Vol.5 No.2 (2022)

Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching

ISSN : 2591-801X

Content Available at : http://journals.sfu.ca/jalt/index.php/jalt/index

Successful collaboration in online learning through skills and community building: a women in leadership MBA subject case study

Vanessa Stafford[A] [A] *Academic Learning Manager, Kaplan Business School, Australia*

Keywords

5-stage model for online learning;
collaborativism;
community of inquiry;
online learning;
peer-peer collaboration;
social constructivism;
women in leadership.

Correspondence

Vanessa.stafford@kbs.edu.au [A]

Article Info

Received 26 April 2022
Received in revised form 20 May 2022
Accepted 20 July 2022
Available online 18 August 2022

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2022.5.2.ss4

Abstract

Harasim's Collaborativism and Garrison's Community of Inquiry are underpinned by the notion that successful online peer-peer collaboration leads to deep learning and that online learners require scaffolded facilitator support to successfully collaborate. This support includes two actions: firstly, transitioning students from the roles of face-to-face learners to online learners so they know what to do and how to do it in a new learning environment and secondly, building a strong online community that sets the positive cognitive and behavioural building blocks that underpin successful collaboration. Collaborativism sees learners progressing through distinct discourse-focussed collaboration stages in order to achieve new, deep knowledge acquisition and Community of Inquiry proposes the convergence of Social Presence, Teaching Presence, and Cognitive Presence to achieve the same. Linking theory to practice, Salmon's 5-Stage Model for Online Learning complements these frameworks by providing facilitators with a practical online learning model, with embedded learning activities, providing the tools to create a strong online learner community. These three theorists bring Social Constructivism to the online learning space.

MBA661 Gendered Workplace Environments v1, is a higher education subject, placed at an Australian Qualifications Framework level 9 (AQF-9), and at a Master of Business Administration level 600 (MBA-600). It sits within a Women in Leadership specialisation stream. It is used here in an illustrative case study on how to successfully apply these theories and aligned model to achieve online Social Constructivism. The educational philosophy used in its syllabus design and facilitation was to put community building activities before content teaching so that technology and collaboration skills were developed in a supportive, scaffolded manner, better equipping students to then engage in effective, collaborative content learning. This case study provides presumptive evidence that placing community building activities before content teaching within weekly lesson plans results in strong student collaboration skills development that may contribute to higher student satisfaction levels with collaborative learning.

Introduction

Social-constructivist learning in face-to-face learning environments is widely considered best-practice for learning design and teaching. Synchronous online learning environments should replicate this best-practice to ensure the same student satisfaction exists under both models. Social-constructivist learning involves facilitating peer-peer dialogue and collaboration (Harasim, 2017), and the building of a Community of Inquiry (Swan, 2019). The online version of this involves scaffolding students through the role adjustment from face-to-face learner to online learner, in order for social-constructivism to be maintained (Garrison et al., 2019). However, the challenges of technology and social distance in synchronous online learning environments have caused low student satisfaction with discourse-based, collaborative experiences, with students reporting that breakout rooms are like awkward first dates, forcing them to make small talk with complete strangers (Radhakrishnan, 2020; Rozelman & Steigerwald, 2021; Whear, 2020). These negative collaborative experiences may indicate a failure to implement social-constructivism well in the synchronous, online classroom. The case study reported in this article, asks whether we can improve student satisfaction in synchronous, online collaborative learning experiences by focussing on building a competent online community before attempting to teach lesson content. The frameworks of Linda Harasim's (2017) Collaborativism, Garrison's (2019) Community of Inquiry, and Salmon's (2021) 5-Stage Model for Online Learning can all help to address this question.

Whilst these frameworks were originally designed to counter the challenges of asynchronous collaboration, considering the common challenges of technology and distanced socialisation, applying these models to the synchronous online learning experience is useful. Both environments contain the risk of students not collaborating well under a social-constructivist design rooted in the face-to-face education context, and therefore students being dissatisfied with their learning experience. Accordingly, this analysis reports on a case study subject, placed at an Australian Qualifications Framework level 9, (AQF-9), and Master of Business Administration level 600 (MBA-600). It explores whether the implementation of these frameworks into the design and facilitation of the subject could create a strong online community – one that improves student collaboration satisfaction in synchronous, online learning environments.

To discuss this question, a brief summary of the frameworks outlined above is provided, followed by an illustrative discussion on how they were used in a subject's design. This case study's design and facilitation is discussed from the syllabus designer/classroom facilitator's (designer/facilitator) personal experience. This argument presented here will assert that by building a strong, synchronous, online learning community before focussing on teaching the subject content led to an observable improvement in collaborative efficacy of the learner group, and consequently, displayed observable higher student satisfaction with synchronous, online collaborative learning experiences.

