Assessment 3: Design an Online Community

https://www.facebook.com/groups/chatbotsineducation

Susan Suarez

Educational Technology Leadership, New Jersey City University

EDTC 816 Advanced Building Online Communities

Dr. Laura Zieger

April 25, 2021

Assessment 3: Design an Online Community

The new Facebook community "Chatbots in education" targets educators, educational technology specialists, chatbot developers, chatbot enthusiasts, and anyone interested in the utilization of chatbots in education. Located at

https://www.facebook.com/groups/chatbotsineducation, this is a closed community aimed at the sharing of resources and ongoing discussion about needs and experiences using chatbots in education. As the community increases, mentorship will be available to assist learning and growth of members. While the creator of the group is conducting dissertation-level research on the use of chatbots to alleviate perceptions of isolation in online courses, the group is open to the variety of pedagogical chatbot use.

Design and Methodology

Facebook groups is an ideal platform for this online community and its objectives. Wegner et al. (2009) explain the importance of the interplay of the technology, the individuals, and the community in a digital habitat. According to Wegner et al. (2009), some of these considerations include the community's maturity and "readiness" (p. 161) to adopt new technology, closed or open community interaction, security, schedules, infrastructure, resources, and budgets. Continually adding functionality to adapt to community needs, Facebook is easy to use, free, familiar to many users who already use it to communicate with friends and family, and affords the capability of privacy while maintaining the ability to share pictures, comments, and experiences within the group. Facebook is also an exceptional tool for inter-group relations with its ease of sharing resources and inviting other users to join, either directly or through groups.

Although the community is established, Kraut and Resnick (2016) list several challenges in bringing and sustaining newcomers to online communities such as "Chatbots in education."

These include recruitment, selection, retention, and socialization of newcomers while also protecting the community from newcomers as they become acclimated to the community. Recruiting for this group will be via word of mouth and personal invitation. The initial members are encouraged to invite others who they feel would be important to the group. Moderators will be selected from the initial membership, with additions and deletions as needed. Community-based moderators who enforce the community expectations is a larger deterrent of abhorrent behavior, however the sanction – whether removal from the group or temporary muting – should be imposed by the administrator (Kraut & Resnick, 2016).

As the group grows, the Facebook group functionality of member mentorship will be activated, and mentorship encouraged. According to Kraut and Resnick (2016), mentorship increases newcomer commitment to the community. Additionally, to protect the community, access barriers such as the Facebook group join questions and acceptance of community rules are implemented as a first step to joining.

In order to be successful, online communities require active contribution and participation from the members who comprise the online community. This group will use a variety of ways to motivate contribution and participation. One methodology in particular is to set specific, challenge-goals and deadlines to increase engagement. Active feedback illustrating how unique potential contributions are and that others have made complementary contributions is essential (Kraut and Resnick, 2016). As the community develops, users can acquire badges as motivation to be involved in more activities as they become "trusted" members. These badges include a Moderator badge for members who manage the membership and posts, a New Member badge for new members that will display for two weeks, a Rising Star badge for new members who have made engaging posts that will display for one month, Visual Storyteller for people who

share engaging images or videos that displays for one month, and Conversation Starter for people who create engaging posts and comments which also shows for one month. These badges not only serve as a motivational reward activating both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, but as a signal for engagement to other members.

Chatbots in Education in Comparison to Existing Communities

The Facebook group "Chatbots in education" is uniquely dedicated to the intersection of chatbots and education. Certainly, there is a niche that can be filled with a community willing to exchange information about various experiences with chatbots in education. The sampling of chatbot communities which follow is a representation of the available communities. Those that are specifically tailored to education, lack interaction and engagement.

Snatchbot (https://support.snatchbot.me/discuss) is an API for chatbot building. There is limited community building and online engagement as is found with "Chatbots in education." Rasa, an open-source framework for building conversational chatbots, offers a blog (https://forum.rasa.com/) and an active developer community of over 10,000 members worldwide and extends beyond education to all type of chatbot use. Chatbots.org (chatbots.org) offers a general community page with reviews and news and a forum broken into a variety of categories. Chatbots.org also extends beyond education and focuses on development not implementation.

Looking specifically at Facebook, TARS Chatbot Community on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/groups/tarscommunity) is also a private group with 274 members presenting itself as a space for chatbot lovers, creators, and people who want to share their chatbot experiences, post questions, give advice or provide support to other community members. The group is mildly active with weekly activity. Posts from the admin generally advise

the membership of webinars. While TARS does focus more on chatbot utilization, very little is directed towards educational use.

Also on Facebook, Education Technology (https://www.facebook.com/groups/ 2989201691163018/about) is a private group of 56 members means to provide technology information. The creator writes, "I can use my copywriting skills to share my knowledge and experience with chatbots for anyone interested in the education industry. This includes teachers, parents, students, and administrators in K-12 and higher education." The group's name might not accurately reflect the group's purpose, and the group lacks community interaction.

"Chatbots in Education" in Comparison to Existing Communities

According to "The truly monumental guide to building online Communities" (MackWebSolutions, 2013), building an online community yields benefits stemming from the interaction of participants. These participants engage with, and exchange in, information specific to the community's subject, thereby fostering learning and transforming a group into an online learning community. Both the guide and Wenger et al. posit that the tools do not drive the community, but the community builder, along with the goals of the community, drive the tools and their use.

The Facebook group, "Chatbots in education," seeks to do develop an online learning community in a niche topic of developing technology. Applying principles from research, the group will empower members to be active participants who create and evolve the group norms and self-govern. Members will be incentivized to engage, share, and mentor through researched design approaches such as timely and timed challenges, badges, and polls. Finally, the community will also be empowered to share not only amongst themselves, but with other communities thereby increasing knowledge and connection to the greater chatbot community.

References

Johnston, B. (2020, May 25). The crucial role of member research in the success of online

    communities. *Structure3c*. https://structure3c.com/2013/10/20/attributes-of-thriving-

    online-communities/

Kraut and Resnick (2016). *Building successful online communities: Evidence-based social*

    design. The MIT Press.

MackWebSolutions. (2013). The truly monumental guide to building online communities.

    https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/arthur-assets/The+Monumental+Guide+to

    +Building+Online+Communties.pdf

Wegner, E., White, N., & Smith, J. (2009). Digital habitats: Stewarding technology for

    communities. CPsquare.