

Students' Level of Knowledge Construction and Pattern of Social Interaction in an Online Forum

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Abstract : The asynchronous discussion forum is one of the most widely used activities in learning management system environment. Online forum allows participants to interact, construct knowledge, and can be used to complement face to face sessions in blended learning courses. However, to what extent do the students perceive the benefits or advantages of forum remain to be seen. Through content and social network analyses, instructors will be able to gauge the students' engagement and knowledge construction level. Thus, this study aims to analyze the students' level of knowledge construction and their participation level that occur through online discussion. It also attempts to investigate the relationship between the level of knowledge construction and their social interaction patterns. The sample involves 23 students undertaking a master course in one public university in Malaysia. The asynchronous discussion forum was conducted for three weeks as part of the course requirement. The finding indicates that the level of knowledge construction is quite low. Also, the density value of 0.11 indicating that the overall communication among the participants in the forum is low. This study reveals that strong and significant correlations between SNA measures (in-degree centrality, out-degree centrality) and level of knowledge construction. Thus, allocating these active students in a different groups aids the interactive discussion takes place. Finally, based upon the findings, some recommendations to increase students' level of knowledge construction and also for further research are proposed.

Keywords : asynchronous discussion forums, content analysis, knowledge construction, social network analysis

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