Using discussion boards as a means of engaging learners

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USTLG 30th November 2009

Plan

- What are the essential teaching ingredients needed to engage learners?
- Research & Professional Development Level 1 Sport & Exercise Module
- Pilot study
- Staff training for Online Social Network Learning (OSNL) on Blackboard
- Structure of peer assessment activities
- Examples of online postings
- Observations
- Conclusions

Essential ingredients?

- Small group work
- Problems to solve or questions to answer
- Learning by doing – tasks – hands-on etc
  - Involves behaviour, thinking, negotiating meaning with others, reflecting
- Discourse between students
- Discourse between tutor and students
- Visible outputs by students which are routinely recognised by the tutor and shared with the group
- Formal assessment

Research and Professional Development in Sport & Exercise Level 1

Week	Lecture	Workshop
1	Introduction to the module	Reflecting on the essay process
2	Learning and Teaching in Higher Education	Learning Styles
3	**Developing Research Skills**	**Using e-resources**
4	**Plagiarism and Referencing**	**Internet based session**
5	**Writing Styles (1): The written word**	**Understanding plagiarism and referencing**
6	**Writing Styles (2): Report Writing, Reading and Summarising**	**OSNL: Peer assessment: Essay introduction**
7	**Assessment, feedback and revision**	**OSNL: Peer assessment: Essay main body**
8	**Introduction to Qualitative Research**	**OSNL: Peer assessment: Essay conclusion and bibliography**
9	Introduction to Quantitative Research	Qualitative Methodologies - choosing the right methodology
10	Qualitative Research (2)	Quantitative Methodologies – becoming acquainted with statistical concepts
11	Quantitative Research (2)	Working with Qualitative / Quantitative data
12	Module summary	Working with Qualitative / Quantitative data

■ CREATE THE **DIFFERENCE**

Pilot study (what the students said about online social network learning)

- Indicating how learning is enhanced and knowledge is extended through: discourse, seeing others views, making comments, receiving feedback from peers and promoting reflection

- (Transcript on page 2 of handout)
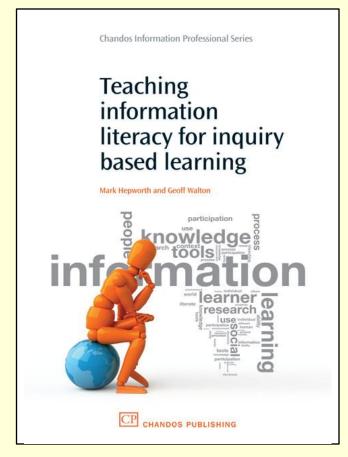
- <u>Alternative link to movie</u>

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Pilot study (tutor perspective)

- *"We have clearly seen behavioural changes, we've seen students becoming more engaged, students becoming more informed, we've seen students acquiring better knowledge, developing skills […]."*

- *"[…] they were working as a team so they were working in a collaborative environment with one-another, they were learning from one-another, it was also very interactive, less of us more of them."*

- *"[…] the way they interacted, developing certain friendships and relationships amongst the group, the cohesion with the group certainly developed, certainly noticed that since the project has come to an end those relationships are deeply manifest and continued. I think in terms of a group interaction thing it has been productive, it's been good."*

Commercial break!!

- All and more in my book!
- Practical examples underpinned with theory
- Face-to-face learning
- Online learning
- Based on empirical research

Chandos Information Professional Series

Teaching information literacy for inquiry based learning

Mark Hepworth and Geoff Walton

CHANDOS PUBLISHING

Staff training for OSNL

- Presentation to staff
- Handout guide issued to all module tutors (see handout p3-7)
- Online groups and tasks set up in advance
- Direct support to tutors during first year
- Help and guidance in completing Tutor Summaries (see handout p6-7)

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Structure of peer assessment activity (1)

- 112 students in 7 online tutor groups (2007-08)
- 111 students in 7 online tutor groups (2008-09)
- 162 students in 8 online tutor groups (2009-10) (one excluded from analysis – incomplete data)
- Week 1 Activity
  - Discussion concentrated on the Essay Introduction
- Week 2 Activity
  - Discussion focused on the Essay Main Body
- Week 3 Activity
  - Discussion centred on the Essay Conclusion and references
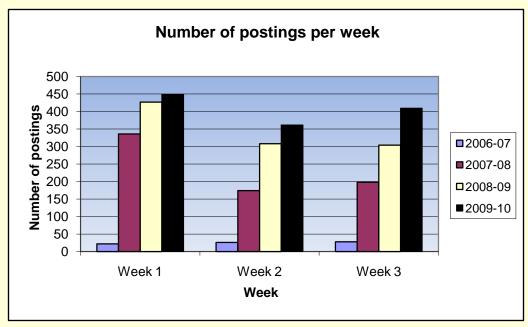- Within groups students expected initially to post comments in pairs

Structure of peer assessment activity (2)

- Forum – Peer Assessment
- Thread - Students posted their draft essay
- Seed – What are the criteria for writing a good assignment?
- Task - Read criteria for good essay structure
  - Resource - Assignment Survival Kit (ASK) step 9
- Task - Make comments, give feedback to fellow students and discuss issues
- Diversity of tutor behaviour
  - Some summarised discussion and posted this before next session only
  - Some participated in ongoing discussion and posted a summary

- (NB printed instructions for students to participate in OSNL – see handout p4-5)

Online contributions

Number of postings per week

- Multiple contributions by many students
- Almost every student made at least one contribution
- Minimum contributions per 50min session - 10 (wk 3 2007-8)
- Maximum contributions per 50min session - 148 (wk 1 2009-10)
- 2009-10 adjusted to Total No.Of Postings X 112/162 for comparison

CREATE THE **DIFFERENCE**

Online postings to peers

- ***Typical structure, i.e., positive-criticism-positive***
  - *"Good introduction, well referenced however you may need to reference the bit about the Indianapolis Colts football team, nice one mate."*
- ***Evidence of learning regarding evaluating information***
  - *"[...] include more [sources] that are more up-to-date."*
  - *" [...] good and relevent (sic) sources"*
  - *"[...] try to use academic references instead of autobiographies."*
  - *"[...] could use references from books as well as the internet"*
  - *"Your whole reference list are (sic) websites. could you know use books as its easyer (sic) as you dont (sic) have to worry if they are credible? "*

More examples

- *Evidence of learning regarding referencing information*
  - *"[...] Be careful with punctuation and use of brackets when referencing."*
  - *"Your references could include more information such as page numbers."*
  - *"[...] Watch your referencing in the main text, only author and date is need (sic), not the title of the book or journal."*
  - *"[...] four of your refences (sic) have not got the place and name of publishers."*
  - *"[...] you have to put the name of the author before the journal/book! i (sic) didnt (sic) do that either on mine but i (sic) have just reallized (sic) and learned something from reading other peoples comments"*
  - *"[...] you have used the italics and spaces brilliantly [...] the references look like they are from a book."*
  - *"[...] references need to be in alphabetical order"*
  - *"And think that the url reference needs more i.e. author of website etc. maybe look for some other example on how to reference websites"*
  - *"just need to check the APA style"*

Observations

- High level of engagement noted by module tutors

- Evidence of learning

- Students still working at the end of the session compared to pre OSNL when students were ready run to out of the door!

- Students now used to the idea of drafting and redrafting written work

Concluding remarks

- Staff feedback very positive
- Students enjoy it
- Students comfortable with online social networking environment
- Potential to assess online discourse?