

Chapter 1: Background and research problem?

1.1.	Prelude	2
1.2.	Introduction	2
1.3.	Background	3
1.4.	Problem identification	4
1.4.1.	Practical problem	4
1.4.2.	Research problem	6
1.5.	Purpose and objectives of the study	6
1.6.	Research question	7
1.7.	Rationale and background for the study	9
1.7.1.	Roles for the online facilitator: A review of previous research	10
1.7.2.	Competencies: An explanation	12
1.7.3.	Competencies for the online facilitator	14
1.8.	Uniqueness of the study	16
1.9.	Purpose statement	17
1.10.	The scope of the study	17
1.10.1.	What is excluded from the study?	17
1.11.	Research approach	17
1.12.	Research design	18
1.12.1.	The subject of the study	18
1.12.2.	Research methodology	21
1.12.3.	Procedure of authenticity and trustworthiness	25
1.13.	Delimiters of the study	27
1.14.	Outline of chapters	28

Chapter 2: Literature review



2.1.	Prelude	30
2.2.	Introduction	30
2.3.	Theme 1: Adjusting to the online environment	31
2.3.1.	Literature review	31
2.3.2.	Conceptual framework for the online environment	43
2.4.	Theme 2: 'Talking' online	46
2.4.1.	Literature review	46
2.4.2.	Conceptual framework for 'talking' online	57
2.5.	Theme 3: Facilitator roles	60
2.5.1.	Literature review	60
2.5.2.	Conceptual framework for facilitator roles	73
2.6.	Theme 4: Challenges and demands	75
2.6.1.	Literature review	75
2.6.2.	Conceptual framework for online challenges	83
2.7.	Theme 5: Competencies	85
2.7.1.	Literature review	85
2.7.2.	Conceptual framework for competencies	89
2.8.	Conclusion	91

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology



3.1.	Prelude	95
3.2.	Introduction	95
3.3.	Research problem and motivation for the study	96
3.4.	Purpose and objectives of the study	96
3.5.	Research questions	97
3.6.	Research paradigm	99
3.7.	Research approach	101
3.8.	Research strategy	103
3.8.1.	The case study versus other qualitative studies	106
3.9.	Research design	107
3.10.	Research design – the case study in question	109
3.10.1.	The six-week period	110
3.10.2.	The objectives of the case study	110
3.10.3.	The sample	110
3.11.	Data collection methods and data collection instruments	111
3.11.1.	Observation	111
3.11.2.	Written texts and questionnaire	115
3.11.3.	Interview	120
3.11.4.	<i>Work Profiling System (WPS)</i> session	130
3.12.	When administered and who conducted?	131
3.13.	Trustworthiness and authenticity	133
3.14.	Conclusion	134


Chapter 4: Analysing the case – Evidence and discussion



4.1.	Prelude	137
4.2.	Introduction	137
4.3.	How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?	138
4.3.1.	Introducing the online environment	140
4.3.2.	<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	141
4.3.3.	<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>	145
4.3.4.	<i>WebCT</i>	147
4.3.5.	The virtual island	148
4.3.6.	The voting station	149
4.3.7.	Facilitator adjustments	151
4.3.8.	Summary	167
4.4.	How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?	169
4.4.1.	Formulate clear messages	169
4.4.2.	Create a relaxed and supportive online environment	170
4.4.3.	'Listen' to the learners	175
4.4.4.	Only 'speak' when spoken to	178
4.4.5.	Be visible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	181
4.4.6.	Use humour and special language (emoticons)	184
4.4.7.	Use 'facilitator finesse'	185
4.4.8.	Be organised	186
4.4.9.	Use your personal touch	190
4.4.10.	Summary	194
4.5.	What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?	196
4.5.1.	Analysing the postings against the Blignaut and Trollip taxonomy	196
4.5.2.	'Visible' facilitator roles	206
4.5.3.	Role of Administrator	207
4.5.4.	Role of Social Supporter	209
4.5.5.	Role of Instructor	211
4.5.6.	Role of Guide	213
4.5.7.	Role of Mediator	215
4.5.8.	Summary	217
4.6.	What challenges did the online facilitator face?	219
4.6.1.	Mayhem during Week 1	220
4.6.2.	Computer literacy	223
4.6.3.	Conflict	226
4.6.4.	Learner-group problems	230
4.6.5.	Learners lagging behind	233
4.6.6.	Learners not 'reading' properly	240
4.6.7.	Learners uncomfortable with online assessment	242
4.6.8.	Marks for individual assignments	243
4.6.9.	Institutional support for the online facilitator	244
4.6.10.	Using the team-teach approach	245
4.6.11.	Providing constructive feedback	246
4.6.12.	Abrupt ending to course	247
4.6.13.	Language problems	248
4.6.14.	Changes to the existing course	248
4.6.15.	Summary	250

Chapter 4: Analysing the case – Evidence and discussion (*Continued*)

4.7.	What people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies were identified for the online environment?	253
4.7.1.	WPS session	253
4.7.2.	WPS report information	259

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations		
5.1.	Prelude	274
5.2.	Summary	274
5.3.	The answers to the subsidiary questions	276
5.3.1.	How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?	276
5.3.2.	How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?	277
5.3.3.	What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?	277
5.3.4.	What challenges did the online facilitator face?	277
5.3.5.	What people competencies were identified for the online environment?	279
5.3.6.	What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?	279
5.3.7.	What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?	279
5.4.	Discussion	279
5.4.1.	Methodological reflection	280
5.4.2.	Substantive reflection	282
5.4.3.	Scientific reflection	285
5.5.	Recommendations	291
5.5.1.	For policy and practice	291
5.5.2.	For further research	292
5.5.3.	For further development	292
5.6.	Conclusion	293
Bibliography		294
Annexures		312

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Table 1.1:	Research subsidiary questions	7
Table 1.2:	The roles of the three researchers and learners	8
Table 1.3:	Roles for the online facilitator	11
Table 1.4:	Explanation of competencies	15
Table 1.5:	Breakdown of the statistics for ORO 880 Module	21
Table 1.6:	Research design and data collection methods	24
Table 1.7:	Overview of the remainder of the research report	28

Chapter 2

Table 2.1:	Comparison of classroom and online teaching activities	35
Table 2.2:	Problems and solutions for the online environment	40
Table 2.3:	Role of Learner	62
Table 2.4:	Role of Administrator (my terminology)	62
Table 2.5:	Role of Change Agent	63
Table 2.6:	Role of Coach	63
Table 2.7:	Role of Communication Expert	63
Table 2.8:	Role of Co-presenter	64
Table 2.9:	Role of Facilitator	64
Table 2.10:	Role of Instructor	65
Table 2.11:	Role of Jovial Nag	65
Table 2.12:	Role of Knowledge Navigator	66
Table 2.13:	Role of Learning Catalyst	66
Table 2.14:	Role of Listener	66
Table 2.15:	Role of Manager	67
Table 2.16:	Role of Mediator	67
Table 2.17:	Role of Mentor	68
Table 2.18:	Role of Moderator	68
Table 2.19:	Role of Personal Muse	69
Table 2.20:	Role of Role Player	69
Table 2.21:	Role of Social Supporter	69
Table 2.22:	Role of Starter	70
Table 2.23:	Role of Subject Matter Expert	70
Table 2.24:	Role of Tutor	70
Table 2.25:	Role of Technical Fundi (my terminology)	71
Table 2.26:	Breakdown of online facilitator challenges	84
Table 2.27:	Each subsidiary question within its conceptual framework	93

List of Tables (*Continued*)

Chapter 3

Table 3.1:	The intellectual puzzle for this study	98
Table 3.2:	Interpretivism	100
Table 3.3:	Characteristics of qualitative research	102
Table 3.4:	Special features of a case study	104
Table 3.5:	Research design for this study	108
Table 3.6:	The six-week period of the case study	110
Table 3.7:	Disadvantages of using observation with the corrective measures for this study	115
Table 3.8:	Disadvantages of using documentation with the corrective measures for this study	117
Table 3.9:	Disadvantages of using a questionnaire with the corrective measures for this study	120
Table 3.10:	Disadvantages of using a face-to-face interview with the corrective measures for this study	125
Table 3.11:	Disadvantages of using a focus group interview with the corrective measures for this study	129
Table 3.12:	Assistants used in the research project	131

Chapter 4

Table 4.1:	Coding scheme for the Administrator	208
Table 4.2:	Coding scheme for the Social Supporter	210
Table 4.3:	Coding scheme for the Instructor	212
Table 4.4:	Coding scheme for the Guide	214
Table 4.5:	Coding scheme for the Mediator	216
Table 4.6:	WPS task statement rating scale: Time spent	257
Table 4.7:	WPS task statement rating scale: Importance to job objectives	257
Table 4.8:	The online facilitator profile – people competencies	266
Table 4.9:	Scale definitions for people competencies (SHL, 1998)	267
Table 4.10:	The online facilitator profile – thinking competencies	268
Table 4.11:	Scale definitions for thinking competencies (SHL, 1998)	269
Table 4.12:	The online facilitator profile – energy competencies	270
Table 4.13:	Scale definitions for energy competencies (SHL, 1998)	271

Chapter 5

Table 5.1:	Typical features of a web-based environment	284
Table 5.2:	Interpretation of people competencies	287
Table 5.3:	Interpretation of thinking competencies	288
Table 5.4:	Interpretation of energy competencies	289
Table 5.5:	The five roles and 13 competencies for the online facilitator	290

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1:	Investigating the online facilitator	8
Figure 1.2:	Overview of 'The Big Project'	9
Figure 1.3:	Statistics for ORO 880 Module	21
Figure 1.4:	The researcher's position in the study	25

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1:	Models of Teaching	45
Figure 2.2:	The nature of face-to-face communication	47
Figure 2.3:	A face-to-face communication breakdown	49
Figure 2.4:	The Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum	58
Figure 2.5:	Taxonomy of instructor postings	73
Figure 2.6:	The four elements of online conflict	83
Figure 2.7:	Competencies versus competences (Adapted from Krüger, 2002)	86
Figure 2.8:	<i>Work Profiling System</i> competencies	90

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1:	Interpretivism	99
Figure 3.2:	A bounded context according to Miles and Huberman	103
Figure 3.3:	Typology of participant observation researcher roles	113
Figure 3.4:	Types of questionnaires	118
Figure 3.5:	e-mail as covering letter with online questionnaire	119
Figure 3.6:	Options of qualitative interviews	122
Figure 3.7:	Interviews on the continuum	122
Figure 3.8:	Focus group – ingredients for success	123
Figure 3.9:	Invitation to the focus group session	128

List of Figures (*Continued*)

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1:	<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	141
Figure 4.2:	<i>Yahoo ID</i>	141
Figure 4.3:	<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>	145
Figure 4.4:	<i>WebCT</i>	147
Figure 4.5:	The virtual island	149
Figure 4.6:	Access to the voting station	150
Figure 4.7:	Voting in progress	150
Figure 4.8:	The 'outcast' is removed	151
Figure 4.9:	Help for learners	178
Figure 4.10:	Visibility of the online facilitator on <i>Yahoo Groups</i>	182
Figure 4.11:	Time of online facilitator postings on <i>Yahoo Groups</i>	183
Figure 4.12:	Online facilitator messages	194
Figure 4.13:	Online facilitator postings from <i>Yahoo Groups</i>	196
Figure 4.14:	Online facilitator posting from <i>WebCT</i>	197
Figure 4.15:	Online facilitator and learner conversation from <i>Yahoo Messenger</i>	197
Figure 4.16:	Summary of message units according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy	204
Figure 4.17:	Summary of message units according to the five online facilitator roles	217
Figure 4.18:	Structure of <i>WPS</i> questionnaires	254
Figure 4.19:	Contact with whom?	261
Figure 4.20:	Type of contact	262
Figure 4.21:	Accountabilities for the job	263
Figure 4.22:	Posture – percent time spent ...	264
Chapter 5		
Figure 5.1:	The five roles for the online facilitator	286

List of Exhibits

Chapter 4

Exhibit 4.1 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on 'thinking differently' for the online environment	139
Exhibit 4.2 [FtoF]:	A description of the kinaesthetic exercise	139
Exhibit 4.3 [YG]:	Extract from the <i>CyberSurviver</i> Introduction	140
Exhibit 4.4 [YG]:	Extracts from the Assignments for this week	142
Exhibit 4.5 [YG]:	Changing the communication channels	142
Exhibit 4.6 [WCT]:	The online facilitator, asking for participation	143
Exhibit 4.7 [WCT]:	A learner's long conversation 'turn'	143
Exhibit 4.8 [SF]:	A disadvantage of asynchronous communication	145
Exhibit 4.9 [YG]:	Using the official communication channels	146
Exhibit 4.10 [WCT]:	A learner's reflections on synchronous communication rules	146
Exhibit 4.11 [WCT]:	The online facilitator's welcome message	147
Exhibit 4.12 [WCT]:	Extracts from assignments to be posted to <i>WebCT</i>	148
Exhibit 4.13 [YG]:	Extract from an assignment to be posted to the virtual island	148
Exhibit 4.14 [YG]:	The four <i>CyberSurviver</i> tribes	151
Exhibit 4.15 [YG]:	Extract from <i>CyberSurviver</i> Introduction	152
Exhibit 4.16 [YG]:	Your motivational force, extracted from <i>CyberSurviver</i> Introduction	153
Exhibit 4.17 [YG]:	Learning outcomes extracted from Assignment for the week	153
Exhibit 4.18 [SF]:	A learner reflecting on his learning	154
Exhibit 4.19 [YG]:	Extracts from important URLs	155
Exhibit 4.20 [YG]:	Completion of Individual and Tribal assignments	155
Exhibit 4.21 [WCT]:	Flexibility on the side of the online facilitator	156
Exhibit 4.22 [YG]:	Time line considerations, extracted from Assignments for the week	156
Exhibit 4.23:	The online facilitator's responses to intellectual content	157
Exhibit 4.24:	The online facilitator's responses to emotional attitudes	158
Exhibit 4.25:	The online facilitator's responses to humorous emotional attitudes	160
Exhibit 4.26 [YM]:	The online facilitator's reply to an emotional outburst and verbal attack	161
Exhibit 4.27 [YM]:	The online facilitator's views on technology	162
Exhibit 4.28 [YM]:	The online facilitator's views on a learner's change of job	162
Exhibit 4.29 [YM]:	The online facilitator on being a teacher	162
Exhibit 4.30 [YM]:	The online facilitator on working on a kibbutz	163
Exhibit 4.31 [YM]:	The online facilitator on moving house	163
Exhibit 4.32 [YM]:	The lack of collaboration ...	164
Exhibit 4.33 [YM]:	The online facilitator's response to the lack of collaboration	164
Exhibit 4.34:	The learners' feelings on monetary issues	165
Exhibit 4.35 [YM]:	The online facilitator on collaborative learning	165
Exhibit 4.36 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on individual learning	165
Exhibit 4.37 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the frustrations of group work	166

List of Exhibits (Continued)

Chapter 4

Exhibit 4.38 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on individual work and collaborative work	166
Exhibit 4.39 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the value of collaborative work	166
Exhibit 4.40:	The online facilitator on the unfairness of formal summative assessment	167
Exhibit 4.41 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on 'talking' via text messages	169
Exhibit 4.42 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the power of the written word	169
Exhibit 4.43 [YG]:	The online facilitator clarifying her intentions in a previous <i>Yahoo Group</i> message	170
Exhibit 4.44 [YG]:	The online facilitator created a relaxed and supportive online environment	170
Exhibit 4.45 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's andragogical approach	171
Exhibit 4.46 [YG]:	The learners' andragogical approach	172
Exhibit 4.47[FtoF]:	The learners played open cards with the online facilitator	172
Exhibit 4.48:	Trouble in Tribe 5	172
Exhibit 4.49 [YM]:	An invitation to team up with a stronger group	173
Exhibit 4.50 [YG]:	'Thank you' notes to experts	173
Exhibit 4.51[YG]:	The online facilitator's motivations for the tribal reshuffle and the online test	174
Exhibit 4.52 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's views on eLearning	175
Exhibit 4.53:	The online facilitator on learner openness	175
Exhibit 4.54 [YM]:	The online facilitator listened to the learners	176
Exhibit 4.55:	The online facilitator listened to the groups	176
Exhibit 4.56 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on learners' struggling	177
Exhibit 4.57 [WCT]:	The online facilitator helping the learners	177
Exhibit 4.58 [YG]:	Learner question – how do I upload a file?	178
Exhibit 4.59 [YG]:	Learner question – did you receive my assignment?	179
Exhibit 4.60 [YG]:	The same learner question – did you receive my assignment?	179
Exhibit 4.61 [YG]:	Arrangement for <i>InterWise</i> session – problem 1	179
Exhibit 4.62 [YG]:	Arrangement for <i>InterWise</i> session – problem 2	180
Exhibit 4.63 [YG]:	Arrangement for <i>InterWise</i> session – problem 3	180
Exhibit 4.64 [YG]:	Arrangement for <i>InterWise</i> session – problem 4	180
Exhibit 4.65 [FG]:	The learners on the visibility of the online facilitator	181
Exhibit 4.66 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on her visibility	182
Exhibit 4.67[FG]:	The learners on the non-interference from the online facilitator	183
Exhibit 4.68:	The online facilitator using humour and special language	184
Exhibit 4.69:	The learners using humour and special language	184
Exhibit 4.70 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on humour	184
Exhibit 4.71 [FG]:	Learners' thoughts on the online facilitator's control of the group	185
Exhibit 4.72 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on remaining calm and relaxed	185
Exhibit 4.73 [YM]:	The online facilitator's opening lines	185
Exhibit 4.74 [YM]:	The online facilitator's 'good luck' message	186
Exhibit 4.75 [YG]:	The schedule for the course	186
Exhibit 4.76 [YG]:	The week's planning	187

List of Exhibits (*Continued*)

Chapter 4

Exhibit 4.77 [FG]:	Learners' comments on the course planning by weekly intervals	187
Exhibit 4.78 [YG]:	Online facilitator away for the long weekend	187
Exhibit 4.79:	A learner away for a week and a learner's e-mail address change for a weekend	188
Exhibit 4.80 [YG]:	Reminders to the learners	188
Exhibit 4.81 [YG]:	The online facilitator on deadlines for tribal assignments	189
Exhibit 4.82 [YG]:	The online facilitator on deadlines for marking assignments	189
Exhibit 4.83 [YM]:	The online facilitator's plea for assignments	189
Exhibit 4.84 [YG]:	The online facilitator posting assessment results	190
Exhibit 4.85 [YG]:	A learner quibbling about marks	190
Exhibit 4.86 [FG]:	The online facilitator's personal approach to all the learners	190
Exhibit 4.87 [FG]:	A learner comments on the energy of the online facilitator	191
Exhibit 4.88 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on her own curiosity	191
Exhibit 4.89:	The online facilitator on greeting the learners	191
Exhibit 4.90 [YG]:	The online facilitator's use of the subject line	192
Exhibit 4.91 [YG]:	The online facilitator's various endings to messages	192
Exhibit 4.92 [YG]:	The online facilitator's use of a clear subject line	193
Exhibit 4.93 [YG]:	The online facilitator on using electronic media	194
Exhibit 4.94:	Administrative (with no academic content) messages	198
Exhibit 4.95:	Affective (with no academic content) messages	199
Exhibit 4.96:	Other (with no academic content) messages	200
Exhibit 4.97:	Corrective (with academic content) messages	201
Exhibit 4.98:	Informative (with academic content) messages	202
Exhibit 4.99:	Socratic (with academic content) messages	203
Exhibit 4.100 [FG]:	A learner's reflections on the course as process and not product	204
Exhibit 4.101 [FG]:	Learners' request for deeper discussions	205
Exhibit 4.102 [FG]:	Learners' rebuttal on deeper discussions	205
Exhibit 4.103 [FtoF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Administrator	207
Exhibit 4.104 [FG]:	Post pre-requisites for an online course	207
Exhibit 4.105 [FG]:	A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – from a learner's perspective	209
Exhibit 4.106 [FtoF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – from the online facilitator's perspective	209
Exhibit 4.107 [FtoF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere	209
Exhibit 4.108 [FG]:	A role for the online facilitator as Instructor – from the learners' perspective	211
Exhibit 4.109 [SF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Guide – from a learner's perspective	213
Exhibit 4.110 [FtoF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Guide – a question by the online facilitator	213
Exhibit 4.111 [FTR]:	A role for the online facilitator as Mediator – a learner's perspective on team work	215

List of Exhibits (Continued)

Chapter 4

Exhibit 4.112 [SF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Mediator – a learner's perspective on peer evaluation	215
Exhibit 4.113 [FtoF]:	A role for the online facilitator as Mediator – the online facilitator's perspective	215
Exhibit 4.114 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on anticipating the potential for trouble	219
Exhibit 4.115 [Q]:	The online facilitator reflected on the challenges of <i>CyberSurviver</i>	219
Exhibit 4.116 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's anguish during Week 1	220
Exhibit 4.117 [YG]:	The <i>Yahoo Groups</i> mistake	220
Exhibit 4.118 [FtoF]:	The origin of the confusion of Week 1	221
Exhibit 4.119 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's solutions to the learner confusion during the face-to-face contact session	221
Exhibit 4.120 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's ignorance with <i>Yahoo Groups</i>	222
Exhibit 4.121 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's 'first aid' to a confused group of learners	223
Exhibit 4.122 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's views on establishing learners' computer skill level	224
Exhibit 4.123 [FG]:	A worried learner, not knowing how to use eLearning tools	224
Exhibit 4.124 [FTR]:	A learner questions the fairness of the module	225
Exhibit 4.125 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on giving the learners the opportunity to experiment with eLearning tools	225
Exhibit 4.126 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on spending time on trouble-shooting	226
Exhibit 4.127 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the <i>CyberSurviver</i> experience	226
Exhibit 4.128 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on conflict	226
Exhibit 4.129 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on a learner's contract	227
Exhibit 4.130 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the game metaphor	228
Exhibit 4.131 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the competition element	228
Exhibit 4.132 [FTR]:	The learners on the game metaphor	228
Exhibit 4.133 [FG]:	A learner's view, seeing the course as task-centred	230
Exhibit 4.134 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on dysfunctional groups	230
Exhibit 4.135 [FTR]:	The learners on dysfunctional groups	231
Exhibit 4.136 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on the downside of the tribal shuffle	232
Exhibit 4.137 [FTR]:	The learners on the downside of the tribal shuffle	232
Exhibit 4.138 [FG]:	The learners on the evicted members of Tribe 5	233
Exhibit 4.139 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's frustration and despair with learners who are lagging behind	234
Exhibit 4.140 [FtoF]:	The course coordinator's thoughts on learners lagging behind	234
Exhibit 4.141 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on being abrupt with learners lagging behind	235
Exhibit 4.142 [YG]:	The online facilitator informed a learner to get on track	235
Exhibit 4.143:	The online facilitator's caring manner with dysfunctional team members	235
Exhibit 4.144 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator reflecting on her way of work	236

List of Exhibits (*Continued*)

Chapter 4

Exhibit 4.145 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on keeping pressure in the course	237
Exhibit 4.146 [FTR]:	A learner on pressure in the course	237
Exhibit 4.147 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on clearer guidelines	238
Exhibit 4.148 [FTR]:	A learner on clearer guidelines	238
Exhibit 4.149 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator, reflecting on the current guidelines for the course	238
Exhibit 4.150 [YG]:	The ground rules for the current course	239
Exhibit 4.151 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on improved guidelines for a future course	239
Exhibit 4.152 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on utilising FAQ	240
Exhibit 4.153 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on learners that do not read lengthy e-mail messages	241
Exhibit 4.154 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on using shorter e-mail messages	242
Exhibit 4.155 [YG]:	The learners' anxiety for the online test	242
Exhibit 4.156 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on online testing	243
Exhibit 4.157 [FTR]:	A learner on the online facilitator as researcher	243
Exhibit 4.158 [FtoF]:	A online facilitator's rebuttal to the research accusation	243
Exhibit 4.159 [FtoF]:	Conflict with individual assignments	244
Exhibit 4.160 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on support from colleagues	244
Exhibit 4.161 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on supportive feedback	245
Exhibit 4.162 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on team teaching	245
Exhibit 4.163 [FG]:	The learners on receiving constructive feedback	246
Exhibit 4.164 [FG]:	The learners on the abrupt ending to the course	247
Exhibit 4.165 [YM]:	The online facilitator speaking to the learners after the course ended	248
Exhibit 4.166 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's concern on a second or third language	248
Exhibit 4.167 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on changing the course to reach more depth per topic	249
Exhibit 4.168 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator on changing the online environment	249
Exhibit 4.169 [PR]:	A day in the life of the <i>CyberSurviver</i> online facilitator	251
Exhibit 4.170 [FtoF]:	The online facilitator's final thoughts on <i>CyberSurviver</i>	252

Chapter 5

Exhibit 5.1 [Q]:	The online facilitator on self-confidence	290
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List of Annexures

Annexure A	Paradigm Quiz	312
Annexure B	Observation Sheet Week 1	313
Annexure B	Observation Sheet Week 2	314
Annexure B	Observation Sheet Week 3	315
Annexure B	Observation Sheet Week 4	316
Annexure B	Observation Sheet Week 5	317
Annexure B	Observation Sheet Week 6	318
Annexure C	Roles Matrix Week 1	319
Annexure C	Roles Matrix Week 2	320
Annexure C	Roles Matrix Week 3	321
Annexure C	Roles Matrix Week 4	322
Annexure C	Roles Matrix Week 5	323
Annexure C	Roles Matrix Week 6	324
Annexure D	Self-administered questionnaire on the online facilitator	325
Annexure E	Interview schedule for the online facilitator	326
Annexure F	Interview schedule for the focus group interview	340
Annexure G	Informed Consent	347
Annexure H	Analysis of the message units in <i>Yahoo Groups</i> according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy and five roles	CD
Annexure I	Analysis of the message units in <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy and five roles	CD
Annexure J	Analysis of the message units in <i>WebCT</i> according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy and five roles	CD
Annexure K	Transcribed and verified transcript of focus group interview	349
Annexure L	Transcribed and verified transcript of face-to-face interview with the online facilitator	362
Annexure M	Transcript of sound files	391
Annexure N	Completed self-administered questionnaire	392
Annexure O	Ways to combat Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD)	393

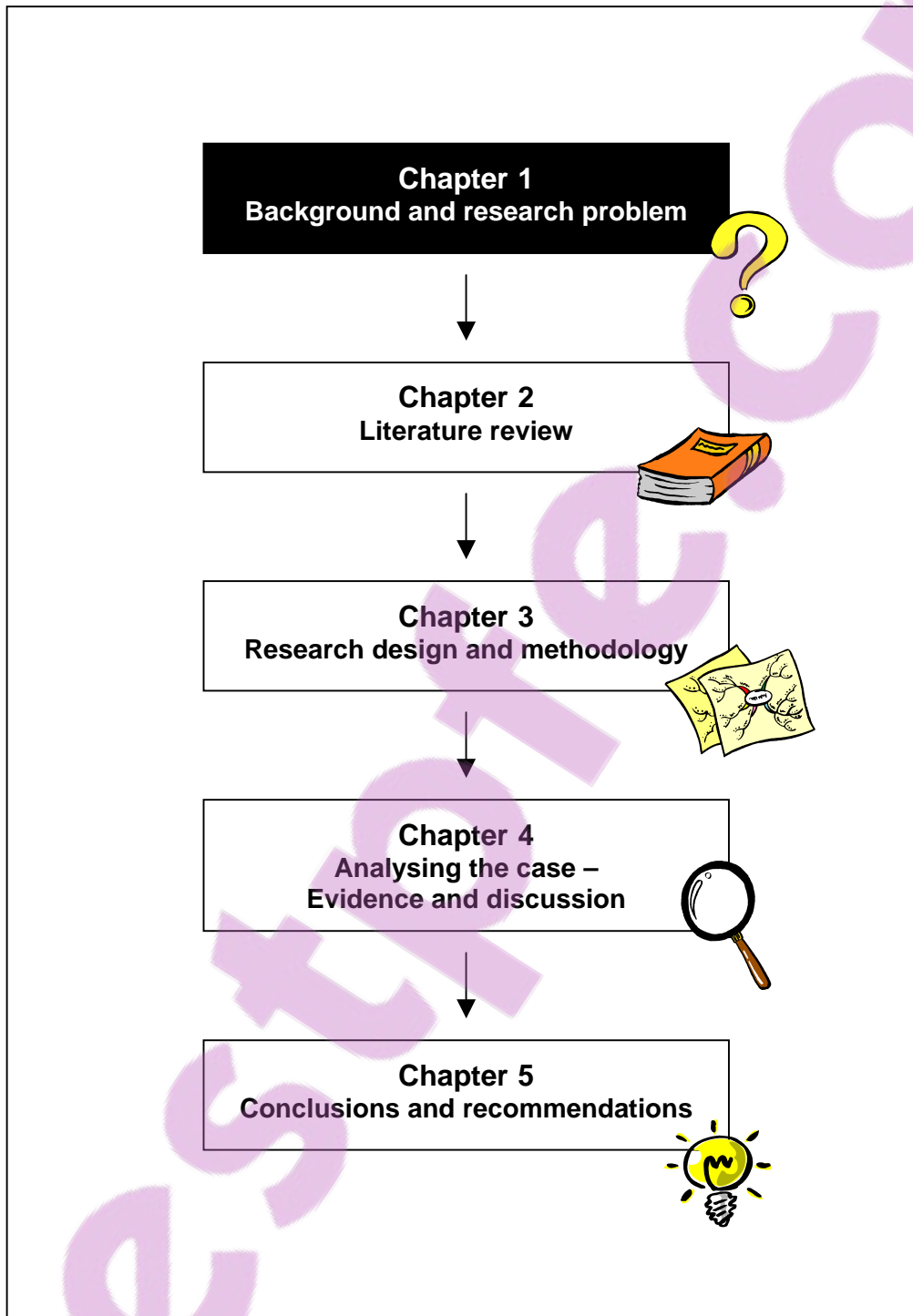


Table of contents

1.1.	PRELUDE	2
1.2.	INTRODUCTION	2
1.3.	BACKGROUND	3
1.4.	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	4
1.5.	PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	6
1.6.	RESEARCH QUESTION	7
1.7.	RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY	9
1.8.	UNIQUENESS OF THE STUDY	16
1.9.	PURPOSE STATEMENT	17
1.10.	THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY	17
1.11.	RESEARCH APPROACH	17
1.12.	RESEARCH DESIGN	18
1.13.	DELIMITERS OF THE STUDY	27
1.14.	OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	28

1.1. Prelude

Everyone wants to be a millionaire, but ask a group of trainers whether they want to become distance learning instructors and you'll see them peer around at colleagues, wondering which brave souls will raise their hands (Mantyla, 2000a:1).

1.2. Introduction

Traditional trainers and instructors are frequently cautious and apprehensive when they are faced with the possibility of taking on the role of online facilitators because they do not know what will be expected of them in such a capacity. Research (Dewar & Whittington, 2000; Broadbent & Legassie, 2002:8) indicates that a new skill set is needed to function in the online environment. The paradigm for this study is interpretive (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Burrell & Morgan, 1979) because it interprets the social behaviour of an online facilitator in natural settings by direct and detailed observation of her interactions. It does this with the purpose of arriving at an understanding and interpretation of how the online facilitator and learners create and maintain their social worlds. This case study focuses on the facilitation of an online course, and pays special attention to how the online facilitator interacts with the learners in a text-based environment. The focus is on the 'visible' roles played by the online facilitator and on identified competencies that the facilitator needs to fulfil in these roles. The researcher used observing, selecting, analysing and synthesising texts, and interviewing as data collection methods. Verification methods for this study were member checking, peer reviews and the crystallization process.

Facilitation is about empowering people to take control and responsibility for their own efforts and achievements. It is the provision of opportunities, resources, encouragement and support for the group to succeed in achieving its objectives, and to do this through enabling the group to take control and responsibility for the way they proceed (Bentley, 1994). Online facilitators are trainers or instructors who teach online, via a computer.

1.3. Background

Traditional methods of facilitating learning require only the instructor, a textbook and whatever additional resource materials the instructor was as able to gather (Taylor, 2002). With the advent of computers and Internet-based education and training, all this has changed. Online learning represents a major paradigm shift and has caused fundamental changes in education. There are at least three factors that are driving this major innovation: the convergence of classroom teaching and open learning; the push for technology-enhanced collaborative learning and the changing relationship between student and teacher (Westera, 1999). Murray (2001) observes that the one common theme that underpins such changes and upon which their success hinges is the development of teachers, instructors and education staff.

According to Broadbent and Legassie (2002) and Zorfass, Remz and Ethier (1998) many eLearning efforts have made the mistake of assuming that teaching online is the same as teaching in the classroom. Online instruction is different from its face-to-face counterpart. A good classroom instructor will not necessarily make a good online instructor – or vice versa. Kling (in Mendels, 1999) supports this argument by saying that if university administrators want to promote distance education, they will need to recognise that teaching online is *not* the same as teaching in the classroom, and that both teachers and students need to understand this and be better prepared to handle the differences. Many researchers have overlooked the difficulties inherent in online pedagogy while praising the educational potential of technology (Mendels, 1999).

The professional literature and even the scholarly literature about activities related to the use of computer networks tend to be upbeat, optimistic and at times even utopian ... to look at the literature on the subject (online teaching), one would not have a clue that issues of the kinds we identified could happen, let alone be thought through and engaged (Kling in Mendels, 1999:5).

Online instructors need new competencies and new sets of skills (Dewar & Whittington, 2000) and they will have to develop appropriate new techniques and sensitivities.

Acquiring these skills takes practice and time. The time to address these issues is *not* when the online course has already been launched. Any online learning project should begin with a consideration of instructor roles and requirements, the identification of potential instructors, and the training of those instructors in the techniques of online instruction until they are competent in what they will be required to do. eLearning can only be successful and effective if time and effort are invested in these preparatory steps (Broadbent & Legassie, 2002:8).

1.4. Problem identification

1.4.1. *Practical problem*

With the emergence of technology, traditional trainers have had to step outside their familiar role of face-to-face teachers into the relatively new territory of online learning (Xebec McGraw-Hill, 2001:13). Because of this, instructors have been required to learn new skills and attitudes (Taylor, 2002). Classroom facilitators, instructors and trainers are generally nervous to learn these new skills because they do not know what is expected of them in this new online environment. Primary factors inhibiting instructors from teaching via distance as identified in the literature are as follows:

- Their age gap. Traditional trainers are from the older generation that did not grow up with technology (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001).



Refer to Annexure A: Paradigm Quiz.

- Scepticism that training via distance learning is not as good as the tried-and-tested classroom experience (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001) and reduced course quality (Betts, 1998; Clark, 1993).
- Fear and anxiety caused by using new technology and the possibility of appearing to be less than proficient in doing so (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001).
- Training where peers can see them (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001).
- Lack of confidence (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001) and negative attitudes of colleagues (Moore, 1997).
- Inadequate access to appropriate up-to-date computer technologies (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001) and lack of technical and administrative support (Betts, 1998; Clark, 1993; Schifter, 2000).

- Inadequate training for the instructors who are expected to write and teach the online courses (Schifter, 2000).
- A perceived lack of control (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001).
- Insufficient practice on the job (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001).
- Fear of losing their jobs (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001).
- Increased workload (Betts, 1998; Dillon & Walsh, 1992; Eisenburg, 1998) and the time it takes to develop and deliver online courses (Clay, 1999; Georges, 2001).
- The altered role of the instructor (Dooley, (n.d.); Kaiser, 1998).