Theoretical framework: solving the challenge of ensuring online social constructivism

The current challenge observed from the standpoint of the designer/facilitator of this reflective case study is maintaining social constructivism in the synchronous, online classroom. Verbal reports from facilitators, or their managers on their behalf, most commonly contain complaints of limited successful student 'group work' in synchronous online lessons. Two results have been observed in these scenarios: either facilitators strive to overcome these challenges by seeking pedagogical advice, or they simplify their pedagogies by reducing a once-socially-constructivist, workshop learning model they used in the on-campus classroom, to an online lecture format, with little to no student collaboration. The latter is an understandable action, considering the pressures educators have experienced over the past few years through the pandemic and the unexpected transition to fully online teaching. However, to ensure social-constructivist learning still occurs in the synchronous, online classroom, we can look to Harasim (2017) , Garrison (2019), and Salmon (2021) for guidance.

Harasim's Collaborativism (2017) is an online learning theory that places the importance of peer-peer discourse over didactic learning pedagogies, seeing learners progress through distinct collaboration stages in order to achieve new, deep knowledge acquisition as a dialogue-based learner group. Harasim (2018) reports that her dissatisfaction with the original asynchronous-forum-based online learning models that had little peer-peer discourse, led her to apply Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, with its focus on discourse within knowledge construction, to a framework that provides collaborative discourse experiences between students within an asynchronous environment. From this perspective, there are three framework phases that students must be scaffolded through by their facilitator: the idea generation phase, the idea organising phase, and the intellectual convergence phase, whereby upon achievement of this final phase, the student has the ability to apply their new knowledge schema to other contexts (Harasim, 2017). These phases are facilitated by specifically-designed learning activities, ranging from posing a problem, allowing for group brainstorming and discussion, through to debating and questioning each other to narrow down ideas, until a shared construction of new knowledge has occurred (Harasim, 2017). In short, Collaborativism is all about creating a community through peer-peer discourse to bring social constructivism to the asynchronous online learning experience.

Garrison's Community of Inquiry is an online learning framework that also builds a community of active learners within an asynchronous online learning environment, this time by facilitating the convergence of Cognitive Presence, Teaching Presence, and Social Presence (Garrison et al., 2019). Similarities can be found between this theory and Harasim's in that the facilitator is crucial, ensuring the alignment of these three spheres. For example, Swan (2019) explains how Cognitive Presence is built upon the work of John Dewey in that learning experiences must include socially constructed, reflective inquiry. It uses the Practical Inquiry model, whereby learners are facilitated through four

phases of learning activity: a triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution (Garrison et al., 2019).

Social presence, on the other hand, was developed out of what Garrison and his co-designers saw as an over-reliance on the notion of 'belonging' within this field of study, and consequently, its lack of integration with cognitive learning processes (Garrison et al., 2019). In other words, the feeling of belonging to a community was not enough to ensure positive learning experiences. Social Presence, therefore, consisted of the facilitation of not only identification with the learning community and building important relationships with two or more members, but of having purpose when engaging in community discourse (Garrison et al., 2019).

Consequently, Teaching Presence has been found to causally influence both the Cognitive and Social Presences and is perceived by students to increase their satisfaction, increase their learning, and create a social community (Anderson et al., 2001; Garrison et al., 2019). Further to the importance of the educator's role, is the need to tackle student role-identify formation when they switch from being face-to-face learners, to online or blended learners. Garrison's (2019) research demonstrates: students see a difference between their two roles of on-campus learner and online learner; that an adjustment to this new online role is needed to be a successful online learner; and that the educator is the key to facilitating them through it by ensuring harmony of these three presences. Garrison says (2019) that the students' role within a Community of Inquiry is to learn the new social expectations for behaviour in an online social context, in order to learn to construct meaning together as a group through shared discourse. In other words, a community of inquiry requires all members to be actively involved.

The 5-Stage Model for Online Learning conceptualised by Gilly Salmon (2021) is also an online learning framework and focusses on scaffolding asynchronous learners through five distinct stages from adjusting to online learning to thriving within it. Beginning with Access and Motivation, Socialisation, and Information Exchange, to Knowledge Construction and Development, the five stages ensure students learn how to learn within an online community (Salmon et al., 2010; Salmon, 2021). A key element of the framework is the design and facilitation of online activities, called 'e-tivities', which promote advancement through the stages and place an emphasis on the importance of the facilitator in building an online community of socially and technically adept learners (Salmon, 2021). For example, new learners could be provided with a carefully constructed e-tivity, asking them to simply post a welcome message on a shared forum. This simple act fits within the first 'access and motivation' stage in that it is testing students' abilities to use technology to post a message, and their willingness to do so.

This framework complements Collaborativism in that technology and peer-peer discourse are important partners that need learning design attention, and complements Community of Inquiry, in that once the community is built, effective inquiry can occur. The distinction between this and the previous two frameworks is that Salmon makes a clear case for facilitating incredibly basic and easy to use e-tivities that support the building of a strong community of capable online learners before content learning begins (Salmon et al., 2010; Salmon, 2021). In other words, build a community before you teach the content. And building this community requires learning activities, as noted by Conrad (2002) when she states that "participation in online learning activities exists before community, that it contributes to community, that it is the vehicle for maintaining community, and that it eventually becomes the measure of the health of community" (para. 70).

Reflections on a case study built upon collaborative, inquiry-based learning experiences

MBA661 Gendered Workplace Environments v1 had these frameworks applied to its instructional design and facilitation. This case study reflection is taken from a 12-week trimester in July 2021, where the student cohort was made up of 36 students of varying genders, cultural backgrounds, and ages. Due to the high number of international students within this Australian-based college, the cohort had a wide range of English language abilities, workshop-style active learning experience, and prior knowledge of the subject's cognate area. The weekly online classes were three hours in length, providing synchronous learning experiences, coupled with a multi-purpose online workbook and LMS-stored learning resources for asynchronous learning opportunities.

The designer/facilitator's goal was to maintain social-constructivist, collaborative learning in a synchronous online environment because engaged, collaborative learners develop deep, meaningful learning experiences (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007). As such, the instructional design implemented two methodologies: the narrative approach and inquiry-based learning that supported deeper learning opportunities. For example, the subject teaches the global history of laws, workplace policies, and practices that have affected women's roles in the paid workforce since the mid-1800s to today, and the trailblazing women who fought for, and made crucial headway towards, women's societal and workplace equality. The students learned the content chronologically from the past to the present, continuously applying those historical contexts to the present day experiences of the modern worker. This by necessity, required complex synthesising of information in order to contextually analyse and understand present workplace culture, laws, and practices and predicting what they would be in the future – essentially answering the questions "how did we get here?" and "where are we headed?". This exemplifies Dewey's call for learning experiences to involve reflective inquiry for them to be meaningful (Swan, 2019) and Blooms Taxonomy's higher order cognitive practices of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Nikolić & Dabić, 2016).

The challenge then, was that students had to be taught how to be collaborative and inquiring learners in the synchronous, online classroom. Researching theories and models that could help facilitate successful online collaboration, Harasim's Collaborativism (2017), Garrison's Community of Inquiry (2019), and Salmon's (2021) 5-stage model for online learning were seen to be the most useful. Each of these approaches contributed in their own way to the design of the subject – from the designer/facilitator's

greater understanding of the learning science to the nuts and bolts of in-class facilitation.

Discussion

To discuss each of these frameworks' influences in more detail, the discussion will start from the end – the assessment goal, then the weekly activity design to prepare students to achieve that goal, then finally, the beginning, where students learned how to learn online.

The end – assessment design

One application of Harasim's framework was in the initial confirmation that the design to incorporate a collaborative, problem-based-learning assessment activity in the final week, using inquiry-based learning, was pedagogically sound. This is because these activities facilitated learning through discourse, which Harasim - and her inspiration from Vygotsky's Social Constructivism – declares to be essential to effective learning (Harasim, 2017, 2018). In fact, focussing on the importance of an individual mind working within its social environment is a key tenet of Vygotsky's work (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019) and so deemed to be a good model for this subject design.

In this assessment, students were to engage in free discourse for three hours, taking all their learnings from the chronologically studied history of gendered workplaces to create the content for the 'missing week 12 workshop', one that would address content for an imagined future date. This task itself was to incorporate inquiry-based-learning, jigsaw learning, and collaboration. The discourse within this collaborative experience saw students progress through Harasim's three discourse stages, including brainstorming and ideation, organising that information, and then deciding on a final shared set of knowledge to apply to the final presentation task. Despite finding a lack of rigorous discussion on Collaborativism itself, the designer/facilitator saw enough logic in the framework to warrant applying it broadly to the final collaborative assessment design.

The middle – learning how to cooperate

One application of Garrison's framework was within the implementation of a jigsaw activity each week. This activity would contribute to the building of a community of inquiry through learning within a diverse group of thinkers (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007) and, as studies have shown, build a strong community through the exchange of resources amongst learners (Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012). The jigsaw activity would take up a third of the class time, so designing it to be pedagogically effective was important.

A jigsaw activity is a technique aimed at building a respectful, enjoyable, and effective learning community by engaging in research-based cooperation: every student's role is important to complete the puzzle; the skills of respect, patience and empathy are practised; and a shared objective that fosters accountability is strived for (Jigsaw Classroom, 2022). The original jigsaw design has three stages - individual learning, group knowledge checking, and then group knowledge sharing (Jigsaw Classroom, 2022). However, for online activity management purposes, the designer/facilitator used a modified two-stage process, replacing the original design's scaffolding within stage two, with scaffolding via weekly repetition of the task.

Stage one consisted of choosing three separate world events from the same era. For example, a law that advanced gender equality in one country, a women's rights protest in another, and the first female college opening in yet another within the same decade. The complete puzzle of knowledge is to acquire a macro sense of the lives of women and their relationship to the workplace at that point in time. If this were taught in a traditional slide deck, text on a page format, the students would experience a lecturer telling them a series of facts. By combining a jigsaw with inquiry-based-learning however, the students were given hyperlinks to three websites and instructed to learn and summarise their part, to then teach to the other two members of their group. Community of Inquiry's Cognitive Presence was useful in considering the importance of shared inquiry within knowledge construction; Social Presence was useful in considering the importance of purpose within a group (hence a 'jigsaw' to complete), and Teaching Presence was crucial to consider regarding the design and facilitation of the activities each week.

