

E-tivities; The Key to Achieve Online Learning

by Gilly Salmon

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The book, *E-tivities*, published in 2002 by Kogan Page Limited in London UK and Stylus Publishing Inc. in USA, is the second book Dr. Salmon about online activities on the Web. Dr Salmon, moreover, with this book introduce us "E-tivities, which refers educational online activities, as a new term in online learning. Dr. Salmon highlights that the *E-tivities* book can help academics, teachers, course managers, teaching assistants, instructors, trainers, e-moderators, and online developers and trainers in corporate training and professional associations as well as staff developers and teacher trainers from many disciplines and any level of education. This book is not about online technology. It is about customizing online learning and teaching in any topic and subject area. *E-tivities* book is based on action research providing us a practical guide for online learning. Dr. Salmon strongly emphasis that "...you will be online or wish to 'move online'..." after reading this book.

Introduction

The book, *E-tivities*, has two major parts: 1) The Part I is about to start designing and implementing e-tivities by exploring a 5-stage framework which helps you not only plan but also run your own e-tivity model to share, elaborate and exchange e-tivities ideas. Online participants in this 5-stage model must work together to accomplish the learning outcomes by providing at least one instructional message. 2) The Part II in *E-tivities* book expands some practical support for online workers. You can find a set of 35 resources for online practitioners. These resources provide you useful and applicable ideas to design, develop and implement your e-tivity frameworks.

Dr Salmon hopefully declares that any kind of online workers can find comfort, joy and success to achieve their e-tivities design approach. She, also, points out that the *E-tivities* book can help online practitioners focus on their 5-stage e-tivity model to design their topics, subjects, courses, programs, teaching practices online. This is about how online practitioners can collaborate with each other for designing and running not only active but also interactive online teaching and learning activities.

Introducing E-tivities

E-tivities gives to frameworks for enhancing active and participative online learning inexpensive-cost computer mediated environments. *E-tivities* are relatively low-priced to plan and implement. They merely require the Internet and an interactive online platform, such as Bulletin Board for the communication among people by encouraging working with not only broad perspectives, but also different ideas.

E-tivities, which are extremely essential for online learning and teaching, organize online instructional principles and pedagogies based on the integration of network technologies. Moreover, e-tivities can be easily modified for all topics and any discipline. E-tivities in this book are relatively inexpensive to use and in the hands of the online practitioners as well as somewhat uncomplicated to test and revise. Dr. Salmon strongly highlighted that

"...There are, of course, many ways to use new technologies for teaching and learning. But e-tivities are designed for efficiency. They are reusable and recyclable. Indeed they get better the more they are employed. They use other learners and readily available electronic resources. They can be used for participants who never meet or in combination with classroom activities or print-based distance learning. They can form a whole course or program when sequenced carefully together or be included as a small part, to replace or support all kinds of other learning and teaching methods..."

On the one hand, Dr. Salmon, also, emphasizes that the e-tivities, taking place online, in this book are for everyone. On the other hand, at least two people are involved an e-tivity to collaborate with each other online. Moreover, online learners involved e-tivities do not have any time and space limitations to communicate with others. Diverse online learners from the globe can access e-tivities anytime anyplace with digital network based technologies.

To lessen existing barriers and challenges, and improve the potential of the network technologies, e-tivities must carefully design for active and interactive online learning. Dr Salmon defines the key features of e-tivities in this book as: *"...1) A small piece of information, stimulus or challenge (the 'spark'), 2) online activity which includes individual participants posting a contribution, 3) an interactive or participative element- such as responding to the postings of other, 4) summary, feedback or critique from an e-moderator (the 'plenary')...". To build effective and efficient e-tivities, some key principles are given in the E-tivities Book: 1) Decide on what you expect online learners to do, and what the e-moderators will do; 2) Make clear your planned objectives for each e-tivity; 3) Plan your evaluation or assessment to meet your learning and teaching purpose; 4) Motivate online learners but avoid motivating them to simply log-on, instead provide an e-tivity which makes taking part meaningful; 5) Create an authentic learning experience for your online learners. Dr. Salmon strongly suggest that online practitioners must use the 5-stage model to design and implement e-tivities for any educational milieus.*

The 5-stage Model

Dr Salmon gave us a useful 5-stage framework to design and run our e-tivities based on interaction among online learners and participants to motivate and engage.