According to Taylor (2002) and Choden (2001), instructors have to face this challenge. For many it is a daunting task. For others it represents a seemingly unnecessary and unwelcome change. Some trainers will successfully make the transition while others may be forced to look for another job.

Learning will always remain as important as ever. Learning and performance improvement is what is important for as far into the future as anyone can see (Rosenberg, 2001:311). Because training, development, education and learning are all important elements for trainers and instructors, they need to be able to use various technologies effectively in the delivery of learning interventions and the optimal performance of their jobs. Qualified teachers thus need to have their skills and knowledge constantly enhanced if they are to keep up with new technologies and trends. Because learning opportunities span a person's lifetime in the information age (Gunasekaran, McNeil & Shaul, 2002) personal role adjustments are a life-long activity. Poole and Axman (2002) are of the opinion that necessary 21st century skills include not only traditional core competencies, but also technology literacy, inventive thinking, communication and collaboration and the ability for self-directed learning.

*Learning is a lifelong process, **especially for instructors**. Keeping up with technology is a must for every teacher and trainer. It can be compared to a "virtual" treadmill – either keep moving or fall off the end. There is no possibility of standing still. Technology is changing the face of education and online learning offers much to learn (Taylor, 2002:34 – my emphasis).*

Suitable people therefore need to be selected as online facilitators.

1.4.2. Research problem

The core problem of this study is that classroom facilitators, instructors and trainers are nervous to take the step toward online facilitation, as they do not know what is expected of them in this new online environment. It implies that traditional trainers need to step outside their comfort zone into a relatively new territory and the trainers need help in this area (Xebec McGraw-Hill, 2001:13). Trainers have always played a vital role in the learning arena and the introduction of Internet-driven learning methods should complement what trainers' offer, not eliminate the need for them.

1.5. Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this research is to identify what different roles the online facilitator plays in the online environment in order to be able to identify which competencies the online facilitator needs to function in the online environment.

Given the purpose, the objectives are *inter alia*:

- To describe what the online facilitator did in the online environment.
- To investigate the various roles that the online facilitator played to be 'visible' in the online environment.
- To scrutinise the challenges that the online facilitator faced.
- To design a *Work Profiling System (WPS)* Person Specific Report for the online facilitator from the most job-relevant competencies, based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job.

1.6. Research question

The research set out to answer the following question:

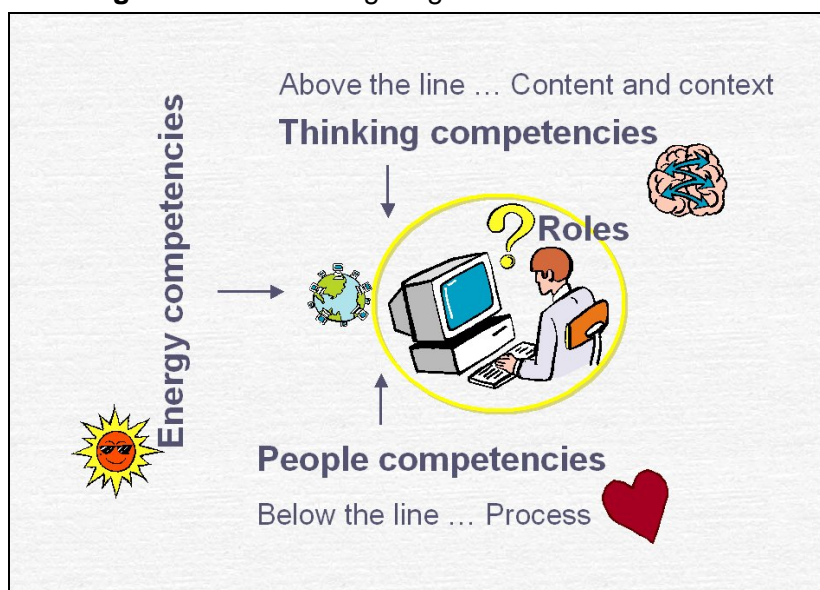
What are the roles and competencies of an online facilitator?

In order to answer the main question, the following subsidiary questions, as indicated in Table 1.1, were also answered as part of the research.

Table 1.1: Research subsidiary questions

Research context	Research subsidiary questions
<p>The context for this instrumental case study was the 2002 ORO 880 online module on eLearning for the Master's degree in Computer Assisted Education of the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The module simulated the popular reality television series, <i>Survivor</i>, implementing the same rules and events that took place in the television series – except that the location had been shifted to cyberspace. The name was adapted to <i>CyberSurviver</i>, emphasising 'surf', to indicate surfing the Internet to get to various locations.</p>	How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?
	How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?
	What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?
	What challenges did the online facilitator face?
	What people competencies were identified for the online environment?
	What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?
	What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

The research is conceptually represented in Figure 1.1. 'Above the line' issues in the conceptual map deal with how the online facilitator structured the course in the virtual environment, the content of the course, the individual and 'tribal' (group) assignments and in-time delivery of assignments. In essence, this represents the intellectual dimension of the course. 'Below the line' issues that were scrutinised were the dynamics of the virtual community, how the online facilitator 'talked' and encouraged the learners, what challenges were faced, how conflict was managed, the dysfunctional tribes, social interaction between the tribes and the online facilitator, and processes put in place to assist the learners *en route* to their learning paths. In essence, this represents the social dimension of the course.

Figure 1.1: Investigating the online facilitator

I formed part of a research team of three partners who all investigated the case study from different angles. The roles, responsibilities and main research question of the three researchers are indicated in Table 1.2. My two fellow researchers acted as external commentators and played an important role in triangulating the investigation.

Table 1.2: The roles of the three researchers and learners

Researcher	Role	Responsibility and main research question
Linda van Ryneveld	Facilitator	Taught the online module from 18 July 2002 to 29 August 2002 and participated in the face-to-face interview.
	Researcher	Study the motivational factors involved in teaching and learning online in a course that is based on a game. <i>What are the operative dynamics in a web-based course that is presented in the form of a game to adult learners?</i> (In progress)
Salomé Meyer	Researcher Observer	Study the affective considerations in the design of online learning for adults. <i>What is the nature of the lived experience (feelings) of students in an online education setting and how did it influence their learning experience?</i> (In progress)
Debbie Adendorff	Researcher Observer	Study the role of the online facilitator. <i>What are the roles and competencies of an online facilitator?</i>

Table 1.2: The roles of the three researchers and learners

Researcher	Role	Responsibility and main research question
Learners	Participants in the 2002 ORO 880 <i>Surviver</i> Module on eLearning	Provided e-mails and other asynchronous messages for data collection purposes. Participated in the focus group interview.

The three of us were affectionately labelled as members of 'The Big Project', as is indicated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Overview of 'The Big Project'

1.7. Rationale and background for the study

Although online learning is growing in popularity, it is not a problem-free format for delivering learning interventions. Improving online learning is rather an evolutionary process that must take cognisance of team competencies, capabilities, resource limitations, time constraints and employee receptiveness to the changed way of learning (Mazoué, 1999).

When a learning problem in the online learning format becomes evident, it often becomes a matter for research. After doing a comprehensive literature review, the researcher established that there is a definite role for the **online facilitator**. However, the real problem arises when trying to define the most imperative roles in terms of their visibility because, as can be seen from the synthesis in Table 1.3, literature indicates that there are 23 roles from which to choose. This makes prioritisation a nearly impossible task. This problem will be illustrated in Chapter 2.

1.7.1. Roles for the online facilitator: A review of previous research

Articles and surveys in the literature about the facilitation of online learning indicate how crucial the role of the online facilitator is (Rosenberg, 2001; Duckworth, 2001; Hofmann, 2001a; Harris & Figg, 1994; Nichols, 2002; Rykert, 2002; West & Luetkehans, 1998; Taylor, 2002; Mazoué, 1999). In spite of this, disagreements exist about the roles that the online facilitator needs to fulfil (Choden, 2002; Zorfass *et al.* 1998). What is also clearly evident is that facilitation of online learning in the formal environment has been the subject of more research than the non-formal environment (Clarke & Cronjé, 1998; Collison, Elbaum, Haavind & Tinker, 2000; Coppola, Hiltz & Rotter, 2002; Dutton, Dutton & Perry, 2002; Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; King, 2002; Rovai, 2002; Schrum & Hong, 2002; Selwyn, 2000).

What one finds in the non-formal environment are surveys conducted by commercial training organisations for their customers. Such surveys have been carried out across industry sectors and might contain biases in the reporting of the findings (Vesta, 2002; DigitalThink, 2002). Other reports that are being sold over the Internet at a fee reflect the perceived commercial value of *understanding* what makes online learning implementation and facilitation effective. Online facilitation courses are being offered at exorbitant \$US prices. Also available are general URLs (Uniform Resource Locators – Internet addresses to various sites) for online facilitation and collaboration, learning how to learn, general resources and online instructional strategies (Hall & LeCavalier, 2000).

Twenty-three roles have been identified for the online facilitator. Although the individual authors never list more than seven roles at a time, these roles amount to 23 different roles when they have been analysed and synthesised. Some of these roles overlap and could possibly be integrated into previously mentioned roles.

Table 1.3 provides a summary of the various roles listed, together with the referenced authors, as condensed from the literature.

Table 1.3: Roles for the online facilitator

Roles	Reference
Role of Learner This role would be a pre-requisite for any online facilitator	Choden (2002) Peté, Fregona & Cronjé (2002) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Administrator (my terminology)	Choden (2002)
Role of Change Agent	Choden (2002)
Role of Coach Also referred to as 'Guide on the side', 'Reflective guide', 'Tour guide' and 'Travel guide'	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Collison <i>et al.</i> (2000) Corley (1998) Harris & Figg (1994) Mazoué (1999) Regents of the University of Minnesota (2002) Rosenberg (2001) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Communication Expert	Harris & Figg (1994)
Role of Co-presenter	Duckworth (2001) Rykert (200)
Role of Facilitator Also referred to as 'Conceptual facilitator'	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Haynes, Pouraghabagher & Seu (1997) Mazoué (1999) McGee & Boyd (1995) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Instructor Also referred to as 'Pedagogue'	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Jovial Nag	Harris & Figg (1994)
Role of Knowledge Navigator Also referred to as 'Orchestrator of resources'	Choden (2002) Mazoué (1999) Volery & Lord (2000) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Learning Catalyst Also referred to as 'Creator of learning experiences'	Inayatullah (1999) Owston (1997) Volery & Lord (2000)
Role of Listener	Choden (2002) Harris & Figg (1994) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Manager	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002)

Table 1.3: Roles for the online facilitator

Roles	Reference
Role of Mediator Also referred to as 'Referee'	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Harris & Figg (1994) Mazoué (1999) McGee & Boyd (1995)
Role of Mentor	Mazoué (1999) Nichols (2002)
Role of Moderator Also referred to as 'Evaluator'	Ambrose (2001) Choden (2002) McGee & Boyd (1995) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002)
Role of Personal Muse	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002)
Role of Role Player	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002)
Role of Social Supporter	Berge (1996) Choden (2002)
Role of Starter Also referred to as 'Prompter'	Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Harris & Figg (1994) Mazoué (1999)
Role of Subject Matter Expert	Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Role of Tutor	Harris & Figg (1994)
Role of Technical Fundi (my terminology) Also referred to as 'Technical assistant' or 'Technician'	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Duckworth (2001) Harris & Figg (1994)

Online facilitation is a new skill that needs to be learnt, practiced and experienced (Langan, 1997; Choden, 2002; Peté *et al.* 2002; Zorfass *et al.* 1998).



Since a literature study did not pinpoint this new skill set, the researcher felt that it was necessary to conduct a case study to establish what *really* happens during the facilitation of an online course. This will be illustrated in the discussion of the research design for this study.

1.7.2. Competencies: An explanation

There are several dimensions against which it is possible to assess the level of fit between an applicant and a job or role (SHL, 1998). These are *inter alia*:

- Interest (very simply, this looks at what you want to do).
- Style (looks at how you like to do it).

- Motivation (looks at why you do it).
- Ability (looks at whether or not you can do it).

In the 'new' economy (Capelli, 2000), employees are key assets because they have a remarkable impact on organisational performance. Competency-based systems have increasingly been recognised as effective tools in the strategic management of human resources. Competency models provide an integrated framework that links people to the business through human resource processes, from selection to succession planning (SHL, 1998) in the following ways:

- In **recruitment**, competencies communicate the corporate or organisational message to the suitable target audience and serve as criteria for screening application forms and CVs.
- In **selection**, competencies integrate psychometric, assessment centre and interview information into a unified framework.
- In **performance management**, competencies describe job behaviours that are evaluated in conjunction with job objectives.
- In **development**, competencies enable comprehensive feedback on individual strengths and development needs as well as effective personal development planning and career pathing.

Competencies enable one to focus on clearly specified behaviour. Managers are aware of what they are looking for when selecting new employees; staff see what is required of them within their role, and training and development may be provided to address clearly defined needs or deficiencies.

'Competencies' (Krüger, 2002) refer to the inherent (or pre-existing) *clusters* of knowledge, interest, attitude, willingness, ability, skills and human attributes that are important for effective functioning in a role. They include the conscious and unconscious dimensions of each person and they focus on work profiling.

Boyatzis (1982) describes a 'job competency' as an underlying characteristic of a person that results in an effective and/or superior performance in a job. It may be a motive, trait, and skill, an aspect of one's self image or social role, or a body of knowledge that a person uses.

1.7.3. *Competencies for the online facilitator*

The literature is limited with regard to competencies that the online facilitator needs. Articles that the researcher found often listed online teaching tips and tasks to be conducted by the facilitator. These included: monitor use of your online material, keep tight deadlines, include downloads of required software (Embleton, 1999); acknowledge questions and respond soon, avoid exotic fonts, chunk text, keep pages to about 35K to 50K in file size (Tang, 2000); allow enough time prior to the start date for development, make course content interesting, determine learning preferences for the current group of learners, carefully select activities (Batovsky, 2002); begin and end on time, ask for support, establish group identity, suspend judgment upon spelling and grammar accuracy (Duckworth, 2001).

Two articles did list facilitator competencies. Schuman (2002) listed facilitator qualities, and Full Circle Associates (2002b) listed skills. However, some of the competencies also fell into task descriptions or only provided lists such as learning styles, teaching/training, feedback skills, e-mail and ftp (Full Circle Associates, 2002b).

Palloff and Pratt (1999) suggest that faculty teaching online must play both intellectual and social roles. It is for this reason that the researcher selected to use the *Work Profiling System (WPS)* tool from Saville and Holdsworth Ltd (SHL). This is reflected in Table 1.4. This tool has a definite 'people component', which is imperative in a virtual environment to establish social interaction (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Barclay, 2001). People competencies link to the social role, as is indicated by Palloff and Pratt (1999).

There is also the thinking component. This indicates that the online facilitator has to facilitate the learning process and provide intellectual and scholarly leadership whilst sharing his/her subject matter knowledge with students (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer, 2001). The thinking competencies would link to the intellectual role, as indicated by Palloff and Pratt (1999).

Energy competencies (SHL) are also indicated on the *WPS*. As Wilkinson (2001:1) indicates, top facilitators know that it is important to maintain a high energy level because it engages the group by grabbing their attention, gaining their interest and keeping it fun. The facilitator's energy rejuvenates the topic indirectly and suggests to the participants that the topic must be important because the facilitator seems to be excited about it. Energy also increases the perception of the facilitator's self-confidence.

Table 1.4 provides a list of people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies, with indicators of what is expected of a particular person designated for a certain role (SHL, 1998).

Table 1.4: Explanation of competencies

People Competencies	Indicator
Leadership:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing direction ▪ Empowering ▪ Motivating others ▪ Developing others ▪ Attracting and developing talent
Interpersonal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpersonal sensitivity ▪ Teamwork ▪ Building and maintaining relationships ▪ Flexibility ▪ Stress tolerance ▪ Tenacity ▪ Cross cultural awareness ▪ Integrity
Thinking Competencies	Description
Analytical:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Judgement ▪ Information gathering ▪ Problem analysis ▪ Objective setting ▪ Management control ▪ Written communication skills ▪ Technical skills and competence
Business awareness:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organisational awareness ▪ Strategic perspective ▪ Commercial orientation ▪ Cross functional awareness ▪ Innovation ▪ Career and self development
Energy Competencies	Description
Dynamism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self confidence ▪ Impact ▪ Decisiveness ▪ Drive ▪ Initiative ▪ Persuasiveness ▪ Oral communication skills
Operational:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concern for excellence ▪ Customer service orientation ▪ Execution



A literature study did not provide sufficient information about the competencies needed by the online facilitator to operate in the online environment. Observing the online facilitator, selecting and analysing the virtual artefacts and interviewing the online

facilitator should provide better insight into the required competencies for the role of an online facilitator. After conducting the work profiling session, it should be possible to compile a *Work Profiling System* report for the online facilitator, listing the applicable indicators per people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies. With such information at hand, potential online facilitators should be able to understand what is expected of them in this role.

1.8. Uniqueness of the study

Since current available knowledge about online facilitation is incomplete, this study will provide the following explicit information:

- Examined roles with related responsibilities that the online facilitator fulfilled to be visible when conducting online learning.
- Documented facilitation techniques and new sensitivities to accommodate challenges and difficult situations.
- Designed *Work Profiling System (WPS)* Person Specific Report for the online facilitator in terms of people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies. These competencies are derived from the most job-relevant competencies which have been derived from an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job.
- Evidence of research collaboration. Research collaboration made this study unique. Different researchers used the same data for three different studies. Three researchers had the advantage of receiving constant critiques about their processes from each other.
- This study lends itself to transferability. The purpose of this study is to create context for the reader. The reader can then interpret the situation, and based on the context, s/he can then transfer the knowledge where appropriate. The transfer of knowledge is based on the context of the online facilitator in the virtual environment. Context-based transferability indicates the degree of similarity between the original situation (online facilitator) and the situation to which it is transferred, by providing sufficient information that can be used by the reader to determine whether the findings are applicable to the new situation (specifically with regard to the roles played and how the online facilitator manages tricky situations and interacts with the learners). Although the study was conducted in the formal environment of a university master's programme, the role of

the online facilitator is not confined to the formal environment and the findings gathered could be of value in any online learning environment.

1.9. Purpose statement

The purpose of this study is to identify the roles and competencies of the online facilitator and, in so doing, to contribute to the dialogue of the facilitation process.

1.10. The scope of the study

The research focused on the facilitation of a single online course by paying special attention to the online facilitator *per se* and how this person interacted with the 24 learners in a text-based environment over a period of six weeks by helping them along and making their learning path easier.

1.10.1. *What is excluded from the study?*

The study did not cater for the following:

- The design and development of course material.
- The role of Instructional Designer or Course Developer.
- The role of Instructional Designer and Facilitator.
- The selection and use of eLearning platforms.
- Computer infrastructure – hardware and software specifications.
- The academic background of the facilitators or the learners.
- South African Qualifications Authority requirements.
- The development of Education, Training and Development (ETD) Practitioners.

1.11. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was followed because the aim of this research was to study events in their natural setting in an attempt to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). This approach is derived from the humanities and emphasises holistic information and interpretive approaches to be able to **Verstehen** (Husén, 1999:32 – my emphasis) i.e. understanding something in

its context. This was applicable to the study as the researcher is investigating the roles and competencies of the online facilitator during an online course.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1995), all qualitative research is *interpretative*, because it is guided by a set of beliefs about the world and how it should be understood and studied. This study falls within the **interpretive paradigm** because it explores socially meaningful action through direct detailed observation of the online facilitator in a natural setting in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how the facilitator and learners create and maintain their social worlds.

1.12. Research design

A research design is a plan or blueprint of the activities planned for the research and it is selected in accordance with the type of research questions asked (Mouton, 2001). It is the logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of the study (Rowley, 2002).

The selected research method for this study was a **case study** because the goal was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the facilitator in an online situation. A specific online case was explored over a six-week period through detailed, in-depth data collection that included multiple sources of information that were rich in context (Creswell, 1998).

Merriam (1998:27) says of case study research:

... [T]he single most defining characteristic ... lies in delimiting the object of the study, the case. I can "fence in" what I am going to study.

1.12.1. The subject of the study

The study focused on a single case study where an online facilitator facilitated 24 master's degree students of the University of Pretoria on the eLearn ORO 880 Module 'Educational Strengths and Weaknesses of the Internet' for a six week period, from 18 July 2002 to 29 August 2002. The single case was Linda van Ryneveld, a female white South African with a MEd CBT *Cum Laude* degree, who works in the field of telematic education at the Tshwane University of Technology.

Linda van Ryneveld was selected because she is experienced in teaching and facilitating online classes. She was also one of the students who obtained a distinction for this module in 1998 and had experience of the demands of this module. Linda was the creator of *CyberSurviver* and she was one of the members of the 'Big Project' research

team. She was also particularly interested in facilitating this module for personal development reasons.

In terms of the constructivist paradigm, which informs the view of knowledge subscribed to in this study, learners help each other to construct knowledge, and this has implications for the role of the teacher/instructor because the line between teacher/instructor and learner becomes blurred. There is a distinct change in the role that the teacher/instructor plays. According to Doolittle and William (1999:70), the teacher's job is to motivate, provide examples, discuss, facilitate, support and challenge, but not to attempt to act as a knowledge conduit. Linda van Ryneveld wanted to establish what roles she had indeed played in the online environment. Linda van Ryneveld was open to any suggestions to improve her techniques and competencies because these are important components of any eLearning intervention.

The researcher selected the eLearn ORO 880 Module for the following reasons:

This module is based on constructivist learning (Dick, 1991). In it learners actively participate in problem solving and critical thinking in a learning activity. The learners construct their own knowledge by testing ideas and approaches on the basis of their prior knowledge and experience. They apply these to a new situation and integrate the new knowledge gained with pre-existing intellectual constructs. Wilson (1996:5) defines a constructivist-learning environment as 'a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities'. The learning is controlled by the learner, and is (at the most) only guided or influenced by the facilitator.

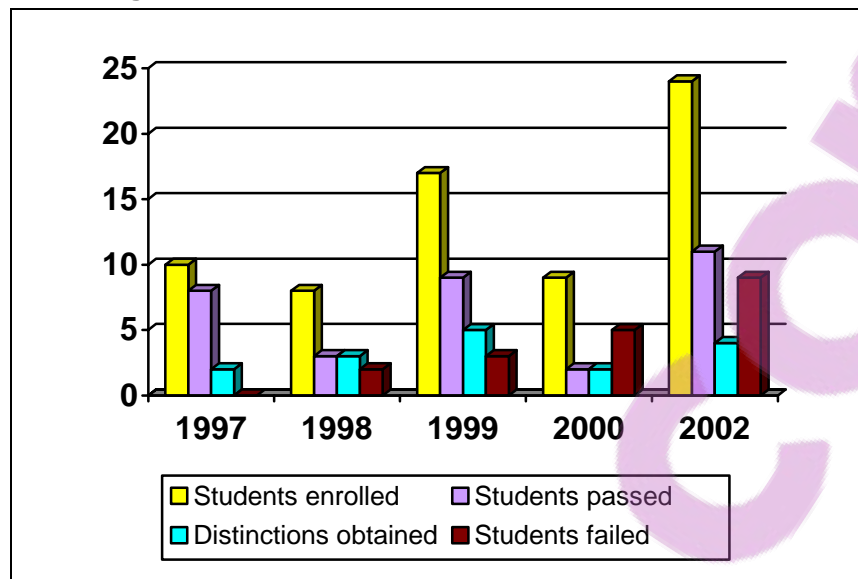
This module forms part of the MEd curriculum that was taught in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000. This particular module has a long track record of presentation and it is seen as a successful module because learners acquire various skills as part of their lifelong learning experience that can be utilised 'back-on-the-job'. It is a practical module in which learners are provided with a variety of tools to build their own websites. This complies with one of the key elements of constructivism since they construct multiple representations of data (Maur, 1999). In this module learners demonstrate a high level of creativity when they produce assignments. Figure 1.3 provides statistics on the success rate of this particular module. By constructing their own learning, the learners learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the Internet in a learning environment.

By the time that the learners get to do this module, they have already completed four modules and they have acquired the skill to participate in co-operative work. The eLearn

module is structured around individual assignments and group assignments.

Collaboration is seen as another key element in constructivist learning (Maur, 1999) in which a community works towards shared goals.

Two modifications were made to the 2002 ORO 880 Module. The module simulated the popular reality television series, *Survivor*. Apart from the location, which in the television series is usually some deserted spot, the location was cyberspace. The name was also adapted to *CyberSurviver*, emphasising ‘surf’, as in surfing the Internet to get to various locations. The same rules and events that are found in the television series took place. The *Survivor* television series is known for various activities that the tribal members have to fulfil – and the frustration, tension and volatile emotions that characterise the game. It was hoped that similar reactions would be evoked in the online module. This particular feature of the game made it unique for use as a case study. The more frustration, drama, trauma and problems evoked in the game, the more meaningful it would be to study the online facilitator and how she dealt with all the challenges. The results for the 2002 course are also incorporated in Figure 1.3. (This module was not taught in 2001 because there was a change in course scheduling. Table 1.5 provides a breakdown of the statistics for the ORO 880 Module, used in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: Statistics for ORO 880 Module**Table 1.5:** Breakdown of the statistics for ORO 880 Module

Statistics	1997	1998	1999	2000	2002
Students enrolled	10	8	17	9	24
Students passed	8	3	9	2	11
Distinctions obtained	2	3	5	2	4
Students failed	0	2	3	5	9

The sample selection is a typical sample as it reflected the average person and situation of the phenomenon of interest. This sample selection is in no way atypical, extreme, deviant or intensely unusual (Merriam, 1998:62).

1.12.2. Research methodology

Research methodology pinpoints the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. Observing, selecting, analysing and synthesising texts and interviewing were used as data collection methods. Member checking, peer reviews and the crystallization process were used as verification methods for this study. The design classification is hybrid data that is a combination of textual and numeric data and it has a low degree of control.



The researcher gathered **primary data** by means of researcher field notes, by being an observer participant, and by observing the online facilitator at work in the online environment. The researcher observed the online facilitator's actions, responses, non-verbal communications and visibility. The researcher did not participate in any online

activities, but was logged onto the system most of the time and received the messages and assignments as the participants received their information.

Another set of **primary data** was obtained from the various sets of online information that the online facilitator sent to the group and received from the group during the six-week period, which were produced independently of the research study.



Text messages consisted of *inter alia*:

- Asynchronous *Yahoo Groups* electronic group messages and *WebCT* messages.
- Synchronous *Yahoo Messenger* messages.
- Sound files.
- Formal test responses.
- Self-administered questionnaire.

A content analysis of the asynchronous *Yahoo Groups* electronic group messages and *WebCT* messages and synchronous *Yahoo Messenger* messages was done in terms of the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments.



Interviews:

An interview protocol was designed. The questions were open-ended and loosely structured. They combined ideal position questions (to elicit information and opinion) and interpretive questions (Merriam, 1998). The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and then transcribed. The following interviews were conducted:

- Focus group interview with learners.
- Personal semi structured face-to-face interview with the online facilitator as a reflective session.

**Work Profiling System (WPS) Session:**

Synthesised information gathered from the field notes, content analysis, formal test responses and interviews was used as input data for the development of the *WPS* report. This information was also distributed to the participants who were included in the work profiling session. The *WPS* is a computerised job analysis system developed by Saville and Holdsworth Ltd (SHL). The *Work Profiling System* session consisted of one accomplished performer in online facilitation, the researcher and two independent verifiers/observers, facilitated by a trained *WPS* consultant. This session lasted for approximately four hours. The responses were then entered into the *WPS* database and reports were generated.

Secondary data was gathered from analysing the roles of the online facilitation from the literature. Online facilitator roles, featured in the literature, were compared to the actual online facilitator roles in the case study.

The research design and data collection methods are graphically presented and summarised in Table 1.6. Each research subsidiary question is matched to a data collection method, which, in turn, is linked to a numbered data collection instrument.



Table 1.6: Research design and data collection methods




Research Design: Case study		What are the roles and competencies of an online facilitator?			
		Subsidiary questions	Data collection method		
			Observe	Texts	Interview
		How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?	1	2, 3, 4, 6	9
		How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?	1	2, 3, 4, 6	8, 9
		What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?	1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	8, 9
		What challenges did the online facilitator face?	1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	8, 9
		What people competencies were identified for the online environment?	1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	8, 9
		What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?	1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	8, 9
		What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?	1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	8, 9
Data collection instruments			Authenticity and trustworthiness		
 Observe	 Select/analyse data texts	 Interview	 Member checks and peer reviews	 Crystallization	 Triangulation
1. Researcher field notes, being an observer participant, observing the online facilitator at work	2. Literature study 3. Asynchronous <i>Yahoo Groups</i> electronic group messages and <i>WebCT</i> messages against Blignaut and Trollip taxonomy 4. Synchronous <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> messages against Blignaut and Trollip taxonomy 5. Sound files 6. Formal test responses 7. Self-administered questionnaire	8. Focus group interview with learners 9. Personal semi structured face-to-face interview with online facilitator as a reflective session	Verify with online facilitator and learners that roles, responsibilities, activities and competencies documented by researcher was interpreted correctly	Tell the same story through data gathered from different data collection instruments 	Triangulate with research partners

1.12.3. Procedures of authenticity and trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers strive for 'understanding'. There are various opinions about the importance of verification in qualitative research. Alternative terms have been suggested by a variety of authors for 'internal validity', 'external validity', 'reliability' and 'objectivity'. The suggested alternatives were 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'confirmability' (Creswell, 1998:197). This study focussed on authenticity and trustworthiness (Creswell, 1998).

Because I am both a researcher and observer in this study, I have a bias. Because I have a receptive audience that is awaiting research results, I have a bias. As part of my job, I am responsible for coaching future online facilitators. I have a personal interest in this research because I need to understand what competencies an online facilitator needs to fulfil various roles with effectiveness in the online environment. I also need to take cognisance of the dynamics and dilemmas that online facilitators could face. My involvement will prepare me to be able to select an appropriate person for the role of an online facilitator and to be able to brief online facilitators comprehensively on the various roles that they will need to fulfil. Figure 1.4 provides a snapshot of the researcher's position in the study.

Figure 1.4: The researcher's position in the study

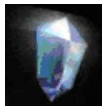
	Head Instructional Designer for a financial institution – my job
	Instructional Designer responsible for online facilitators – my job
	Researcher at the University of Pretoria – my research

I will provide a richly textured description of the study that will allow readers to make their own decisions about context-based transferability (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). I will describe in detail the online facilitator, the participants and the setting under study. With this detailed description, it is up to the reader to transfer the information to another setting.

To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in the study, the following measures were put in place:



Member checking and **peer reviews** or debriefing sessions were conducted. The online facilitator and learners verified and judged the accuracy and credibility of the findings and interpretations of the researcher with regards to the roles, responsibilities, activities and competencies of the online facilitator.



Richardson (1995:5) disagrees with the concept of triangulation, and emphasises that the central image for qualitative inquiry is a *crystal* – and not a triangle. Mixed-genre texts in the post-experimental moments have more than three sides. Crystals grow, modify and change. In the **crystallization** process (Richardson, 1995) the researcher told the same story through data gathered from different data sources. This was also followed by a process that considers the data from various angles – by highlighting different aspects, depending on different phases of the analysis.



Investigator triangulation

I form part of a research team of three partners who are all investigating the case study from different angles. The two partners acted as external commentators and played an important role regarding the triangulation/crystallization of the data from the case study.



The data gathered from the taxonomic content analysis, the self-administered questionnaire, field notes, formal test responses and interviews were used as input data for the design a **Work Profiling System (WPS) Person Specific Report** for the future online facilitators from the most job relevant competencies based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job.


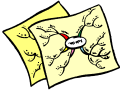


1.13. Delimiters of the study

- The study only focussed on a single case study. Convenience sampling was used as the participants and online facilitator were selected partly because they happened to be available.
- The study focussed on an academic eLearning online module and not an organisational or in-service eLearning module.
- The format of the online course was enriched and restricted by using the game metaphor. Using another didactical approach might have changed the research results.

1.14. Outline of chapters

The outline of the rest of the chapters in the research report is indicated in Table 1.7.

Table 1.7: Overview of the remainder of the research report

Chapter	Description
2 	Literature review: This chapter provides a literature review and a conceptual framework for each subsidiary question.
3 	Research design and methodology: This chapter provides an in-depth description of <i>inter alia</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research approach. ▪ Research design. ▪ Research methodology. ▪ Data collection methods. ▪ Data collection instruments. ▪ Data analysis. ▪ Verification of information.
4 	Analysing the case study – Evidence and discussion: This chapter provides evidence of the various data collection instruments in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction. ▪ Results of being an observer participant, observing the online facilitator at work. ▪ Results of taxonomic content analysis of the asynchronous <i>Yahoo Groups</i> electronic group messages and <i>WebCT</i> messages. ▪ Results of taxonomic content analysis of the synchronous <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> messages. ▪ Results of sound files. ▪ Results of formal test responses. ▪ Results from self-administered questionnaire. ▪ Results of focus group interview with learners. ▪ Results of personal semi structured face-to-face interview with online facilitator as a reflective session. ▪ Results of the design of the <i>WPS</i> for the future online facilitator. ▪ Comprehensive overall results.
5 	Conclusions and recommendations: This chapter concludes the research and provides the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summary This section summarises the research in terms of the research question and the results. ▪ Discussion This is a reflective section and discusses what lessons can be learnt from this research. Information will be provided in terms of methodological reflection, substantive reflection and scientific reflection. ▪ Recommendations for policy and practice, for further research and for further development work.

