Categorising asynchronous discussion threads: improving the quality of student learning

Dr Anthony Barnett, Senior lecturer, University of Worcester, WR2 6AJ  email: a.barnett@worc.ac.uk

Evaluating contributions to an asynchronous discussion

Churches (2010)  Bloom’s Digital Taxonomy rubric
- reply construction
- understanding
- evaluation

- pointing
- questioning
- resolving
- summarising

Golanics & Nussbaum (2007)  Enhancing online discussion
- collaborative argumentation
- adversarial argumentation
- exploratory discourse

Jimoyiannis & Angelina (2012)  Social network analysis
- cohesion
- role analysis
- centrality

Type of discussion thread
- Passive facilitator
- Active facilitator
- Dominant facilitator
- Multiple facilitators
- Balanced discussion
- Cliqued discussion
- Formulic discussion
- Uninvolved discussion
- Direct response discussion
- Evolving discussion
- Self referencing
- Unresponsive star
- No names discussion
- Multiple sub-threads
- Complex models

Forum: Computer science
Thread: Which programming languages should be taught in secondary schools and why?

- Very few participants (5) though with multiple messages exchanged between facilitator and separate message posters
- Facilitator responded to every message
- All messages were directed at the facilitator
- 11 of the 17 messages contained at least one reference or hyperlink - most contained several
- Analysis of the content provides evidence that participants read at least some of the cited texts
- Average message length: 265 words; range 156-410 words

- 5 of the 6 messages that contained at least one question were asked by the facilitator

S1: “[As I posted the first message and therefore had the facilitator role], I believe it was my responsibility to respond to each post and assist with moving the discussion forward.”

S2: “On the whole for every participant commenting on this thread I made sure I replied back and tried to include a question for them to think about and research. This way I hoped they would return with their viewpoint to carry on the discussion.”

Previous research: