

Chapter 12

Redesigning Student's Thinking Processes through Advanced Discussion Forums

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter addresses how a typical discussion board can transform the learning process into a collaborative environment that creates extended thinking processes promoting successful student outcomes. To illustrate a collaborative learning environment, teaching methodologies should focus on assisting a student to become diversified independent thinkers. Creating a diversified independent thinker infuses independent and cooperative critical analysis through varied topical issues.

INTRODUCTION

In an e-learning setting at times we often fall into the trap of relying solely on recall questions that are at the lower level of thinking, which do little to promote critical thinking and analysis. In order to succeed in today's fast paced competitive society, students need to possess a higher level of thinking to achieve their potential. Giving students the tools necessary to connect to global perspectives creates this type of thinking process, thereby creating a more sophisticated, diversified thinking system. Global perspectives refer to allowing students ample opportunities to be exposed to

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various norms, expectations, and geographic languages and thought processes that are only created within specific contextual aspects. This in turn allows students to connect to the vast diversified experiences and knowledge that each student brings to the online classroom setting. Globalized learning is allowing students this type of exposure through the various insights of peers, scholarly analysis and the interaction process. The interaction process allows students to develop broad based cross-cultural analysis of complex topics discussed within the classrooms.

Cultural analysis transcends mere ethnic identifications and becomes a more comprehensive interpretation of topics. A global learner is one who has the capability to break down barriers and clearly be able to articulate and comprehend different diverse perspectives. These perspectives can be accomplished through providing students with a strategic plan of writing prompts that create a mental map that leads students from a lower level of cognitive analysis to a higher level of cognitive functioning. Higher level cognitive functioning will allow students to think in a more consistent critical analytical process.

The most important skill of an online learner is to acquire the ability to think for themselves in an independent critical manner. Inspiring students to inquire, investigate, and interpret creates a level of thinking that connects to the formal stage of cognitive development. At this level of functioning, students have the ability to expand and extrapolate topical information that connects to creating and extending thoughts for personal ideologies that bridge the gap between a low skill level and high skill level of thinking abilities. Creating environments that offer ample opportunities to transform present thinking abilities towards a more three dimensional thinking process will produce not only classroom content success but also create a more developed proactive contributor to society. Creating this type of advanced discussion facilitated by the instructor incorporates content specific follow up questions. These newly added questions will guide and direct students towards the correct path of thinking. This path will enable students to develop a more streamlined and focused approach.

THE NATURE OF THE THREADED DISCUSSION FORUMS

Online learning environments are considered independent in nature however; to foster positive student success they are dependent upon the depth of the interaction process with peer communication. In other words, although students are taking the course independently and within independent locations their success is highly dependent upon collaborative efforts. As early as 1995 with a study per Anuradha A. Gokhale collaborative education fosters academic success due to the level of peer interaction and student involvement. Collaborative learning within an e learning

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