IN-MEDIAS

European Mediation Network

DIGITAL MODULE FOR SELF-PACED FURTHER LEARNING

IN Medias

The Digital Module goes beyond traditional learning methods, offering a dynamic and immersive experience that bridges the gap between theory and practice. User experience is at the heart of the Digital Module's design. It boasts an intuitive interface that ensures easy navigation and engagement.

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The Digital Module is a collaborative endeavor involving eight prominent mediation institutions in Europe. Its primary goal is to offer a comprehensive and innovative digital resource for individuals interested in enhancing their mediation skills and knowledge. Developed as part of an Erasmus+ program, this module leverages the combined expertise and resources of these institutions to provide a high-quality learning experience. Through the Digital Module, users can access valuable insights and practical experiences, equipping them to excel in mediating conflicts within a European context and beyond, all within a convenient digital format.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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Introduction

This innovative learning module represents a paradigm shift in mediation education, offering a unique opportunity for learners to observe full mediations conducted by experienced mediators while simultaneously delving into learning hints provided through a secondary layer of descriptions. This concept emerged in response to a significant demand identified by our project partners. Many individuals within the mediation field expressed a strong desire for training videos where they could watch a full mediation. While some such videos did exist, they lacked the depth and guidance required for effective learning. This was when we brainstormed and came up with this new and innovative concept.

When asked for recommendations, we were hesitant to endorse specific YouTube videos because we believed that presenting them in isolation could foster the misconception that there is only one definitive approach to mediation. We understood that mediation encompasses diverse styles and methodologies, each with its own merits. Therefore, we sought to address the "why" and "how" behind mediation practices. We aimed to clarify the reasoning behind a mediator's actions, the timing of different phases, the purpose of specific questions, and much more.

This learning module seamlessly integrates theory with practice, allowing viewers to decide how deeply they want to engage with the content while watching. Initially, our project aimed to produce just one video. However, as enthusiasm for this immersive learning experience grew, and we received overwhelmingly positive feedback from test viewers, we decided to expand our scope. Consequently, we created two distinct videos—one focusing on family mediation and the other on commercial mediation, each showcasing unique mediation styles, different hints and learnings and personalities. Through these videos, we aim to enrich the mediation community by promoting critical thinking and encouraging learners to explore the myriad dimensions of this essential profession.

Objectives and Goals

The specific objectives and goals of the Digital Module within the In Medias project are multifaceted, reflecting a commitment to enriching the mediation training experience and equipping learners and practising mediators with valuable skills and knowledge. These objectives and goals include:

- **Enhancing Practical Skills**
  The primary aim is to immerse learners in mediation scenarios, allowing them to observe and understand the practical application of mediation techniques, conflict resolution strategies, and communication skills.

- **Deepening Understanding**
  The module seeks to deepen participants' comprehension of mediation by providing in-depth descriptions, explanations, and reflections on various phases of the mediation process. This includes insights into why mediators make specific decisions and how these decisions impact the mediation's progression.

- **Promoting Critical Thinking**
  Encouraging critical thinking and analytical skills is a key goal. By presenting mediation scenarios alongside explanatory content, the module encourages viewers to question and evaluate the mediator's actions and choices.

- **Fostering Ethical Awareness**
  The digital module emphasizes the ethical dimensions of mediation. It aims to instill a strong ethical foundation by highlighting moments in the mediation process where ethical considerations come into play.

- **Skill Transfer**
  Beyond observation, the module aims to facilitate skill transfer. Learners are encouraged to apply what they've observed and learned in the module to their own mediation practice, making it a practical and valuable resource.

- **Customized Learning**
  Recognizing that different learners have varying levels of prior knowledge and preferences for learning depth, the module allows users to decide how much detail they want to engage with while watching, making it adaptable to individual learning needs.

- **Diverse Styles and Approaches**
  The module showcases different mediation styles and personalities, promoting an understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to mediation. This diversity encourages learners to explore and adapt various techniques to their unique mediation contexts.

- **Continuous Improvement**
  The module aims to be a living resource, with room for ongoing improvement based on user feedback and evolving mediation practices and theories.

- **Alignment with In Medias Project Objectives**
  Ultimately, the digital module aligns with the broader goals of the In Medias project, which seeks to elevate the quality of mediation education in Europe and beyond. It contributes to achieving this goal by providing a cutting-edge tool for enhancing mediator training.