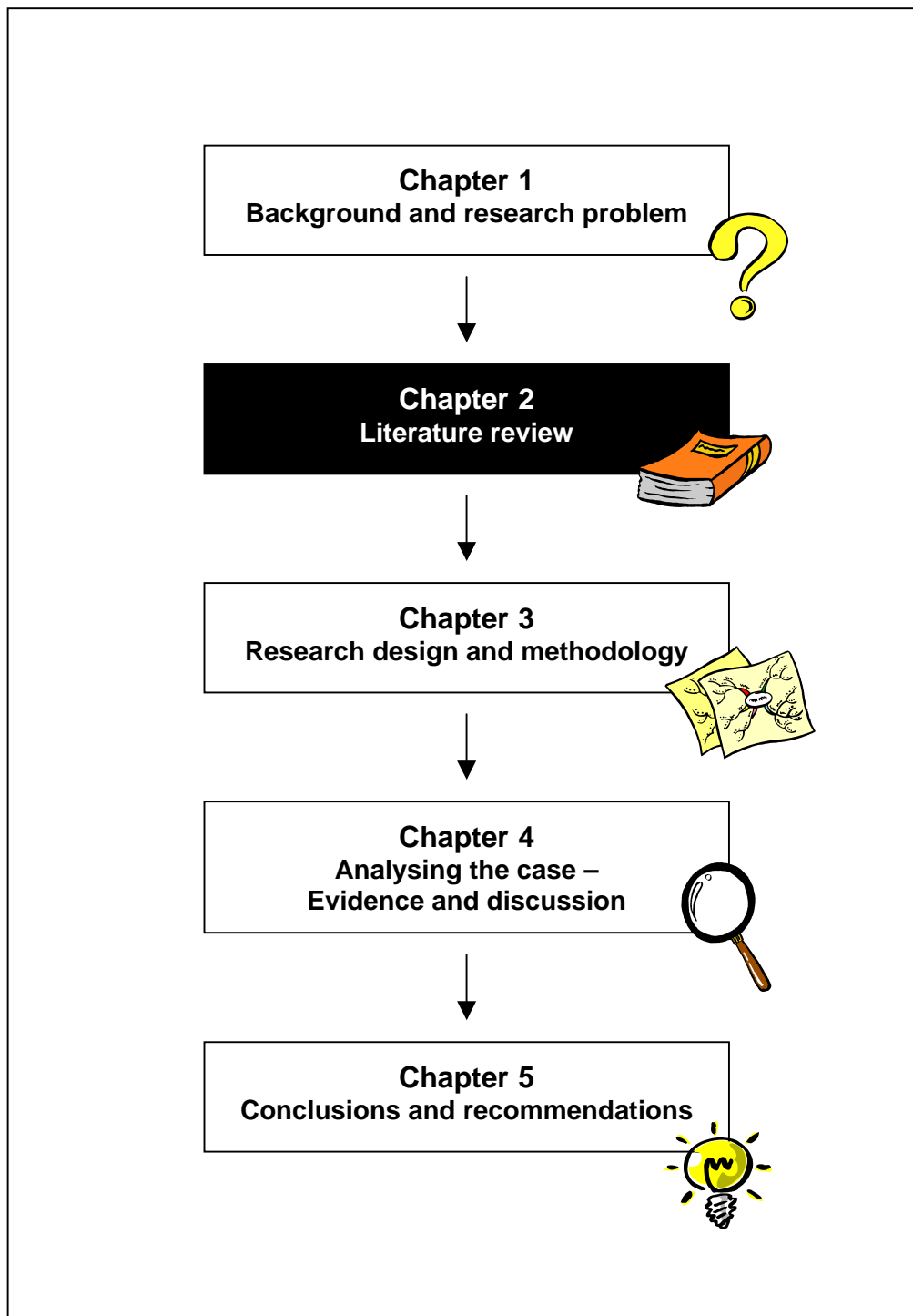


Table of contents

2.1. PRELUDE	30
2.2. INTRODUCTION	30
2.3. THEME 1: ADJUSTING TO THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT	31
2.4. THEME 2: 'TALKING' ONLINE	46
2.5. THEME 3: FACILITATOR ROLES	60
2.6. THEME 4: CHALLENGES AND DEMANDS	75
2.7. THEME 5: COMPETENCIES	85
2.8. CONCLUSION	91

2.1. Prelude

Plato made the following statement:

Our true lover of knowledge naturally strives for reality, and will not rest content with each set of particulars which opinion takes from reality, but soars with undimmed and unwearied passion till he grasps the nature of each thing as it is ... (Mouton & Marais, 1990:3).

2.2. Introduction

The process of reviewing literature and the conceptual framework for the study involves extensive reading about what other researchers say about certain topics, gathering information to support or refute arguments and writing about the findings (Bell, 1989). In this chapter five themes are addressed. I will first present aspects of the literature review on each of the themes explicated in the Table of contents (Adjusting to the online environment, 'Talking' online, Facilitator roles, Challenges and demands and Competencies). On each thematic review follows a conceptual framework within which the research question may be answered. Adjusting to the online environment is plotted on the Paprock and Williams (1993) 2 x 2 matrix against learner-centeredness. The facilitator guides and supports the learners *en route* to take control of their own efforts. 'Talking' and encouraging dialogue online can only happen if the online facilitator makes a deliberate attempt to be more interpersonal on the Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum (White & Weight, 2000). Facilitator roles were examined against the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments. Challenges that the online facilitator had to deal with were examined against the 'Four elements of online conflict' model (White & Weight, 2000). Applicable competencies for the online facilitator were determined against the *Work Profiling System* competencies (SHL, 1998) in terms of people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies.

2.3. Theme 1: Adjusting to the online environment

2.3.1. Literature review

Learning and teaching happen within a community of learners, whether it is in a traditional classroom on the ground, surrounded by physical walls or in an online 'virtual' environment in cyberspace, depicted by connectivity (Makin, 2002) and accessibility. 'Online' refers to any form of learning and teaching that happens via a computer network, and takes place in the context of distance education (Kearsley, 1998). The learners and teachers/instructors are located in different places and most of the interaction takes place via the network.

The development of distance education technologies has created conditions that require faculty to adapt to new ways of teaching and communicating with students (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002). Special ways have to be designed to assign, guide and evaluate students' work. Not only must faculty learn how to use the new technology, but it also requires a paradigm shift in how educators 'orchestrate' the act of learning (Dillon & Walsh, 1992; Hassenplug & Harnish, 1998).

Online learning can be just as effective as traditional classroom learning. A meta-analysis of 19 empirical studies compared online courses with face-to-face courses using measures such as course grades, examination grades and participation. The review found that online learning was always as good as or even better than face-to-face classes (Hiltz *et al.* 2002). Benefits of online learning are the direct result of the differences between online environments and classroom environments. Hiltz and Turoff (1993) discovered that the anonymity of online courses leads to increased student participation, especially among women and minority groups. Students not only participate more often, but they also tend to make longer and more thought-provoking contributions.

This study focuses on the online environment, and it is apparent from the literature that certain adjustments need to be made in order to function in the online environment. Comments on adjusting in the online environment vary from minimal to severe as indicated by the following quotes. There are 'obvious differences, but some changes may surprise you' (Don'tTeachOnline, 2002). The environment is 'different, yet alike' (White, 2000). The 'whole environment' is different (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). There are 'subtle differences' (Tobin, 2001). It is a 'transition process' (Moreira, 2002). The 'dynamics' of teaching and learning are changing (Kearsley, 1998). Online learning represents the 'biggest potential change in teaching methods since the inception of

formal college education – it is changing higher education for ever’ (Aase, 2000). It ‘doesn’t require anything fancy, but isn’t necessarily easy, either’ (Carnevale, 2000).

Parkin (2001) believes that there is no difference between the classroom environment and the online environment in terms of success measures and the core critical success factors, being appropriate content and learning design. The purpose of any learning intervention is to achieve the learning objectives, and success is measured against those learning objectives. However, environmental and process factors also come into play in the achievement of the learning objectives.

In the classroom environment controllable physical factors can influence the success of the learning intervention. These factors are *inter alia* trainer competence, learner preparedness, group size, comfort, lighting, acoustics, availability of water and the speed of serving the food during breaks. These controllable physical factors do not exist in the online environment; but other unique factors do (Parkin, 2001).

Kleiman (Tobin, 2001) clearly states that online facilitation is very different from classroom teaching because the facilitator does not have as many control points. When participants go off-topic online, the facilitator may not even notice this for a day or two. The facilitator does not have the equivalent of giving the class a ‘look’ or using humour to get the discussion back on track. In the online environment these casual tools do not exist that are so effective in a classroom setting.

The online environment lacks the physical communication cues that teachers/instructors and learners depend on heavily in the classroom environment – for both conscious and unconscious responses (White, 2000; Aase, 2000). This includes nodding, seeing a learner’s facial and body language, smiles, gesturing, eye contact, head bob, a surprised look or a voice tone! (Cyrs & Smith, 1990). This limitation requires unambiguous writing and thorough reading to ensure communication is clearly understood.

Social interaction and learning in the online environment challenge many of the old assumptions about education. The old thinking paradigm’s picture is that the online learning environments should mirror the image of classroom environments, with quiet students who are not engaged and the teacher is the central figure (Aase, 2000; White, 2000). The new thinking paradigm emphasises that online learning has made schooling obsolete, expertise and learning are immediately available ‘on demand’ and ‘just in time’, lurking is participation and teachers are peripheral (Aase, 2000; Kearsley, 1998; Makin, 2002).

Online learning is becoming a learner-centred event while faculty still play a key role in creating and organising class activities (Kearsley, 1998). In the online environment learners are now the active performers of tasks (Makin, 2002) and the importance of widespread participation of learners in the design of their own learning is emerging (Kimball, 1995). In a digital world learning has moved from a domain of reading, writing and arithmetic to one of sight, sound and dimension (Brown, 2000). The online environment is characterised as much by its visual and performance appeal as by its narratives and numbers (Brown, 2000). The best online experiences involve discovery on the part of the learners and in the online environment, this takes more time than in the classroom. Facilitators should allow time for discussions, learner presentations and lively debates (Don'tTeachOnline, 2002). There is a misconception that online classes will be easier than classroom classes. On the contrary, online classes require much more self-discipline and more hard work than traditional classes (Kearsley, 1998).

The total service context in which learning is delivered is changing. Getting the registration, payment, management, technical support and customer services environment running smoothly in real-time is essential for the online environment. These factors in a classroom environment are typically handled in a slow-response offline environment, or do not exist at all (Parkin, 2001).

Technology is a crucial success factor in the online environment (Parkin, 2001; Aase, 2000). No matter how good the course, if the learner cannot access the course, it is a catastrophe. Many designers build high-tech courses and try to dictate that learners upgrade to the required technology specifications. Rather know your target-learning environment and then build courses that will run on it.

Information technology can be integrated into both the classroom environment and the online environment. The interaction between these technologies and new approaches to learning and instruction may differ (Spector & Anderson, 2000). Online learners should demonstrate learning in different ways than they might in the classroom environment, because they have the tools to do so. This means that instead of writing a paper, the online learner could construct a web page presentation. Instead of taking a test and waiting weeks for the results, the learner can obtain immediate feedback from a digital quiz (Aase, 2000).

The various activities related to online settings and the multiple conditions of time in which these activities take place, put more demands on online teachers/instructors than classroom teachers. The workload increases due to the development, production and

facilitation that needs to take place. Moreira (2002) found that there is a 2-to-1 ratio between preparation time and delivery time. Online courses that include audio, video and interactivity also cost more to produce (Aase, 2000). The online activities are the equivalent of structuring a classroom course around learning modes that mix lectures, exercises, discussions, role-plays, group sessions and tests (Parkin, 2001).

Learners participate differently in the online environment. Some learners feel comfortable initiating e-mail discussions while others prefer to just read e-mail messages and not participate actively themselves, the so-called 'lurkers' (Kearsley, 1998).

Instructors and learners in the online environment need to be tolerant of different styles of participation.

Unlike the classroom experience, most online learning solutions are a blend of strategies, using synchronous and asynchronous form of communication. This implies that not every learner will be learning at the same speed, or in the same time frame. Some learners may use discussion tools, while others depend on the weekly class meeting online for their learning (Don'tTeachOnline, 2002). Many of the online interactions are asynchronous. The delay between interactions can create differences in responses. This can be positive (people think before they respond) or let emotions build up (why *didn't* they respond?) Those learners that go online more frequently may appear to 'hog' the space than those who log-on less frequently (White, 2000).

Table 2.1 provides a comparison of classroom and online teaching activities (Spector & Anderson, 2000).

Table 2.1: Comparison of classroom and online teaching activities

Setting	Location of learners	Use of IT	Temporality of activities	Type of activity
Classroom:	At the same location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation of topics. ▪ Consultation. 	*Synchronous.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Similar for all learners. ▪ Mostly instructor-led. ▪ Discussions and small group work.
Online:	Distributed / scattered at various locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation of topics. ▪ Consultation. ▪ Management ▪ Production, distribution, collaboration and editing of text. ▪ Wide range of interactions (one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Synchronous (tele/video conferencing). ▪ **Asynchronous (threaded discussion). ▪ Synchronous and asynchronous (live broadcast of a remote speaker and archiving for re-use). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ According to individuals. ▪ Mainly learner-centred. ▪ Individual and/or collaborative work (small, medium or large groups).
<p>* Synchronous transmission refers to the fixed transmission of data between sender and receiver. In distance education, the term 'synchronous' is used to refer to interactions that are 'clocked' – interactions must be sent and received at the same time. An example of a synchronous distance education application is computer-mediated conferencing. The person initiating the conference expects to interact electronically in real time with a person or persons at various sites (Williams, Paprock & Covington, 1999:154).</p>				
<p>** Asynchronous literally means 'not synchronous'. In telecommunications, asynchronous transmission refers to data transmission where there is no clocking signal. Data are sent at irregular intervals. In distance education applications, asynchronous is used to refer to interactions that are not 'clocked' – not sent and received at the same time. An example of asynchronous transmission is sending electronic mail. The party receiving the e-mail message does not have to be present at the time the message is sent. The message is 'posted' for later retrieval (Williams <i>et al.</i> 1999:146).</p>				

The instructor, who imposes a schedule and calls for quiet, controls a physical classroom. However, the online environment changes the social dynamics of learning and teaching by putting everyone (the learners and the instructor) on equal footing (Kearsley, 1998). Under normal circumstances, everyone can post messages and everyone has the same opportunity to contribute ideas and make comments. This change in the *status quo* implies that the teacher/instructor does not automatically command a presence in an online environment (Taparia, 2001). There is no counterpart

to standing at the front of the classroom, speaking to an audience until the bell rings (Kearsley, 1998). In the online environment, the instructor must adopt a role of a facilitator – someone who encourages participation and keeps discussions focused on certain topics (Ambrose, 2001; Broadbent & Legassie, 2002). This is much more difficult than classroom teaching which basically involves the presentation of material (Kearsley, 1998). Unless online learners participate in live video conferencing only, they manage their own environment and find their own time, place and pace to learn.

Online learners have more flexibility because they learn from home and from the office, a hotel room or even a seat in an aeroplane, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Parkin, 2001) and are not restricted to contact periods ruled by a timetable. Typical classroom learning has a clearly defined start and end – with a clearly defined cycle (daily or weekly) for learners to depend on. In the online environment, classes are self-paced and flexible in terms of how learners attend these classes. It is not uncommon for a learner to participate just long enough to get the ‘nuggets’ (Don’tTeachOnline, 2002) they were looking for and then leave the class without ‘completing’ it in the traditional sense.

Due to the fact that there are no physical cues in the online environment, it is much more difficult for the facilitator to keep track of exactly what the learners are up to. The learners may be reading their e-mails, talking on the telephone; eating or even writing letters while the facilitator is competing for their attention (Don’tTeachOnline, 2002).

The online environment cannot replicate the rapport that a teacher and learner can share in person. However, the inability of not knowing the learners in person is compensated by knowing the learners by the words and ideas they express. The learners communicate via words and the learners cannot sit passively in the back row twiddling their thumbs – they must interact (Taparia, 2001). Kearsley (1998) concurs that writing skills and the ability to put thoughts into words are vital in the online environment. At this point in time, because most of the online interactions are ‘text-based’, it puts less agile writers and those with a strong visual thinking tendency at a disadvantage. Putting participants at ease with their writing is a key facilitation skill (White, 2000). ‘Text-based’ means that there is a permanent record of each interaction. It is easy to reread the information to gain understanding, but individuals can also rake up old grudges going word for word with ancient posts (White, 2000). It is for this reason that it is imperative to introduce ground rules and rules of netiquette to use in the online environment. Participants need to be considerate of others and think carefully about what they write and be sensitive to any form of cultural bias. The online environment is

a splendid place for debate and discussion, but participants need to be civil and considerate (Shea, 1994; Angell & Heslop, 1994).

An interesting aspect of the egalitarian nature (Kearsley, 1998:2) of the online environment is that it minimises discrimination and prejudice that arises in the classroom environment. Unless someone deliberately reveals it, the instructor has no idea about the age, gender, ethnic background, physical characteristics or disabilities of the learners in an online class.

Although online learning provides an information rich environment, it is socially impoverished and a very lonely and remote learning environment (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Vault.com, 2000; Makin, 2002). Learning *per se* remains a social task that is built upon social interaction and the success or failure of any learning activity is usually a measure of its success or failure to create effective social interaction, to create a sense of community between the learner and the material, the learner and the teacher and the learners with each other (Dillenberg & Schneider, 1995; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Barclay, 2001; Moore, 1989). Interaction among learners is crucial in the online environment (Kearsley, 1998). It is the facilitator's role to ensure that a high level of interaction occurs in an online course (Broadbent & Legassie, 2002). A powerful form of interaction is group activity (Kaplan, 2002). Learners can be divided into small groups based upon common interests and skills. These groups can be formed for the full duration of the course or for a short-term period to complete a particular assignment (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Kearsley, 1998).

In the online environment the instructor/teacher needs to provide feedback to the learners for all assignments completed and postings made. This forms part of the interaction between learner and instructor (Moore, 1989). Learners in the online environment look for some of the same things found in traditional classroom courses – a knowledgeable instructor who interacts with the students (Carnevale, 2000) and instructors who are willing to field questions and engage the learners in group discussions. Although interaction is important, instructors do not have to stay up until all hours answering e-mails to achieve this. The instructor's workload can be limited by having learners moderate their own chats, while the instructor responds to only one out of 10 messages – enough to let the learners know the instructor is paying attention, but without creating an impossible workload for the instructor (Carnevale, 2000; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Kearsley, 1998). In the traditional classroom, it is unusual for more than a handful of learners to want to talk with the teacher after class. However, in the online environment, nearly all the learners send e-mails to the instructor. The separateness of the online experience encourages learners to try to connect in other ways (Don'tTeachOnline, 2002).

All forms of assessment and evaluation done in the classroom environment can be done in the online environment for example: traditional quizzes, tests with multiple choice answers, problem solving exercises within time limits. Portfolios and work samples are ideal for the online environment. The question of cheating is always raised in online assessment, because online activities are usually done in an unsupervised setting. If assessment involves assignments or projects unique to a particular learner/group, there should be less of a problem. Tests can also be made unique for each learner. In essence, if learners are going to cheat, they will find a way, online or not! Assessing group performance might be more difficult. This burden can also be overcome by having the contribution of each team member identified (Kearsley, 1998).

According to Shepherd (2002) one type of trainer/instructor who is good in the classroom and hopeless online is the 'classroom charismatic'. This person has the force of personality to succeed face-to-face, 'but much of the time is just winging it' (Shepherd, 2002). Online, when neither party has the visual clues, it all breaks down. Competent facilitators do not need to be charismatic, but they need structure and the ability to get learners involved in various activities.

It is actually more demanding to teach online than in a face-to-face situation (Harasim, 1993; Berge, 1995, LaVoie, 2003). It is demanding not only in terms of cognitive load, but also in time required online. Faculty report that they are spending more time preparing and delivering online courses than equivalent face-to-face courses (Pachnowski & Jurczyk, 2003; Care & Scanlan, 2001). Even after teaching an online course eight times, faculty still report that online courses take more of their time to teach (LaVoie, 2003). Faculty do not receive reduced course loads or additional compensation for the extra time that online courses require (LaVoie, 2003). Instructors need a lighter teaching load to provide them with the time both for training involved and to provide time for access to the discussion forums. Using the technology must become seamless for the instructor. For this reason a support team is required in the early implementation stages to ensure that the instructor can focus on teaching and learning instead of the technology (Harasim, 1993; Berge, 1995).

On the contrary to the abovementioned, a survey of 255 faculties participating in SUNY's distance education programme found that 96% of faculty reported 'satisfaction' with their experience teaching online courses. Eighty-five percent of faculty feel that teaching online would improve their classroom teaching too (Shea et al. 2002).

DiBiase (2000) asks the question: 'Is distance teaching more work or less?' DiBiase compares two courses, one online and one in a traditional classroom, and reveals that the online course requires more instructor attention and monitoring, but it does not require more overall time. Hislop (2001) also asks a question: 'Does teaching online take more time?' According to Hislop (2001:23) many instructors feel that teaching online takes more time, but there is relatively little data available on this issue. This study provides some support for the belief that teaching online may take more time than teaching face-to-face. However, the amount of difference tends to be small, and there are some suggestions that this relationship between teaching mode and time is more complicated than generally assumed. Bender, Wood & Vredevoogd (2004) research teaching time for a distance course and a face-to-face course. Results indicate that a distance course takes less time to teach than a face-to-face course, if student enrolment and assessment procedures are not included in the analysis. When analysed on a per-student basis, both faculty and teaching assistant time is higher for the distance course.

Several authors (Barclay, 2001; Carnevale, 2000; Dutton, Dutton & Perry, 2002; Embleton, 1999) reiterate that the whole online environment is different and this creates new problems that need to be solved.

Table 2.2 lists the abovementioned authors' problems and possible solutions. Barclay (2001), Carnevale (2000), Dutton *et al.* (2002) and Embleton (1999) still do not know how to resolve problems 5, 6, 7 and 10 as indicated in Table 2.2; therefore the questions marks against solutions 5, 6, 7 and 10.

Table 2.2: Problems and solutions for the online environment

Problems		Solutions	
1.	Student preparation.	1.	Tutorials, tours, help screens, frequently asked questions.
2.	The instructor is an information bottleneck.	2.	Peer tutoring, modelling of behaviour, peer mentoring, champions.
3.	Numbers.	3.	Appropriate distribution of learners into groups.
4.	Flaming ¹ .	4.	Tone and interaction (Netiquette).
5.	Access (time on task).	5.	?
6.	Time.	6.	?
7.	Expectations.	7.	?
8.	Passive learning.	8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration/problem-based learning. ▪ Integrated (interactive) materials that engage the learners with the materials, the instructor and each other.
9.	The technology.	9.	IRC, MOO/MUD, web-based messaging, e-mail and newsgroups.
10.	Meeting the instructor's goals.	10.	?

According to Abramov and Martkovich (2002), the main factors influencing satisfaction levels of students in online courses are delivery mode, collaboration and communication with instructors and peers. To ensure higher satisfaction levels in online courses, Abramov and Martkovich (2002:13-14) suggest that instructors do the following:

- Consider a kind of a 'license agreement' listing all the major points a learner has to know, and develop a mechanism that involves confirmation sent by every learner before actually starting studying. This needs to be done because about a quarter of online learners manage not to have found out what the prerequisites are until after they have started the course.
- Develop a screening test that enables the course administrator to screen learners who are either severely under-qualified.

¹ Flaming refers to making derogatory remarks or attacking another person via e-mail (Millennium Cable Speed, 2000)

- Provide tools (online tutorials, mini-training sessions, self-assessment tests, quizzes) and Frequently Asked Questions to learners. This ought to minimise the number of questions the instructor has to answer.
- Pay special attention to performance of learners during the first 2-3 weeks and offer additional help, if it is needed.
- Use encouragement sparingly; otherwise learners develop a feeling of being attended on by a 'babysitter'. This affects the learners' confidence and ability to learn independently. By no means may an instructor show irritation – even if the learner keeps asking the same question for the fifth time within one week.
- Learners have different learning styles: some are 'social learners' and work best in teams; others prefer working alone. Unless the nature of an assignment dictates otherwise, the option of working alone or joining a team should be left open.
- Inform learners that their papers will not be graded instantly. It usually takes 4-5 days for the instructor to grade 25 papers. If this point is not reiterated at the beginning of the courses, the learners tend to develop unrealistic expectations.

According to Reeves (2002), the roles of human teachers and digital technologies in tertiary education must be made as effective as possible. To date, there is not enough evidence about the demands of the online teaching on staff members, 'nor do we understand the most effective alignments of educational objectives, content, instructional methods and assessment strategies for online learning' (Reeves, 2002:7). Reeves (2002) urges for a different type of research agenda in the form of development research. This will provide a set of design principles that specialists and practitioners can apply to the development of effective digital learning environments (Reeves, 2002:7).

The person that has to make the biggest adjustment from the classroom environment to the online environment is the teacher, instructor and education staff (Murray, 2001). The change involves moving from teaching to facilitating (Rosenberg, 2001; Duckworth, 2001; Hofmann, 2001a; Harris & Figg, 1994; Nichols, 2002; Rykert, 2002; West & Luetkehans, 1998; Taylor, 2002; Mazoué, 1999).

Rogers (1969:164-166) lists the following ten Guidelines for Facilitation:

1. The facilitator is largely responsible for setting the initial mood/climate of the group.
2. The facilitator helps to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals in the class as well as the more general purposes of the group.
3. The facilitator relies upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes that have meaning to him/her as the motivational force behind significant learning.
4. The facilitator endeavours to organize and make easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning.
5. The facilitator regards himself as a flexible resource to be utilized by the group.
6. In responding to expressions in the group, the facilitator accepts both the intellectual content and the emotionalised attitudes, endeavouring to give each aspect the appropriate degree of emphasis that it has for the individual or the group.
7. As the classroom climate becomes established, the facilitator is increasingly able to become a participant learner, a member of the group, expressing his views as an individual.
8. The facilitator takes the initiative in sharing herself with the group – feelings as well as thoughts – in ways which neither demand nor impose, but represent simply a personal sharing which the student may take or leave.
9. Throughout the course, the facilitator remains alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings.
10. The facilitator endeavours to recognize and accept his own limitations as a facilitator of learning.

The abovementioned information reveals aspects of adjustments that need to happen when changing from classroom-based instruction to learning in the online environment. It is also apparent that certain adjustments are critical to function in the online environment. For purposes of this study it is important to ask the question:

How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?

In the early days, distance education was synonymous with correspondence courses and was a lonely activity. During the learning process, students worked on their own with little contact with other students and teachers. With the change from 'teaching' to 'learning' (Barr & Tagg, 1995) and rapid technological innovations, distance education can be interactive and vibrant today. The paradigm underpinning interactive learning is based on the concepts of constructivism (Dick, 1991; Cyrs & Conway, 1997) and focuses on supporting students to actively process the information they receive and construct new knowledge through their own experiences. The role of educators in this constructivist student-centred model is to provide students with a learning environment that encourages knowledge construction and reflection through social interaction with other students in a learning community (Palloff & Pratt, 1999).

2.3.2. Conceptual framework for the online environment

One of the biggest fears of first-time online facilitators is the belief that teaching from a distance is radically different from teaching face-to-face (Mantyla, 2000a; Murray, 2001). Although it is true that there are differences, it is also true that basic principles for teaching and learning online are the same as the basic principles for any teaching and learning environment (Williams *et al.* 1999:105). Instructors still need to address issues such as course purpose, learning objectives and the volume of information, but managing these areas calls for a different emphasis in a technology-based learning environment (Barclay, 2001; Carnevale, 2000; Embleton, 1999; Williams *et al.* 1999; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Kearsley, 1998; Don'tTeachOnline, 2002; Lick, 2001; Levy, 2003; Shea *et al.* 2002; Care & Scanlan, 2001).

Irrespective of the teaching or learning situation, the following remains important (Seels & Glasgow, 1990; Rothwell & Kazanas, 1992; Gagne, Briggs & Wager, 1988; Fardouly, 1997; Flouris, 1989, Williams *et al.* 1999):



- Good instructional design produces good outcomes, and poor instructional design produces poor outcomes.
- Learning does not take place because of what the teacher does, but because of what the learner does.
- The measure of good instructional design is the meaningfulness of the learning that takes place.

Meaningful learning is defined as

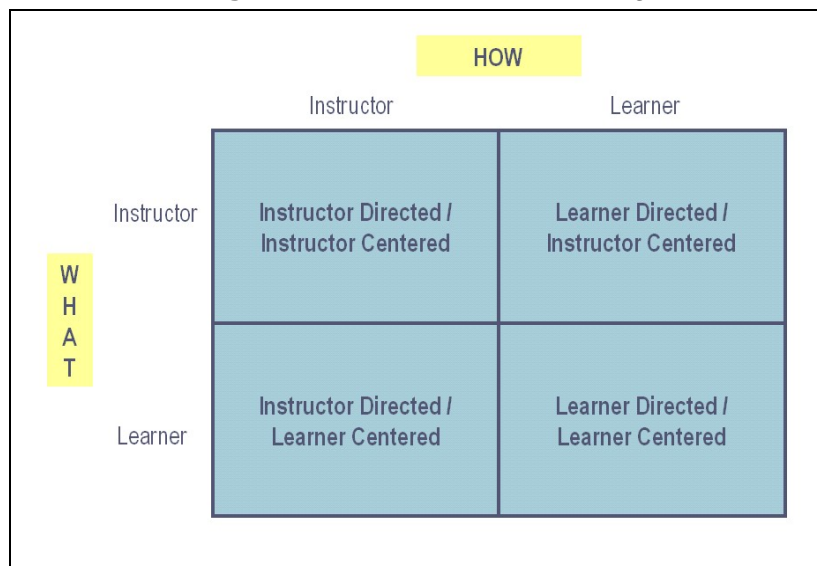
[L]earning in which individuals are helped to acquire needed knowledge, attitudes and skills to help solve real life problems
(Williams *et al.* 1999:106).

Meaningful learning provides the learners with the opportunity to discuss, argue, negotiate and reflect upon existing beliefs and knowledge. The learner is 'involved in constructing knowledge through a process of discussion and interaction with learning peers and experts' (Harasim, 1989:51).

Meaningful learning occurs when learners are drawn into the learning activity. For the purpose of this study, the Paprock and Williams (1993) 2 x 2 matrix on Models of Teaching will be used as the conceptual framework, because it emphasises the relationship between meaningful learning and the extent to which learners are involved in 'what' is taught and 'how' it is taught. The more involved the learner is in defining the learning equation, the more interaction and participation will occur.

Figure 2.1 provides a graphical representation of the Models of Teaching. Figure 2.1 suggests that in any teaching and learning process, there are two elements to consider: 'what' is learned and 'how' it is learned (Williams *et al.* 1999:107). The decision made about the relationship between these two elements affects the extent of participation and interaction.

Figure 2.1: Models of Teaching



The extent of participation refers to various levels of participation – mental, physical and emotional – that keep learners involved in the learning process (Williams *et al.* 1999; Moore, 1989; Palloff & Pratt, 1999) namely:

- Talking
- Writing
- Watching
- Thinking and
- Doing.

In high-technology online environments, the key to creating interactive and participative learning environments is not getting so wrapped up in the technology that the technology drives the method (Parkin, 2001).

The Paprock and Williams' Models of Teaching (1993) address the learner-centeredness that the online environment is creating. Learners need to participate and discover in the online environment, using synchronous and asynchronous

communication tools to become part of the learning community to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills to help solve real life problems. But, as Mazoué (1999:109) states

Learner-centered does not mean you're on your own, pal!

The facilitator, on the other hand, is the person that assists, guides, encourages and supports the learners *en route* to enable the learners to take control and responsibility for their own efforts and achievements (Bentley, 1994). Participating in *CyberSurviver* revolved around learner-centeredness. The online facilitator set the tone and provided the framework for the modules as well as information on assignments, assessment criteria, communication tools and collaboration exercises. The learners were at the centre of the learning experience and interacted with each other via talking, writing, watching, thinking and doing.

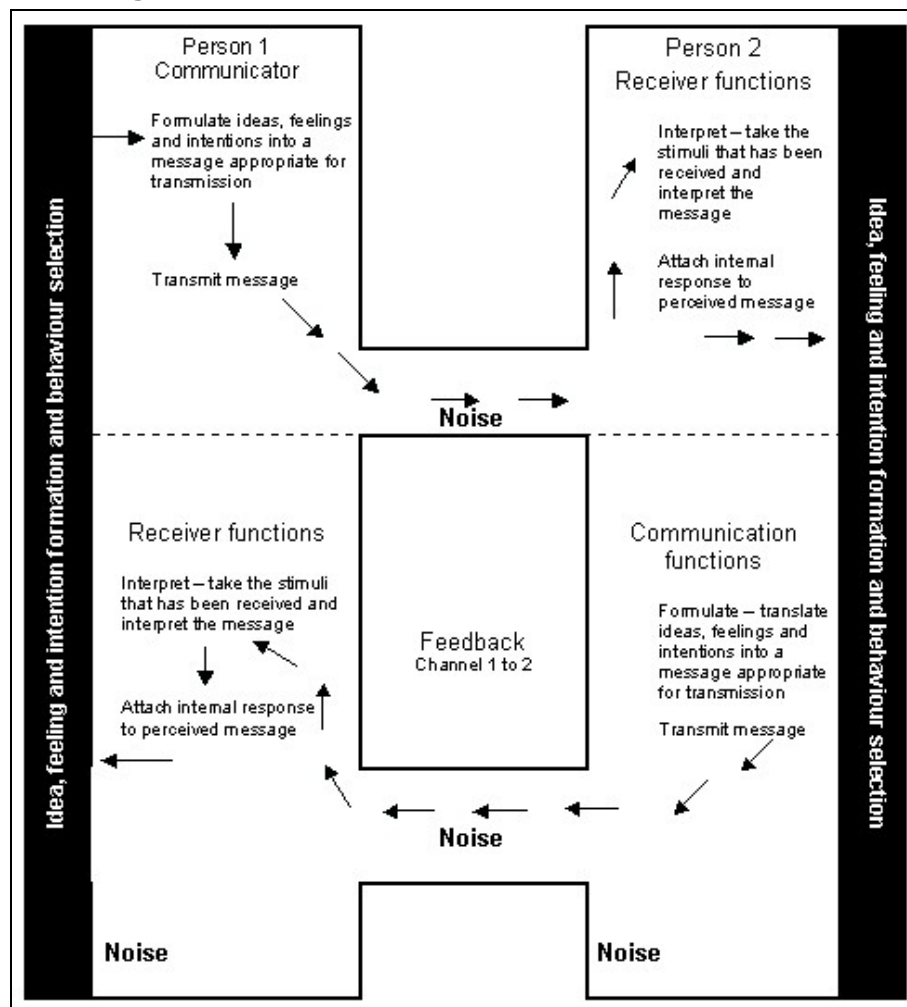
2.4. Theme 2: 'Talking' online

2.4.1. Literature review

Communication is one of the most important basic human activities. Although people spend most of their waking time in some form of communicating activity, people do not pay enough attention to how they communicate. It is important to understand how communication takes place to enable people to handle communication breakdowns (Johnson, 1981).

Face-to-face communication in its broadest sense is seen as the two-way process by which certain information is conveyed or transmitted from a communication source to a receiver, who in turn reacts to a stimulus (Van Schalkwyk, 1988:1). Figure 2.2 provides a graphical representation of the nature of face-to-face communication (Johnson, 1981:22).

Figure 2.2: The nature of face-to-face communication



Face-to-face communication is a process where people send one another symbols to which certain meanings are attached. These symbols can be either verbal (words) or non-verbal (facial expressions and gestures). All communication affects the relationship between people in one-way or another. The communicator formulates ideas or feelings into a message and sends the message along a channel. The channel can be any means by which the messages are transmitted and received. The message is any information that is sent through words (verbal) or through physical behaviour (non-verbal). For communication to be successful, there must be a receiver who interprets the messages and gives feedback. Feedback is the response or the reaction of the

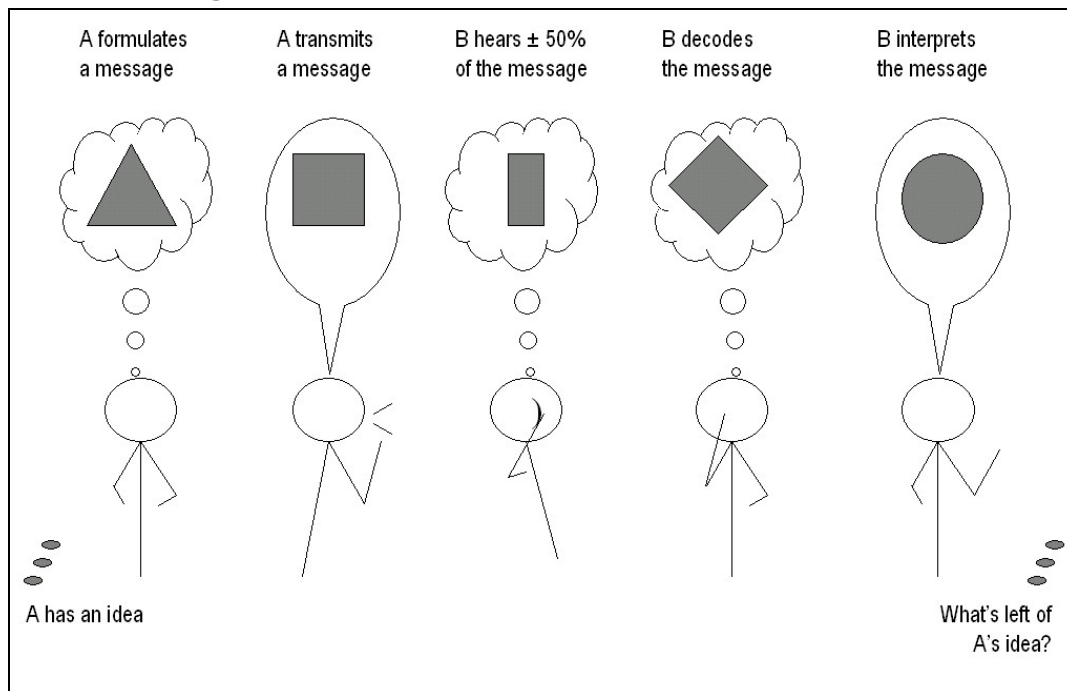
receiver that the sender observes. Noise is ever present in the communication process and is any element that interferes with the communication process.

In the communicator/sender (Johnson, 1981:30), noise refers to *inter alia*:

- Confused thinking. The inability to be able to provide the recipient with a clear picture of what the communicator intends to say.
- Line-loss distortion. Every time a message is repeated, another layer of meaning is added, leading to distortion and lack of clarity.
- Obfuscation, using obscure words that lead to misunderstanding.
- Emotional distortion. Feelings can twist a person's judgment for selecting the correct word with the appropriate meaning.
- Ignoring feedback. If the communicator ignores what the other person is telling him/her, the message can be lost.
- Language. Use words and sentence construction that most people understand. Talk the talk of the receiver.

In the receiver (Johnson, 1981:35), noise refers to *inter alia*:

- Not listening.
- Emotional distortion. Feelings can obstruct the interpretation of the message.
- Selective interpretation. People hear what they want to hear.
- Ignorance. If the recipient does not have a clue what is said, the message is lost.
- Language. If the receiver does not use the same language, the message is lost.
- Feedback. If the recipient does not indicate that s/he understands the message, ineffective communication has taken place.

Figure 2.3: A face-to-face communication breakdown

One of the problems that is found in face-to-face communication is the issue of expressing ideas in such a way that there is little chance of misunderstanding (Brockbank, 1998:181) as is graphically presented in Figure 2.3. It is through experiencing and expressing feelings that relationships are built and maintained and although feelings and emotions are internal states of mind, overt behaviours are used to communicate them to other people (Van Schalkwyk, 1988). The more adept an individual is in expressing feelings, the better this person will be in responding to the problems of others.

The term 'online communication' refers to reading, writing and communication via networked computers. It encompasses *synchronous* computer-mediated communication (whereby people communicate in real time via chat or discussion software, with all participants at their computers at the same time); *asynchronous* computer-mediated communication (whereby people communicate in a delayed fashion by computer, using programs such as e-mail); and the reading and writing of online documents via the World Wide Web (Warschauer, 2001). Nesis (2000) defines online communication as using communication technologies to interact by passing and receiving information online.

There is a distinct difference between face-to-face communication and online communication. In face-to-face communication there are many subtle cues provided by body language and vocal intonation. When meeting people face-to-face, there is a clear sense of what is appropriate in the way people act and communicate. Communication researchers have consistently found that non-verbal cues are the

dominant source of meaning in interpersonal communication (Mehrabian, 1972). Meeting people over the Internet similarly requires a certain level of awareness. On the Internet, body language such as smiles, a nod of the head or a disapproving look cannot be seen and the tone of a person's voice cannot be heard. A pun made with a grin in a face-to-face situation may come across entirely differently in an e-mail message. Proper form and following rules are important in most human undertakings for example, proper table manners, proper greeting, stick to the rules of the road. Online communication has its own protocol and it is important to abide by online netiquette (Shea, 1994; Angell & Heslop, 1994; Lewis, 2000).

According to Warschauer (2001) newsgroups, e-mail, chat rooms and instant messages mostly use written English and suffer from the limitations of written English because it lacks a consistent method to convey non-verbal communication. Tone of voice, body language, facial expressions and gestures, which are common in face-to-face communication, are difficult to transmit in writing. The main method used to transmit emphasis and tone of voice is sentence structure and punctuation. There is no real way to communicate hand gestures or body language. Facial expressions can be mimicked by 'emoticons' or 'smileys', but even these fall short!

Online communication suffers from an immediacy that written English doesn't. When talking to someone in a chat room, the person sees everything that is typed immediately, just as if it is spoken. Then the other party reacts appropriately or inappropriately, and does so quickly to keep the conversation going. The same conversation spoken face-to-face, or over a telephone, would not present the same potential for misunderstanding because of non-verbal cues given in the tone of voice and facial expressions. This fast rate of information exchange contributes to misunderstandings (Warschauer, 2001).

The online communication complexities can lead to anxiety and hostility. Exchanges can quickly blow out of proportion. Users react and use insulting language and 'flaming' occurs, which is defined as electronic messages that express startlingly blunt, extreme and impulsive language. 'Flaming' involves online conflict that erupts into personal or rude attacks (Shea, 1994). A 'flamer' often says things online that s/he would never say to another person in a face-to-face situation (Sproull & Kiesler, 1992).

Individuals in the online environment are relatively more uninhibited. Flaming is one outcome of this dynamic. Online members are also more willing to disclose personally sensitive information about themselves in contrast to face-to-face interaction. Students often comment that they quickly come to know their virtual classmates much better than

co-workers or neighbours, even when the latter relationships have been for a long duration (Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler & McGuire, 1986).

Status differences play less of a role in the online environment. The fact that a person is 'the instructor' or 'the manager' has less of an inhibiting effect on the interaction. Instructors who are accustomed to the traditional lecture method might be surprised by the 'cheekiness' of online students (Sproull & Kiesler, 1992).

Interaction in online groups tends to be more evenly distributed among group members. Students often comment that they engage in online discussions to a much greater degree than when in a traditional classroom. Everyone has equal access to the instructor and to the interaction in the online environment (Kiesler, 1984).

Online consensus decision-making takes significantly longer than when group members interact in a face-to-face environment. It tends to be more difficult for online groups to reach agreement. It can be tough for groups of more than three students to efficiently complete their work (Kiesler, 1984).

Lewis (2000:17) suggests that there is a 'WRITE' way to communicate online. This way involves communicating online in a manner that is **W**arm, **R**esponsive, **I**nquisitive, **T**entative and **E**mpathetic. An explanation of each component is discussed below.

Warmth does not mean to give people the electronic equivalent of sloppy hugs and kisses; it rather means to decrease the distance among participants. Being warm online is a way of reminding others that it is 'people who are engaged in communication, not software' (Lewis, 2000:17).

Instructors can include online warmth in the following ways:

- Use the telephone when necessary.
- Send sensitive information to private mailboxes.
- Incorporate warmth into written text – write something about your family and your interests.
- Describe the setting from which you are writing or the music to which you are listening. Online warmth of this kind helps students place you in a human setting.
- Play with language by making use of 'emoticons' – send the occasional virtual bouquet of roses: --<-<@--<-<@

Responsiveness – online communication is usually asynchronous. This means people have to wait several days before getting a response to a message. The instructor needs to set deadlines in terms of when students can expect feedback and this action reduces anxiety and creates expectation on the part of the students. Try to return personal messages as soon as possible. Provide occasional reminders to students.

Inquisitiveness – defensiveness is reduced if people ask questions rather than make statements. It is usually more constructive to ask a person ‘why’ than it is to tell a person ‘what’. Inquisitiveness provides information that is useful for solving a problem or resolving an issue.

Tentativeness – defensiveness is reduced if people read, “It appears that ...” as opposed to “It is ...”. Use “I-messages as opposed to “you-messages”.

Empathy – instructors need to put themselves in the shoes of their audience and consider the position of the students. A wide variety of issues should be kept in mind, *inter alia*:

- A student can still be an effective contributor even if s/he misspells words or uses poor grammar. Be lenient in the informal class discussions.
- Sometimes students send reasons for failure to perform. Consider the students and their hectic lives.

A facilitator should ‘talk’ to his/her students and a facilitator who fails to pay special attention to these areas will run into problems. The components of ‘teacher talk’ (Hiss, 2000:24) include control talk, humour, special language and an andragogical approach. An explanation of each component is discussed below.

Control talk refers to any communication used by an online facilitator to set tone, to clarify expectations and to convey meaning that is understood by all participants. The facilitator needs be responsive to each student’s problems and must have a ‘caring persona’ (Hiss, 2000:25) rather than one that is cold and aloof. Messages sent by the facilitator should come across naturally, as though they were speaking to the student in a face-to-face situation. Students, in turn, tend to model the facilitator’s communication style, contributing to a warmer online environment. Students take their cues off the facilitator. Facilitators should never lose their temper or be sarcastic online. A facilitator who is not very ‘visible’ will likely have students who are also not visible.

Effective control talk helps to set a productive tone in the online environment; it clarifies expectations and creates a structure that contributes to learning. Useful hints for control talk include the following:

- Reply to student autobiographies with a personal note about something the student said. Online students love to be warmly welcomed. Talk about their dogs, children, and hobbies – anything not related to work or school.
- Compile the syllabus and have it ready to go at the start of the online course and include when assignments are due and the points or percentage of the grade for each assignment.
- Upload class materials the day prior to using the actual materials.
- Answer questions as soon as possible, but not later than 24 hours.
- Never leave the online class for an extended time without telling the students when you will be back.
- Try to send students a handout, message, thought for the day, or something every day – online students need to know that you are there!
- Give feedback and grades on a regular schedule every week. Online students hate not knowing how they are doing and include some positives in the feedback.

Humour promotes novelty, divergent thinking, creative problem solving and risk taking. Laughter in the classroom is a sign that students enjoy the learning process rather than viewing it as dull and boring – a smile can come right through the computer monitor via the facilitator's words (Hill, 1988). Humour should always be G-rated (Gold rated), indicating that the facilitator should stay away from any racial, ethnic, gender-related, political, religious, gay or alternative lifestyle humour (Hill, 1988; Watson & Emerson, 1988; Gilliland & Mauritsen, 1971).

Special language (emoticons). In face-to-face situations, facilitators use non-verbal expressions to communicate in conjunction with words. However, online facilitators must depend exclusively on words. Use emoticons to clarify meaning – use emoticons that the students are familiar with! Communicate in a conversational manner, as opposed to an academic tone (White, 2000).



Andragogical approach. One of the biggest mistakes an online facilitator can make is to treat the students as children. A facilitator who ‘talks down’ to students or patronises them can expect problems. Another mistake that facilitators make is to communicate as though they are the only experts in the class. An adult-centred approach assumes that students can bring a wealth of information and experience to a class (Brookfield, 1988). In many cases, adult online students may be as knowledgeable as the facilitator in a particular area. The facilitator should make such students feel comfortable about sharing their expertise without the threat of being reprimanded or ridiculed. A facilitator must take care not to say too much or dominate discussions because students have a tendency to ‘clam up’ (Hiss, 2000:35).

There are three requirements for effective communication (Herring, 1996:35-47).

These requirements are *inter alia*:

1. The skill of sending messages:

- Clearly ‘own’ your messages by using first person singular pronouns. Personal ownership means taking responsibility for the ideas and feelings that are expressed.
- Make the messages complete and specific. Include clear statements with all the necessary information.
- Be redundant. Repeat messages more than once and through different channels.
- Ask for feedback concerning the way the messages are being received.
- Describe feelings by name, action or figure of speech – be descriptive.

2. Sender credibility – this refers to the attitude the receiver has toward the trustworthiness of the sender and is affected by the following:

- The reliability of the sender as information source.
- The intentions or motives of the sender.
- The expression of warmth and friendliness.
- The majority opinion of other people concerning the trustworthiness of the communicator.

- The expertise of the communicator.

3. Optimal feedback:

- Focus feedback on the person's behaviour and not on his/her personality.
- Focus feedback on descriptions rather than judgments.
- Focus feedback on a specific situation rather than on abstract behaviour.
- Focus feedback on the 'here and now' rather than the 'there and then'. It serves no purpose to refer to something that happened two years ago.
- Focus feedback on sharing feelings and perceptions rather than on giving advice.
- Do not force feedback on other people. Feedback is given to help people become more aware and not to preach to them. Feedback should serve the needs of the receiver, and not the needs of the giver.
- Do not give people more feedback than they can understand at the time.
- Focus feedback on actions that the person can change and suggest alternatives.

'The giving and receiving of feedback requires courage, skill, understanding and respect for yourself and others as well as involvement' (Myers & Myers, 1992:15). Do not give feedback lightly. The person giving feedback should ensure that s/he is willing to be responsible for what is said and that the timing of the feedback is appropriate. The purpose of feedback is to increase other people's self-awareness and positive feelings. To invest in a relationship by providing accurate and realistic feedback is a sign of caring and commitment (Myers & Myers, 1992).

Listening forms part of communication (Johnson, 1981). The problem with listening is that people believe that it is the same as hearing and that it is something that occurs naturally. The fact is that listening well takes effort and time. Listening involves understanding, analysing and evaluating the communicated message. Listening is one of the important contributions a person can make to building relationships. The listener shows care through confirming or disconfirming responses. Confirming responses include direct acknowledgement of someone's message, agreement about content, asking for more information and giving positive feedback. Disconfirming responses

include ignoring what someone has said and making irrelevant or impersonal responses.

Listening is one of the facilitator's most useful tools (Bentley, 1994:10). For facilitators there are probably six main situations in which they will have to listen. In each of these, the objective of the listening will differ (Bentley, 1994:10-13):

1. **Monologue.** One person talks, extensively and continuously, without any apparent interest in whether people listen. This is more a process of 'saying what I want to say'. In this situation facilitators have to listen for the underlying message or reason for the monologue.
2. **Dialogue.** This is the exchange of thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions between two or more people. The key to listening in this situation is to grasp what the other person is saying so that a relevant response can be made. There is an implied process of taking turns to speak and listen.
3. **Conversation.** This action is less formal than dialogue and seems to be an opportunity for people to engage in sharing information. There is no particular need to respond to what someone else has said, nor to talk about the same things, though there is usually some link between what people are saying. For facilitators, the aim is to try to define the central theme of the conversation.
4. **Discussion.** A discussion is a focused conversation on a particular topic. It is an opportunity for people to offer their views. Facilitators need to listen for the consensus, and to pick out the various themes, i.e. the essence of the group's views. In addition, it is important to notice where differences exist between group members.
5. **Debate.** This exists when there are particular views being expressed for and against some particular theme. The debate might be an organised one, or one that arises from a discussion, but facilitators have to spot the difference. In a debate, facilitators need to be impartial.
6. **Argument.** This usually occurs as the final expression of contrasting views between two or more people. When agreement has not been reached, and if it is important to the parties engaged in the debate that their views hold sway, then we have an argument. In this situation, facilitators have to listen clearly to what each party is saying and try to define some common ground. Facilitators should not take

sides, but remain respected listeners who can summarise and reflect back the relevant positions of the parties.

According to Mazoué (1999:108), instructors should provide as much ‘personal’ contact as possible and convey a sense of their own sustained involvement in and commitment to an online course.

The abovementioned information reveals various aspects of ‘talking’ in the online environment. For purposes of this study, it is still important to ask the question:

How did the online facilitator ‘talk’ to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?

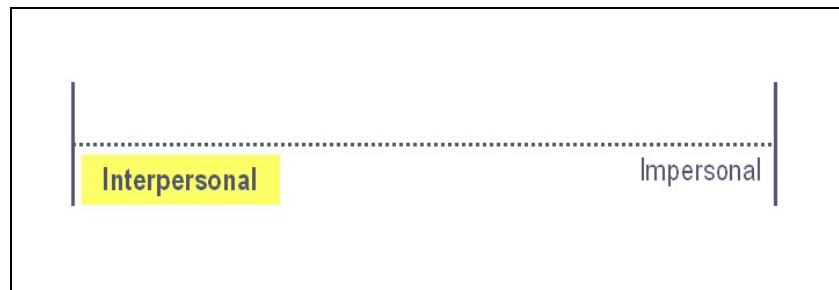
To establish rapport with a group and to be warm and responsive towards learners suggest that the online facilitator needs to form a bond with the learners. This bond can only be formed if the online facilitator is willing to move toward an ‘interpersonal’ approach towards the learners as is described in the conceptual framework below.

2.4.2. Conceptual framework for ‘talking’ online

Interpersonal communication is often regarded as face-to-face communication that happens between two people – such as between employer and employee, husband and wife, teacher and student. ‘Interpersonal’ can also be defined as a type or quality of communication that can be present in a range of settings – on the telephone, through writing, in groups and even on the computer (White & Weight, 2000:4). The online environment is technologically dependent, and online facilitators need to alter their interpersonal metaphor and think about the quality of online communication.

Stewart (1990) offers a way with his Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum as is depicted in Figure 2.4 (White & Weight, 2000:4). This metaphor encompasses the many possibilities for interpersonal communication in the online environment.

Figure 2.4: The Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum



The continuum reiterates that interpersonal communication is not restricted to face-to-face situations or a number of people, but is a result of the choice the online facilitator makes in the online environment. The continuum functions by accentuating that a person may choose to place a communication situation anywhere on the quality spectrum. It is no longer a question of 'either' impersonal 'or' interpersonal communication, but of degrees. No matter what the situation, the Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum assumes that a person has a choice to be more or less interpersonal. Stewart (1990:16-18) suggests that there are three reasons for making the choice to be more or less interpersonal in communication situations, considering that communication means dealing with people. The three reasons are *inter alia*:

1. One chooses to be more interpersonal in order to focus on what makes the other person unique. In the online environment, messages are likely to show less social awareness, politeness and concern for the individual. Online facilitators must create opportunities for students to share their unique experiences and traits.
2. One chooses to be more interpersonal in order to show respect for a person's ability to think and make choices. Online facilitators must recognise that their students are thinkers and give them tasks that are complex enough to be challenging, but simple enough to accomplish. Successfully challenging an online student requires a high level of open communication and feedback between online facilitators and students.
3. One chooses to be more interpersonal in order to pay attention to relevant feelings and to the whole human being. Humans have feelings and the online environment is an emotional environment. Online messages can be blunt and escalate into flaming. Online facilitators can help develop the whole student by establishing a

positive and supportive emotional climate through using techniques such as 'emoticons', effective conflict management and constructive feedback.

Facilitation is a word that describes an activity and it is something that someone does. It is a process, yet it also includes non-action, silence and even the facilitator's absence (Bentley, 1994). The word facilitate is derived from the Latin *facilis* which means 'to make easy' and dictionary definitions vary, for example:

- To free from difficulties and obstacles, to make easy.
- To lessen the labour of.
- To render easier, to promote, help forward.
- To make easier or less difficult; help forward (Random House Webster's College Dictionary, 1991:477).

The way day-to-day learning and talking functions in the online environment is a result of how the online facilitator perceives communication and its relationship to human beings. According to Rykert (2002:1):

Good online facilitation is partly good listening, partly good timing and the ability to be tuned in to what the group is trying to accomplish.

Online students are unique and online facilitators should choose to be interpersonal and to look for opportunities to treat online students as thinking human beings and to render support and guidance. Online learning is not just about the transmission of information. It depends on a friendly, relaxed and hospitable atmosphere with a facilitator who shows respect for students, who is concerned about their needs and who is supportive. 'Facilitator finesse' (my terminology) can only be attained if the online facilitator makes a deliberate decision to be more 'interpersonal'.

2.5. Theme 3: Facilitator roles

2.5.1. Literature review

With the emergence of the World Wide Web there has been a major shift from instructor-centeredness to learner-centeredness in online courses (Howard, 2003; Kearsley, 1998; Makin, 2002; Kimball, 1995; Drago, Peltier & Sorensen, 2002). The instructor is no longer the primary source of information for the learner who now has access to indefinite sources of information. The role of the instructor has moved from that of 'sage on the stage' to that of 'guide on the side' (Collison, Elbaum, Haavind & Tinker, 2002) to more recently, 'host on the post' (Ambrose, 2001). The learner no longer depends primarily on the perceptions of the instructor, but develops his/her own ideas and constructs his/her learning from multiple sources (Howard, 2003). An instructor now needs to step back from the limelight, facilitate the learning process (Gunawardena, 1992) and provide support through asynchronous text messages (Broadbent & Legassie, 2002). As Mazoué (1999) notes, the role of the instructor is to support learners as 'informational explorers'.

In addition, the online instructor must compensate for the lack of physical presence by creating a supportive environment where learners feel comfortable participating and particularly where learners know that their instructor is accessible (Hobgood, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 1999). However, Bischoff (2000:58) states:

The key to online education's effectiveness lies in large with the facilitator.

Mason (1991) suggests that faculty teaching online must play both intellectual and social roles. There must be a balance between subject matter (content) and personal exchanges (non-content matter) (Dede, 1996; Moller, 1998). The most important role of the instructor in online classes is a 'high degree of interactivity and participation' (Kearsley, 1998; Broadbent & Legassie, 2002). Effective online teaching consists of instructor 'visibility and frequent and timely feedback' (Bischoff, 2000). A facilitator who is not very 'visible' will likely have students who are also invisible (Hiss, 2000).

Facilitators should post notes regularly to their class and their names should appear frequently (Hiss, 2000).

Although the facilitator is now considered to be a 'guide on the side', it is important that the facilitator remains **visible** (Bischoff, 2000 – my emphasis) and has a **strong presence** (Schweizer, 1999 – my emphasis), also referred to as **teaching presence** (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer, 2001 – my emphasis). Instructors have to be

'seen' in order to be present in the online asynchronous environment (Picciano, 2002). It is the online presence of the instructor, the knowledge that the instructor is 'out there' that matters most to the students (Smith, Ferguson & Caris, 2002; Woods, 2002). The instructor has to be available everyday because learners expect instant responses (Arsham, 2002:10). In online courses learners 'demand more feedback, and the more feedback they receive, the more interaction they want' – learners develop a 'type of intimacy' in their communications with instructors that rarely manifests in face-to-face classrooms (Brown, 1998:3). If students are required to post a certain number of messages each week, then online instructors should maintain at least the same level of participation as students (Bischoff, 2000; Graham, Cagiltay, Lim, Craner & Duffy, 2001). Infrequent interaction with instructors was one of the reasons given by students for not completing distance education courses (Wilkinson & Thomas, 1991). Online learners require support and guidance to make the most of their learning experience. This support takes the form of a combination of student-instructor interaction and student-student interaction (Threlkeld & Brzoska, 1994). Learners value timely feedback regarding course assignments, exams and projects (Woods, 2002; Hootstein, 2002) and learners benefit significantly from their involvement in small learning groups (Kearsley, 1998; Dillenberg & Schneider, 1995; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Barclay, 2001; Moore, 1989) because these groups provide support and encouragement along with feedback. Learners are more motivated if they are in frequent contact with their instructor (Ambrose, 2001; Barclay, 2001). The participation of the online facilitator is crucial for successful learning in asynchronous online environments (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003) and 'what is' certain is that some students are positively affected by receiving instructor-initiated personal e-mail messages outside the required group discussion formats (Woods, 2002:389).

It is apparent from the literature that there are a vast number of roles that the online facilitator could fulfil. However, it is important to note that no clear indication is gained as to which roles provide visibility for the online facilitator and which role the instructor should play in terms of contributions to the discussion group (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:2).

Although the individual authors never list more than seven online facilitator roles at a time, when synthesised, these roles amount to at least 23 different roles. What is also evident is that some of these roles overlap and could possibly be integrated into already mentioned roles. Choden (2002) suggests that the various roles could be divided amongst several people, both in synchronous and asynchronous mode. Although

authors list responsibilities for the respective roles, it is often unclear how to go about fulfilling the particular responsibilities, because no guidelines or examples have been provided to assist a newcomer to optimally engage in the roles. Tables 2.3 to 2.25 provide a summary of the various roles and responsibilities of the online facilitator as synthesised from the literature.

The role of the learner reiterates the fact that an online facilitator should have participated in an online course prior to conducting an online course. Various references were made to this role as is indicated in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Role of Learner

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn the technology. ▪ Learn in this new environment. ▪ Participate before you facilitate. ▪ Practice, practice, practice! 	Choden (2002) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

The role of 'learner' would be a pre-requisite for any online facilitator.

The literature refers to 'administrative' tasks or duties but does not stipulate an administrative role *per se*. I have taken the liberty of including a role of administrator as is reflected in Table 2.4. The role of administrator is to plan, organise and monitor the learning intervention.

Table 2.4: Role of Administrator (my terminology)

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set course agenda, rules and decision-making norms. ▪ Post course materials at the beginning of the course. ▪ Post timely bulletins about changes and updates to the course. ▪ During first week, assure that all learners are 'on board'. ▪ Return learner calls/e-mails within 24 hours. ▪ Record questions asked in the session's chat function. ▪ Refer learners' problems to advisors. ▪ Provide statistics. ▪ Track learner participation. 	Choden (2002) Learning Peaks (2001)

The role of a change agent encompasses helping people adapt to the changes brought on by new technologies as is reflected in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Role of Change Agent

Responsibilities	Reference
Be an advocate for the virtual classroom within your organisation	Choden (2002)

The role of coach guides the learner/s to build knowledge as appears in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Role of Coach

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist learners learning in self-study mode. ▪ Comment on implications of comments made by learners. ▪ Elicit conversation and foster reflection. ▪ Encourage interactivity to foster the building of knowledge. ▪ Encourage learners to discuss issues and collaborate with each other to generate solutions to problems. ▪ Guide learners to post and read messages. ▪ Guide learners through weekly tasks and activities. ▪ Keep learners motivated and focussed on the instructional objectives of the course. ▪ Organise the particulars of the project. ▪ Orientate the learners. ▪ Provide both support and challenge. ▪ Work one-on-one with an individual and with the group. ▪ Suggest schedules for communications and time lines for project activities. 	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Collison <i>et al.</i> (2000) Corley (1998) Harris & Figg (1994) McGee & Boyd (1995) Mazoué (1999) Regents of the University of Minnesota (2002) Rosenberg (2001) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

This role is also referred to as the 'Guide on the side' (Ambrose, 2001), the 'Reflective Guide' (Ambrose, 2001), the 'Tour Guide' (McGee & Boyd, 1995) and the 'Travel Guide' (Mazoué, 1999).

The role of communication expert focuses on applying effective communication methods in the cyberspace as is indicated in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Role of Communication Expert

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand various types of interactions, exchanges and instructional collaborations that succeed in the virtual environment. ▪ Liaise with the subject matter expert. 	Harris & Figg (1994)

In the role of co-presenter the facilitator uses the team-teach approach for synchronous sessions as is reflected in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Role of Co-presenter

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standby to sort out administrative concerns because the synchronous session must start on time. ▪ Share the roles. ▪ Act as a soundboard. 	Duckworth (2001) Rykert (2002)

The role of the facilitator focuses on assisting and guiding the learners during the learning process to optimally interact with the learning content, the subject matter expert and peers, as is described in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9: Role of Facilitator

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist and facilitate learners in their own informational explorations; this is not handholding. ▪ Create a strong interactive learning environment. ▪ Foster group learning. ▪ Post thoughtful discussion questions related to the topic. ▪ Draw abstractions from the discussions. ▪ Ensure learners understand expectations and norms for respectful interaction. ▪ Ensure learners know how to follow directions for carrying out the associated tasks and activities, both online and offline. ▪ Plan with the teacher to ensure collaborative learning happens between the teacher, learners and subject matter expert. ▪ Facilitate interactive information exchanges. ▪ Look at overall co-ordination. ▪ Provide guidance / comments as needed. ▪ Help learners apply, analyse and synthesise content. ▪ Raise the level of a discussion. 	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Haynes <i>et al.</i> (1997) Learning Peaks (2001) Mazoué (1999) McGee & Boyd (1995) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

This role is also referred to as the 'Conceptual Facilitator' (Ambrose, 2001).

The role of the instructor is to create realistic problem-based experiences for the learners in order to achieve meaningful learning as is reflected in Table 2.10.

Table 2.10: Role of Instructor

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that the instructor has previous experience of conducting workshops or courses. ▪ Focus on the learners rather than on the technology. ▪ Create realistic problem-based experiences to make content meaningful for learners. ▪ Focus on the learning process to achieve the outcomes. ▪ Guide the learning process. ▪ Question, support, lead and pace. ▪ Help learners connect content with prior knowledge. ▪ Provide explanations. ▪ Provide the instructional program. ▪ Provide individual feedback. ▪ Post at least 10% of discussion postings. ▪ Provide information to help learners complete assignments. ▪ Suggest strategies and ideas for learning. ▪ Use a teaching assistant or subject matter expert. 	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Hootstein (2002) Learning Peaks (2001) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

Berge (1996) refers to this role as the 'pedagogical' area. According to Hootstein (2002) the instructor role encompasses a consultant, a guide and a resource provider.

In the role of jovial nag the facilitator tenaciously insists on interaction from the learners as is described in Table 2.11.

Table 2.11: Role of Jovial Nag

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become the persistent voice that prods learners into communicating in a timely and consistent manner. ▪ Remind learners of interim project deadlines. 	Harris & Figg (1994)

The role of knowledge navigator reiterates the sharing of information, as is described in Table 2.12.

Table 2.12: Role of Knowledge Navigator

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a learning environment where information is treated as a group resource instead of a scarce commodity for which learners are in competition. ▪ Encourage learners to provide information and resources. ▪ Guide information sharing. ▪ Guide learners to locate, review and download relevant messages, material and resources. ▪ Provide additional resources. 	Choden (2002) Mazoué (1999) Volery & Lord (2000) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

This role is also referred to as the 'Orchestrator of resources' (Choden, 2002).

In the role of learning catalyst the facilitator has to precipitate the learning that will occur as is indicated in Table 2.13.

Table 2.13: Role of Learning Catalyst

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask questions. ▪ Be able to catalyse learners so that they can discover their own learning that is crucial. ▪ Engage learners in many different levels – deconstruct the worldview but also reconstruct it and relate it to daily problems. ▪ Observe learner reflections as they have time to think before posting a message. 	Inayatullah (1999) Owston (1997) Volery & Lord (2000)

This role is also referred to as the 'Creator of learning experiences' (Owston, 1997).

The role of listener emphasises that the online facilitator should listen to various conversations as is described in Table 2.14.

Table 2.14: Role of Listener

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stay tuned in to the learners. ▪ Promote lively and relevant discussions amongst learners without monopolising the discussion. 	Choden (2002) Harris & Figg (1994) Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

The role of manager encompasses the organisational, procedural and administrative duties per learning intervention as is listed in Table 2.15.

Table 2.15: Role of Manager

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep to the tasks, agenda, timetable, procedural rules and decision-making rules. ▪ Manage organisational, procedural and administrative duties. ▪ Develop study guides for courses to help ease learners' anxiety and address both content and technical concerns. ▪ Provide introductory information; describe learning activities and resource information. ▪ Help learners manage their time and avoid information overload. ▪ Define expected learner behaviours through guidelines, protocols and netiquette. ▪ Track learners. 	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Hootstein (2002) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002)

Berge (1996) does not refer to a role, but rather to the 'managerial' area.

In the role of mediator the online facilitator ensures fair play between all learners as is described in Table 2.16.

Table 2.16: Role of Mediator

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure standards of fair play and network scholarship. ▪ Focus the discussion on common ground when learners are disagreeing. ▪ Intervene in situations that threaten to undermine course cohesiveness. ▪ Provide technological assistance that supports learning goals. ▪ Set up real-time chat. ▪ Tend to help build consensus and move the discussion away from debate to finding common solutions. ▪ Track down resources and materials that enrich the learning experience and sort out disputes. 	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Harris & Figg (1994) Mazoué (1999) McGee & Boyd (1995)

This role is also referred to as the 'Referee' (Mazoué 1999).

In the role of mentor the online facilitator becomes a trusted teacher to assist an individual learner on his/her learning path as is reflected in Table 2.17.

Table 2.17: Role of Mentor

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish an instructional bond and rapport that will reinforce learners' sense of commitment to specific learning objectives of the course. ▪ Move towards a mentoring role rather than a didactic one; take time to establish academic relationships with individuals. ▪ Provide motivational support. ▪ Provide ongoing guidance. 	Mazoué (1999) Nichols (2002)

In the role of moderator the online facilitator assesses the work of each learner and group as is described in Table 2.18.

Table 2.18: Role of Moderator

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model the language, discussion techniques and netiquette protocols necessary for quality communication in the online environment. ▪ Review contributions. ▪ Reflect on the learning. ▪ Provide learners with clear grading criteria. ▪ Remind learners about upcoming assignments. ▪ Provide examples of desired writings and assignments. ▪ Provide resource ideas for completing assignments. ▪ Assist learners who are having problems (by e-mail or telephone). ▪ Acknowledge receipt of assignments within 24 hours. ▪ Return assignments with detailed notes and grade within 96 hours. ▪ Contact learners who have not completed assignments within 24 hours after assignment due date. Help a learner work out a plan to complete the assignment. 	Ambrose (2001) Choden (2002) Learning Peaks (2001) McGee & Boyd (1995) Peté <i>et al.</i> (2002)

The role is also referred to as the 'Evaluator' (Choden, 2002).

The role of personal muse reiterates the fact that the online facilitator has to critique his/her own views on topics under discussion as is reflected in Table 2.19.

Table 2.19: Role of Personal Muse

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Question your own views. ▪ Legitimise critiquing the instructor's views and open up the discussion. 	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002)

The role of role player encourages the online facilitator to take any other role to provide alternative perspectives as is described in Table 2.20.

Table 2.20: Role of Role Player

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assume a role of another person. ▪ Playfully assume the role as a 'teacher' on a Monday, flush with new ideas – the facilitator then presents alternative perspectives without concern for personal ownership or direct confrontation with learners. 	Ambrose (2001) Broadbent & Legassie (2002)

The role of social supporter reiterates the importance of a social, learning community as is reflected in Table 2.21.

Table 2.21: Role of Social Supporter

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a friendly environment in which a climate for learning is promoted. ▪ Foster collaborative learning. ▪ Establish, facilitate and maintain a learning community, as learning is a social activity. ▪ Stimulate learner participation and interaction by using small group discussions, collaborative projects, case studies and one-on-one exchanges. ▪ Monitor and participate in discussion forums to identify misconceptions. ▪ Keep discussions focussed on the topic, bring out multiple perspectives and summarise main points. ▪ Encourage and ensure a high degree of interactivity and participation. ▪ Guide learners in working together to become more skilled in collaborative skills such as scheduling, project management, time management, consensus building and leadership. 	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Hootstein (2002)

This role is also referred to as the 'Social director – Creator of collaborative environments' (Hootstein, 2002). Berge (1996) refers to this as the 'social' area.

In the role as starter the online facilitator takes an active role in initiating discussions and making contact with learners as is described in Table 2.22.

Table 2.22: Role of Starter

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start the session. Take an active role in providing or even initiating contact with learners when it is necessary to promote and foster their ability to function in an intellectually independent manner. 	Broadbent & Legassie (2002) Harris & Figg (1994) Mazoué (1999)

This role is also referred to as the 'Prompter' (Harris & Figg, 1994).