The beginning - learning how to learn

There were many applications of Salmon's framework, it being the most practical of the three. However, they all closely relate to Garrison's view that students must learn how to be online learners, as distinct from their roles within a physical classroom where the behavioural norms of discourse are different (Garrison et al., 2019). Since the majority of students had not chosen to be online learners, having been forced into the model due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to pay considered attention to how they were approaching their new roles and the behaviours this would entail. Therefore, with the 5-Stage Model for Online Learning focussing on scaffolding learners through the adjustments to an online learning environment, and having a clear pedagogy to follow in the use of e-tivities (Salmon et al., 2010; Salmon, 2021), three activities were designed to foster access to learning, and socialisation to the online community.

A) Access to learning

E-tivity One was a Microsoft Form titled 'How I study online'. The form (see Appendix 1) was designed to gather data on how capable each student would be as an online learner before the lessons began, focussing on students' access to the live online session and the activities required of them within it. The questions ranged from "I have stable internet", with suggested responses such as 'always', 'sometimes', and 'never', to "I will be studying on…", with suggested answers such as 'a PC/laptop', 'an iPad', or 'a mobile phone'. Another angle to 'access', which touches on 'motivation' as well, was

access to learning due to in-home distractions, with one question asking: 'I predict that I will have challenges fully participating during my live, three-hour class. For example...', followed by a free-text box.

The data collected through this form highlighted which students had poor wifi and limited learning tools, which would hinder their ability to maintain video, audio, and effective shared file collaborative work throughout the three-hour lessons. One student's circumstance was revealed to be a firestorm of complexities: studying in India due to the pandemic, caring for a young child without support, unpredictable wifi strength in the neighbourhood, an old laptop with no camera, and limited English being spoken on a daily basis that affected the student's skills and confidence to communicate. The ability for this student to engage in successful collaborative learning appeared challenging – how would they progress through Collaborativism's idea generation stage with such barriers to effective discourse? Knowing their circumstances was the first step in designing further e-tivities to overcome these challenges.

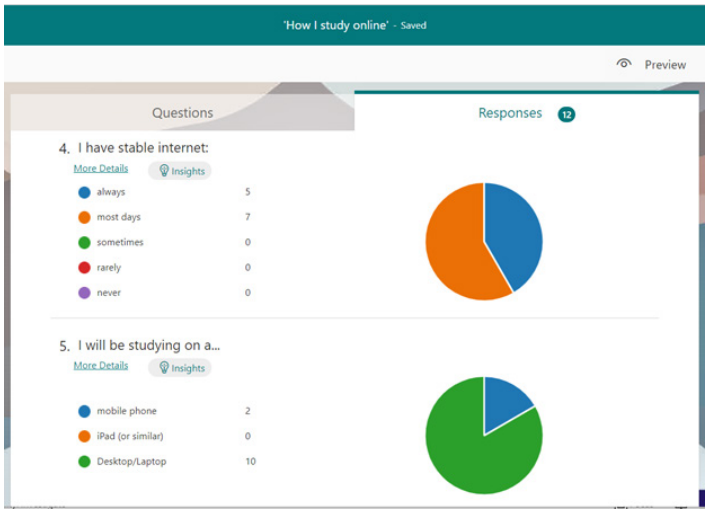


Figure 1: How I study online Microsoft Form. See Appendix 1 for full form.

E-tivity Two was titled 'Welcome colouring in page'. This was a collaborative colouring activity using a shared Google slide, via Zoom, with students using their individual Annotation tools to colour a 'welcome' picture. A deceptively frivolous activity at the beginning of lesson one, it answered a number of key online learning questions: 'who can use the technology of an Annotation tool?', 'who can collaborate together to enhance, rather than ruin, a collective artwork?', 'who has the confidence to speak up when they can't work out how to use the tool vs who will retreat and remain separate from the group?', and 'who has the technical ability to use voice or chat to ask for help in using the tool?'. The first stage of 'access' was addressed here and allowed the designer/facilitator to take notes on who was struggling with technology.

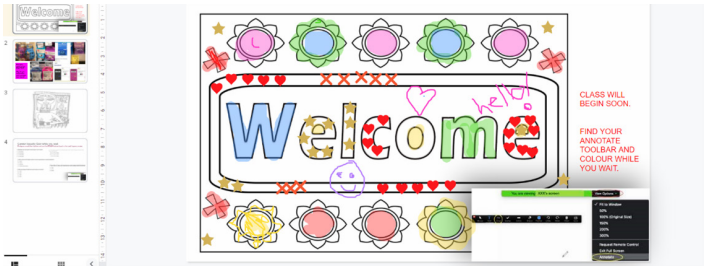


Figure 2: 'Welcome colouring in page' activity.

B) Socialisation

Salmon's first stage of Access was addressed by the colouring activity however, it also addressed her second stage of 'Socialisation'. On the second application of the colouring activity in week three, a remarkable thing occurred, whereby those who had been quieter in weeks one and two, appeared to be more willing to engage in casual verbal discourse while they were pre-occupied with the colouring task. An assumption is that when the group's focus appears to be on a collaborative object and away from a student's face on Zoom, they feel more comfortable speaking to the group (and research does exists in the English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) field regarding task-based learning leading to more peer-peer discussion (Fonseca, 2016), so there may be a connection here worth exploring with task-based learning on Zoom). This second iteration of the e-tivity moved students who had been previously noted as 'struggling' on the designer/facilitator's notes, to the category of 'emerging' as their technological and socialising skills appeared to improve. Other e-tivities of this ilk were designed and facilitated to build further collaboration skills and confidence towards a possible category of 'thriving'.

