



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jhlste



Research notes

Using online forums for encouraging higher order thinking and 'deep' learning in an undergraduate Sports Sociology module



Kathryn Leflay*, Mark Groves

University of Wolverhampton, Gorway Road, Walsall WS13BD, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Higher education

Deep learning

Asynchronous Online Discussion Forums

ABSTRACT

A growing trend towards using technology for learning in Higher Education presents challenges in terms of providing opportunities for deep learning. This paper focuses on how asynchronous online discussion forums could be used for encouraging deep learning. Four online activities were created; each of which was open to postings for one week. Deep learning was said to have occurred if students demonstrated one or more of the components outlined in [Enwistle and Waterston's \(1988\)](#) model. The results highlighted that activities appeared to encourage various aspects of deep learning including processing new information, connecting facts and interpreting academic material. Additionally, the results highlighted the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating this process. Engagement with the tasks was however identified as an issue. Consequently, it was recommended that further research explores student motivation, in particular how students can be encouraged to take on full participatory roles online.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Research has indicated that technology can be used to support student learning and can overcome some of the issues associated with more traditional methods ([Condie & Livingstone, 2007](#); [Desanctis, Fayard, Roach & Jiang, 2003](#); [So, 2009](#)). In many Higher Education establishments there has been a shift towards the use of new technologies ([Allen & Seaman, 2007](#)), although there is little consensus at the present time as to how it should be used in terms of best practice ([Harasim, 2000](#)). [Westera, van den Herik and van de Vrie \(2004\)](#) expressed concern that in some institutions the use of technology might be little more than a token gesture, merely providing new ways of doing something familiar rather than recognising the potential diversity for its use. This suggestion was supported by [Salmon \(2005\)](#) who has stressed that in order for teaching with technology to be effective, it needs to move beyond the uploading of lecture slides and resources to a greater emphasis on teacher intervention, learning design and pedagogical processes.

The growing expectation of staff to incorporate the use of technology into their teaching presents at least five challenges. Many teaching staff might not be wholly confident using the various applications they are expected to implement, leading them to avoid trying new methods within their teaching ([Mason, 1994](#); [Salmon, 2003](#); [Westera et al., 2004](#)). Issues of competency extend beyond the use of technology with additional challenges of how to monitor student interaction and assess the effectiveness of online activities as well as providing methods of feedback ([Brace-Goven, 2003](#)).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Kath.Leflay@wlv.ac.uk (K. Leflay), M.Groves@wlv.ac.uk (M. Groves).

One particular model that has been opted for extensively within universities is a blended learning approach. [Vaughn and Garrison \(2005, p. 2\)](#) defined blended learning as ‘an approach to the design of a course or programme that integrates face to face and online learning’. This method is often perceived to integrate the best of face to face teaching with online learning providing unique opportunities that neither approach can offer alone ([Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia & Jose, 2009](#)). As universities begin to incorporate the use of technology alongside classroom based teaching, it is important to assess how students perceive blended learning methods and how they can best aid their learning. Despite its many benefits, and the frequent use of technology outside of educational settings, getting students to fully engage online presents a seemingly uphill struggle ([Dale & Lane, 2004](#); [Groves & O’Donaghue, 2009](#); [So, 2009](#)).

2. Asynchronous Online Discussion Forums

Asynchronous Online Discussion Forums (AODF) are one of the most widely used methods within a blended learning strategy ([Riley, 2006](#)). They tend to be accessible, simple to use, compatible with teaching and learning practices, and exist within virtual learning environments ([Guzdial & Turns, 2000](#)). Online forums allow discussions to extend and develop beyond a classroom setting where there are frequently constraints on time. They also allow students to participate in discussions 24 h a day, regardless of geographic location ([Salmon, 2005](#)). In addition to issues concerning access, face to face interactions tend to happen quickly leaving little time to provide indepth feedback, with AODFs both learners and teachers have time to reflect prior to posting a response ([Groeling, 1999](#)). AODFs also provide a non-intimidating environment where learners feel able to give opinions, offer suggestions and ask questions ([Alvarez-Torres, 2001](#)). Indeed, many people who opt out during a face to face session can be encouraged to voice their opinion online ([Aydin, 2005](#)).

AODFs tend to foster collaborative learning, allowing the investigation of different perspectives and ideas ([Johanssen, 1999](#)). Social constructivist approaches encourage the use of collaboration thus allowing students exposure to alternative perspectives, arguably, the forum creates a space to allow such collaboration to occur ([Groves & O’Donaghue, 2009](#)). Through their participation students become active creators of knowledge rather than passive receptors of information ([Vygotsky, 1978](#); [Stacey, 1999](#)).

Although AODFs can function as a space for collaborative learning, in order for them to be effective people have to decide to participate. Evidence suggests that even in compulsory settings promoting participation can be a challenging task ([So, 2009](#)). When students do engage they often post the minimum number of notes and some may choose not even to engage at all ([Dennen, 2005](#); [Zhu, 2006](#)). In order to encourage participation, [Zhu \(2006\)](#) suggested some generic guidelines for teachers to follow. Zhu suggests that topics should be worthy of discussion, information and instructions should be visible and clear to users and clear and detailed feedback should be available. Additionally, [Lane, Dale and Horrell \(2006\)](#) recommended that students’ comments on the forum should be used as the focus of discussion within lectures thus integrating the online tasks into wider module delivery.

There are several additional pitfalls associated with the use of asynchronous discussion forums that need to be considered when setting up learning opportunities online. Some students might be concerned about the permanence of their postings compared to face to face discussions where comments are easily forgotten ([Williams, 2002](#)). Moreover, conversing online lacks the mixture of speech and body language that are often used in face to face sessions to ascertain students’ understanding of a topic ([Groves & O’Donaghue, 2009](#)).

3. Asynchronous online discussion forums and deep learning

According to [Salmon \(2000\)](#), online environments should stimulate reflective thought and strategic meaningful construction of knowledge moving beyond strategic and instrumentalist learning. Deep learning is associated with academic engagement as well as developing a more meaningful understanding of a particular subject area, drawing on one’s own and others knowledge in coming to know and understand ([Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty & Bowl, 2008](#)). Deep learning involves questioning, researching and making connections between the familiar and unfamiliar ([Biggs, 2003](#); [Ramsden, 2003](#)). [Bloom’s \(1956\)](#) taxonomy has frequently been used in educational settings to provide a classification system of levels of cognition. The highest levels of Bloom’s taxonomy are associated with the notion of deep learning. The levels from lowest to highest are (1) knowledge, (2) understanding, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis and (6) evaluation. This system therefore provides a framework from which particular learning goals and objectives can be developed. Deep learning is a multifaceted concept, however, [Enwistle and Waterston’s \(1988\)](#) suggested that there are several indications that students have engaged in deep learning. Students are deemed to have engaged in the deep learning if they demonstrate one or more of the following criteria:

- Connecting facts and ideas and concepts in order to interpret propose or judge.
- Processing new elements of information.
- Creating new information.
- Proposing one or more solution in terms of judgement.
- Assuming advantages/disadvantages for a situation or solution.
- Presenting support or proof for support by examples.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1011277>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1011277>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)