Abstract

Asynchronous online discussion has been lauded as a powerful communication tool in education, particularly in adult, tertiary and distance education contexts where it offers a capacity for building online academic communities that would be difficult to maintain in physical space. Yet considerably less support is available for teachers attempting to build such cyber-communities in school contexts (Lapadat, 2005) than that in the tertiary context. One particularly rich potential of the online mode is for young people to exchange opinions about the literature they are reading, whether this be through commercial book sites, state education web forums or individual school forums (Love, 2002, 2005; Love & Simpson, 2006). In this presentation, I examine some features of text-response discussions across these forums and offer a contribution towards the development of diagnostic framework for establishing and managing such discussions. Such frameworks may enable teachers to avoid simply reproducing old pedagogic practices in new technological skins (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) or worse still, validating a new mode of structural inequity and disadvantage, as they work with online discussions.

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