E-tivity Three focussed on an important skill within socialising – scaffolded communication. It was called 'Meet your Desk Buddy', using the 'Virtual Desk Buddy' pedagogical tool. This activity was created by the designer/facilitator in March 2020 to teach a faculty of green online educators how to maintain pair, peer-peer interaction as naturally occurs at an on-campus classroom desk. The activity was adapted from the Think, Pair, Share pedagogy created in 1981 by Frank Lyman and colleagues (Kaddoura, 2013). The purpose of both the offline and online versions of Think, Pair, Share is to build in inclusive pedagogy of scaffolded peer support when contributing to class discussions and as such, is the antithesis of the classroom 'cold-call' (Kaddoura, 2013). At its core, Think, Pair, Share inserts a step of testing your answer or thoughts with another student privately, before answering the facilitator's question publicly to the class (Kaddoura, 2013).

Allocating time to practise this skill would be crucial preparation for the final collaborative, problem-solving assessment activity, since studies have shown that when learners share personal information with each other, a strong learning community is built (Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012). Below is the e-tivity that was provided to the students on their week one workshop slide (Salmon's e-tivity titled sections in column one have been added here for illustrative purposes only, the students see only column two). It shows

the rationale and instructions to the students to meet and get to know their virtual desk buddy, and then provides the invitation to use the private chat function to share their ideas and contributions with each other throughout the lesson. These scaffolded contributions are facilitated by the educator using the method of Think, Pair, Share.

Table 1: 'Meet your desk buddy' instructions.

Title	Meet your Desk Buddy!
Purpose	When you complete this activity, you will know one classmate a little better. This will allow you to build connections with your peers for more interesting and effective learning experiences .
Task summary	You will use the Zoom chat function to private chat your Desk Buddy, exploring your similarities and differences using text and emojis.
Spark	Remember chatting with a classmate at a physical desk? This is the next best thing!
Individual contribution	Every person is a desk buddy to one other student. Your educator will tell you who your Desk Buddy is. 1. Click on the Zoom Chat icon. 2. 'Everyone' is shown by default. Change this by selecting the arrow and choosing your Desk Buddy's name from the list. 3. Start typing to your Desk Buddy using text or emojis. Suggested questions: where do you live, favourite holiday destination, languages you speak, reason for studying this subject?
Dialogue begins	Respond to your Desk Buddy's questions with your answers and your own questions.
E-moderator interventions	This conversation is between students only but if your Desk Buddy must step away, choose your facilitator to private chat with for a moment.
Schedule and time	You have 10 minutes to chat. Afterwards, your facilitator will ask who found any interesting similarities with their Desk Buddy.
Next	Your Desk Buddy is now your partner for the rest of the lesson. Private chat your Desk Buddy whenever you need to. When your facilitator asks a question to the class, there will be time to test out your answer or your idea on your Desk Buddy first, before sharing with the group.

Results

Although this reflective case study is purely from the designer/facilitator's perspective as the observer of student behaviour and receiver of verbal and written opinions, it presents a persuasive case that successful collaboration was achieved. Four observable results are now discussed:

Result one: Observations of students' moods upon returning from breakout rooms were positive, even when the collaborative task had been described as messy. This mood was observed through facial expressions, body language, voice and chat tone, and thumbs up emoji use.

This indicates success with two design features: firstly, the weekly lessons following the same activity pattern each week, enabling scaffolded skill building opportunities that allow for skill and confidence growth. Secondly, the learning design was explained to the students from the start, so they were on the same page with the design. Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory (Dewey, 1975) was briefly explained, that everything is learned within a social context and that they were practicing the messy but fulfilling aspects of humans interacting together, which would prepare them better for the workplace. They were told that their collaborative skills and experiences would most likely be poor to begin with, but would strengthen as the weeks progressed, through self-reflection and practice. Therefore, for post-task positivity to occur (the goal), pre-task positivity was fostered (it's OK to fail), setting the scene for safe, experiential learning practice.

Result two: Verbal feedback positively progressed. It took a pattern that progressed from week one: 'we didn't work together very well', to around week four: 'we didn't work together that well, but we know where we went wrong' to eventually week twelve: 'we worked together fairly well'.

Not all groups progressed to the same extent as others, and some individual members expressed high levels of expectations from themselves and others, resulting in lower satisfaction than some of their peers. For these students, the designer/facilitator reminded them of the Experiential Learning design and suggested they reflect on one aspect of the collaborative task's 'failure' and to make one improvement next time. This appeared to give those high achievers a positive challenge for them to be empowered by.

Result three: There was an observed progressive reduction in support requests from students within breakout rooms over the trimester. From at least one call to enter a breakout room per group in the first few weeks, to no calls in the second half of the trimester.

This indicates a learned competence in not only using the technology to collaborate through but also a more successful collaboration experience. Again, for those high achievers, if there was a private complaint that a peer wasn't 'pulling their weight', the designer/facilitator empowered them to take the lead in finding a solution. This often involved re-allocating tasks to allow those with poor wifi or those multitasking private commitments (children, work) to be assigned tasks that suited their achievable level of participation, shifting the mentality from 'pulling their weight' to 'doing what they can'.