The role of subject matter expert reiterates the need that facilitators also need to be content experts as is indicated in Table 2.23.

Table 2.23: Role of Subject Matter Expert

Responsibilities	Reference
Ensure that the instructor has strong content knowledge.	Zorfass <i>et al.</i> (1998)

The role of tutor indicates instructing a learner what to do as is indicated in Table 2.24.

Table 2.24: Role of Tutor

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information regarding netiquette, language, appropriate style of communication and online communication conventions such as emoticons. Provide standards for virtual interaction. 	Harris & Figg (1994)

The role of technical fundi indicates the needs for good control of the technology and the ability to perform basic troubleshooting tasks as is indicated in Table 2.25.

Table 2.25: Role of Technical Fundi (my terminology)

Responsibilities	Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make technology transparent, as learners have to concentrate on the academic task at hand. Sort out technical problems. Help learners troubleshoot technical systems used in the course. Help learners become comfortable with the system and the software. Refer learners to appropriate help sources, if needed. 	Berge (1996) Choden (2002) Duckworth (2001) Harris & Figg (1994) Hootstein (2002) Learning Peaks (2001)

This role is also referred to as the 'Technical assistant' (Hootstein, 2002) or the 'Technician' (Learning Peaks, 2001). Berge (1996) refers to this as the 'technical' area.

The 23 roles mentioned above reveal information regarding the various activities performed by the online facilitator. The problem is that 23 roles are too many to use and not manageable for an online facilitator. It is necessary to combine some of these roles, and to determine the relative importance of the various roles; so the following question still has to be asked:

What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) hosted an online interactive discussion on the human side of e-learning, featuring guest expert Karen Mantyla (2000b:1) and she made the following comment:

Without human interaction at each step, the technology just sits there waiting for something to happen. So much emphasis is placed on the technology that there needs to be a focused shift to people – they make it happen. The human side includes all learners, trainers ...

Rosenberg (2001:308) concurs in the following way:

With all the movement to technology-based learning, human interaction and sharing could be at risk. If e-learning does not have a human element – if people do not have opportunities to meet each

other and work with each other, face-to-face or online – we may not like what we'll get. ... In a technological world, we must continue to preserve the people-centric nature of learning.

The abovementioned two quotations play an important part in positioning the roles of the online facilitator in a contextual framework. Although online learning emphasises learning via technology, it is clearly stated by Mantyla (2000b) and Rosenberg (2001) that the 'human element' of the learners and instructors cannot be ignored.

To analyse online facilitator postings it was important to select a classification scheme that would form a conceptual framework, considering the intellectual side as well as the social or people side of online facilitator postings and messages. The 23 roles already listed did not provide any indication for an intellectual dimension and people dimension or which roles were more visible to the learners. Very little information is available on models that encapsulate the intellectual side and social side of online messages. White and Weight (2000) provide examples of messages that online facilitators could write and Anderson *et al.* (2001:6-10) provide a coding scheme for Instructional Design and Organization, Facilitating Discourse and Direct Instruction. For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments. This taxonomy distinguishes between academic content and no academic content messages. Academic content would relate to the intellectual side of online messages because the sub-headings deal with corrective, informative and Socratic messages. No academic content would relate to the social side of online messages because the sub-headings deal with administrative, affective and other matters.

2.5.2. Conceptual framework for facilitator roles

The Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy was created from postings of instructors to categorise their attributes. Figure 2.5 provides a graphical representation of the taxonomy of instructor postings. The taxonomy provides clear examples of how to categorise the various instructor postings.

Figure 2.5: Taxonomy of instructor postings

With no academic content	Administrative
	Affective
	Other
With academic content	Corrective
	Informative
	Socratic

An explanation of the taxonomy follows (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157):

Administrative (with no academic content):

Postings that relate to general administrative topics, such as dates, profiles, formats, functionality of software and many other organisational aspects, for example *Welcome to the class! I have recorded your preference for a letter grade. I look forward to your contributions to the class.* (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).

Affective (with no academic content):

Postings that acknowledge learner participation and provide affective support, for example *I am enjoying your comments and especially the replies and threads that are forming. Keep up the great work!* (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).

Other (with no academic content):

Postings that contain non-content related messages, as well as the posting of discussion topics, for example:



- *Here's the official wording! Discussion 2: Is consciousness at the heart of psychology or is it a concept outside the realm of psychology? Support your responses with references. (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).*
- *To all the mothers in the class, a Mother's Day card ... (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).*

Corrective (with academic content):

Postings that correct the content of a learner's posting, for example *You have talked about the instructional designer not being the project manager, however, you have listed several project management duties, e.g. under #7 to monitor: time spent, ... Please reconsider if these are project manager duties or ... (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).*

Informative (with academic content):

Postings that comment on a learner's posting from a content perspective and provides individual feedback, for example *This is a fine posting, not only answering the questions but going into reflection and application of your experience to an attempt to solve the problem. In addition, while you took your own position based on your experience, you posed a counter argument, which is the essence of scholarly discussion. You make a fine example of good intellectual discourse, by raising the contrary arguments and treating them respectfully. Nicely done! (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).*

Socratic (with academic content):

Postings that ask reflective questions (Socratic questions) about the learner's postings, for example *In your posting you took the position of a teacher. Please explain the same scenario from the position of a learner. (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157).*

2.6. Theme 4: Challenges and demands

2.6.1. Literature review

Almost anyone who has taught online would agree that the demands on online facilitators are different from those of face-to-face facilitators, although the general issues and situations with which they deal are, in essence, the same (Don'tTeachOnline, 2002; Barclay, 2001; Choden, 2001; Broadbent & Legassie, 2002; Dewar & Whittington, 2000; Parkin, 2001). Many instructors who receive positive evaluations from students in traditional classrooms find it difficult to adapt their style to a distance learning format (Clay, 1999).

The online facilitator must manage a course, guide learners throughout the learning experience, motivate the learners and interact with them, assess the learners and deal with conflicts or difficulties. Although each course must be understood within its own specific context, the teaching and learning settings, constraints of the environment, status of the learners and the online facilitator and the pedagogical model, several authors have identified challenges (Graham *et al.* 2001) or demands (Higgison, 2000) for the online facilitator. These challenges or demands are not discussed in terms of importance. It is also essential to note that these challenges and demands are taken from the online facilitator's perspective and not from a learner's perspective because it is the online facilitator that is scrutinised in this study.

Challenge 1: Online facilitators are inundated with e-mail messages and bulletin board postings

Instructors want to be accessible to online learners, but are worried about being overwhelmed with e-mail messages or bulletin board postings (Graham *et al.* 2001). Instructors fear that if they fail to respond quickly, learners would feel ignored (Young, 2002). While interaction is encouraged (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996) it takes time to adjust to the promptness of responding to individual learner messages (Kochtanek & Hein, 2000).

Challenge 2: Online facilitators have extended working hours

It takes more time to teach in a virtual classroom than in a face-to-face classroom and the growth of e-mail, course Web sites, instant messaging software and online courses have forced many online facilitators to rearrange their daily routines to accommodate their learners (Young, 2002). According to Darling (2000), online facilitators need much

more time offline in preparation for the class, which includes creating extra materials and in addition, the time to respond to learners in writing. It takes about two hours to answer all questions and e-mail messages every day (Young, 2002). Teaching online takes three times as long as face-to-face teaching (Palloff & Pratt, 1999) and some universities consider teaching one course online to be the equivalent of teaching two face-to-face courses (University of Toronto, 2000; University of North Carolina, 2000). Teaching online takes 25% more time than teaching face-to-face (Schweizer, 1999). Online courses are more demanding and time consuming than face-to-face courses (Young, 2002; Coghlan, 2002). Asynchronous courses require approximately two to four times more facilitative interaction than a classroom-based course (Kochtanek & Hein, 2000). Apart from the fact that teaching online takes more time, some teaching staff make promises to their students that they will answer e-mail messages within 24 hours (Young, 2002) or even five hours (Darling, 2000).

Online practitioners report that they have developed an obsession when it comes to online courses – a mixture of curiosity and a sense that if they do not keep logging on, they might fall behind, but online teaching cuts into other activities such as research and time with the family (Shepherd, 2000b; Taylor, 2002; Mantyla, 2000a; Hofmann, 2001a). Without self-discipline, online classes can ‘eat up’ an online facilitator’s weekend – set aside time for the online classes and stick to it (Western Nevada Community College, 2001).

The time requirement comes as a shock to instructors who are not prepared for the frequent and heightened level of interaction with learners (Kochtanek & Hein, 2000). Instructors also need to check into the course interactions several times each day as a specific threaded discussion unfolds (Kochtanek & Hein, 2000).

Challenge 3: Online facilitators battle to design assignments that facilitate meaningful cooperation among learners during asynchronous discussions

Online learning does not always involve independent work (University of Toronto, 2000) because interaction among learners is crucial in the online environment (Kearsley, 1998) to create a sense of community and belonging (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). However, instructors often only require ‘participation’ in the weekly discussion forum with the result that discussions often have no clear focus and never reach the point of meaningful, in-depth discussions (Graham *et al.* 2001). In order for students to participate, they must receive clear expectations from their instructors. This is often a mistake on the side of the instructor because the instructor fails to develop structure

and clear requirements (Clay, 1999). Saying 'every student must post to the bulletin board at least twice a week' is better than saying 'be sure to use the bulletin board for interaction' (Clay, 1999). Regardless of the technology used, faculty need to learn how to personalize their instruction and incorporate student involvement activities into the instruction (Dillon & Walsh, 1992; O'Quinn & Corry, 2002).

Challenge 4: Online facilitators should at least take an online course as learners first and they need training before facilitating an online course

Many case studies endorse the view that online facilitators need to experience online learning as a learner before they can effectively support other online learners (Cornelius & Higgison, 2000). Taking an online course as a learner is the most effective way to understand the online process, the chaos and confusion that accompany online learning (Dewar & Whittington, 2000).

Online facilitators need to acquire new skills (Dewar & Whittington, 2000). Acquiring these skills takes practice and time. The time to address these issues is not when the online course has started. Any online learning project must begin with a consideration of instructor roles and requirements early in the process and identify potential instructors, train them in the techniques of online instruction and ensure that they are comfortable in the role (Broadbent & Legassie, 2002:8). So often online facilitators are forced into teaching classes online without any support of their institution or having received training in the art of online facilitation (Cornelius & Higgison, 2000).

It is imperative to take time to learn the technology (Clay, 1999). Students are more suitable to use the technology effectively when instructors show the confidence to answer most of their questions and understand their problems. By practicing and mastering the technology, instructors are able to move beyond the basic features and optimise the effectiveness of their courses. Instructors will also save a lot of time in the long run by being able to quickly make adjustments to a course.

Whilst the principle of using the medium to teach about the medium is commendable, there clearly needs to be more individual support for instructors in coming to terms with not just the technical but also the pedagogical dimensions of their newer roles (Brennan, 2000).

Regrettably, Zorfass, Remz and Gold (1998:14) feel that not enough has been done to develop the skills of the online facilitator:

So far, the literature on Online facilitation has examined what the Online facilitator does to promote thinking, conversations and learning. We have not located articles that have taken the critical step back to consider what it takes to help Online facilitators develop the skills they need to do their specialised work.

Challenge 5: Online facilitators are solely responsible for the design and delivery of online classes

It would appear that online facilitators are responsible for most of the development of the course and provide both subject and technical support to students (Higgison, 2000). It is for this reason that staff is reluctant to become online facilitators (Templeton, 2000). The time to create an online course is substantial (Kochtanek & Hein, 2000). Administrators do not recognise the effort that is required to develop online classes and fellow staff members feel that because online teaching is not face-to-face teaching in terms of contact hours, the online facilitators are getting a break (Western Nevada Community College, 2001).

The majority of instructors who develop online courses are using technologies that are entirely new to them and many of these instructors have limited information technology (IT) skills, which affects their ability to design and deliver such courses (Templeton, 2000; Kochtanek & Hein, 2000). Developing online course materials involves much more than simply putting the syllabus on the web, turning the lectures into PowerPoint slides to be viewed on the web, assigning homework and required readings and testing at the end of the semester (UNCW, 2000; Arsham, 2002; Barclay, 2001). Hands-on training with the technology of delivery is critical for the instructor (UNCW, 2000; Carnevale, 2000; Clark, 1998).

A mistake often made by instructors is using cutting-edge technologies when simple measures would suffice (Clay, 1999). Instructors are tempted to put PowerPoint slides on Internet courses when text would accomplish the same objective. The same goes for putting the textbook online (Clay, 1999). The purpose of an online course is not to replace the textbook. Instructors are doing the students a disservice by forcing them to read pages and pages of text from a computer screen.

Wolcott (1993) remarks that it is particularly challenging to focus on instructional activities because most faculty members are trained in content areas as opposed to curriculum and lesson planning. It is a 'foreign practice' (Wolcott, 1993) for faculty members to plan interactive strategies in advance of course delivery because faculty

members are accustomed to rely on verbal cues and the spontaneity of the classroom discussion to serve as a catalyst for interaction (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002; Wolcott, 1993; Lick, 2001; Levy, 2003).

Challenge 6: Learners need support apart from the course work support provided by the online facilitator

An important role to be played by those involved in online learning is that of supporting learners. Learners stumble upon a number of challenges in the online learning environment, including administrative and technical difficulties and course work issues (Templeton, 2000). Instructors often feel responsible to assist the learners in overcoming these problems. However, the challenge for the institution is how to provide the learners with administrative and technical support without the instructors feeling they have to take on all these roles and affect the level of learning support they can provide (Templeton, 2000; UNCW, 2000).

According to Morrison (1999) there has never been a period during which more forces have had an impact on higher education at one time – faculty are moving forward, technology is improving and student demand is increasing, but few changes are taking place in the university structures to accommodate the special needs of distance-learning students (Bothel, 2001). Faculty ought to change the admission process; registration, technology support and other student services must be advanced to support the student who is not physically present on campus (Bothel, 2001).

Challenge 7: Online assessment is a huge issue for online facilitators

Online assessment is a huge issue for instructors. Participation in online activities in some cases is an assessable task (Hinett & Thomas, 1999). While some facilitators like to use self checking devices, an online quiz, multiple choice questionnaires or written assignment and problem based exercises sent by e-mail, there are many who believe that the assessment process should be as rich as the learning process and should be a transparent process for the learner (Brennan, 2000). How does the online facilitator ensure that the person submitting the assessment task is indeed the 'actual' learner? There is scant research available to assist with these issues.

Challenge 8: Online facilitators are slack in providing feedback to learners

Online communication requires that instructors and learners learn new communication and information management skills (Bradey, 2003). An active learner online requires an active instructor online (Bradey, 2003). It is essential that instructors provide timely and appropriate feedback to their learners about their work (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996; Bradey, 2003). Instructors need to provide two types of feedback, namely information feedback and acknowledgment feedback (Graham *et al.* 2001). Information feedback provides information or evaluation, such as an answer to a question or an assignment grade and comments (Graham *et al.* 2001). Acknowledgment feedback confirms that some event has occurred such as the instructor acknowledges that s/he has received a question or assignment and will respond shortly (Graham *et al.* 2001).

Research (Graham *et al.* 2001; Collis, Winnips & Moonen, 2000) indicated that instructors gave prompt information feedback at the beginning of a course, but as the course progressed and instructors became busier, the frequency of responses decreased and the response time increased. In some cases learners only received feedback on postings after the discussions had already changed to another topic. Likewise, instructors rarely provided acknowledgement feedback. Instructors only provided acknowledgement feedback when they were behind with marking and wanted to inform the learners that their assignments would be graded soon (Graham *et al.* 2001; Collis *et al.* 2000). Students feel more connected with instructors who participate regularly (Clay, 1999).

Challenge 9: Online facilitators need to respond effectively to online conflicts

The interaction with a network is via a computer and it is easy to forget that there are people at the other end of the line. People interacting on computers are isolated from social cues and non-verbal communication, with the result that messages are often blunt and discussions can be rude and insulting (White, 2000; Shea, 1994; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Harasim, Hiltz, Teles & Turoff, 1996).

During online courses, online facilitators encounter difficult learners who dominate a class discussion, challenge course content, resent the expertise of the instructor, display rude and inappropriate tone to peers, refuse to adhere to the class structure and assignment schedule, or simply do not participate (White & Weight, 2000).

The online facilitator needs to 'watch' inter-group conflict situations and prompt mediation has to take place when the following problems occur: attacking, flaming,

dominating, disrupting, sarcasm, drifting off track and withdrawing (University of Toronto, 2000).

Various challenges and demands have been discussed above. For the purpose of this study, it is vital to determine what challenges this particular online facilitator had to deal with. Are the challenges similar to those already mentioned or are there new and additional challenges that the online facilitator had to cope with? Therefore, it is fitting to ask the question:

What challenges did the online facilitator face?

The Webster's College Dictionary (1991:225) defines 'challenge' as

difficulty in a job that is stimulating to one engaged in it.

The Webster's College Dictionary (1991:359) defines 'demand' as

an urgent or pressing requirement.

On analysing the abovementioned challenges and demands, it can be deduced that there are difficulties attached to the role of the online facilitator, which could cause conflict within the online facilitator *per se*.

Challenge 1: Online facilitators are inundated with e-mail messages and bulletin board postings. The online facilitators are overwhelmed with messages and they do not know how to stem the flow of messages, which can cause inner conflict.

Challenge 2: Online facilitators have extended working hours. In this scenario there will be conflict situations because family life suffers.

Challenge 3: Online facilitators battle to design assignments that facilitate meaningful co-operation among learners during asynchronous discussions. The word 'battle' clearly indicates a conflict or struggle because online facilitators are not sure what to do.

Challenge 4: Online facilitators should at least take an online course as learners first and they need training before facilitating an online course. Indirectly, there is confusion within the online facilitator because this person feels inadequate to present the online class.

Challenge 5: Online facilitators are solely responsible for the design and delivery of online classes. In this section it was clearly indicated that online facilitators do not necessarily have the IT skills to design online courses, therefore a team is appointed to help with the design of the online courses.

Challenge 6: Learners need support apart from the course work support provided by the online facilitator. There is inner conflict because the online facilitators feel that they are wasting valuable facilitation time helping learners with administrative and technical queries.

Challenge 7: Online assessment is a huge issue for online facilitators. Once again, there is the inner battle and struggle with online assessment.

Challenge 8: Online facilitators are slack in providing feedback to learners. The conflict arises here because there is just too much work to do and the online facilitators cannot cope with the workload.

Challenge 9: Online facilitators need to respond effectively to online conflicts. This is a tricky situation and deals with conflict *per se*.

It is for this reason that the researcher selected the 'four elements of online conflict' model (White & Weight, 2000:151) as the conceptual framework for the challenges that the online facilitator faces.

2.6.2. Conceptual framework for online challenges

The 'four elements of online conflict' model is graphically illustrated in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6: The four elements of online conflict

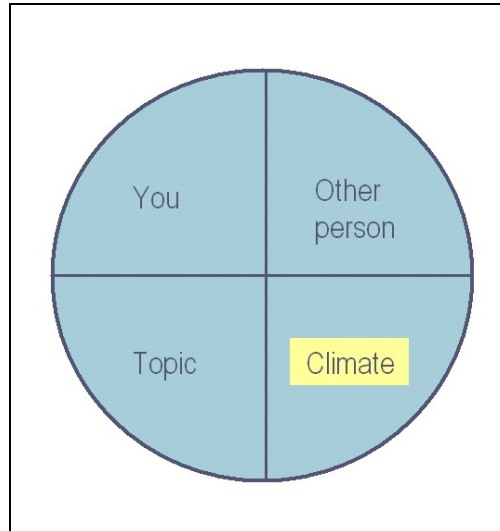


Figure 2.6 illustrates a circle where each one of the conflict elements makes up one quarter of the circle. Three of the four elements are self-explanatory. The 'you' of a conflict is anyone who deals with the second element, 'other person'. The 'topic' is the subject you and others are talking about. The climate of a conflict is the physical environment and objects, such as the computer, the temperature in the room, but also the emotional state of the person or sensitive topic.

Table 2.26 provides a breakdown of the abovementioned challenges in accordance with the 'four elements of the online conflict' model.

Table 2.26: Breakdown of online facilitator challenges

Challenge	You	Other person	Topic	Climate
Too many e-mails	Online facilitator	Learners	Too many private and course e-mails	Frustration and workload
Extended working hours	Online facilitator	Learners	Long hours – login to system at night and also over weekends	Balance between work and family life
Battle with design of co-operative asynchronous discussions	Online facilitator	Faculty or institution	Incorrect design	Learners do not participate and online community dysfunctional
Be a 'learner' and receive training	Online facilitator	Faculty or institution	Attend a course and receive training	Incompetence and time limitations
Design and develop course solo	Online facilitator	Faculty or institution	Course development	Incompetence, frustration and time limitations
Additional learner support	Online facilitator	Faculty or institution	Administrative and technical support	Frustration, additional workload and infrastructure
Online assessment	Online facilitator	Faculty or institution and learners	Online assessment	Incompetence and infrastructure
Slack with feedback	Online facilitator	Learners	No or late feedback on assignments	Frustration, pressure and workload
Effective response to conflict	Online facilitator	Learners	Online conflict	Dysfunctional group

Cognisance needs to be taken of the various challenges that the online facilitator needs to face. It is imperative that solutions be found for these challenges otherwise potential newcomers might never take up the challenge to conduct online classes.

2.7. Theme 5: Competencies

2.7.1. Literature review

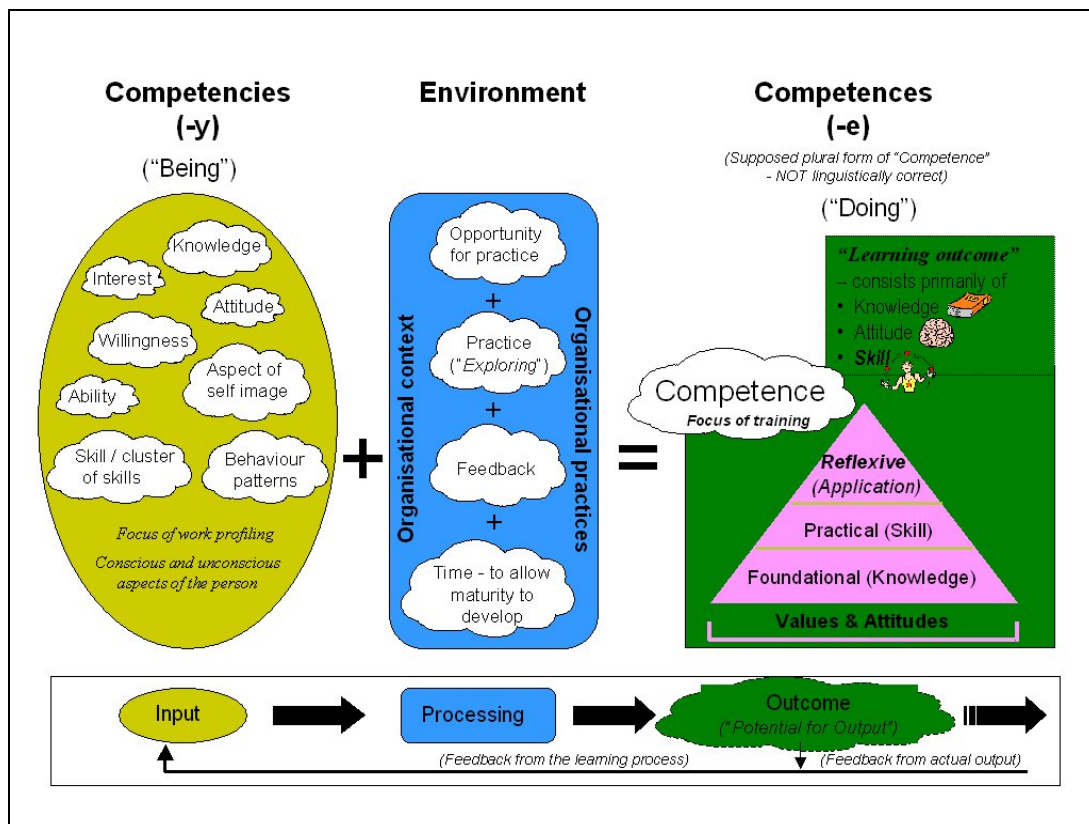
Over the last ten years, particularly within the service industries utilising call and contact centres it has been reported that recruiting staff on the basis of their competencies has become normal practice (Shellabear, 2002).

If you get the right person it's easy to give them the skills (Shellabear, 2002; SHL, 1998).

Competency models have developed as a way to discuss worker characteristics in a manner that is in language of business people as opposed to psychologists (SHL, 1998:33). As such these competency models tend not to be as detailed as attribute models and they generally include specific job/industry knowledge or skill requirements not included in attribute models. The use of competency models make activities such as succession planning, individual training and development plans and performance management programmes easier to design and implement (SHL, 1998; Boyatzis, 1992).

Competency profiling is a method for identifying specified skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour necessary to fulfil certain tasks within a role (Krüger, 2002; Boyatzis, 1982; Shellabear, 2002). In categorising competence, some organisations and industries make distinctions between **competencies** (my emphasis), which refer to desired personal attributes and behaviours and **competences** (my emphasis), which are the knowledge and skill required to bring about improved performance (Shellabear, 2002; Krüger, 2002). Figure 2.7 provides a graphical representation of competencies and competences. Competencies (Krüger, 2002) refer to the inherent (or pre-existing) *clusters* of knowledge, skills and human attributes important for effective functioning in a role. Boyatzis (1982) describes a job competency as an underlying characteristic of a person that results in an effective and/or superior performance in a job. It may be a motive, trait, and skill, aspect of one's self image or social role, or body of knowledge that s/he uses. Competences, on the other hand, refer to replicable and repeated application of a skill (or a cluster of skills) in the domains of knowledge, psychomotor skills and attitudes within a defined context, and to a specified standard. A technical or practical skill or skills cluster, such as typing skill and numerical skill can be included here (Boyatzis, Cowen & Kolb, 1994).

Figure 2.7: Competencies versus competences
(Adapted from Krüger, 2002)



For most organisations and institutions, it is necessary to ensure that its business outcomes are achieved. If standards and the means to achievement are ill defined, an organisation or institution is unable to deliver products and services to customers that meet quality, deadlines and price. For existing staff, knowing specifically what skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour their employers seek enables the staff to assess their own strengths and recognise development areas.

For a competency framework to be effective it needs to be used by line managers and staff within a performance management system (Boyatzis, Cowen & Kolb, 1994). Performance management is the continuous process of developing both competencies and competences to improve individual, group and organisational performance. Competency profiling is a valuable tool for both an individual and the organisation. It has the potential to facilitate training, development and learning and making a measurable increase to performance (Shellabear, 2002; SHL, 1998).

For the purposes of this study it is important to pinpoint the competencies that an online facilitator needs in the online environment. To date, several task listings have been provided for online facilitators (Full Circle Associates, 2002b; Schuman, 2000), which

still do not answer the question of online facilitator competencies. Sanders (2001) has grouped eLearning competencies into generic categories, namely general competencies, management competencies, distribution method competencies and presentation method competencies. For the presentation method competencies, the following are mentioned (Sanders, 2001:7): Cost analysis and return on investment (ROI) of the presentation methods which include understanding the relative cost of each presentation method or combination of methods and assuring that the organisation is receiving a good value for the money spent. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include *inter alia* analysis skills, ability to compare features of various products and evaluate them against organisational needs and knowledge of which distribution methods can deliver which presentation formats. This information does not assist the online facilitator in any way and still remains at an impractical level. Considering the analytical component, what skills does the online facilitator need to operate at this level – is it judgement, problem analysis or objective setting? (SHL, 1998).

A facilitator, as defined by Zhaba (1998:1) is not necessarily an expert on a specific topic, but an expert in the process of communication, working with people, group dynamics, workshop design and implementation and dealing with crises. Literally translated from Latin, a facilitator's domain is 'to make things work' (Zhaba, 1998:1). Attributes for a facilitator include interpersonal skills, effective communication skills, teaching and facilitation ability, attitudes and knowledge (Zhaba, 1998). On reviewing these competencies, it is once again noted that these attributes are too vague. The facilitator, in this instance, seems to be restricted to a workshop scenario and no reference is made to the online environment. Effective communication skills are mentioned, but it does not specifically state that written communication skills are important.

Broadbent and Legassie (2002) come the closest to indicating competencies for the online facilitator. Online facilitators need to have a number of competencies to be an effective part of an eLearning programme and these competencies are *inter alia* (Broadbent & Legassie, 2002:5):

- A willingness to step back from the limelight and facilitate learning.
- An openness to learn new approaches to learning.
- Ability to monitor personal progress and take action to improve skills.

- Appreciation of the benefits of eLearning.
- Creativity to design and adapt eLearning for various purposes, groups and topics.
- The ability to write clear e-mail messages.
- The ability to anticipate learner reaction to situations.
- The ability to learn online facilitation skills.
- Time management skills.
- The ability to provide support and counselling via e-mail messages.

Except for the ability to write clear e-mail messages and to provide support and counselling via e-mail messages, the abovementioned competencies are also vague. Broadbent & Legassie (2002:5-6) mention that if no person can be found with the exact skills listed above, one option is to identify in-house people who possess three higher-level competencies that indicate they can further develop the specific skills. The higher-level skills and attitudes are empathy, flexibility and eagerness to become an online instructor.

Higgison (2000) states that institutions need to support the development of the technical, teaching and contextual knowledge and skills needed for online delivery. It is important to identify the main roles and activities involved in supporting online activities. This can only be achieved when skills, abilities and behaviour patterns associated with each role have been identified (Higgison, 2000). When the suitable person is appointed as an online facilitator, the development process starts, which include the drawing up of a training and development plan, including objectives, timetables and resources, setting up a monitoring and evaluation process and ensuring the institutional culture, procedures and process support and value the online innovation (Higgison, 2000).

Before any recruiting process or development process can start, it is important to ask the question:

What people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

Palloff and Pratt (1999) suggest that faculty teaching online must play both intellectual and social roles. It is for this reason that the *Work Profiling System (WPS)* tool from Saville and Holdsworth Ltd (SHL) was selected as the conceptual framework, as it has a specific intellectual component, indicated as thinking competencies as well as a social component, indicated as people competencies. Energy competencies are also indicated on the *WPS*. As Wilkinson (2001:1) indicates, top facilitators know that it is important to maintain a high energy level because it engages the group by grabbing their attention, gaining their interest and keeping it fun. The facilitator's energy rejuvenates the topic indirectly and suggests to the participants that the topic must be important because the facilitator seems to be excited about it. Energy also increases the perception of the facilitator's self-confidence.

2.7.2. Conceptual framework for competencies

The *Work Profiling System* is used in over 40 countries and in 20 languages. The *Work Profiling System* tool covers all the key tasks performed in a job. It provides a thorough and systematic basis for analysis and forms a vital check to ensure that no important areas of a role are overlooked (SHL, 1998). The data collection process is fast and reliable. It provides an objective framework to handle complex and sensitive issues such as organisational change and job evaluation.

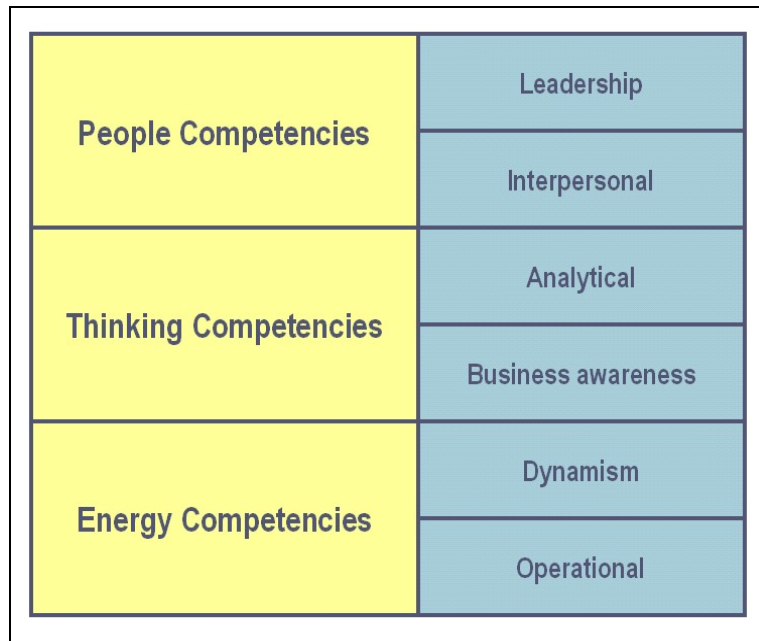
Features and benefits of the *WPS* (SHL, 1998:42) are *inter alia*:

- The *WPS* uses standard terminology for increased objectivity. The *WPS* questionnaires and reports describe work characteristics, such as work behaviour or human abilities. This makes comparing different jobs to one another much easier.
- The information database of the *WPS* provides reports on the tasks and behaviours that comprise a role (including work context and environment) and the characteristics and competencies employees need in order to be effective.
- Compared to other methods, the *WPS* is considerably less time consuming. The analysis can be completed in less than a day.

- Research has shown that the process is role sensitive and effective discrimination between different roles can be achieved.
- The WPS has successfully been defended in major labour court cases.

Figure 2.8 provides a graphical breakdown of the various competencies.

Figure 2.8: *Work Profiling System* competencies



Each set of competencies has indicators attached to them to pinpoint what is expected of a particular person designated for a certain role (SHL, 1998).

The indicators for Leadership (SHL, 1998) are *inter alia*: providing direction, empowering, motivating others, developing others and attracting and developing talent.

The indicators for Interpersonal (SHL, 1998) are *inter alia*: interpersonal sensitivity, teamwork, building and maintaining relationships, flexibility, stress tolerance, tenacity and integrity. Cross-cultural awareness is another indicator. At present, this indicator has few WPS items that load onto it and does not register moderate, high or extreme. Therefore, this particular indicator is always at baseline level.

The indicators for Analytical (SHL, 1998) are *inter alia*: judgment, information gathering, problem analysis, objective setting, management control, written communication skills and technical skills and competence.

The indicators for Business awareness (SHL, 1998) are *inter alia*: organisational awareness, strategic perspective, commercial orientation, cross-functional awareness, innovation and career and self-development.

The indicators for Dynamism (SHL, 1998) are *inter alia*: self-confidence, impact, decisiveness, drive, initiative, persuasiveness and oral communication skills.

The indicators for Operational (SHL, 1998) are *inter alia*: concern for excellence, customer service orientation and execution.

2.8. Conclusion

According to the literature, cognisance should be taken of the different 'look' of the online environment as opposed to the classroom environment. An online facilitator should realise that s/he does not have as many control points (Tobin, 2001) in cyberspace. Online learning is learner-centred (Kearsley, 1998) and the learners are the active performers of tasks and assignments (Makin, 2002). The online environment is more challenging than the classroom setting (Moreira, 2002) and it is actually more demanding to teach online than face-to-face (Harasim, 1993; Berge, 1995). These facts will be corroborated in Chapter 4 after studying the online facilitator who performed the *CyberSurviver* case study.

The online facilitator is the person that has to make the biggest adjustment to the online environment. This person has to move from the centre stage position in the classroom setting to that of a 'guide on the side' (Collison *et al.* 2002) or even to a less glamorous position of 'host on the post' (Ambrose, 2001). The online facilitator has to facilitate the learning process and provide support through asynchronous text messages. The online facilitator must also compensate for the lack of physical presence by creating a supportive environment where learners feel comfortable to participate (Hobgood, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 1999). Chapter 4 will reveal how the online facilitator under scrutiny managed to adjust to the online environment and it will also indicate which personal adjustments she had to make.