Module Content

Full Mediation Simulations: At the heart of the Digital Module are full-length mediation simulations. These simulations expose learners to mediation sessions, each addressing different contexts and scenarios. Learners have the unique opportunity to observe these sessions, gaining firsthand insight into how mediators navigate various complexities.

Learning Hints: In conjunction with the mediation simulations, the module incorporates a second layer of content in the form of learning hints. These hints provide meticulous descriptions of every phase of the mediation process, including the techniques employed and the reasoning behind mediator actions. This dual-layer approach ensures that learners receive a comprehensive and immersive learning experience.

Reflective Commentary: Within the learning hints, reflective commentary is interspersed, encouraging learners to engage in critical thinking. This commentary prompts learners to contemplate the mediator's decision-making process, the strategic timing of interventions, and the ethical considerations inherent in mediation. This reflective element adds depth to the learning journey, fostering a deeper understanding of the nuances of mediation.

The Digital Module is meticulously structured to ensure an organized and engaging learning experience:

1. Scenario Selection: Learners are granted the flexibility to choose from two different mediation scenarios (family or commercial mediation), catering to their specific interests and learning goals. This customization empowers learners to tailor their learning experience to their unique preferences.

2. Interactive Navigation: The module boasts an intuitive and user-friendly interface that facilitates seamless navigation between the video simulations and learning hints. Users can pause, rewind, and review specific segments at their own pace, ensuring they can delve deeply into areas of particular interest.

3. Topic-Based Segmentation: To enhance accessibility, the content is systematically organized into topics and segments. This enables learners to easily locate and revisit specific aspects of mediation, whether it pertains to conflict resolution techniques, hints about the process and phases, or other pivotal aspects of the mediation process. We use three icons to show whenever there is second layer of information available.

4. User-Friendly Design: Recognizing the diverse technical backgrounds of its users, the module is meticulously designed for accessibility across various browsers and easy self explanatory interface design.

Methodological Approach

The development of the Digital Module within the In Medias project followed a rigorous and systematic methodological approach. This approach was informed by both partners and research in the field of mediation education and best practices in instructional design. Here's an overview of the key aspects of the methodology:

- Needs Assessment and Stakeholder Input:
  The process began with a thorough needs assessment to understand the requirements and expectations of potential learners. This involved consultation with mediation practitioners, educators, and learners themselves to identify gaps in existing mediation training resources. Wh did this by reaching out to the networks of each project partner.

- Curriculum Alignment:
  The module's content was aligned with the curriculum objectives of the In Medias project. It was essential to ensure that the digital resource seamlessly integrated with other components of the project's mediation training program on one hand and on the other to create a stand alone self-paced learing modul for people who were not involved with the IN Medias project yet.

- Mediation Research:
  In-depth research into contemporary mediation practices, cultural differences and theories was conducted. This was also crosslinked to the IN Medias publication team. This research helped inform the selection of mediation scenarios, the identification of relevant techniques, and the understanding of ethical considerations within mediation.

- Instructional Design:
  The development process followed best practices in instructional design. This included defining clear learning objectives, structuring content logically, and incorporating interactivity to enhance engagement.

- Scenario Selection:

  Careful consideration was given to the selection of mediation scenarios. From many different scenarios, provided by the partners we have chosen a family and a commercial mediation that included specific aspects that we wanted to showcase and elaborate on.

- Expert Mediators:

  Experienced mediators from the IN Medias Team and partner institutions were enlisted to conduct the mediation simulations. Their expertise and real-world experience were invaluable in ensuring the authenticity and effectiveness of the simulations.

- Role Players:

  The video production itself became a learning experience for those who played the roles of the mediants. All 4 parties were alumni of our In Medias mediation training. We used the video production among others to reflect on the emotions and behaviour of parties in conflict. We focused intentionally on an intercultural setting and involved people from Italy, Poland, Germany, Belgium and Ireland.

- Reflective Commentary:

  The inclusion of reflective commentary within the module was based on research and an enormous teamwork amongst the partners. It was important to us that the comments come from diveres partners with diverse intercultural background and approaches. A redaction team collected the comments, fitted them to the correct time stamp and reformulated them into comprehensive language with the goal to allowed learners to explore the "why" and "how" behind mediation practices.

