

The Motivating and Limiting Factors of Learners' Engagement in an Online Discussion Forum

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Abstract : Lately, asynchronous discussion forum is integrated in higher educational institutions as it may increase learning process, learners' understanding, achievement and knowledge construction. Asynchronous discussion forum is used to complement the traditional, face-to-face learning session in hybrid learning courses. However, studies have proven that students' engagement in online forum are still unconvincing. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the motivating factors and obstacles that affect the learners' engagement in asynchronous discussion forum. This study is carried out in one of the public higher educational institutions in Malaysia with 18 postgraduate students as samples. The authors have developed a 40-items questionnaire based on literature review. The results indicate several factors that have encouraged or limited students' engagement in asynchronous discussion forum: (a) the practices or behaviors of peers, or instructors, (b) the needs for the discussions, (c) the learners' personalities, (d) constraints in continuing the discussion forum, (e) lack of ideas, (f) the level of thoughts, (g) the level of knowledge construction, (h) technical problems, (i) time constraints and (j) misunderstanding. This study suggests some recommendations to increase the students' engagement in online forums. Finally, based upon the findings, some implications are proposed for further research.

Keywords : asynchronous discussion forum, engagement, factors, motivating, limiting

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