According to Bischoff (2000), effective online teaching consists of instructor visibility and frequent and timely feedback. Twenty-three online facilitation roles have been identified from the literature, indicating the variety of activities that the online facilitator has to perform. Not one of these roles indicates visibility *per se*. The problem is that 23 roles are too many to use and not manageable for an online facilitator, thus creating more frustration and anxiety for future online facilitators. These 23 roles have also not indicated which are important in terms of an intellectual focus and people focus towards learners. How must these newcomers cope with the technology and perform 23 roles without appearing less than proficient? (Murray, 2001). To make matters worse, various challenges were highlighted which the online facilitator needs to be aware of

and manage in the online environment. It is for this reason that the *Work Profiling System* tool (SHL, 1998) was selected to identify people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for the online facilitator. It is important to identify the visible roles and applicable competencies to appoint the suitable person for this role and to contract development plans to support this online innovation because ...

*The role of the **online facilitator** is emerging as an important role in the success of online group work spaces* (Rykert, 2002:1 – my emphasis)

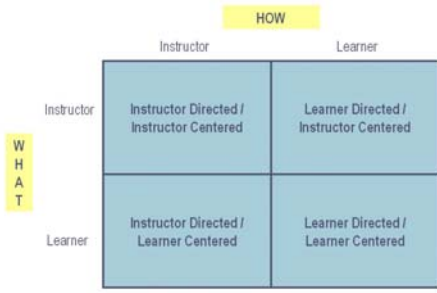

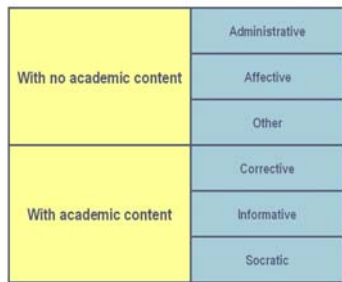
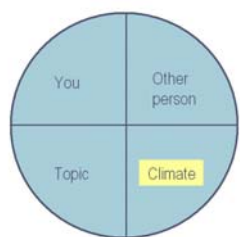
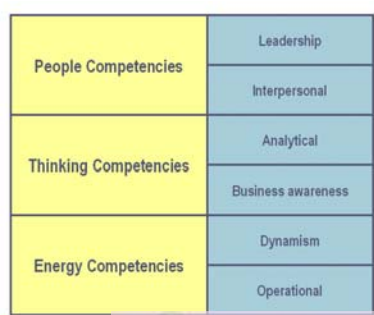
and

***Instructors** ... play a crucial role in maintaining the viability of their online courses ...* (Mazoué, 1999:108 – my emphasis).

A synopsis of each subsidiary question within its conceptual framework is depicted in Table 2.27 to provide an overview of all the concepts that influence this study.

Chapter 3 provides the research strategy and research design to address the research problem.

Table 2.27: Each subsidiary question within its conceptual framework

 <p>Models of Teaching (Williams <i>et al.</i> 1999:107)</p>	<p>How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?</p> <p>The learner-centred environment has an impact on the online facilitator because the facilitator has to move from being the 'sage on stage' to a 'guide on the side'.</p>
 <p>Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum (White & Weight, 2000:4)</p>	<p>How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?</p> <p>By definition, the online facilitator needs to be caring and help and assist the learners.</p>
 <p>Taxonomy of instructor postings (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003:157)</p>	<p>What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?</p> <p>Although the online facilitator is working on the side, s/he still needs to be visible for the learners in a social and intellectual manner.</p>
 <p>Four elements of online conflict (White & Weight, 2000:151)</p>	<p>What challenges did the online facilitator face?</p> <p>Being online brings along new challenges that can be clustered into four quadrants and the 'climate' needs to be understood to avoid possible conflict situations.</p>
 <p>Work Profiling System competencies (SHL, 1998:60)</p>	<p>What people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies were identified for the online environment?</p> <p>Because teaching online needs a social and intellectual component, the <i>Work Profiling System</i> will be used to pinpoint competencies.</p>

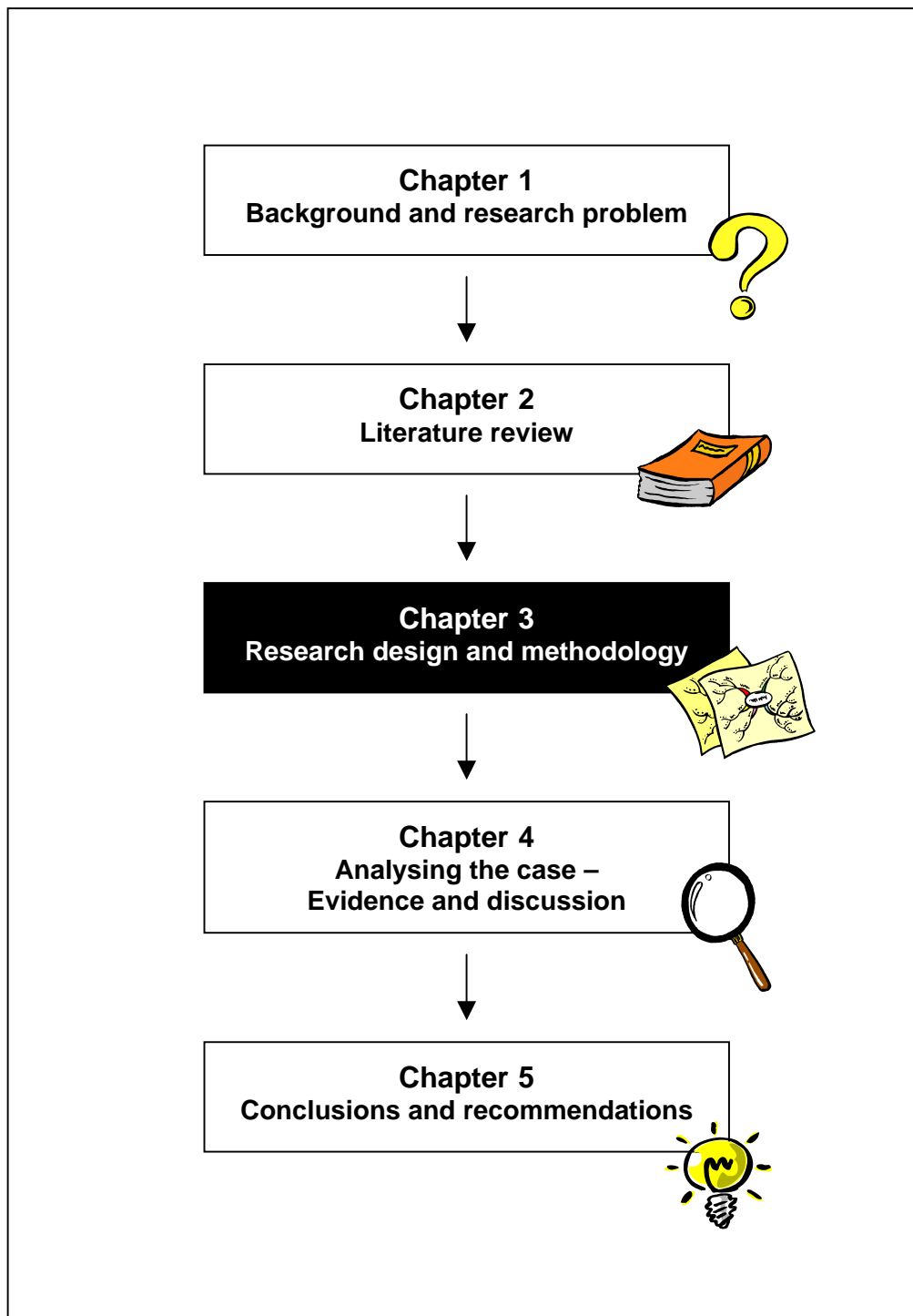


Table of contents

3.1. PRELUDE	95
3.2. INTRODUCTION	95
3.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY	96
3.4. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	96
3.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	97
3.6. RESEARCH PARADIGM	99
3.7. RESEARCH APPROACH	101
3.8. RESEARCH STRATEGY	103
3.9. RESEARCH DESIGN	107
3.10. RESEARCH DESIGN – THE CASE STUDY IN QUESTION	109
3.11. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS	111
3.12. WHEN ADMINISTERED AND WHO CONDUCTED?	131
3.13. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND AUTHENTICITY	133
3.14. CONCLUSION	134

3.1. Prelude

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial questions of a study (Yin, 1989:27).

3.2. Introduction

The research problem emphasises the necessity to know what different roles the online facilitator needs to play in the online environment as well as to identify which competencies the online facilitator needs to function in the online environment. The intellectual puzzle (Mason, 2002:13) is presented in the form of the research question, the research objectives and subsidiary questions. A research strategy and research design are created to address the research questions. Observer participant observation, various written texts, a face-to-face interview and a group focus interview were selected as data collection methods. Each method, with its corresponding data collection instrument, is described in terms of objectives, preparatory work, advantages, disadvantages and corrective measures put in place to counteract the disadvantages. All data gathered was in preparation for the pivotal *Work Profiling System* session, which is described in detail in Chapter 4. To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in the study, member checks, peer reviews, crystallization and investigator triangulation were employed. The chapter ends with information on the various assistants used by the researcher, their duties and preparation for their respective tasks.

3.3. Research problem and motivation for the study

The implementation of online learning has forced organisations to change their way of work. Dobbs (2000a) poses a warning about the implementation of online learning. The perceptions of the advantages of Internet technologies for training have motivated organisations to rush to adopt online learning regardless of whether they had a clear reason to do so (and no one wanted to find out what was happening, but no one dared to get left behind). The core problem of this study is that classroom facilitators, instructors and trainers are nervous to take the step toward online facilitation, as they do not know what is expected of them in this new online environment. It implies that traditional trainers need to step outside their comfort zone into a relatively new territory and the trainers need help in this area (Xebec McGraw-Hill, 2001:13). Trainers have always played a vital role in the learning arena and the introduction of Internet-driven learning methods should complement what trainers' offer, not eliminate the need for them.

It is for this reason that it is imperative to know what the online facilitator does in terms of fulfilling various roles to increase visibility as well as to identify which competencies the online facilitator needs to function in the online environment. The suitable person needs to be selected for this role.

3.4. Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this research, as was stated in Chapter 1, is to identify what different roles the online facilitator plays in the online environment in order to be able to identify which competencies the online facilitator needs to function in the online environment.

Given the purpose, the objectives are *inter alia*:

- To describe what the online facilitator did in the online environment.
- To investigate the various roles that the online facilitator played to be 'visible' in the online environment.
- To scrutinise the challenges that an online facilitator needs to faced.
- To design a *Work Profiling System (WPS)* Person Specific Report for the online facilitator from the most job-relevant competencies, based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job.

3.5. Research questions

From the objectives, the following questions emerge:

- How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?
- How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?
- What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?
- What challenges did the online facilitator face?
- What people competencies were identified for the online environment?
- What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?
- What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

The main research question and the essence of the enquiry (Mason, 2002:13) can be summarised as follows:

What are the roles and competencies of an online facilitator?

The intellectual puzzle (Mason, 2002:13) is represented in Table 3.1. At a glance the main research question is indicated with the research objectives and clearly formulated research subsidiary questions.

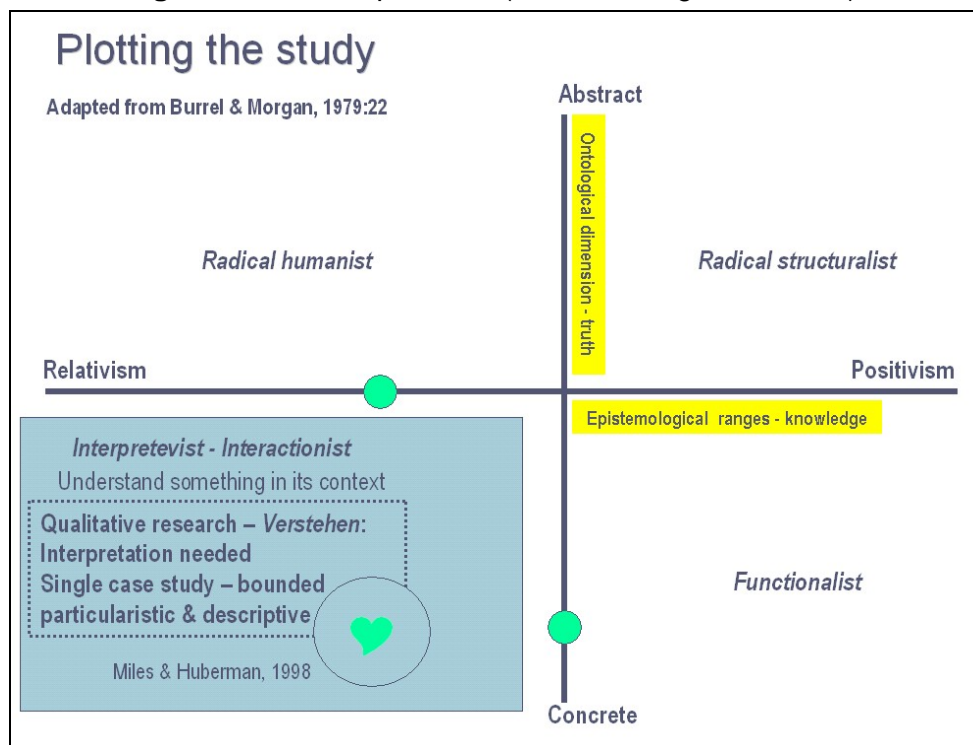
Table 3.1: The intellectual puzzle for this study

Research question	Research objectives	Subsidiary questions
What are the roles and competencies of the online facilitator?	To describe what the online facilitator did in the online environment.	How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?
		How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?
	To investigate roles that will increase the 'visibility' of the online facilitator.	What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?
	To scrutinise the challenges that the online facilitator faced.	What challenges did the online facilitator face?
	To design a <i>Work Profiling System (WPS)</i> Person Specific Report for the online facilitator based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job.	What people competencies were identified for the online environment?
		What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?
		What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

3.6. Research paradigm

Linking research and philosophical traditions helps to illustrate different research orientations (Merriam, 1998:3). The research philosophy depends on the way you think about the development of knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000:84) or about the production of knowledge (Merriam, 1998:3). Carr and Kemmis (1986) distinguish between three basic forms of educational research, namely positivist research, interpretive research and critical research. Knowledge gained in positivist research is objective and quantifiable. Knowledge gained in critical research is an ideological critique of power, privilege and oppression (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). In the interpretive approach the researcher does not stand above or outside, but is a participant observer (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:88), seeking to discern the meanings of actions as they are expressed within specific social contexts. The purpose of interpretive social science is not to provide causal explanations of human life, but rather to deepen and extend the knowledge of why social life is perceived and experienced in the way that it is (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:90). Figure 3.1 graphically represents the study as adapted from the Burrell and Morgan (1979:22) sociological paradigms.

Figure 3.1: Interpretivism (Burrell & Morgan, 1979:22)



According to Burrell and Morgan (1979:22-23), the functionalist paradigm views the social world as consisting of concrete artefacts and relationships that can be identified, studied and measured through natural sciences from an objectivist point of view. The

interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is. Interpretivism views the social world from subjective experiences of individuals. The radical humanist paradigm also views the social world from an ideographic perspective, as does the interpretive paradigm, but the frame of reference focuses on overthrowing the limitations of existing social structures. The radical structuralist paradigm focuses on structural relationships within a social world, providing explanations for the basic interrelationships within the context of social formations. The radical structuralist paradigm is concerned with radical change and emancipation. This study is situated in the interpretivist paradigm.

Interpretivism, as used in this study, is summarised in Table 3.2 in respect of the purpose of the research, the nature of reality (ontology), nature of knowledge and the relationship between the inquirer and the inquired-into (epistemology) and the methodology used (Cantrell, 2001).

Table 3.2: Interpretivism

Feature	Description
Purpose of research	Understand and interpret daily occurrences and social structures and meaning people give to the phenomena of online facilitation.
Nature of reality (ontology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reality is concrete and can be explored. ▪ There are multiple and different constructs / realities. ▪ Explore meaningful actions, interactions and behaviours. ▪ Reality is constructed through human interaction. ▪ Discover how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting by means of daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with others around them. These writings could be text and visual pictures. ▪ Many social realities exist due to varying human experience, including people's knowledge, views, interpretations and experiences. ▪ Inquiry is not a matter of offering interpretations of reality, but one of offering interpretations that become reality, to the extent they are agreed upon (Smith, 1989:171 – my emphasis).

Table 3.2: Interpretivism

Feature	Description
Nature of knowledge / relationship between inquirer and inquired-into (epistemology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Events are understood through the mental process of interpretation that is influenced by and interacts with social context. ▪ Those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural setting. ▪ Inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing. ▪ More personal, interactive mode of data collection.
Methodology	Processes of data collected by text messages, interviews, reflective sessions – research is a product of the values of the researcher.

3.7. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was conducted because the aim of this research was to study events in their natural setting in an attempt to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). This approach was derived from the humanities with an emphasis on holistic information and **interpretive approaches** to be able to **Verstehen** (Husén, 1999:32 – my emphasis) – understanding something in its context. This was applicable to the study as the researcher is investigating the online facilitator in a natural setting in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how the facilitator and learners create and maintain their social worlds.

The word 'qualitative' implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meaning that are **not** experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995:8 – my emphasis). Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied and the situational constraints that shape the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995:8).

Savenye and Robinson (1996:1172) define qualitative research as follows:

... research devoted to developing an understanding of human systems ... qualitative research systems typically include ethnographies, case studies and generally descriptive studies.

This is applicable to the study that is in the form of a case study.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Creswell (1998) and Merriam (1988) provide characteristics for qualitative research. These characteristics are summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Characteristics of qualitative research

Characteristics	Bogdan & Biklen (1992)	Creswell (1998)	Merriam (1998)	This study
Natural setting as source of data	✓	✓	✓	The online environment
Researcher as key instrument of data collection	✓	✓	–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observe ▪ Select, analyse and synthesis texts ▪ Interview
Data collected as words or pictures	✓	✓	✓	Words, emoticons and sound files
Outcome as process rather than product	✓	✓	✓	Online facilitator follows certain processes and <i>CyberSurviver</i> was about process rather than product
Inductive analysis, paying attention to particulars	✓	✓	✓	●
Focus on participants' perspectives and meaning	✓	✓	✓	Focus group interview and face-to-face interview

● The inductive approach followed (Saunders *et al.* 2000:91), emphasised the following:

- Gaining an understanding of the meaning participants attached to the events.
- There was a close understanding of the research context and there was a rich collection of qualitative data.
- A realisation that the researcher was part of the research process.
- Less concern with the need to generalise.

Creswell (1998) also explains that qualitative research is selected because of certain reasons, *inter alia*:

- The research question often starts with a **how** or a **what**, as is the case for the study.

- The topic needs to be **explored**. In this study there are a variety of variables and the online facilitator's behaviour cannot be explained by means of a theory. More knowledge needs to be gained about the topic.
- Qualitative research emphasises the researcher's role as an active learner, which is so true as the researcher is no expert who can pass judgment but needs to live very closely to the online facilitator under research.

Bearing the above in mind and reflecting on the research question, it was appropriate that the qualitative approach was used for this study because it focused on the subjective experiences of the individual and it was sensitive to the contexts in which people interact with each other (Mouton, 2001).

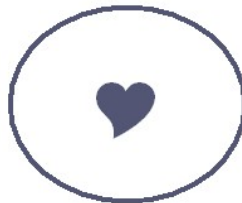
3.8. Research strategy

The research strategy is a general plan of how you will go about answering the research questions you have set (Saunders *et al.* 2000:92). The selected strategy is a case study. Miles and Huberman, quoted by Merriam (1998:27) think of the case as:

a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context.

According to Merriam (1998:27), Miles and Huberman graphically present 'the case' as a circle with a heart in the centre – the heart is the focus of the study and the circle defines the edge of the case: *what will not be studied*. Figure 3.2 is my graphical interpretation of the written bounded context, according to Miles and Huberman.

Figure 3.2: A bounded context according to Miles & Huberman



Similarly, Stake (1995) and Creswell (1998) indicate that a case study must have boundaries. To ascertain whether the study is ring-fenced, Merriam (1998:27) suggests that the researcher asks how finite the data collection would be:

- Is there a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed?

Or

- Is there a finite amount of time for observations?

Both these questions can be answered in the affirmative. The case study in question involved 24 learners and one online facilitator and observations could only be made for a six-week period, suggesting that there is a clear starting and ending point.

The case study, per definition, contains special features (Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978; Creswell, 1998). Table 3.4 provides a summary of these special features, which are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic.

Table 3.4: Special features of a case study

Particularistic
<p>Description (Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978; Creswell, 1998) Focus on a particular situation or event. This specificity makes it an especially good design for practical problems – for questions and situations arising from everyday practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It can suggest what to do or what not to do in a similar situation. ▪ It can examine a specific instance, but highlight a general problem.
<p>This study Focus on the online facilitator and her interactions and challenges with the learners in the virtual environment in terms of coping with tight deadlines, numerous e-mail messages and dysfunctional teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On reflection, the online facilitator suggested what would remain the same in the course and suggested changes for future usage. ▪ This case study examined <i>CyberSurviver</i> particulars, but highlighted general online facilitation challenges.

Table 3.4: Special features of a case study

Descriptive
<p>Description (Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978; Creswell, 1998)</p> <p>The end product of a case study is a thick description of the phenomenon being studied – it includes many variables and portrays interaction over a period of time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illustrate the complexities of a situation – there are many contributing factors. ▪ Show the influence of personalities on the issue. ▪ Show the influence of passage of time on the issue, especially deadlines. ▪ Include vivid material – quotations and interviews. ▪ Obtain information from many sources. ▪ Spell out differences of opinion on the issue and suggest how differences have influenced the result. ▪ Present the information in many different ways.
<p>This study</p> <p>The end product of this study is reflected in Chapter 4 and provides a thick and rich description of the role and competencies of the online facilitator, after being studied for a six-week period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The online facilitator had to cope with various challenges and the study highlighted difficulties specific to the virtual environment. ▪ From the very beginning there were learners in the groups who could not co-operate and others who would not co-operate. There were also learners who wanted to work, but were constantly at loggerheads with others, thus working against each other all the time. There were also learners who never became involved and caused tremendous frustration for the others – this clearly shows evidence of the influence of personalities in the virtual environment. ▪ Definite deadlines were set for numerous assignments and evidence is provided of the impact of these deadlines. ▪ In Chapter 4, various extracts, in the form of direct quotations, are provided from <i>Yahoo Groups</i> messages, <i>WebCT</i> messages, <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> messages, formal test responses, focus group interview and face-to-face interview. ▪ Various data sources were used for this study, as is listed above. ▪ Studying the online facilitator highlighted how people differ in opinion, especially regarding collaboration. Evidence will indicate how the online facilitator managed these differences and how she made adjustments to assist the learners to function optimally in the virtual environment.

Table 3.4: Special features of a case study

Heuristic
<p>Description (Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978; Creswell, 1998)</p> <p>The case study illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study – new meaning can be discovered, the reader's experience can be extended or what is known can be confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened and why. ▪ Explain why an innovation worked or failed to work. ▪ Evaluate, summarise and conclude – increasing potential applicability.
<p>This study</p> <p>The researcher endeavoured to provide a reader with a clear understanding of online facilitation and the role of the online facilitator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The online facilitator encountered various challenges. Each challenge was dissected and solutions were provided. ▪ The mayhem of Week 1 was described in detail. ▪ At the end of each research questions, a summary was provided to indicate new discoveries or confirm existing research.

The case study for this research project was a single case. Yin (1989) pointed out that generalisation of results, from either single or multiple designs, can be made to theory and not to populations. Yin (1989) and Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993) argue that the relative size of the sample whether 2, 10 or 100 cases are used, does not transform a multiple case into a macroscopic study. The goal of the study should establish the parameters and then should be applied to the research. Similarly, even a single case could be considered acceptable, provided it meets the established objective.

A typical case study strives towards a holistic understanding of cultural systems of action (Stake, 1995). Cultural systems of action refer to sets of interrelated activities engaged in by the actors in a social situation. It is typically a system of action rather than an individual (biography) or group of individuals (ethnography). The case study in question is the bounded system of the online learning environment and how the online facilitator interacts with the learners.

3.8.1. The case study versus other qualitative studies

This study is not a biographical life history, because the focus of a biography is on the life of a person who has had a distinguished career (Creswell, 1998) and substantial contextual material is available about the individual's family, daily life and work life (Creswell, 1998; Lomask, 1986).

This study is not a phenomenology, because the focus is not on understanding the meaning of experiences of individuals about a concept or phenomenon, with the inclusion of a philosophical discussion (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

It is not a grounded theory study, because no theory or model is being developed (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).





This study is not ethnography, studying the behaviours of a culture-sharing group, using anthropological concepts such as myths, stories, rituals and social structure (Creswell, 1998; Wolcott, 1994).

This research is a case study, because it is an in-depth study of a bounded system in terms of time and place (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Shaw, 1978). Table 3.5 provides a list of multiple sources of information in data collection to provide the detailed in-depth picture of the online learning environment and how the online facilitator interacts with the learners.

3.9. Research design

The research design is the action plan for getting from here to there. 'Here' is specified by an initial set of questions. 'There' is specified as answers to the questions. In the gap between 'here' and 'there' a number of major steps may be found, such as the collection and analysis of relevant data. The logical sequence of the research design assists the researcher to ensure that the evidence addresses the initial questions (Yin, 1989). A summary of the research design for this study is reflected in Table 3.5. The following groupings are presented in the table: Research design; Data collection methods; Data collection instruments; Data sources; When the method was administered; Who conducted the data collection; Types of check for trustworthiness and authenticity and ethical considerations. Each one of these groupings is dealt with separately after the summary in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Research design for this study

Research design	Case study – 2002 ORO 880 <i>CyberSurviver</i> online module on eLearning				
Data collection methods	 Observation	 Content analysis	 Interview Focus group Face-to-face	 WPS session	
Data collection instruments	Researcher field notes in the form of an observation sheet per week and roles matrix per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asynchronous <i>Yahoo Group</i> messages <i>WebCT</i> messages Synchronous <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> messages Sound files Formal electronic test responses Self-administered questionnaire 	Interview schedule		WPS protocol
Data source	Online facilitator and learners	Online facilitator and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional for learners – 14 learners attended the session Scribe Independent verifier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online facilitator Independent verifier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transcripts Field notes Content analysis Test responses Accomplished performer Researcher Verifier Two independent observers
When administered	18 July – 28 August 2002	18 July – 28 August 2002 Questionnaire = End August 2003	8 May 2003	20 May 2003	19 October 2003
Who conducted	Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online facilitator Researcher 	Independent moderator	Independent interviewer	WPS facilitator
Verification: Trustworthiness and authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member checks and peer reviews Triangulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member checks and peer reviews Triangulation Crystallization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member checks and peer reviews Crystallization 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member checks Crystallization
Ethical considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covert observation Informed about researcher 	Documents can take on private or confidential form – obtain permission to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What you ask How you ask it Gain trust Obtain informed consent 		Restrict information to case study only

3.10. Research design – the case study in question

The basis for this **instrumental case study**¹ was the 2002 ORO 880 online module on eLearning for the Master's degree in Computer Assisted Education. The module simulated the popular reality television series, *Survivor*, implementing the same rules and events that took place in the television series – the location just shifted to cyberspace. The name was adapted to *CyberSurviver*, emphasising 'surf', to indicate surfing the Internet to get to various locations. A weekend away was the winning prize for the final *CyberSurviver*!

An online facilitator presented this six-week module entirely online, with a start-up face-to-face contact session at the beginning of the module and a face-to-face closure session at the end of the module. The 24 tribal members (learners) were divided into four groups (tribes), each consisting of six learners with differing levels of computer and web literacy. All the interactions between the tribal members and the online facilitator took place using a number of pre-selected web-based communication tools, such as *Yahoo Groups*, *Yahoo Messenger*, *WebCT* and *InterWise*. The online facilitator deliberately selected these tools to provide the learners with a wide range of experiences regarding synchronous and asynchronous communication. The module was presented in asynchronous mode. Some of the learners only had access to their networked computers from home, whilst others only connected from their workplace.

Tribal members had to access the instructions for the weekly assignments via the Internet. They also had to complete a number of collaborative/tribal and individual assignments each week and submit these assignments electronically. Keeping with the spirit of the original *Survivor* game, immunity and reward challenges were posted on a regular basis. The objective of the game is that members get voted off on a weekly basis, until only one final survivor remains. At the end of each week's activities, the tribes had to vote off one member of their team, based on a number of pre-set criteria. This member then joined other evicted tribal members (learners) in a separate Tribe 5. This particular tribe had to complete all the assignments as they were given to the tribal members still in the game, but no one from Tribe 5 was eligible to win the final prize.

¹ Use the case instrumentally to illustrate the issues (Stake, 1995:46)

3.10.1. The six-week period

Table 3.6 provides a summary of what was expected of the learners for the six-week period.

Table 3.6: The six-week period of the case study

Week 1: 18 – 24 July 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal Assignment 1 ▪ Individual Assignment 1 (with tribal assistance) ▪ Individual Assignment 2
Week 2: 25 – 31 July 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal Assignment 2 ▪ Individual Assignment 3 ▪ Individual Assignment 4 ▪ Collaborative Behaviour
Week 3: 1 – 7 August 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal Assignment 2 (continued) ▪ Individual Assignment 5 ▪ Individual Assignment 6 (with tribal assistance and support) ▪ Individual Assignment 7
Week 4: 8 – 14 August 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal Assignment 3 ▪ Individual Assignment 8 ▪ Individual Assignment 9 ▪ Collaborative Behaviour
Week 5: 15 – 21 August 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal Assignment 4 ▪ Individual Assignment 10 ▪ Individual Assignment 11 ▪ Collaborative Behaviour
Week 6: 22 – 28 August 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal Assignment 5 ▪ Individual Assignment 12 ▪ Individual Assignment 13

3.10.2. The objectives of the case study

The objectives of the case study are *inter alia*:

- To describe what the online facilitator did in the online environment.
- To investigate the various roles that the online facilitator played to be 'visible' in the online environment.
- To scrutinise the challenges that the online facilitator faced.

3.10.3. The sample

The sample selection is a typical sample as it reflected the average person and situation of the phenomenon of interest (Burns & Grove, 1997). This sample selection is in no way atypical, extreme, deviant or intensely unusual (Merriam, 1998:62). The participants or learners selected themselves. If a learner enrolled for the Master's degree in Computer Assisted Education this particular module, on which the case study

was based, was compulsory. The participants were selected merely because they happened to be there and they were the learners that enrolled for the eLearning module.

The **participants/learners** were all adults with an education background ranging in age from 23 – 55 years. They enrolled for this compulsory ORO 880 eLearning module for the Master's degree in Computer Assisted Education on a part-time basis whilst working full time. Fifteen of the 24 learners completed the course. There was a gender mix, with eight men and 16 women enrolling for this module.

The **online facilitator** is a 33-year old, white South African woman with a MEd CBT *Cum Laude* degree who works in the field of telematic education at the Tshwane University of Technology.

This sample should provide meaningful contexts, illustrations and scenarios of the particular online context.

3.11. Data collection methods and data collection instruments

A case study involves a wide array of data collection instruments as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 1998:123).

Sections 3.11.1 to 3.11.4 provide a detailed description of the specific data collection method as it pertained to the study.



3.11.1. Observation

(Direct) observation is conducted during a field trip during the case study. This technique is useful for providing additional information about the topic being researched. In the context of the study, the researcher did make use of observation. Although a specific field trip was never made, the researcher observed the online facilitator via her personal computer in what she was doing in cyberspace.

This subsection considers the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions on the use of observation. It is followed by a detailed description of what type of observer role the researcher played. The objectives of using this data collection method are listed as well as preparatory measures to commence with the observation. The advantages and disadvantages of observation are discussed. An indication is also given of corrective measures put in place to counteract the disadvantages.

The ontological position (Mason, 2002:85) sees interaction, action and behaviour as central to the natural setting. People make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting by means of daily routines and conversations.

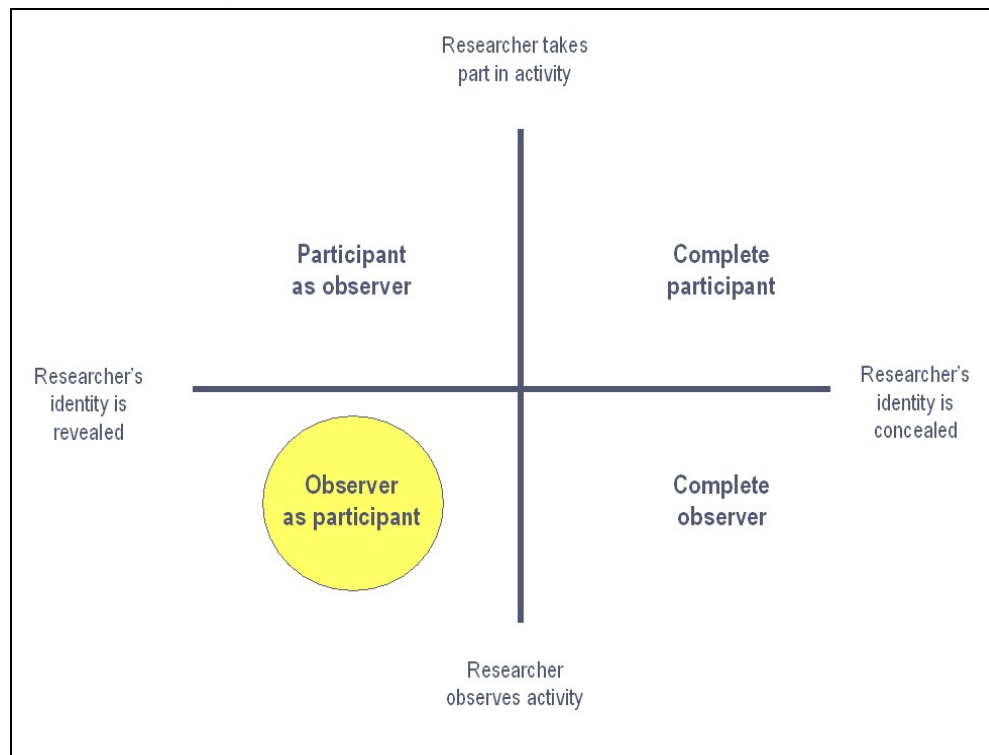
The epistemological position (Mason, 2002:86) suggests that observing or participating in the natural setting can generate knowledge of the social world. I want to know what this social setting feels like (Mason, 2002:85).

Several of the research questions and objectives are concerned with what the online facilitator does. Using observation is an obvious way in which to discover this and watch what the online facilitator does.

I adopted the role of 'observer as participant' in the online course to observe without taking part in the activities in the same way as the 'real' learners. In other words, I was a 'spectator' (Saunders *et al.* 2000:222). My identity as a researcher was clear to all concerned. This had the advantage that I could focus on my research role and I could note insights as they occurred to me. The disadvantage of this role was that I lost the emotional involvement; not really knowing what it feels like to be on the receiving end of the experience.

Figure 3.3 provides a graphical representation of the typology of participant observation researcher roles (Saunders *et al.* 2000:223). The role I played is highlighted with the yellow circle.