- User-Centered Design:

  The digital module was designed with the user in mind. Usability testing and user feedback played a crucial role in refining the module's interface and ensuring it was accessible to learners of varying technical backgrounds. And allows both: the watching the simulation with or without the second level information.

- Continuous Improvement:

  A commitment to ongoing improvement was established. Feedback mechanisms were integrated to collect user input, which was used to refine the module.

Technological Infrastructure

The Digital Module within the In Medias project is underpinned by a robust technological infrastructure that facilitates an advanced and seamless learning experience. Here's an intricate overview of the technology and software utilized for module delivery, along with the stringent technical requirements for users:

Videointeractions Player:

At the core of our digital module is a bespoke Videointeractions Player meticulously engineered in JavaScript. This player represents the pinnacle of interactive video technology, designed to offer a user-friendly interface coupled with unparalleled interactive capabilities.

Unified User Interface Across Browsers:

A challenge that we successfully navigated was the harmonization of the player's appearance across multiple web browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, and Safari. Achieving a uniform and consistent visual identity across these diverse platforms required meticulous coding and engineering.

Tailored Interactive Functionality:

Beyond merely providing a unified look, the player was meticulously customized to seamlessly integrate with the specific requirements of the In Medias project and the integration of the In Medias platform.

Dynamic Extensibility of Interaction Data:

A technological feat achieved within the Videointeractions Player is the dynamic extensibility of interaction data. Rather than embedding interactive elements directly into video content, our player allows for the independent management of interaction data. This empowers content administrators to expand or modify interactive features without altering the core video content itself, ensuring adaptability and scalability over time.

Technical Requirements for Users:

To engage with the Digital Module seamlessly, users are encouraged to meet the following technical requirements:

- Devices: Access to the module is optimized for desktop and laptop computers to ensure an immersive and comprehensive viewing experience.

- Browsers: Compatibility with the latest versions of major web browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, and Safari, is essential for optimal performance.

- Plugins: The module operates without the need for additional browser plugins or extensions, ensuring straightforward accessibility.

User Experience

These are insights into the user experience, highlighting aspects of user-friendliness, navigation, and interactivity:

User-Friendliness:

From the moment learners access the module, they encounter a user-friendly interface designed for accessibility and ease of use. The layout is clear, and navigation is straightforward, ensuring that even those with limited technical proficiency can engage effortlessly.

Intuitive Navigation:

The module's navigation is thoughtfully designed to enhance the overall learning experience. Users can effortlessly move between video simulations and learning hints, pause or rewind specific segments, and explore various mediation scenarios at their own pace.

Interactive Elements:

Interactivity is a hallmark of the Digital Module. Users have the opportunity to engage actively with the content. This interactivity is strategically placed to reinforce learning and deepen understanding.

Visual Cues for New Information:

To keep users engaged and informed, we've implemented visual cues in the form of three key icons representing second-level information on mediation phases and processes, techniques and methods, and additional insights. These icons serve as signposts for deeper exploration. Importantly, we've incorporated a subtle but effective enhancement—a blinking dot in various colors appearing on these icons to signal new information. This familiar notification concept, akin to new messages on a phone, ensures users are aware of updates without causing distraction.

User Testing and Improvements:

- The user experience has been refined based on feedback and rigorous testing. Through user testing, we gained valuable insights into how learners interacted with the module and identified areas for improvement.
- One notable improvement was optimizing the display of icons to strike a balance between visibility and unobtrusiveness. We wanted users to focus on the mediation content without distraction but ensure the icons were readily accessible when needed.
- We enhanced the hinting system to make it more user-friendly, providing clearer guidance (with the blinking dot) on new information and how to access it.
- Improvements were also made to the overlay of information, making it more intuitive and user-friendly. Users now have a streamlined way to pause and return to the mediation content seamlessly.

Integration with Other Modules

Integration of the Digital Module with In Medias Curriculum and Publication

The Digital Module, an integral component of the In Medias project, seamlessly aligns with both the In Medias publication, which underscores the diversity of mediation approaches, and the broader In Medias training curriculum. This synergy enhances the richness and effectiveness of mediation training, making it not only invaluable for novice mediators but also a vital resource for seasoned practitioners interested in intercultural mediation.