Result four: Written student reflections spoke of enjoyment, ease, overcoming challenges, and a sense of community. Challenges and dissatisfaction with peers were also mentioned, but with additional insights into what occurred, why, and how they would do things differently next time.

This indicates that the final assessment design and weekly supportive community building and collaborative skills building activities were successful. The reflective essay for the final assessment task specifically asked students to reflect on their individual experience in the final collaborative group project. The assessment outline and rubric included sample questions to answer, guiding students to reveal any negative aspects of their collaborative experience, rather than avoid it, and to follow this with insights using what, why, and how statements. The written experiences indicated growth in skill, confidence, and enjoyment in collaborative learning experiences.

Considerations

One: Further research is needed. It is not clear if all the designed and facilitated activities had a causal effect on perceived student positivity with collaborative learning or whether one was more effective than the other.

Presumptively, the Virtual Desk Buddy e-tivity most likely had a greater impact on building discourse confidence and a sense of community due to it most closely resembling the relaxed peer to peer classroom table connection. The weekly jigsaw inquiry-based-learning activity most likely had the greatest impact in preparing students for their final collaborative assessment, due to its embedded skills building scaffolding. However, further research testing students' opinions is required to confirm or counter these presumptions.

Two: Facilitator skill is crucial to success. Whilst the results give the designer/facilitator validation that these elements to the instructional design worked to some degree, it is worth noting that the facilitation of these activities each week requires significant pedagogical skills in the areas of educational technology, and online group facilitation. It also requires a flexible mindset and a good dose of humour to solve technology and collaboration issues calmly by adapting pedagogies during the lessons when required. Therefore, it might be prudent for many facilitators to choose one element only of the above examples to introduce until confidence and capability has been increased to attempt more.

Three: It should also be noted that not every student met with observed success to the level the designer/facilitator had hoped. This may not be surprising when you consider that a student's sense of social presence is their own to control and that learning designers who try to 'push' the creation of a sense of community, when the student's 'pull' is not quite there, may be in fact creating a type of forced community in which not all students are comfortable with engaging (Conrad, 2002).

Conclusion

This case study reflection from the designer/facilitator's standpoint, discussed the contextual need for exploring Collaborativism, Community of Inquiry, and the 5-Stage Model for Online Learning to help design and facilitate an effective online learning experience. This reflection began with a summary of the above frameworks, followed by a discussion on how these frameworks were applied to the subject's instructional design and in class pedagogies, demonstrating how useful they were in solving the challenge of how to maintain social constructivism in a synchronous online subject. By allocating lesson time to building a community before focussing on subject content, this subject first taught learners how to learn in an online, synchronous learning environment, indicating eventual collaboration success through a strong sense of community.

The measure of this success is the perceived satisfaction in students post-collaborative experiences by the designer/facilitator, and the self-reported satisfaction in student reflections on collaborative experiences. This case study reflection makes no assertion that students acquired deeper learning through their collaborative experiences, rather, this reflection purely focuses on the perceived student satisfaction with their collaborative experiences in an online environment as observed by the designer/facilitator. Further areas of research could include examining a link between student satisfaction in online, synchronous collaborative experiences and the acquisition of deeper learning.

Finally, the future of synchronous, online learning has been catapulted to the present thanks to the forced global migration to online learning in 2020. Many institutions, by necessity, swapped pedagogically unsound face to face learning lectures for pedagogically unsound online learning lectures. On the other hand, others were better placed to utilise pedagogically sound online learning theories into their already social constructivist delivery models. It is this author's opinion that online learning will only embed more Social Constructivism, and as such, online facilitators should explore the online learning theories in this reflection, and others, to ensure they are skilled and ready for the continuation of social and collaborative online teaching and learning practices.

References

Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, D. R., & Archer, W. (2001). Assessing teaching presence in a computer conferencing context. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 5*(2), 1-17.

Conrad, D. (2002). Inhibition, integrity and etiquette among online learners: The art of niceness. *Distance Education, 23*(2), 197–212. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158791022000009204

Dewey, J. (1975). *Experience and education: By John Dewey.* Macmillan.

Fonseca, R. (2016). *An attempt to increase student talking time through task-based interaction among basic level language learners at ICPNA*. University of Piura, Peru. https://pirhua.udep.edu.pe/bitstream/handle/11042/2646/MAE_EDUC_325.pdf?sequence=1

Garrison, R., Cleveland-Innes, M., & Fung, T. (2019). Student role adjustment in online communities of inquiry: model and instrument validation. *Online Learning, 8*(2), 61-74. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v8i2.1828

Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2007). *Blended learning in higher education*. Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118269558

Harasim, L. (2018, May 24). OCL theory. *Linda Harasim*. https://www.lindaharasim.com/online-collaborative-learning/ocl-theory/

Harasim, L. (2017). *Learning theory and online technologies*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716831

Kaddoura, M. (2013, June). Think-Pair-Share: A teaching learning strategy to enhance students' critical thinking. *Educational Research Quarterly,* 1-24. http://erquarterly.org/index.php?pg=content

Radhakrishnan, A. (2020, December 14). Opinion | How breakout rooms are the blind dates of e-learning.

