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EDUC 7102- 1

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(Partially) Annotated Bibliography

Andresen, M. A. (2009). Asynchronous discussion forums: success factors, outcomes, assessments, and limitations. *Educational Technology & Society, 12* (1), 249–257.

The author of this paper reviewed other studies dealing with asynchronous discussion forums and found that while they have much to offer, they also come with some limitations. He found that learners should be offered incentives to participate in discussion forums and that instructors need to offer very clear expectations and guidelines for course requirements.

After reading this paper, it is clear to me that one way to help students make the most of discussion forums is to start the class with explicit directions for how the discussion forums are to be used, and how students will be assessed. When students understand what is expected of them, they will rise to the challenge.

Beuchot, A., & Bullen, M. (2005). Interaction and interpersonalitv in online discussion forums. *Distance Education, 26*(1), 67-87. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/217777236?accountid=14872>

Cheng, C., Pare, D.E., Collimore, L., & Joordens, S. (2011). Assessing the effectiveness of a voluntary online discussion forum on improving students' course performance. *Computers and Education, 56*(1), 253-261.

The subjects of this study were a group of undergraduate students in an introductory psychology course. Their postings on a discussion forum were counted and compared to their overall grade in the class. The authors of the study determined that there was some correlation between the activity in the discussion forums and the level of success as measured by grades.

The primary limitation of this experiment was that the discussion forum participation was optional, so it is difficult to determine whether students performed well in class because they participated in the discussion forums or whether the better students, who would get better grades anyway, also were more able to share their thoughts in the forums. The implication is that if discussion forum postings are mandatory, even those students who are less sure of themselves will be encouraged to contribute.

Christopher, M. M., Thomas, J. A., & Tallent-Runnels, M. (2004). Raising the bar:

Encouraging high level thinking in online discussion forums. *Roepers Review*, 26(3), 166-171. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/206699807?accountid=14872>

Gafni, R. & Geri, N. (2010). The value of collaborative e-learning: Compulsory versus optional online forum assignments. *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning & Learning Objects*, 6, 335-343.

These authors studied 120 postgraduate students, some of whom were required to post to discussion forums, some of whom were merely given the option, and compared the student success in the course (as measured by exam grades) with the presence of the

discussion board posting requirement. They found that optional discussion postings had no effect on the overall grade, but compulsory postings did lead to higher grades.

The results of this study suggest that forum postings should be compulsory, as this form of communication can help students achieve higher levels of success in their classes. Making participation mandatory ensures that all students will participate, and all will feel the need to same pressure to show their best work to their classmates.

Lewinson, J. (2005). Asynchronous discussion forums in the changing landscape of the online learning environment. *Campus - Wide Information Systems*, 22(3), 162-167.

Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/218053258?accountid=14872>

Mason, R. B. (2011). Student engagement with, and participation in, an e-forum. *Journal of Educational Technology and Society*, 14(2), 258-268

56 students participated in this experiment, which asked them to complete questionnaires regarding their participation in an online discussion forum. The author found that a significant number of the students explained that their lack of participation was due to the forums tasks being optional, and a general inexperience with and insecurity around this type of communication.

From this conclusions of this experiment, it is clear that for discussion forums to be successful, students must be given a chance to interact with their classmates on the discussion forums for an extended period of time so that they can grow accustomed to their use and become comfortable communicating in this manner.

Yukselturk, E. (2010). An investigation of factors affecting student participation level in an online discussion forum. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, 9(2), 24-32

The author of this study examined the relationship between levels of participation in an online discussion forums and factors in students' lives, as well as looking at students' perceptions of the reasons for their levels of participation. It was found that there was a positive correlation between high levels of participation and the following three characteristics: high scholastic achievement, gender (males participate more frequently) and a greater number of weekly hours of internet use. Additionally, students' perceptions of why they did not participate more frequently were that they did not fully understand the material being taught and so did not know what to talk about, they felt uncomfortable talking with people they did not know, and there weren't enough activities offered to which they could respond.

From the conclusions of this study, it is clear that students need to be taught how to use discussion boards productively. For example, students can be encouraged to ask questions and help one another understand the material being taught. Also, a social forum can give students the opportunity to get to know one another and find commonalities amongst their differences. Instructors should make certain to offer enough opportunities for students to utilize the discussion boards.

Zhang, T., Gao, T., Ring, G., & Zhang, W. (2007). Using online discussion forums to assist a traditional English class. *International Journal on ELearning*, 6(4), 623-643.
Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/210330131?accountid=14872>

This study of 54 high school seniors found that discussion forums did not improve reading, grammar or vocabulary abilities but did improve writing skills and led to higher levels of critical thinking. The study also examined whether interventions from an

instructor would aid learning, and found that that the group that received these interventions felt more confident in their ideas after receiving instructor feedback. The authors of this study felt that the students involved did not fully understand the importance of interaction on the discussion boards, and this lack of understanding led to less effort being made to communicate with classmates.

The conclusions of this essay indicate that the importance of interactivity should be made clear at the beginning of a class, and assessments of participation should be based not just on whether participants share their ideas, but on how well they respond to one another's ideas as well.