In Medias Publication

- The Digital Module harmonizes with the In Medias publication, which delves into the myriad mediation approaches and styles across diverse cultural contexts. By providing practical exposure to different mediation styles and personalities, the Digital Module reinforces the scientific research behind the publication. This cross-linkage between the module and the publication underscores the practical application of diverse mediation approaches, enriching the learning experience.

In Medias Training Curriculum:

- The Digital Module serves as a versatile self-paced training resource within the In Medias curriculum. Its alignment with the curriculum ensures that learners can integrate the practical experiences gained from the livemodule into their broader mediation training journey. It complements theoretical teachings by offering an understanding of mediation techniques, ethical considerations, and the practical application of mediation knowledge.

Relevance for Practitioners of Intercultural Mediation

- While the Digital Module is for those embarking on their mediation journey, it is equally pertinent for practitioners seeking to specialize in intercultural mediation. The module's exposure to diverse mediation scenarios and the opportunity to analyze cases through a reflective lens caters to the needs of experienced mediators. It enables them to further refine their skills, adapt their approach to intercultural contexts, and broaden their cultural competence.

Future Developments

Here are insights into potential future developments and enhancements for the module:

- Multilingual Expansion: Building upon the success of the current module, there are plans to secure funding for the creation of additional videos in diverse languages. This expansion will facilitate broader access to mediation knowledge and skills, catering to a more extensive and diverse audience of learners around the world.
- Diverse Fields of Mediation: To address the multifaceted nature of mediation, future developments may include the creation of specialized videos focusing on various fields of mediation, such as workplace mediation, community mediation, and criminal mediation. Each video will provide targeted insights and practical experiences relevant to those specific contexts.
- Ongoing User Feedback: The incorporation of a user feedback mechanism on the website is a proactive step to collect valuable comments and suggestions from learners and users. This feedback will serve as a crucial resource for shaping future enhancements.
- Enhanced Interactivity: Advancements in interactive technology may lead to the integration of even more engaging and immersive interactive elements within the module. This could include virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) components for a more dynamic and experiential learning experience.
- Continuous Technical Improvements: The modular design of the Digital Module allows for ongoing technical enhancements. Separating the second layer from the video recordings enables efficient updates, ensuring that the module remains compatible with evolving technology and software.
- Integration into Further In Medias Trainings: The module will continue to serve as a cornerstone of In Medias trainings, ensuring that participants benefit from its rich and practical learning experiences. This integration ensures the sustainability and relevance of the module within the broader In Medias project.

Conclusion

In summary, the Digital Module within the In Medias project is a transformative resource designed to self paced mediation training. Key point in this IO description are:

- The Digital Module's immersive experience, which offers learners the opportunity to observe real-life mediation sessions and engage with detailed commentary and insights.
- Its methodological approach, informed by research and best practices, ensuring the highest standards in mediation education.
- The technological infrastructure, including the cutting-edge Videointeractions Player, ensuring seamless accessibility and user engagement.
- The user experience enhancements derived from rigorous user testing, making the module intuitive and user-friendly.
- The expected learning outcomes, aligning with broader mediation training goals and catering to both beginners and experienced practitioners.
- The integration with other modules in the In Medias Curriculum, enhancing the overall mediation training experience.
- Future developments and enhancements to adapt to evolving technology and mediation practices, including multilingual expansion and specialized content.

For educators, trainers, and organizations interested in implementing the Digital Module in their mediation programs, here are some recommendations:

- Integration into Curriculum: Seamlessly integrate the Digital Module into your mediation curriculum to provide learners with a balanced and practical learning experience.
- Adaptation for Diverse Audiences: Tailor the module to suit the needs of your target audience, whether they are novice mediators or experienced practitioners seeking specialization in intercultural mediation.
- Feedback Mechanisms: Implement feedback mechanisms to collect input from users and please report them to us in order to improve the module to meet evolving needs.
- Exploration of Multilingual Content: Consider expanding the module with content in diverse languages to reach a wider audience with translation or voice over.

Appendix

Cases for simulation

You can access the briefings of the simulation cases used in the Digital Module here

Comments second level

You can find an overview of all comments on the second level here

Access to the digital modul

You can access the digital module via the following link