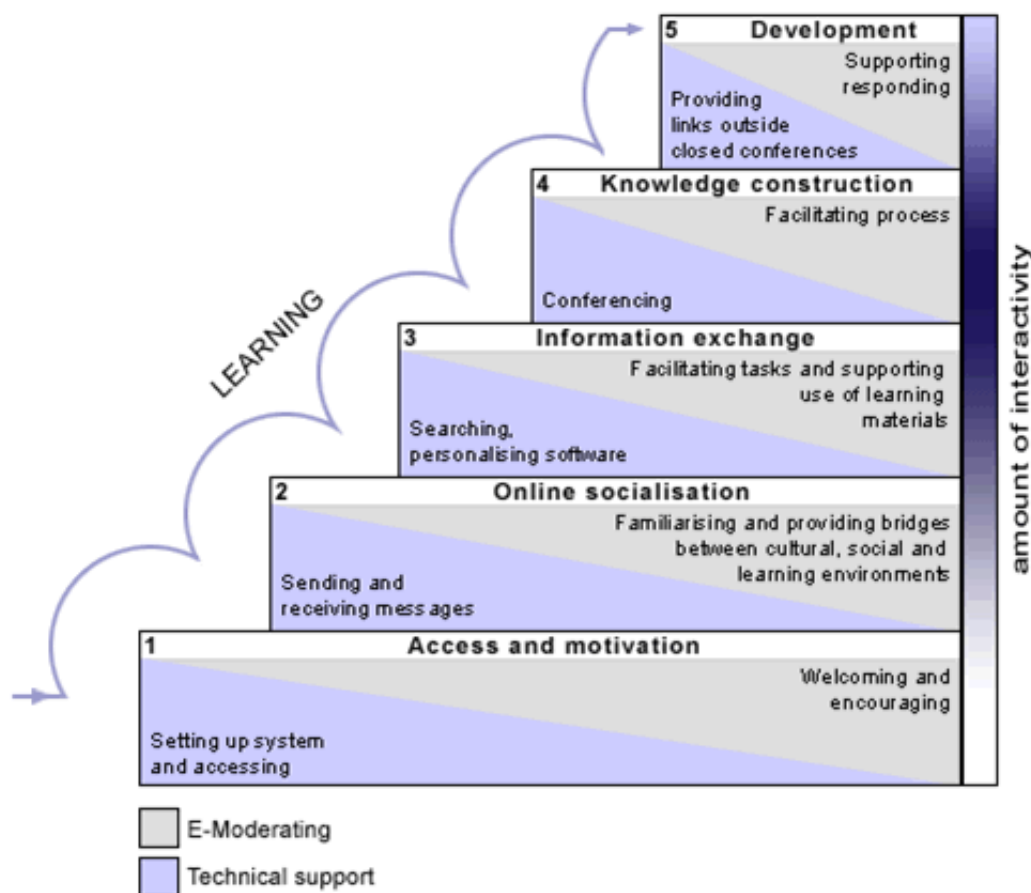


Table 1: 5-Stage of E-tivities
(Salmon, 2002, <http://www.e-tivities.com/5stage.asp>)x

Stage 1 - Access & Motivation - New online learner can be experiencing considerable frustration in logging on. The e-moderator must play a role for ensuring access and welcoming and encouraging. The essential element is motivation to get online participants through the early stages. E-tivities at this stage must provide rookie online learners with a gentle introduction to using the new online learning milieu. However, at the beginning, high-esteem online learners need support sometimes.

Stage 2 – Socialization - The e-moderator by creating his/her own special online community through e-tivities must build the bridges for all online participants. Online participants can be excited to share and exchange their thoughts and collaborate with.

Stage 3 - Information Exchange – In this stage, not only must information be exchanged, but also cooperative tasks must be achieved. Online learners must explore necessary information at their own pace and place by respecting different and diverse views points of others. Dr. Salmon states that online learners in this stage interact with the course content and interaction with the e-moderators and/or other people.

Stage 4 - Knowledge Construction - E-tivities at this stage have online discussion or knowledge development aspects. Online learners must take control of their own knowledge construction in use of new ways. At this stage, e-moderators have imperative roles to build and maintain online groups.

Stage 5 – Development – Online learners in this stage must become critical and self-reflective as well as responsible for their own learning to be able to build on the ideas acquired through the e-tivities and apply them to their individual contexts. They also become.

E-tivities & Costs

Dr. Salmon point outs that "...Once e-tivities are designed and built into a program, the key cost issue is arranging appropriate e-moderator support...". Consequently, how many online participants can be likely to log on and when is imperative to know; because it is strongly impact on the efficiency of use of thee-moderators time.

Dr. Salmon strongly states to keep down the costs of seting up e-tivities:

"1) Make clear decisions about roles and numbers of e-moderators that you will need and the participant: e-moderator ratio. 2) Encourage e-moderators to work in small teams, covering for and supporting each other 3) Double the impact of trained and experienced e-moderators by encouraging them to e-moderate 2 or 3 groups of participants at any time. 4) Keep your e-moderator support to participants focussed and specify what you expect them to do and when – if necessary publish total number of hours per week or month available to participants. 5) Establish early on how much e-moderators should expect to do, and what are reasonable expectations on the part of participants 6) Ensure that e-moderators are trained in designing, developing and running efficient and effective e-tivities. Train e-moderators in advance of starting work with their participants. 7) Train e-moderators online, rather than face to face. 8) Train e-moderators using the online platform itself, thus creating confidence in the platform as well as creating an e-moderating skill base. 9) Ensure that e-moderators can up and download messages offline if they wish. 10) Train them how to use your software or platform software to best advantage to save time. 11) Set up good helpdesk and online support systems, preferably 24 hours, and encourage competent participants to support others, leaving more of your e-moderators' online time for learning related e-moderating. 12) Use existing resources and knowledge constructed online as much as possible rather than develop materials and/or pay for expensive third party materials. 13) Develop systems for reuse, recycling and sharing of e-tivities instructions. 14) Build up economies of scale as rapidly as possible – choose only systems and approaches that can be expanded cheaply."

It is of the extremely crucial that the online educational milieu must establish an easy but successful staff development program to engage and support instructors as e-moderators.

Summary

Dr. Salmon argues that the characteristics of e-learning are online interaction and participation. The essential questions in E-tivities Book are "how can teachers and learners use technologies happily?" and "how can we create environments to make success more likely?". Dr. Salmon states that e-tivity processes must take place by engaging online learning to achieve the outcomes that provide a framework for online activities called as e-tivities in a very clear style. The addressed e-tivities can be easily integrated in any diverse academic disciplines. The book, E-tivity, is a useful and practical guide for all online workers to collaboratively engage their online learners into their knowledge constructions and to design and implement e-learning milieus.

Reference

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