mail that it was a "small questionnaire survey" in order to compare the level of ICT skills of seniors in the partners institutions.
It is definitely, not even in this version, a small questionnaire. It's very extensive and also full of IT jargon, which is difficult for seniors both to understand and relate to.
(Both Liv and myself are seniors and have extensive formal computer education as part of our formal background and 6 PC's currently in use in our home. And even we did not know some of the terms etc. used in your form !)
The experience, at least in our society, is that most seniors strive to give what they regard as positive answers to such "gallup polls"; something which require questions to be extremely clear and specific. In this regard we in addition failed to find any "control questions" where you can verify the response to the most important questions.
2. And, you seem to miss the fact that "skills" means "ability to use or perform something" (Not duration, location etc. of anything, as you for a large part will be measuring)
3. You have changed "ICT Skills" to "ICT Knowledge" in your current mail, and that even make the whole thing more "fuzzy". Are you now talking about knowledge of ICT terminology, how many Computer magazines the participants are reading or what ?
Since you haven't really changed your questions to accommodate your own term change we are sticking to the ICT Skills basis (To assess ICT Knowledge will be even more difficult)
4. The questionnaire is structurally and language wise complex. So much so that many of the senior respondents might need assistance and interpretation (in which case it would fail an important criteria for being an objective and verifiable survey !)
5. Below you'll find only a few of our form question related points:
 - Your question 1 relate ICT skills only to current "ongoing" training when PCs have been around for more than 30 years and some potential respondents may have worked with them both professionally and at home for about that long.
 - We also have "learners" who have developed extensive ICT skill by dedicated self study as well as prior high degree university studies in Computer Science; -which you won't "catch" as having any formal training at all.
 - How do you prevent respondents "saying yes" to "2A" or "2B" from answering some of the other questions and thus ruining the survey ? (The same goes for other "dead end" questions !)
 - You don't even establish whether the respondents own a PC themselves; which would have a great impact on real use frequency and skills development
 - 3B is still stating "connected to Internet". Anyone may be connected 24 hours a day (because many seniors don't switch off their PCs !) without applying or developing any skills.

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- 4C . Lots of seniors have been ICT trained by their "husbands", "wives" or "partners"; and may be offended by them being left out in the parenthesis.
 - 5V. PLEASE don't call EXCEL or Calc "Table editors" ; they are "Spreadsheets". (I.e. Highly advanced calculations and accounting programs. The first one, Visicalc, was released in 1979 on the Apple II personal computer (and significantly responsible for that PCs sale success)).
 - 6. You are here confusing and mixing "electronic peripheral equipment" (Printers, Scanners, plotter, film reader, additional monitors, back up external disks etc. etc.) and "applications" (which in this case is usage of PCs, their programs and peripheral equipment for special tasks).
6. We have members (i.e. "learners" and "teachers") who still manage companies, others who are writing full books, scientific papers (one on NATO, another on psychology and others) etc. All using PCs extensively for many hours daily for weeks, months and years. I completely fail to see how you will rate these skills against someone who are using Facebook 2- 4 hours a day....
7. With respect to Seniornett Norge in general we have members who took their IT/Computer Science university degrees in the 1970ies, have managed and operated large computer departments responsible for thousands of PC being installed and used, staff trained and establishing "Home-PC schemes" (where employees got PC's to take home for training of themselves and their families). These individual seniors have ICT (and PC usage, "e-inclusion", "e-awareness", "Knowledge Society") skills most (or all !) of the professors, coordinators and participants in our partnership only can dream of getting in their lifetime...
8. I'm sorry to say that we will not be willing nor able to participate in the use of the proposed form (even in it's current version) for ICT skill assessment. This is both because many of our associates and members will find it fuzzy, immature, unprofessional and therefore offensive; and a waste of time. And not the least; - because you have not at all explained how you will grade all the individual "spotted" responses into a representative "ICT skills" measure / "yardstick" / figure / grade / ranking or any other objective and representative presentation on an individual, group, organizational or country basis.
9. This is truly one such activity we initially hoped our partnership should collaborate on. We had a vague ("end of the line") hope that our comments prior to the Rotterdam meeting should stimulate a shift in meeting focus to the exchange of best practice experience getting partner representatives with good senior ICT training experience to work together. We realize of course now that it's too late because other partners are not interested, qualified or able to work on such an agenda, and we have. because of that, wasted most of our time in that regard.

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