The Evanstonian. https://www.evanstonian.net/opinion/2020/12/14/how-breakout-rooms-are-the-blind-dates-of-e-learning/

Rozelman, N. T., & Steigerwald, G. K. (2021, March 29). Love It/Hate It: Zoom Breakout Rooms | Flyby | *The Harvard Crimson*. https://www.thecrimson.com/flyby/article/2021/3/29/loveit-hateit-breakout-rooms/

Salmon, G. (2021). Five stage model for online learning. *Gilly Salmon.com*. https://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html

Salmon, G., Nie, M., & Edirisingha, P. (2010). Developing a five-stage model of learning in second life. *Educational Research, 52*(2), 169–182. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2010.482744

Shackelford, J. L., & Maxwell, M. (2012). Sense of community in graduate online education: Contribution of learner to learner interaction. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 13*(4), 228-249. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v13i4.1339

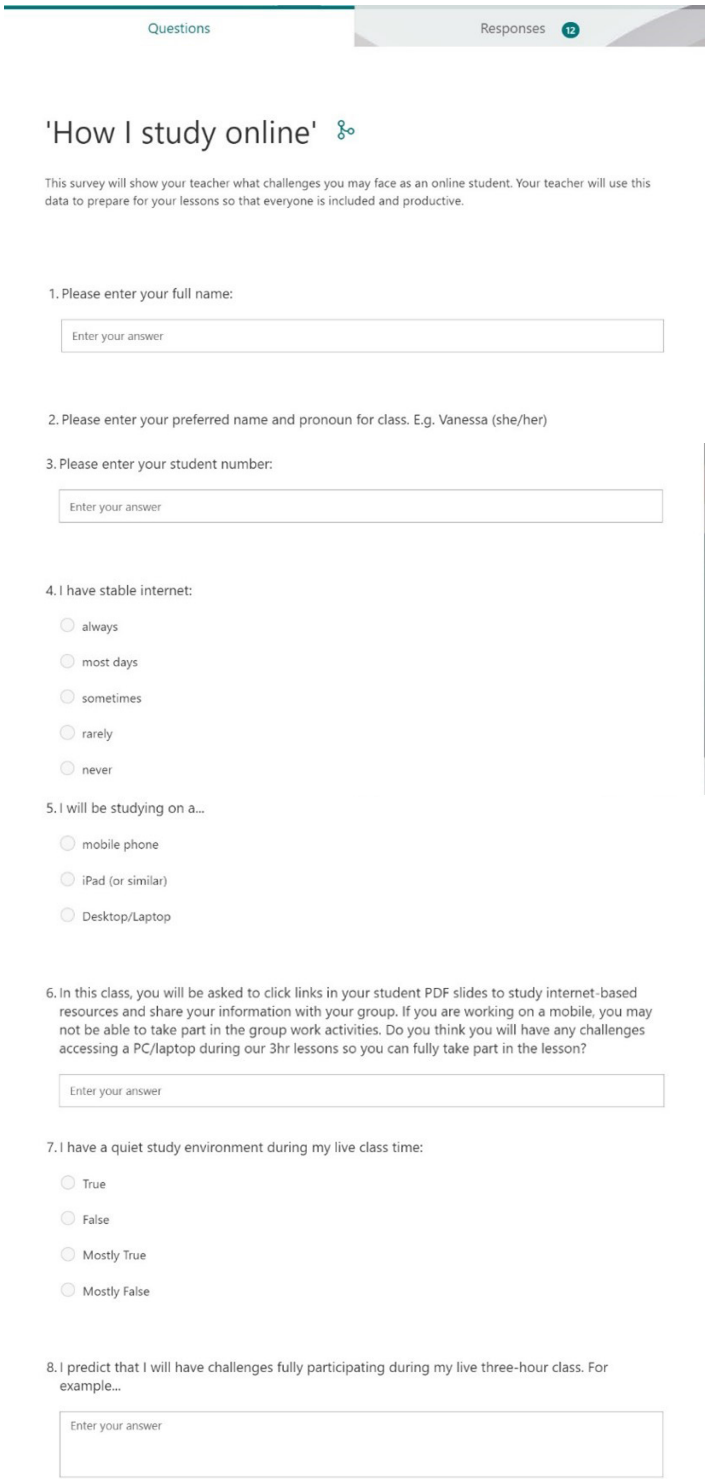
Swan, K. (2019). Social construction of knowledge and the community of inquiry framework. *Springer Briefs in Education,* 57–65. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7740-2_7

Vasileva, O., & Balyasnikova, N. (2019). (Re)Introducing Vygotsky's thought: From historical overview to contemporary psychology. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*(1515). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01515

Whear, L. (2020, October 16). Break out rooms are the actual worst part of being a student right now. *UK*. https://thetab.com/uk/2020/10/16/break-out-rooms-are-the-actual-worst-part-of-being-a-student-in-2020-178590

Appendix

1. E-tivity one - Microsoft Form titled 'How I study online'.



Questions Responses 12

'How I study online'

This survey will show your teacher what challenges you may face as an online student. Your teacher will use this data to prepare for your lessons so that everyone is included and productive.