Figure 3.3: Typology of participant observation researcher roles (Saunders *et al.* 2000:223)



The **objectives** of the observation were *inter alia*:

- **To observe activities and interactions in the virtual setting**

I was logged onto *Yahoo* most of the time, just to observe who was participating and in particular, to observe the online facilitator. Questions that I posed were *inter alia* does the online facilitator initiate participation or does she wait for a problem to arise before 'speaking'. How is the online facilitator adapting in this environment? I recorded behaviour as it happened on a daily basis, for six weeks. My notes were contextualised and used as reference points or *promising lines of enquiry* (Saunders *et al.* 2000:227) for my interview later on with the online facilitator. I carefully took cognisance of the online facilitator's actions and responses and visibility.

- **To observe unusual situations**

I was particularly interested in tight, stressful situations and also 'what does not happen'.



- **To observe conversations and writing style**

I looked at the length of messages; whether the online facilitator used participant's names; how learners were greeted; non-verbal communication and usage of emoticons.

- **To check my own behaviour**

I immediately jotted down my feelings if I thought the online facilitator acted differently as I would have done.

The researcher made notes on the abovementioned actions on the Observation Sheet that was designed for this purpose (Creswell, 1998:125). These actions were observed on a daily basis.



Refer to Annexure B for an example of the Observation Sheet.

- **To check roles against the roles matrix**

I had already documented the identified 23 roles for the online facilitator. I designed a roles matrix and ticked off the applicable role as I observed the online facilitator fulfilling this role.



Refer to Annexure C for an example of the Roles Matrix.

My **preparation** for the observation:

The Observation Sheet and Roles Matrix were designed before the case study commenced on 18 July 2002. It was imperative to have these documents handy when observing the online facilitator so that I could make my field notes there and then as I observed the participants.

The **advantages** of using observation as a data collection method for this study are summarised below (Mason, 2002; Saunders *et al.* 2000; Merriam, 1989; Creswell, 1998).

- It is good at explaining what is going on in particular social situations and I got a good impression of what this role encapsulates.
- It alerts the researcher to significant social processes, such as interacting in the virtual environment.
- Experience 'real life' emotions of those being researched – it afforded me the opportunity to experience the real emotions and frustrations of working in the virtual world.
- Virtually all data collected are useful.

The **disadvantages** of using observation as a data collection method for this study are summarised in Table 3.7 (Mason, 2002; Saunders *et al.* 2000; Merriam, 1989; Creswell, 1998) and corrective measures are provided to counteract the disadvantages for this study.

Table 3.7: Disadvantages of using observation with the corrective measures for this study

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
It is extremely time consuming.	The researcher knew that the study would be over a period of six week. In the greater scheme of things, six weeks is not a long time span. However, being able to observe from the luxury of my own home and office was just a natural continuation of my work and studies after hours. No time was wasted travelling to an actual site.
It can pose difficult ethical problems for the researcher in terms of role conflict.	At times I would have liked to participate just to see the effect of using two online facilitators. However, up front it was made clear that I will fulfil the role of observer as participant. There was no role conflict as my role was defined as a researcher.
The closeness of the researcher to the specific situation can lead to observer bias.	Being in a virtual environment makes the closeness less in your face. I also declared my bias and it is for this reason that I had a section entitled 'My own behaviour and feelings' on the Observation Sheet. If the online facilitator did something that I totally disagreed with, it was noted. This was also used as discussion points during the face-to-face interview.
The participant observer role is demanding and not all researchers are suited for this particular role.	My role was observer as participant, meaning that I observed without taking part in the activities.
Data recording is often difficult and it is complex to categorise observations.	Before the case study started I had already thought about what I wanted to observe. These various themes were included in the Observation sheet. This made the recording of field notes much easier.
Can be expensive.	Working in the virtual world helped in that I did not have to travel and visit sites. I did not have to incur any additional costs to my set-up at home.
Factualness and reliability of the data.	There is an audit trail for what was produced during the online module. Retrieving the actual electronic messages can corroborate this.



3.11.2. **Written texts and questionnaire**

Documents, in the format of written texts, are means of communication between the parties in the study. In the interest of triangulation, the written texts serve to corroborate the evidence from other sources. As is indicated in Table 3.5, a substantial number of written texts were used in the study. It is interesting to note that Creswell (1989:121) is the only author consulted who indicates the use of audio-visual materials. Audio-visual

materials were added to this section because e-mail or electronic messages fall within the realm of audio-visual materials. The researcher analysed various sets of e-mail messages in the study. Sound files were also used in the study and these are also categorised as audio-visual materials.

This subsection considers the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions on the use of written texts and a questionnaire. It is followed by a detailed list of documents used for this study. The advantages, disadvantages and corrective measures for documentation are revealed. The online questionnaire, as another data collection method, is discussed. The objectives of the questionnaire are listed. The preparation of the questionnaire regarding compilation and submitting is described. This subsection ends with the advantages, disadvantages and corrective measures taken in respect of questionnaires.

The ontological position (Mason, 2002:106) suggests that the written word, text, documents and visual pictures are meaningful in the social world because they act as a form of expression and communication.

The epistemological position (Mason, 2002:107) suggests that these written texts and visual pictures count as evidence of the ontological position. It is important to interpret and 'read' these documents in the context of how and why they were produced and used and what meaning they have and what they are seen to be or represent of the natural setting.

The production of these documents did not involve the researcher in social interaction as did observation and interviewing.

The following sets of documents form the basis of this study:

- Asynchronous *Yahoo Group* electronic messages.
- *WebCT* electronic messages.
- Synchronous *Yahoo Messenger* messages.
- Sound files.
- Formal electronic test responses.

These documents were constructed in particular contexts by the sample group, with particular purposes and with consequences, intended or unintended. All the electronic

messages were used for a content analysis by comparing the online facilitator's artefacts to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments to establish the online facilitator's roles. The *ATLAS/ti* software package was used for the coding purposes. I made use of interviews to corroborate the data found here.

The **advantages** of using documentation as a data collection method for this study are summarised below (Saunders *et al.* Creswell, 1998; McNamara, 1999).

- Obtain comprehensive information.
- Few biases about the information.

The **disadvantages** of using documentation as a data collection method for this study are summarised in Table 3.8 (Saunders *et al.* Creswell, 1998; McNamara, 1999) and corrective measures are provided to counteract the disadvantages for this study.

Table 3.8: Disadvantages of using documentation with the corrective measures for this study

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
Takes long to gather.	A time limit of six weeks pertained to this documentation. Once the case study was completed, no more documentation was considered eligible for this study.
Information may be incomplete.	The documentation is not incomplete in terms of assignments submitted or electronic tests completed. It is possible that the researcher has not retrieved all the electronic messages. The facilitator posted 122 asynchronous messages and the learners posted 588 messages.
Data is restricted to what already exists.	That is the objective of the case study – to research the interactions between the online facilitator and learners for the six-week period.

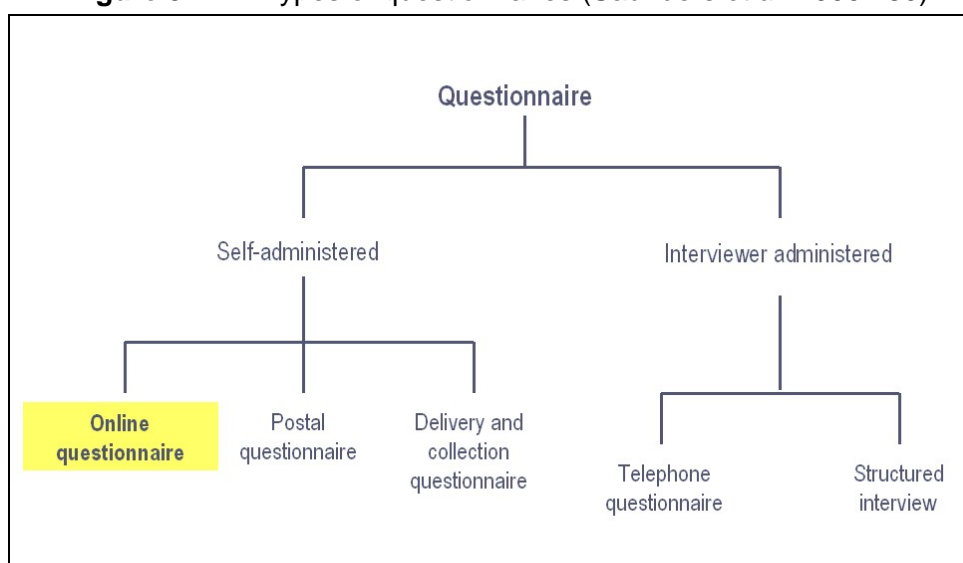


Refer to:

- Annexure H for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Groups* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy and five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).
- Annexure I for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Messenger* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy and five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).
- Annexure J for an analysis of the message units in *WebCT* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy and five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).

The researcher also made use of a questionnaire. Figure 3.4 provides a graphical representation of the typology of questionnaires (Saunders, *et al.* 2000:280) and the yellow block indicates the type of questionnaire that was used for this study. An online questionnaire was selected because the entire case study was conducted in an online environment, where the learners responded to various assignments electronically. Thus selecting the online questionnaire was familiar to the learners. The completion of the questionnaire was compulsory for the online facilitator, but an optional choice for the learners.

Figure 3.4: Types of questionnaires (Saunders *et al.* 2000:280)



This data collection method specifically dealt with the research subsidiary questions and it was important to establish what the online facilitator and learners felt would be the crucial competencies needed for the online environment. It is for this purpose that the researcher also asked for evidence to be submitted, depending on the answers that were selected.



Refer to Annexure D for the self-administered questionnaire on competencies for the online facilitator.

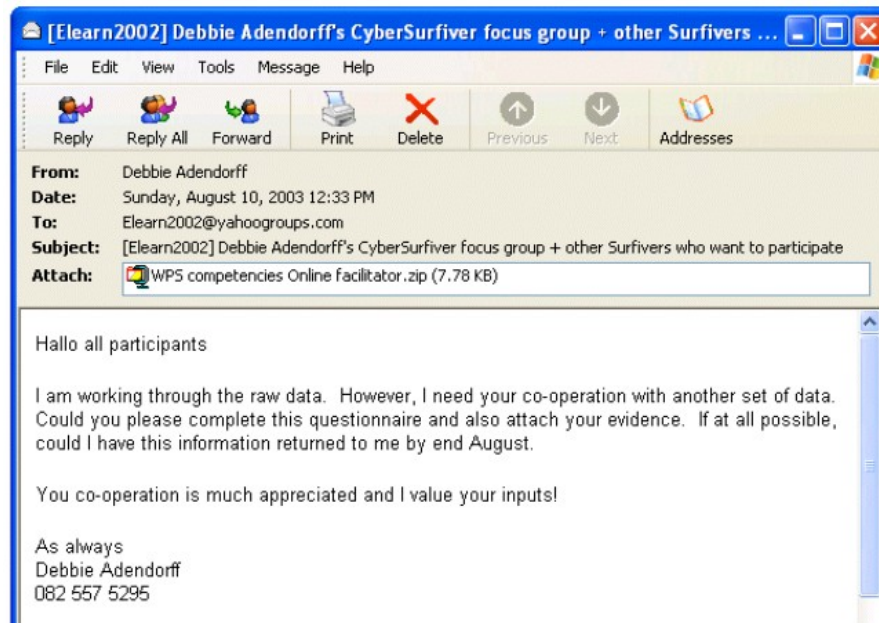
The **objectives** of the questionnaire were *inter alia*:

- To reflect on the role of the online facilitator.
- To individually select the competencies that each person thought should apply to the online facilitator.

My **preparation** to compile and send the questionnaire:

Clear instructions were provided what to do in the online questionnaire. The option columns were clearly defined. No information was bias or embarrassing and the minimum amount of writing was required. The layout was attractive and restricted to one A4 page of information. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained to the recipients (Saunders *et al.* 2000; Munn & Drever, 1995). Figure 3.5 provides an example of the covering letter that was sent to the user group, with a clear time line instruction.

Figure 3.5: e-mail as covering letter with online questionnaire



The **advantages** of using a questionnaire as a data collection method for this study are summarised below (Saunders *et al.* 2000; Munn & Drever, 1995; Selwyn & Robson, 1998; McNamara, 1999, Kerka, 1995; Mehta & Sivadas, 1995).

- Questionnaires are inexpensive.
- Low administration costs in terms of money and time.
- Possible to send the same e-mail to multiple addresses in one action, thus making a large 'mail shot' of subjects relatively straightforward.
- Most e-mail software allows sender of the message the option of notification when the recipient has received the message and when s/he has read it.
- Eschews conventional constraints of spatial and temporal proximity between interviewer and participant.
- Provides practical advantage of providing 'ready transcribed' data.
- Quantitative studies indicate that 'electronic' questionnaires have a very favourable response rate compared to the typical 20-50% response rates achieved by conventional mail surveys (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

The **disadvantages** of using a questionnaire as a data collection method for this study are summarised in Table 3.9 (Saunders *et al.* 2000; Munn & Drever, 1995; Selwyn & Robson, 1998; McNamara, 1999, Kerka, 1995; Mehta & Sivadas, 1995) and corrective measures are provided to counteract the disadvantages for this study.

Table 3.9: Disadvantages of using a questionnaire with the corrective measures for this study

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
Response rate is low.	I wanted the online facilitator to complete this questionnaire. It was an optional favour that I asked of the learners.
Data collected is limited in both quantity and quality.	It might be so, but I wanted the opinion of the online facilitator and quantity is not necessary in terms of this case study.
Follow-up letters are needed to chase non-responders.	The online facilitator asked for an extension, but promised to get the questionnaire to me.
Limited to biased population of users in terms of age, income, gender and race.	I was particularly interested in the online facilitator's thoughts and ideas.
Respondent's anonymity is virtually impossible and this poses an ethical problem.	The online facilitator has provided me with written consent to use her first name in the study.
The average individual is inundated with e-mails; so much so that attending to every mail message is impossible and a questionnaire may be construed as junk mail.	This might be the case for the rest of the participants or they could just decide that they have worked hard enough for this module. However, the online facilitator did answer the questionnaire.



3.11.3. Interview

Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information. Several forms of interviews exist, namely:

- Open-ended / semi-structured interview – key participants are asked to comment about certain events and provide insight into events. The researcher must avoid becoming dependent on a single informant and seek the same data from other sources to verify authenticity. In this study a face-to-face interview and focus group interview were scheduled with the participants and the online facilitator.
- Focused interviews are used where a participant is interviewed for a short period of time. This method is often used to confirm data collected from another source. Although this form of interview was not part of the scope of the study, this type of interview happened during the peer review sessions.

This subsection considers the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions on the use of interviews. Detailed information is provided on the face-to-face interview that was conducted with the online facilitator in terms of objectives of the session, preparatory work, advantages, disadvantages and corrective measures. The researcher also made use of a focus group interview with the participants of the case study. In similar vein, the objectives, preparatory work, advantages, disadvantages and corrective measures are discussed in this section.

This 'conversation with a purpose' (Merriam, 1989:71) is most probably the most commonly used data collection method in qualitative research (Mason, 2002:62).

The ontological position (Mason, 2002:64) suggests that people's knowledge, views, interpretations and experiences are meaningful in the reality that I am exploring.

The epistemological position (Mason, 2002:65) allows for meaningful ways to generate data by interacting with people by asking questions and listening to answers.

Interaction can be stimulated through focus groups where certain sets of topics are discussed. Cues would be taken from the group about what to ask them next. Semi-structured interviewing is appropriate because there can be no bias during the interview sessions because an independent moderator and interviewer were used. Interviewing just adds an additional dimension to the data because participants have time to reflect. The transcripts of the interviews were also used to corroborate evidence.

Semi-structured and in-depth interviews are used in qualitative research to conduct exploratory discussions to be able to understand the 'what' and the 'how' (Saunders *et al.* 2000) of things. All the subsidiary questions are 'what' or 'how' questions, making the selection of this data collection method essential for the research.

The types of interviews fall into two dimensions, namely options of interviews and interviews on the continuum (Merriam, 1989; Saunders *et al.* 2000; Mason, 2002; Healey & Rawlinson, 1993; Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Figure 3.6 provides a graphical representation of the options of qualitative interviews. The yellow blocks indicate the two options that were used for this study.

Figure 3.6: Options of qualitative interviews (Saunders *et al.* 2000:240)

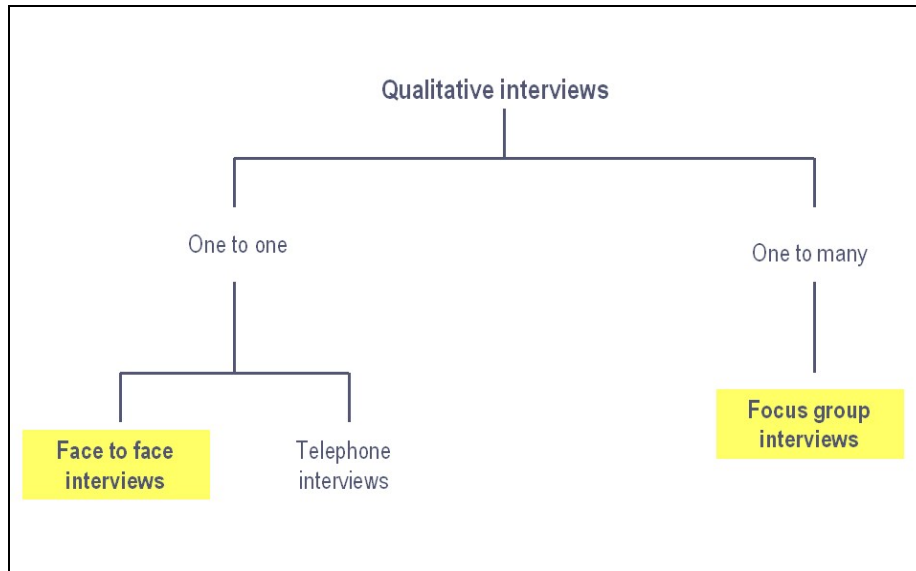
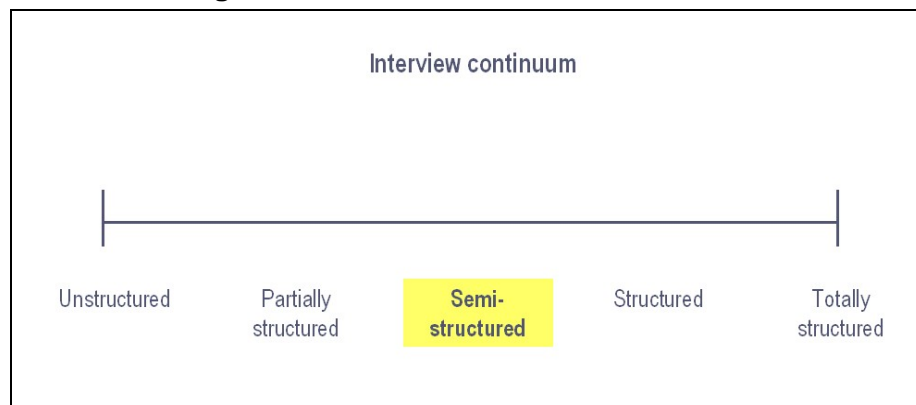


Figure 3.7 is my representation of the interviews on the continuum. The yellow block indicates my selection.

Figure 3.7: Interviews on the continuum



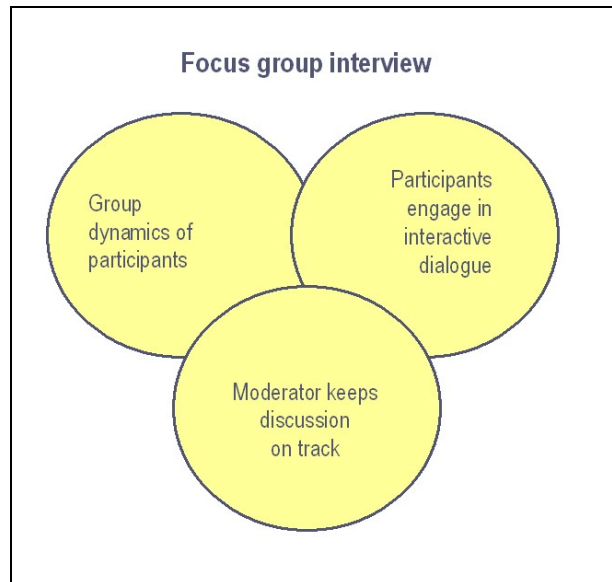
Options of interviews are related to the form of interaction that is established between the researcher and those who participate in the process (Saunders *et al.* 2000:244). This differentiation involves conducting an interview between a single participant and a group.

Although focus groups are a form of group interviewing, it is important to differentiate between them. A group interview involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the prominence being on questions and responses between the interviewer and the participants. Focus groups, on the other hand, rely on interaction within the group based on questions supplied by the moderator. The major difference that distinguishes

a focus group is the insight and data produced by the interaction within the group (Gibbs, 1997). The focus group revolves around organised discussions with a selected group of participants to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic.

Figure 3.8 provides my interpretation of a successful focus group.

Figure 3.8: Focus group – ingredients for success



I chose to use of a face-to-face interview with the online facilitator and a focus group interview with participants who wanted to participate in the interview. I made use of an interview schedule (Creswell, 1998:124) for both interviews, which were my list of questions to be asked during the interview sessions.

The continuum of interviews consists of unstructured interviews on the one end, followed by partially structured interviews, then semi-structured interviews, then structured interviews and totally structured interviews on the other end. Unstructured interviews are based on instinct or experience when interviewing a participant and no set questions are formulated. Partially structured interviews have questions formulated without any order. Semi-structured interviews have questions formulated with order in mind. Structured interviews have formulated questions in a particular order that are coded. Totally structured interviews provide alternative answers for each question.

I selected a semi-structured interview because I wanted the online facilitator to reflect on the online learning situation. Therefore the questions were interpretative by design, but ideal position questions (Merriam, 1989) were also asked. Using interpretive questions have the advantage of checking your understanding of the situation, gaining more information about a situation and revealing opinions and feelings about certain incidents.

The **objectives** of the face-to-face interview were *inter alia*:

- To reflect on the online experience without the need to write anything down.
- To reflect on the various roles of the online facilitator.
- To further explore the tricky situations faced by the online facilitator.
- To explore opportunities for improvements of the online facilitator.

My **preparatory work** to conduct the face-to-face interview is listed below (Coopman, 1999).

Determine the purpose of the interview:

This has been addressed in the objectives section above.

Select the interviewee:

The researcher knew that it had to be the online facilitator.

Structure the interview:

Compile the interview schedule.



Refer to Annexure E for Interview Schedule for online facilitator.

Set up the interview:

- It was decided to use an independent interviewer so that there could be no bias from the researcher. The interviewer had also met the online facilitator on a previous occasion. This made the session easier because the two parties knew one another.
- It was decided to conduct the interview at the online facilitator's workplace, in case she wanted to refer to sets of documents. She could then easily retrieve the documentation from her personal computer.
- The researcher briefed the interviewer extensively on the case study. Three days prior to the interview, the interviewer received the Interview Schedule and a dictaphone to tape the conversation.
- The interview was to be conducted on 20 May 2003 at the online facilitator's place of work. Two hours were set aside for the interview.

Conduct the interview:

- The interviewer was also responsible for note taking. It was decided before hand, that if the online facilitator wanted to change to her mother tongue, that this was in order.
- The interviewer often conducted face-to-face interviews. She followed the set layout of the Interview Schedule and made field notes.

Hand over:

- On 21 May 2003 the interviewer met with the researcher and handed over the tape, field notes, interview schedule and dictaphone.
- The researcher then transcribed the conversation.

The **advantages** of using a face-to-face interview as a data collection method for this study are summarised below (Saunders *et al.* 2000; McNamara, 1999, Berry, 1999; Anderson & Killenberg, 1999; Barone & Switzer, 1995; Stewart & Cash, 1997).

- Obtain the full range and depth of information.
- Gather rich data through the words of the interviewee.
- Develop a relationship with participant.
- Provide the participant with an opportunity to think aloud about things she may not have thought about previously.
- Explore meanings, understandings and perceptions.
- Discover subjective meanings.
- Allow new understandings to be developed during the research process.
- Participant generally finds experience rewarding.
- Non-verbal communication is observational opportunities.

The **disadvantages** of using a face-to-face interview as a data collection method for this study are summarised in Table 3.10 (Saunders *et al.* 2000; McNamara, 1999, Berry, 1999; Anderson & Killenberg, 1999; Barone & Switzer, 1995; Stewart & Cash, 1997) and corrective measures are provided to counteract the disadvantages for this study.

Table 3.10: Disadvantages of using a face-to-face interview with the corrective measures for this study

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
Interview schedule needs to be piloted.	I submitted the interview schedule to my supervisor and co-supervisor for comments.
The time-consuming requirements may result in a reduction of willingness to take part in the interview.	The online facilitator was willing to participate in the interview, but she wanted it at her place of work. The time restraint was never an issue.
Lack of standardisation leads to concerns about reliability.	This could be corroborated with evidence from the observation sheet, actual documentation of incidents and information forthcoming from the focus group interview. The researcher is looking for dependability. This will happen if there is a close fit between what the researcher recorded and what actually happened in the setting.
Can be costly.	The researcher had to pay the independent interviewer a set rate of R250,00 per hour – travelling costs were not calculated. The researcher did the transcription herself.
Researcher bias – where comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the researcher creates bias in the way that interviewee responds to the questions.	It is precisely for this reason that an independent interviewer was contracted to conduct the interview – there could be no bias.

Table 3.10: Disadvantages of using a face-to-face interview with the corrective measures for this study (*Continued*)

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
Where interviewer is unable to develop trust with the interviewee, the value of the information given might be limited.	The interviewer and interviewee knew one another on a professional level. They were both comfortable with the arrangement that the independent interviewer would conduct the interview.
Interviewee may choose not to reveal certain parts of sensitive information.	The interviewee was very willing to speak about sensitive issues, because it was already revealed in the online messages. This provided the online facilitator to shed more light on these tricky situations.
There might be issues about the generalisability of the findings.	This study is not concerned with generalisability. The researcher wants to find out what happened in this specific case study.
The skills of the interviewer in terms of attentive listening skills.	The interviewer is skilled in face-to-face interviewing. She is also qualified to facilitate stress management, conflict management and cultural sensitivity. She conducts corporate research, team coaching, executive coaching and business skills facilitation.
Ask permission to tape the interview.	Both the interviewer and interviewee know about conducting research and gladly gave permission to use the dictaphone.
Cultural misinterpretation possible.	This did not apply as both women were of the same race.
Stressful for interviewee and interviewer.	The interviewer conducts interviews on a daily basis. She was well briefed about this case study and received the Interview Schedule on time for her preparation. The interviewee knew what this interview was all about – to reflect on the case study and on her role as online facilitator.



Refer to Annexure L for the transcript of the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator.

The researcher also made use of a focus group interview with the participants.

The **objectives** of the focus group interview were *inter alia*:

- To reflect on the online experience.
- To obtain the multiplicity of views on specific issues and emotional processes as indicated in the Interview Schedule.
- To provide closure to the *CyberSurviver* module.

My **preparatory work** to conduct the focus group interview is listed below (Saunders *et al.* 2000; Gibbs, 1997; Goss & Leinbach, 1996; Kitzinger, 1994).

Design focus group environment:

- Booked the Dean's Boardroom at the Groenkloof Campus, as this is a regular meeting place for this pre-existing group.

Select focus group participants:

- This was a voluntary session and I sent out e-mail to the list server. Figure 3.9 is a screen print of the actual invitation that went out to the learners.
- As the learners responded, I provided them with more information regarding the session, *inter alia* the duration, location.

Select moderator:

- One of the research partners had already started focus group interviews with the learners on her topic of interest and used an independent moderator. To provide continuance, I decided to also make use of the services of the same moderator. The learners knew this person by now and were very comfortable with her style of conducting the focus group interview.
- The researcher briefed the moderator extensively on the case study. Two days prior to the interview, the moderator received the Interview Schedule. On the evening of the session, I supplied the moderator with a dictaphone to tape the session.
- I also arranged for a scribe to attend this session. This person competently speaks and writes Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Pedi, the Namibian languages, Afrikaans and English. I felt that this was necessary, should one of the participants want to answer the questions in his/her mother tongue. On the day of the session, the researcher had a two-hour meeting with the scribe.

Prepare interview schedule:



Refer to Annexure F for Interview Schedule for focus group.

Conduct group interview:

- The interview was conducted on 8 May 2003. Two hours were set aside for the interview. Fourteen learners attended the focus group interview.
- The researcher opened the session and placed the session in context.
- Ground rules were set to allow each participant to speak alone and to avoid a chaotic situation.
- Informed Consent letters were handed out and signed by the learners present.

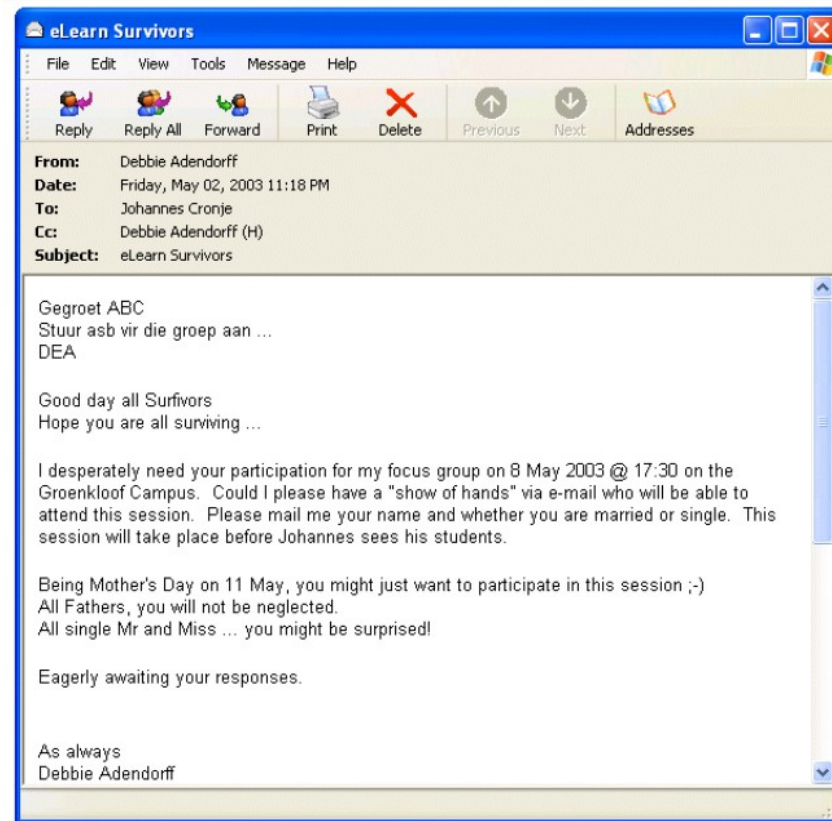


Refer to Annexure G for the Informed Consent letter.

- The researcher then handed over to the moderator. There was an arrangement between the researcher and the moderator that as soon as the session had finished, the moderator would contact the researcher to wrap up the session.
- Each question to be discussed was written on the white board in the Board Room.
- At the end of the session the researcher thanked the participants and handed out a small gift to all present.

Hand over:

- Directly after the focus group session, the moderator handed over the tape, field notes and interview schedule. The moderator kept the dictaphone to use it for the face-to-face interview.
- The researcher then transcribed the conversation.

Figure 3.9: Invitation to the focus group session

The **advantages** of using a focus group interview as a data collection method for this study are summarised below (Saunders *et al.* 2000; McNamara, 1999, Gibbs, 1997; Goss & Leinbach, 1996; Homan, 1991; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan & Krueger, 1993).

- Gather rich data through the words of the interviewees.
- Obtain common impressions.
- Obtain a range and depth of information in a short time.
- Interaction enables participants to ask questions of each other.
- Participants get the opportunity to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences.
- It elicits information that allows the researcher to find out why an issue is salient as well as what is salient about it. As a result the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood.
- The participants benefit because it is an opportunity to be valued as experts.
- The chance to work collaboratively with a researcher is empowering.
- Obtain several perspectives about the same topic.
- If the group works well, trust develops and the group explores solutions to problems as an entity, rather than as individuals.
- Time to collect the information is limited.
- Obtain large amount of information in a short time.
- Sensitive topics become shared experience.
- Interactions may create new ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- Explore the degree of consensus on a given topic.

The **disadvantages** of using a focus group interview as a data collection method for this study are summarised in Table 3.11 (Saunders *et al.* 2000; McNamara, 1999, Gibbs, 1997; Goss & Leinbach, 1996; Homan, 1991; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan & Krueger, 1993) and corrective measures are provided to counteract the disadvantages for this study.

Table 3.11: Disadvantages of using a focus group interview with the corrective measures for this study

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
Encourage all participants to talk and monitor individuals who may dominate the discussions.	A competent moderator was appointed who would have looked after all the participants.
Need a good, strong facilitator for safety and closure. Difficult to do well – practice makes perfect!	It is for this reason that an independent moderator was appointed to facilitate the session.
Difficult to schedule 6-8 people together.	I informed the participants about the voluntary session. What was in my favour is that on this specific night, the learners had another lecture on the campus.
Can be intimidating, especially for inarticulate or shy members.	This was a voluntary session.
The researcher and moderator have less control over the data produced as in a one-to-one interview.	If the moderator stuck to the Interview Schedule, the researcher would receive the data she was looking for.
It may not be easy to get a representative sample; group too heterogeneous or too homogenous. Select participants with similar status ('horizontal slice') instead of 'vertical slice' status, which are different status and variations in work experience) (Saunders <i>et al.</i> 2000:269).	The group <i>per se</i> is a representative sample. They are also horizontal in status as postgraduate students.
The method of discussion may discourage some from trusting others with sensitive or personal information.	Sensitive issues had already been revealed in the online messages. Now was the time to clarify the situation.
Focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous because the material is shared with the other in the group.	Nothing was confidential during the course of the study. The participants even gave the researcher written permission to use their first names in the study.

Table 3.11: Disadvantages of using a focus group interview with the corrective measures for this study (*Continued*)

Disadvantages	Corrective measures for this study
It should not be assumed that the individuals in a focus group are expressing their own definitive individual view. They are speaking in a specific context and it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. Problems arise when attempting to identify the individual view from the group view.	This will be corroborated with the data analysis of the messages and triangulation between the research partners. However, if the views are related to a specific context, then the majority group feeling will suffice.
It can be hard to analyse responses.	Ground rules were explained at the start of the session. Only one person spoke at a time. The session was taped. The moderator started each section with a question, allowed the discussion and then gave a time count down and final comments before moving on to the next discussion point.
Difficult to substantiate levels of data reliability.	This will be corroborated with the field notes on the observation section and the interview with the online facilitator.
Difficult to manage the process and note key points at the same time. Check moderator's skills – danger of losing and confusing data.	A moderator was used to facilitate the process and a scribe was appointed to take field notes.



Refer to:

- Annexure K for the transcript of the focus group interview.
- Annexure M for the transcript of the sound files.

3.11.4. **Work Profiling System (WPS) session**

The objective of the *WPS* session was to design a *Work Profiling System (WPS)* Person Specific Report for the online facilitator from the most job-relevant competencies, based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job.



