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Effective E-moderating: engaging your students in online discussions

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Session Outline

- What do we mean by “e-moderating”?
- IBIS Discussion board functionality
- Advantages and Disadvantages
- Gilly Salmon’s **5 stage model of teaching and learning online through CMC**



What do we mean by 'e-moderation'?

- 'E-moderation' or 'Facilitation' - the act of managing learners and learning through an online medium. (The Australian Flexible Learning Framework)
- "managing the communication of others online" (Coghlan 2001).
- Facilitation is also a pedagogical term that applies to student-centred approaches to teaching as opposed to teacher-driven –
 - From "the sage on the stage" to "the guide on the side" (Kempe 2001).



Advantages of Discussion Boards

- Time and place independence
- No need to travel to the place of learning
- Time between messages allows for reflection
- Speakers of other languages have added time to read and compose answers
- All students have a voice without the need to fight for 'airtime'
- The lack of visual cues provides participants with a more equal footing
- Many to many interaction may enhance peer learning
- Answers to questions can be seen by all
- Discussion is potentially richer than in a face to face classroom
- Messages are archived centrally providing a database of interactions
- Process of learning more visible to all

JISC?



Disadvantages of Discussion Boards

- Communication takes place via written messages so learners with poor writing skills may be at a disadvantage
 - Paralinguistic clues as to a speakers' intentions are not available, except through combinations of keystrokes (emoticons) or the use of typeface emphasis (italics, bold, capital letters)
 - Temporal disjunction in exchanges may affect the pace and rhythm of communications
 - The medium is socially opaque; participants may not know who or how many people they may be addressing
 - The normal repair strategies of synchronous communication are not available and misunderstandings may be harder to overcome
 - Context and reference of messages may be unclear so misunderstandings may occur
- JISC?
- Difficult to retain student participation



The 5 Stage Model

- **Stage 1: Access and motivation** – deals with individual access and the ability of participants to use the Discussion Board software
- **Stage 2: Online Socialisation** – individual participants establish their online identities and find others with whom to interact
- **Stage 3: Information Exchange** – participants share information relevant to the course with each other
- **Stage 4: Knowledge Construction** – course related group discussions occur and interaction becomes more collaborative
- **Stage 5: Development** – participants look for more benefits from the system to help them achieve personal goals, explore how to integrate CMC into other forms of learning and reflect on the learning process



Stage 1: Access and motivation

Access

- Set up their own system of hardware and software
- Obtain a password, dial up and access the system through a network
- Arrive in the conference at the point where the conferences are available on the computer screen
- Have access to technical support

Motivation

- Welcome participants individually and offer them support by email or phone
- Make clear the value of participating in the Discussion Board
- Clarify the purpose of the Discussion Board
 - How does it link to and integrate with the rest of the course (its role in assessed components for example)
 - The amount of time they should allocate to it



Stage 1: Access and motivation

“It is a great mistake to assume that any participant will want to divert hours and hours to online conferences without good reason. Clarity of purpose from conference designers and e-moderators is critical from the beginning”

Gilly Salmon (2000)



Stage 2: Online socialisation

Learner behaviour

- Participants get used to being in the new online environment and begin to build online relationships
- Participants recognise the need to identify with each other and to develop a sense of direction online

E-moderator techniques

- Create an atmosphere where participants feel respected and able to gain respect for their views
- Help those participants with similar interests and needs find each other
- Enhance participants confidence in using the Discussion Board by praising their contributions
- Take the lead in prompting mutual respect among participants, defusing problems and counselling any alienated or offended individuals
- Deal with strong differences of opinion or objections to procedures



Stage 2: Online socialisation

“CMC creates the opportunity for online socialisation and networking, however, CMC will not in itself create the social interaction. Sensitive and appropriate conference design and the e-moderators intervention cause the socialisation to occur”

“The empathy developed through this stage of online Interaction provides an essential prerequisite ingredient for later course and knowledge related discussions”

Gilly Salmon



Stage 3: Information Exchange

Learner Behaviour

- Participants begin to appreciate and exchange the broad range of information available online
- At this stage, participants look to e-moderators to provide direction through the mass of messages and encouragement to start using the most relevant content material.

E-moderation techniques

- E-learning at this stage calls for preparation and planning , as in any good teaching.
- E-moderators should ensure that conferencing concentrates on discovering or exploring known (to them) answers or aspects of problems or issues
- Use the course content and links to online resources and website as stimuli
- Presenting and linking of data, analysis and ideas in interesting ways online will stimulate productive and constructive information sharing.



Stage 3: Information Exchange

“For participants, learning how to exchange information in online conferences is essential before they move on to full Scale interaction in stage 4”.

Gilly Salmon



Stage 4: Knowledge Construction

Learner Behaviour

- At stage 4 we start to see participants becoming online authors rather than transmitters of information
- Participants begin to formulate and write down their ideas or understanding of a topic
- Engaged in active learning through widening their own view points and appreciating different perspectives
- Their grasp of concepts and theories is enhanced through the debate and by examples advanced by other participants.

E-moderation Techniques

- collecting up statements and relating them to concepts and theories from the course
- Summarizing from time to time
- Spanning wide ranging views and provide new topics when discussions go off track
- Enable the development of ideas through discussion and collaboration
- Stimulate fresh strands of thought
- Introduce new themes
- suggest alternative approaches



Stage 4: Knowledge Construction

“Conferencing is a medium that can add an extra dimension to developing ideas and increasing understanding of the course material. It gives the opportunity to stop and think and refine ideas without immediately losing one’s place in the debate, and holds on to those ideas for future reference. It is important to accept that it has to be structured and focused in order to do that”

An OUBS e-moderator



Stage 5: Development

Learner Behaviour

- At stage 5, participants become responsible for their own learning through computer mediated opportunities and need little support beyond that already available.
- participants explore their own thinking and knowledge building process.
- Higher level skills require the ability to reflect, articulate and evaluate one's own critical thinking
- Participants find ways of producing humour and dealing with the more emotional aspects of writing and interacting
- Participants may demand better access, faster responses or more software. They become extremely resistant to changes or downtime on the system
- Experience participants can become helpful guides to newcomers to the system

E-moderation Techniques

- E-moderators at stage 5 should set up exercises and online events that promote critical thinking in participants such as commenting on each others writing



Stage 5: Development

“Blumer’s (1969) view of Action Learning is of people involved in directing their actions, individually or collectively, around shared understandings of their world.The aspect of meeting online with colleagues, sharing views and receiving support, especially in terms of actions, is commented on time and time again in the conferences.”

Gilly Salmon (2000)



Any Questions?

Salmon, G. (2000) *E-moderating: the key to teaching and learning online*. London. Kogan Page.

Thank you!