1. Please enter your full name:

Enter your answer

2. Please enter your preferred name and pronoun for class. E.g. Vanessa (she/her)

3. Please enter your student number:

Enter your answer

4. I have stable internet:

- always
- most days
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

5. I will be studying on a...

- mobile phone
- iPad (or similar)
- Desktop/Laptop

6. In this class, you will be asked to click links in your student PDF slides to study internet-based resources and share your information with your group. If you are working on a mobile, you may not be able to take part in the group work activities. Do you think you will have any challenges accessing a PC/laptop during our 3hr lessons so you can fully take part in the lesson?

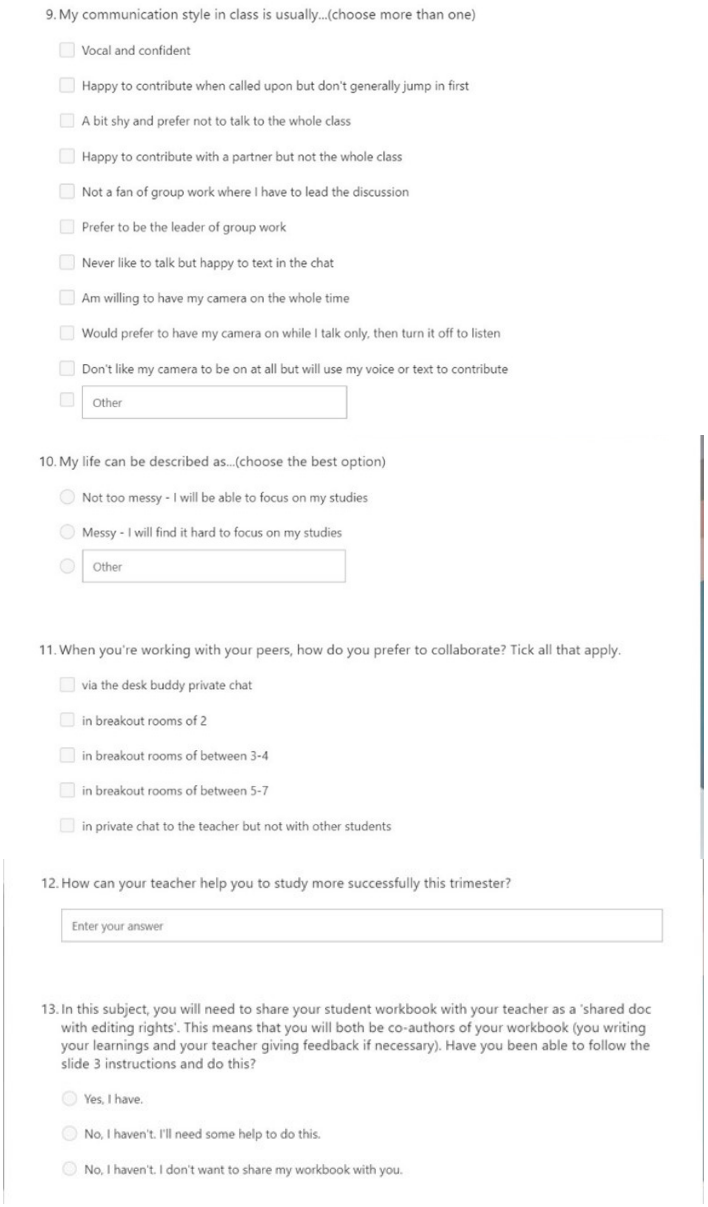
Enter your answer

7. I have a quiet study environment during my live class time:

- True
- False
- Mostly True
- Mostly False

8. I predict that I will have challenges fully participating during my live three-hour class. For example...

Enter your answer



9. My communication style in class is usually...(choose more than one)

- Vocal and confident
- Happy to contribute when called upon but don't generally jump in first
- A bit shy and prefer not to talk to the whole class
- Happy to contribute with a partner but not the whole class
- Not a fan of group work where I have to lead the discussion
- Prefer to be the leader of group work
- Never like to talk but happy to text in the chat
- Am willing to have my camera on the whole time
- Would prefer to have my camera on while I talk only, then turn it off to listen
- Don't like my camera to be on at all but will use my voice or text to contribute
- Other

10. My life can be described as...(choose the best option)

- Not too messy - I will be able to focus on my studies
- Messy - I will find it hard to focus on my studies
- Other

11. When you're working with your peers, how do you prefer to collaborate? Tick all that apply.

- via the desk buddy private chat
- in breakout rooms of 2
- in breakout rooms of between 3-4
- in breakout rooms of between 5-7
- in private chat to the teacher but not with other students

12. How can your teacher help you to study more successfully this trimester?

Enter your answer

13. In this subject, you will need to share your student workbook with your teacher as a 'shared doc with editing rights'. This means that you will both be co-authors of your workbook (you writing your learnings and your teacher giving feedback if necessary). Have you been able to follow the slide 3 instructions and do this?

- Yes, I have.
- No, I haven't. I'll need some help to do this.
- No, I haven't. I don't want to share my workbook with you.