The *WPS* is an integrated job analysis system for describing important tasks and behaviours that comprise a role, including work context and the environment. The *Work Profiling System* session began with the collection and analysis of job task and job context information using structured questionnaires. These questionnaires were administered via a questionnaire booklets and machine-readable answer forms. The information collected from the various data collection instruments for this case study was used as the framework to answer the various questions during the *WPS* session. Once collected, the information was imported into the *WPS* software database and the responses were analysed by the computer to produce detailed job analysis reports.

3.12. When administered and who conducted?

When administered indicates the logical flow of events that happened over a period of time to ensure that sufficient evidence could be gathered on this particular case.

Who conducted indicates that the researcher utilised the services of assistants because the researcher has a bias, which has been declared. Table 3.12 provides information on the various assistants, their duties and preparation for their respective tasks.

Table 3.12: Assistants used in the research project

Assistants	Duties / Preparation
Dr Sonja Grobler (D Cur) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent moderator for focus group interviews Independent interviewer for the face-to-face interview 	<p>Her task: To conduct the focus group interview with the learners and face-to-face interview with the online facilitator.</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I met with Dr Grobler and comprehensively informed her about the case study. She also had a chance to read through the various e-mail messages. I sent the focus group semi-structured questions to the facilitator three days in advance of the actual focus group interview. I sent the semi-structured questions to the facilitator two days in advance of the actual face-to-face session. <p>I specifically made use of an independent person, as not to lead the discussion in a certain direction. This person is also qualified to facilitate stress management, conflict management and cultural sensitivity. I felt that this was necessary to appoint such a person, in case something flares up during the focus group interview.</p> <p>Dr Grobler is self-employed and a director of <i>Facilitation Excellence</i> (Reg no 2002/009539/07). She conducts corporate research, team coaching, executive coaching and business skills facilitation.</p>

Table 3.12: Assistants used in the research project (*Continued*)

Assistants	Duties / Preparation
Annete Ntswane (M.Soc.Sc (Nursing) <i>Cum Laude</i>) Scribe for focus group interview	Her task: To act as the scribe and to observe the learners during the focus group interview and to make field notes. Preparation: I had a two-hour meeting with Mrs Ntswane, prior to the focus group interview, informing her about the case study. This independent black woman was appointed as a scribe to take down field notes. The moderator was asked to conduct the focus group in English, but should a participant struggle with the language, the moderator could inform the participant to switch to his/her mother tongue. This scribe competently speaks and writes Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Pedi, the Namibian languages, Afrikaans and English. Mrs Ntswane has been used as a scribe on approximately 13 occasions.
Dr Sandra van Wyk (D Cur) Independent verifier	Her task: To verify the interpretation of the focus group transcription and face-to-face transcription. Preparation: Limited preparation was needed. Dr Van Wyk independently interpreted the transcripts where after she met with the researcher to discuss the issues at hand. Dr Grobler often makes use of Dr Van Wyk to conduct the team-coaching workshop.
Mrs Ilonka Malan (Human Resource Development (Hons)) Accredited 'City and Guild' Facilitator Independent verifier	Her task: To verify that the researcher provided information that was contained to the case study. Preparation: Prior to the working session, she received the field notes, content analysis, formal test responses and transcriptions of both interviews.
Mr Pieter Möller (M Comm) Qualified WPS facilitator	His task: To conduct the <i>Work Profiling System</i> session. Preparation: No preparation was needed.
Me Ilonka van Zyl (M Comm) Observer/verifier Me Sonet Vos (M Comm) Observer/verifier	Their task: To observe the <i>Work Profiling System</i> session to ensure that the correct process was being followed and that all documentation was completed. Preparation: Prior to the working session, they received the field notes, content analysis, formal test responses and transcriptions of both interviews.

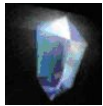
3.13. Trustworthiness and authenticity

Alternative terms have been suggested by a variety of authors (Creswell, 1998) to replace 'internal validity', 'external validity', 'reliability' and 'objectivity'. To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in the study, the following measures were put in place:



Member checking and **peer reviews** or debriefing sessions were conducted.

The online facilitator and learners verified and judged the accuracy and credibility of the findings and interpretations of the researcher with regards to the roles, responsibilities, activities and competencies of the online facilitator.



Richardson (1995:5) disagrees with the concept of triangulation, stressing that the central image for qualitative inquiry is a crystal; not a triangle. Mixed-genre texts in the post-experimental moments have more than three sides. Crystals grow, modify and change. In the **crystallization** process (Richardson, 1995) the researcher told the same story through data gathered from different data sources. This is also followed by a process that considers the data from various angles – highlighting different aspects, depending on different phases of the analysis.



Investigator triangulation

I form part of a research team of three partners who are all investigating the case study from different angles. The two partners acted as external commentators and played an important role regarding the triangulation/crystallization of the data from the case study.

3.14. Conclusion

This interpretive study (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Burrell & Morgan, 1979) considered the social behaviour of an online facilitator in natural settings by direct and detailed observation of her interactions. The basis for the instrumental case study was a 2002 online module on eLearning (ORO 880) for the Master's degree in Computer Assisted Education of the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The module simulated the popular reality television series, *Survivor*, implementing the same rules and events that took place in the television series – except that the location had been shifted to cyberspace. The name was adapted to *CyberSurviver*, emphasising 'surf', to indicate surfing the Internet to get to various locations. The case study focused on the facilitation of a six-week online course, and paid special attention to how the online facilitator interacted with the learners in a text-based environment.

The focus of the research was on the 'visible' roles played by the online facilitator and on identified competencies for these roles. Data collection methods included observing, selecting, analysing and synthesising texts from *Yahoo Groups*, *Yahoo Messenger* and *WebCT* (using *Atlas.ti*), formal electronic test responses, a self-administered questionnaire and interviewing. A face-to-face interview was held with the online facilitator as well as a focus group interview with participants who wanted to participate in the interview. Two separate interview schedules (Creswell, 1998:124) were designed. An independent interviewer and moderator were used to conduct the semi-structured interviewing to avoid any bias during the interview sessions. The transcripts of the interviews and sound files were used to corroborate evidence. Verification methods for this study were member checking, peer reviews and the crystallization of various points of view.

By using various data collection methods and data collection instruments as indicated in this chapter, I was able to build an in-depth picture of the online facilitator in the online environment.

Chapter 4 will report on the results of the various data collection instruments. The actual asynchronous text messages from *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT*, the synchronous messages from *Yahoo Messenger*, the formal test responses and transcripts of the sound files were used as evidence to answer the research questions. The researcher's field notes corroborated the online facilitator's roles and visibility. The focus group interview transcript supported data revealed in the text messages. The face-to-face

interview transcript and the self-administered questionnaire completed by the online facilitator reflected the online facilitator's lived experience of the online environment.

In Chapter 4 the research questions build upon each other and evidence from the data collection instruments support each question. The online environment is depicted. The person specific adjustments that the online facilitator had to make are revealed.

Evidence is then provided to indicate the interaction between the online facilitator and the learners and how the online facilitator 'talked' to the learners. Whilst interacting with the learners and facing numerous challenges, the online facilitator displayed five visible roles. Finally, the five roles were analysed according to the *WPS* Job Analysis Questionnaire to identify the people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for the online facilitator.

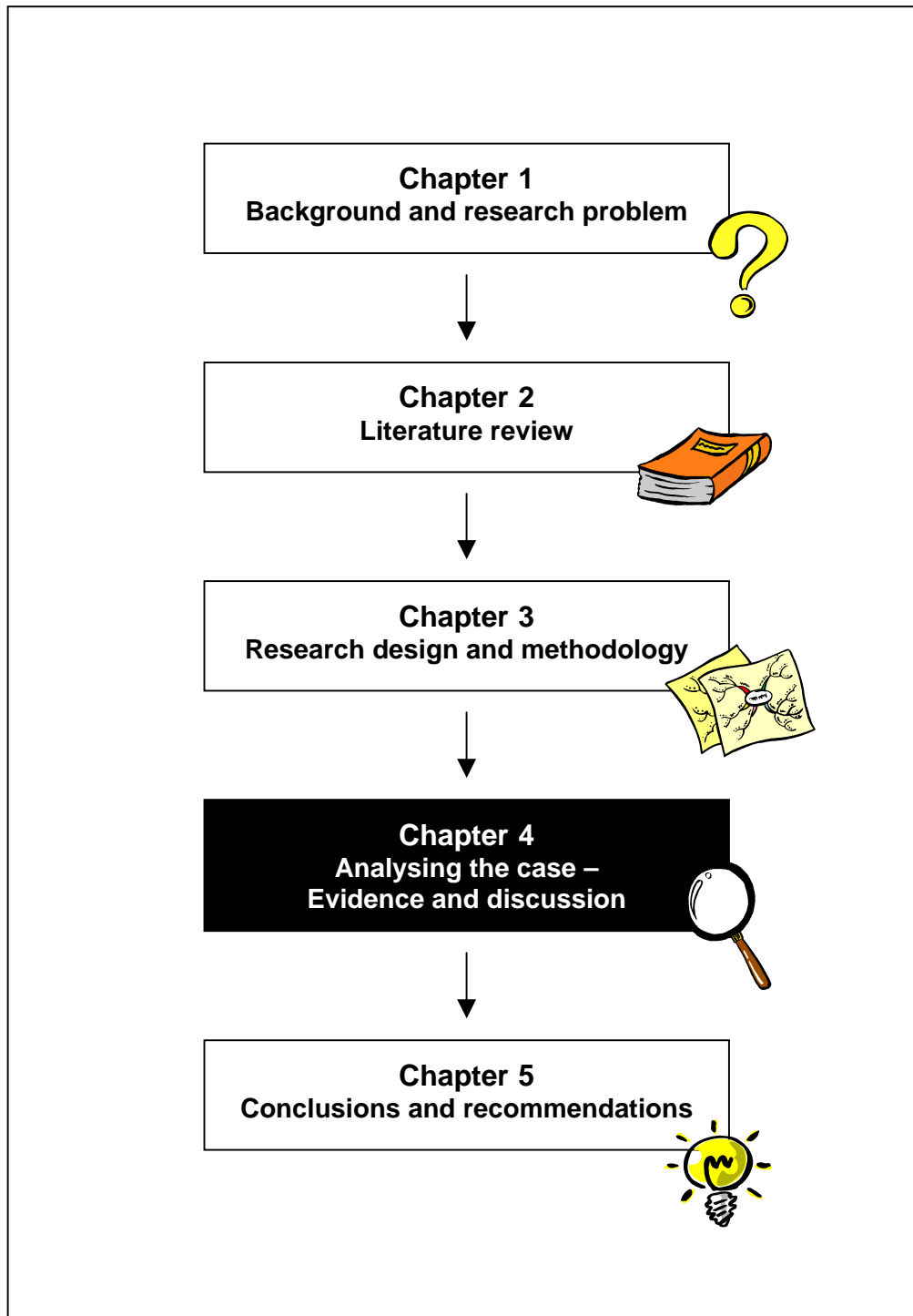


Table of contents

4.1. PRELUDE	137
4.2. INTRODUCTION	137
4.3. HOW DID THE FACILITATOR ADJUST TO THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT?	138
4.4. HOW DID THE ONLINE FACILITATOR 'TALK' TO THE LEARNERS AND ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE WITH THE LEARNERS?	169
4.5. WHAT ROLES DID THE ONLINE FACILITATOR PLAY TO BE 'VISIBLE' IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT?	196
4.6. WHAT CHALLENGES DID THE ONLINE FACILITATOR FACE?	219
4.7. WHAT PEOPLE COMPETENCIES, THINKING COMPETENCIES AND ENERGY COMPETENCIES WERE IDENTIFIED FOR THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT?	253

4.1. Prelude

To be "matter of fact" about the world is to blunder into fantasy---and dull fantasy at that, as the real world is strange and wonderful (Robert A. Heinlein).

4.2. Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of the various data collection instruments, namely field notes in the form of observation sheets and roles matrix; transcripts of the focus group interview, face-to-face interview with the online facilitator and sound files from learners; content analysis of asynchronous *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* messages and synchronous *Yahoo Messenger* conversations; formal test responses from the learners and the self-administered questionnaire completed by the online facilitator. All the data are attached as Annexures. Rich and thick descriptions have been provided pertaining to the online facilitator and the virtual environment, which are represented in grey-shaded Exhibit boxes. There are grammatical errors in the data provided in the exhibits. No data cleaning processes were used because authenticity was important. The purpose of the text messages was not to check for spelling and grammar mistakes, but to encourage participation, share experiences and provide feedback. At times certain data segments will be used to illustrate more than one point, as a data segment may contain elements of several themes. To honour learner confidentiality, this [line] _____ used in an exhibit replaces a specific learner's name. Codes have been designed for the data pool. In each exhibit, a code will be provided to indicate from where the data was selected.

The following codes were used:

[FtoF] = Face-to-face interview

[FG] = Focus group interview

[WCT] = *WebCT* asynchronous communication tool

[YG] = *Yahoo Groups* asynchronous communication tool

[YM] = *Yahoo Messenger* synchronous communication tool

[FTR] = Formal test responses

[Q] = Self-administered questionnaire

[SF] = Sound file

[PR] = Peer review

In this crystallization process (Richardson, 1995), the same story has been told through data gathered from different data sources.

The Afrikaans wording used in the exhibits is retained for the purpose of those readers who understand this language. This will allow the readers of the Afrikaans text to recognise the different nuances that might have been lost in a translation, in spite of the translator endeavouring to capture these nuances.

4.3. How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?

In this section 40 exhibits have been selected from the raw data to illustrate what the virtual environment looked like as well as to describe the facilitator's adjustment in terms of the facilitation process.

The online facilitator, in her face-to-face interview on 20 May 2003, specifically stated that a facilitator needed to think in a different way as is revealed in Exhibit 4.1.

Exhibit 4.1 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on ‘thinking differently’ for the online environment

A facilitator cannot adopt a classroom style of teaching in the online environment and think that it will be successful, because the facilitator will fail miserably! Consider what is written in theory and implement the suggestions, because it does work. The adjustment to the online environment boils down to good planning. You cannot just think up an assignment. You have to think: how is the student reading this, going to experience it? How will s/he interpret it and immediately you have to build in scaffolding at different places. The difficult part is: yes, it is different to what one is accustomed to. So, a person has to think laterally! You have to think: this is what I would have done in class, how on earth am I going to explain this to the guys? So, you explain in words, but you immediately grasp that it is not enough. Then you make screen dumps and upload them (to the site),

On 18 July 2002 the online facilitator and learners met during a face-to-face contact session. During this session, the online facilitator informed the group what *CyberSurviver* was all about and divided the learners into various groups. Learners had to perform a kinaesthetic exercise, as is described in Exhibit 4.2, to position themselves on a continuum according to their ability to utilise the Internet.

Exhibit 4.2 [FtoF]: A description of the kinaesthetic exercise

Ons het 'n fisiese oefening gedoen om hulle in die groepe in te deel. Ek het hulle in 'n lang ry laat staan, van heel Internetvaardig en capable, tot totaal-en-al 'n leek wat die Internet aanbetref het. En daar was soos 'n skuiflyn. Jy moes jouself maar posisioneer waar jy pas. En dan't ek hulle getel: een, twee, drie, vier, so af, een, twee, drie, vier; en dan het ons die ses groepe gevorm - al die een's bymekaar, en al die twee's bymekaar. Sodat elke groep iemand het wat 'n totale leek is, en iemand wat vaardig is, sodat daar 'n goeie balans was. En dan moes hulle bymekaar gaan staan. Gedurende die kinetiese oefening hulle het rondbeweeg en in groepies gestaan, en daar was excitement van . oe!, ons moet nou 'n naam uitdink, en 'n motto
[Translation: We did a physical exercise to group the learners. I asked the learners to place themselves on a continuum representing strong Internet capabilities to the totally inexperienced. Then I counted the learners starting from one, two, three, four, and repeating the count - one, two, three, four, forming six groups. All the number 1's together, all the number 2's together etc so that every group contained one capable and one inexperienced person to give a balance. Then the groups had to stand together. During this kinaesthetic exercise the groups moved about quite excitedly, trying to decide on a name and a motto

The online facilitator then gave each learner a number from one to four, one being 'Internet literate' and four being an 'ignoramus' as far as the Internet is concerned. In the

spirit of *Survivor*, the learners were grouped into 'tribes'. At the end of the evening, the 24 tribal members (learners) were divided into four tribes, each consisting of six learners with a fair distribution of computer and web literacy.

The forming of these tribes had a dual purpose. Firstly, the online facilitator created online communities to ensure social interaction and to create a sense of community between the learners and the content, the learners and the online facilitator and the learners with each other (Dillenberg & Schneider, 1995; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Barclay, 2001; Moore, 1989). Secondly, a powerful form of interaction is group activities (Kaplan, 2002). In the Introduction to the course, the online facilitator specifically stated that '*CyberSurviver* is all about teamwork and survival as is clearly depicted in Exhibit 4.3.

Exhibit 4.3 [YG]: Extract from the *CyberSurviver* Introduction

Let your team down and suffer the dire consequences ...'

During the contact session, the online facilitator gave the learners an introductory speech, which included information on assignments, assessment criteria, the Web as a resource, the Web as a communication tool, collaboration exercises, and the first assignment, which was to create a name and slogan for each tribe. It was made clear that from that point onwards, all communication would take place online.

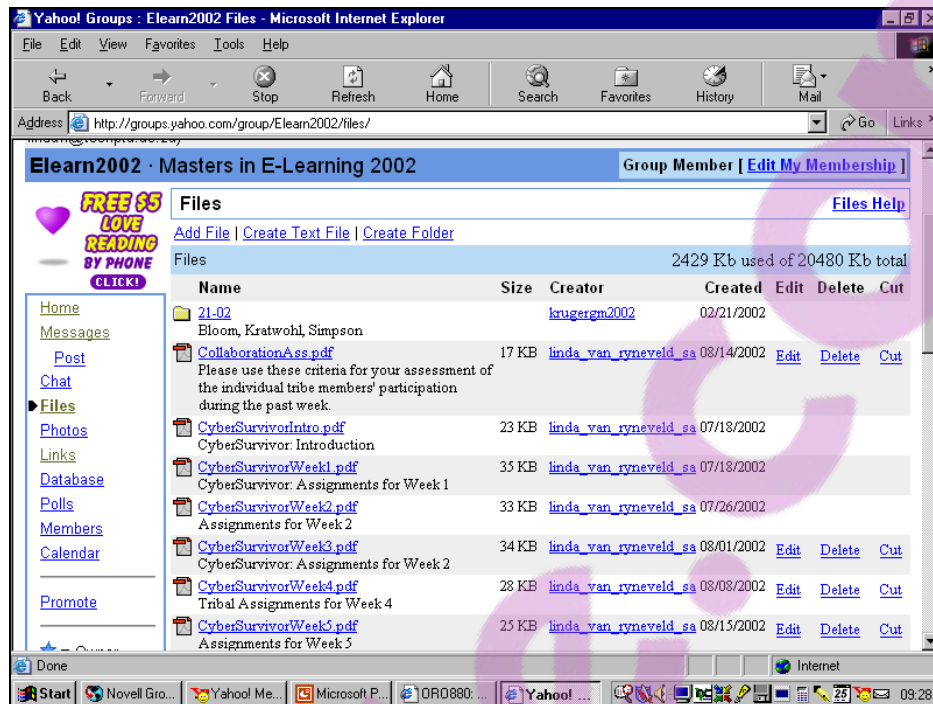
As was stated in Chapter 2, teaching an online course is very different from teaching a traditional course. The online facilitator made the following adjustments in the online environment in order to make the online teaching/learning experience a positive one.

4.3.1. Introducing the online environment

CyberSurviver used a blend of strategies in terms of synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication (Spector & Anderson, 2000). The online facilitator deliberately pre-selected certain web-based communication tools such as *Yahoo Groups*, *WebCT* and *Yahoo Messenger* to provide the tribe members with a wide range of experiences regarding synchronous and asynchronous communication. Figures 4.1 to 4.4 provide a graphical representation of these communication tools that the online facilitator selected for this online environment. Keeping with the 24 hours a day, seven days a week availability of the Internet, this module was presented in asynchronous mode because some of the learners had access to their networked computers from home, whilst others only connected from their workplace.

4.3.2. Yahoo Groups

Figure 4.1: Yahoo Groups



Yahoo Groups is a free asynchronous communication tool, consisting of a bulletin board, a discussion forum and e-mail messages.

The learners had to obtain a Yahoo ID and create a password to access this application.

Figure 4.2: Yahoo ID

Yahoo Groups was the formal medium of communication and during Week 1, Yahoo Groups was the only communication tool available to the learners. This communication tool follows a one-to-many approach, involving the online facilitator or any learner posting a message and responses from the online facilitator and learners being posted at a later stage.

This asynchronous communication tool contained the course introduction and all assignments for the six-week period under the “Files” section. Tribal members had to

access the instructions for the weekly assignments from here. Each week marked a number of collaborative/tribal and individual assignments that the learners had to submit electronically.

On a weekly basis, the online facilitator gave clear instructions which assignments and interactive sessions had to take place on *Yahoo Groups*, as is evident in Exhibit 4.4.

Exhibit 4.4 [YG]: Extracts from the Assignments for this week

Post a message to the Bulletin Board stating which tool you intend to report on, no later than Sunday, 21 July 2002.

Post the address of your website to Yahoo Groups before 05:30 on Thursday, 25 July 2002. Remember to give open access to all the members in the class as they will be evaluating your site.

Evaluate the quality of the other tribes' work and give them a mark out of 25. Watch your Elearn 2002 Yahoo Groups for the e-mail containing the relevant URL.

During the latter part of Week 4, the online facilitator informed the learners that a different asynchronous communication tool was going to be used. In Exhibit 4.5 it is clearly indicated that the communication channel was going to change to *WebCT* and the online facilitator provided an explanation for the change.

Exhibit 4.5 [YG]: Changing the communication channels

Yahoo Groups

Date: Wed Aug 14, 2002 6:13 pm

Subject: Please READ! Communication Channel

Hi everyone

Just a couple of important notes for your attention.
Please read all the following e-mails carefully.

Communication Channels:

Even though we may still use ELearn 2002 Yahoo Groups for general questions and comments, I would like to suggest that we move our discussions to WebCT for the latter part of this module.

This is simply because I would like you to experience the difference in the two mediums (one a Freebie and the other one a LMS available at a cost). I would advise you to check both of these communication channels on a regular basis.

There was pedagogical value (Chickering & Gamson, 1991) in using an asynchronous communication tool because learners shared their knowledge of 'real-life issues' and obtained answers to their questions. In this environment learning was shared.

The advantage of using this asynchronous communication tool was that it allowed the team members more time to reflect on a topic at hand before sending or posting a

message. However, at times, the online facilitator needed to force the discussion as is reflected in Exhibit 4.6.

Exhibit 4.6 [WCT]: The online facilitator, asking for participation

Subject Individual Assignment 8
 Message no 4 Posted by Linda Mon Aug 12 21:14
 Could I just say this (so that you can get going!):
 The idea with Assignment 8 is for you to have and ACTIVE discussion about the live InterWise session (or about realtime synchronous audio-enabled sessions).

Please don't wait for the others to post their messages first so you could improve on them! Anyway, if you allow them to go first everything may have been said by the time you get round to it.

This assignment is the equivalent of a teacher asking pupils to gather in groups and to discuss something. The only difference is that you are all online and doing your talking out of sync.

Please also note that you are not limited to one or two postings only! Post your comments, then rethink them and change your mind (if you need to), criticize what someone else said, differ or agree with one another, whatever ... Just Do It!

One last desperate attempt from my side to get you going:

There will be a reward for the first posting related to Assignment 8!

In asynchronous written conversations learners have time to read others' contributions carefully and to think about the wording and substance of their own response (Carusi, 2001). Asynchronous conversations allowed for more substantial, better thought-out and longer responses. This is evident in Exhibit 4.7. Carusi (2001) refers to this as a long conversation 'turn'.

Exhibit 4.7 [WCT]: A learner's long conversation 'turn'

Subject Interwise Impressions
 Firstly, I must say that all things considered, I think the sessions went very well, and I enjoyed it immensely. While this sort of technology has been available for some time now, one does not tend to use it unless there is a need. Having to participate in the session forced us to learn to use the technology and to bring it into our frames of reference.

After logging in to InterWise to test the system for the first time, I was amazed by the technology! Being able to hear the instructor's voice, have him take over my computer to adjust some settings was actually almost better than having the instructor lean over my shoulder!

I came across some literature on the Internet that claims that Live Online Learning surpasses even the interactivity of traditional classroom models. This, I thought would be why one used a tool like Interwise!

Exhibit 4.7 [WCT]: A learner's long conversation 'turn'

I felt that all three presenters were well prepared. Clearly, this being the first time any of us had worked in this new medium, we were unsure of what to expect. I did feel that one failing was in the lack of interactivity. For this reason, I deliberately chose simple subject matter. My objective was to try and get some interactive things going. I feel that if the instructor is just going to read through a PowerPoint slide show, we might as well cut a CD and mail it to all learners ... not being critical here ... it was the first time any of us had experimented with this medium ... again the purpose of the session was process and not product (I think ... Linda???)... eat your hearts out all your OBE'ers and Constructivists!!

The main thing the session did, was to get me thinking. When, how and why I would advise that online learning be used instead of other methods? What does one need to consider before recommending online learning as the solution? I believe that there may be some overlap between the rest of this post and my (yet to be written) Key Factors posting, however these are the ideas I came up with, after some thought and some googling:

Synchronous sessions need to be used when we need interactivity, when learning and feedback need to happen together. I found some literature to support points made during the session about native language. Literature suggests that interactive sessions are best conducted in the native language of the participants, otherwise the activity tends to be dominated by native language users (which was to some extent true in our case). A real constraint mentioned in the literature is also the difficulty of scheduling sessions. This too was borne out in our session by the fact that not all members could be present at the arranged time, or could be present for the entire session. Also mentioned (in the literature) is the fact that learner concentration decreases (as is the case in the conventional classroom) with time. I noticed also, that this was the case during our session.

On the technical side, the session went well ... with some exceptions, _____ had no microphone, _____'s volume was too low, _____ could not speak at all, because her connection was too slow. A few others were unable to get things set up at all. I guess if one were doing sessions, regularly, such technical problems could be sorted out. In South Africa, bandwidth will be a problem for some time yet.

Communication during the session was pretty good. It was just about as good as speaking face-to-face, this I would say was something that stood out for me. It was also as if, because of the medium, people tried to express their ideas more concisely and even their enunciation of words seemed more measured than in used conversation. Someone did mention that it was rather a pain to have to put up your hand to wait to speak, but as was mentioned this was the InterWise I-Class setup and the I-conference worked differently. I guess this works pretty much the same as in a normal classroom! And that's it, my summary!

A disadvantage of the asynchronous communication tool could be that too much information kept pouring in as each learner answered to the original posting. Exhibit 4.8 clearly substantiated this disadvantage.

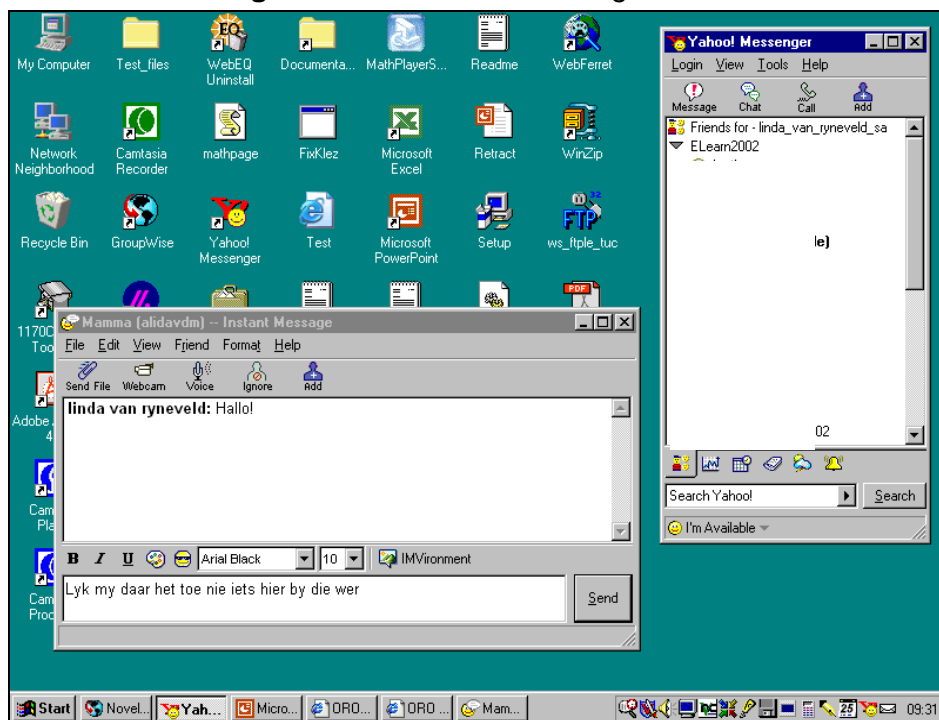
Exhibit 4.8 [SF]: A disadvantage of asynchronous communication

At times I actually felt quite claustrophobic with all the e-mails coming in and not having enough time to read through and appreciate them all.

4.3.3. Yahoo Messenger

Figure 4.3 is a screen print of *Yahoo Messenger*, the synchronous communication tool.

Figure 4.3: *Yahoo Messenger*



During Week 2 the learners had to download two synchronous communication tools as part of their tribal assignment. The synchronous communication tools were *Yahoo Messenger* and *NetMeeting*. After the comparative exercise was done, the learners continued using *Yahoo Messenger* as an informal communication tool between the various team members and the online facilitator.

The online facilitator indicated to the learners, as is evident in Exhibit 4.9, that this tool was not the official meeting place.

Exhibit 4.9 [YG]: Using the official communication channels

Yahoo Groups
Date: Wed Aug 14, 2002 6:13 pm
Subject: Please READ! Communication Channel
Hi everyone

You may still use **Yahoo Messenger in the background** with your tribal mates and other friends, however this will not be our official meeting ground.

There was pedagogical value (Chickering & Gamson, 1991) in using a synchronous communication tool because learners experienced real communication and interaction.

The advantage of using this synchronous communication tool was that it allowed the team members the opportunity of getting to know each other and to informally chat to each other.

In synchronous written conversations there is pressure to respond quickly, in fact, almost as quickly as in face-to-face conversations. Good chat participation may be impeded by a lack of fast and accurate typing skills. Most chat facilities have a limit as to how many characters they allow in each message; who talks when and the real time constraints make chat better for quick banter, than for discussing issues that require some depth (Carusi, 2001). A learner reflected in Exhibit 4.10 that it was important to adhere to rules during synchronous communication, although it could be frustrating at times ...

Exhibit 4.10 [WCT]: A learner's reflections on synchronous communication rules

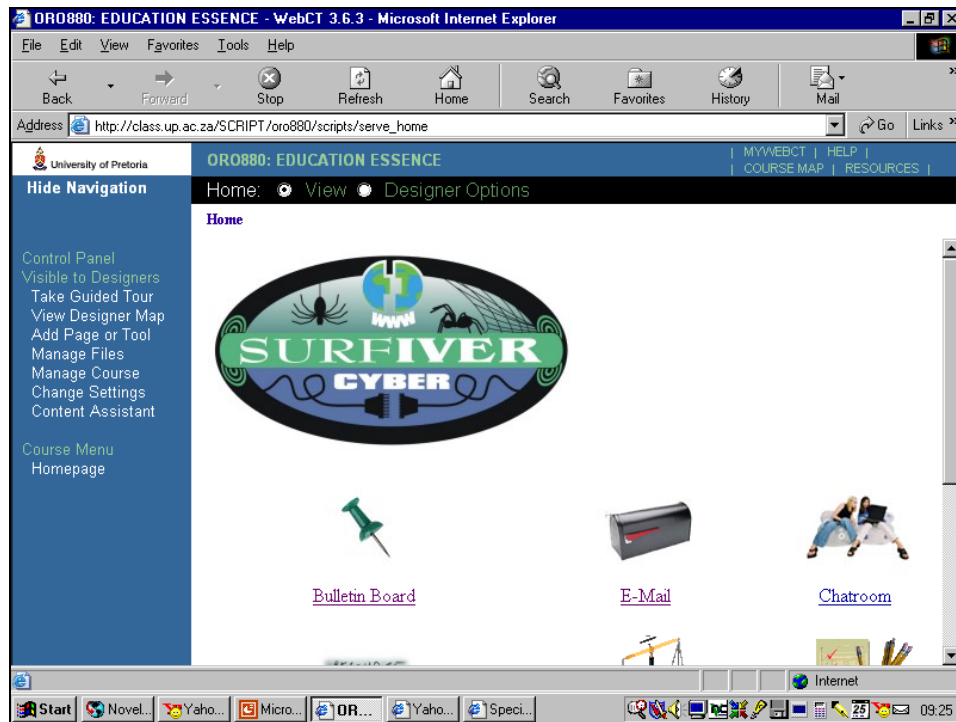
It is important that each of the participants should know what is expected of them. The 'how part' was to pick up and although it was a frustration to put your hand up the process made sense. Just like in a classroom certain rules need to be obeyed.

Synchronous conversations often have a chaotic feel to them (Carusi, 2001). The responses do not flow as they would in a normal conversation, in particular if there are many participants. There is much more potential for synchronous conversations to be useful on a one-to-one basis, particularly in a structured conversation. The online facilitator and the team members had several one-on-one synchronous communication sessions.

4.3.4. WebCT

Figure 4.4 provides a screen print of *WebCT*, the second asynchronous communication tool.

Figure 4.4: *WebCT*



During Week 4 the learners were advised that a different **asynchronous** communication tool would now be used as was indicated in Exhibit 4.5. The online facilitator provided the learners with the web address, which each learner had to log into and create a password for himself/herself.

WebCT was the informal communication tool and served as a place of reflection, critical thinking and commenting on other team member's postings as was described in the online facilitator's posting in Exhibit 4.11.

Exhibit 4.11 [WCT]: The online facilitator's welcome message

Subject Welcome to WebCT!
 Message no 1 Posted by Linda Fri Jul 26 08:55
 Hi there everyone
 This is WebCT's bulletin board, an asynchronous communication tool. When you need to discuss things with your group in privacy, you may use the bulletin board that was specifically created for this purpose.

 Note that when you compose your message you need to change the topic at the top of the screen from Main to Tribe (X).

Exhibit 4.12 lists examples of the several messages that the learners had to post to this Bulletin Board.

Exhibit 4.12 [WCT]: Extracts from assignments to be posted to *WebCT*

Share your impressions of the synchronous InterWise session.
If you were unable to attend the InterWise session, post your reasons for missing this session.
Reply to at least one other 'Impressions' posting.
Comment on Key Factors to consider when planning and presenting a synchronous session. Reply to at least one other 'Key Factor' posting.
Set criteria for evaluating Collaborative Behaviour and Tribal Assignment 3 – Web-based games/learning activities.
Set criteria for evaluating Tribal Assignment 4 – A clickable Concept Map of all the elements and notions related to teaching and learning via the Internet.

On 28 August 2002, the learners wrote the three-hour online test on this application.

4.3.5. *The virtual island*

The specific outcome for *CyberSurviver* was that the learners had to apply their knowledge about the Internet. The online facilitator created a web space for the learners as is graphically presented in Figure 4.5. This web space served as the 'virtual' island. On a weekly basis, the online facilitator informed the learners what needed to be posted to the virtual island as is described in Exhibit 4.13.

Exhibit 4.13 [YG]: Extract from an assignment to be posted to the virtual island

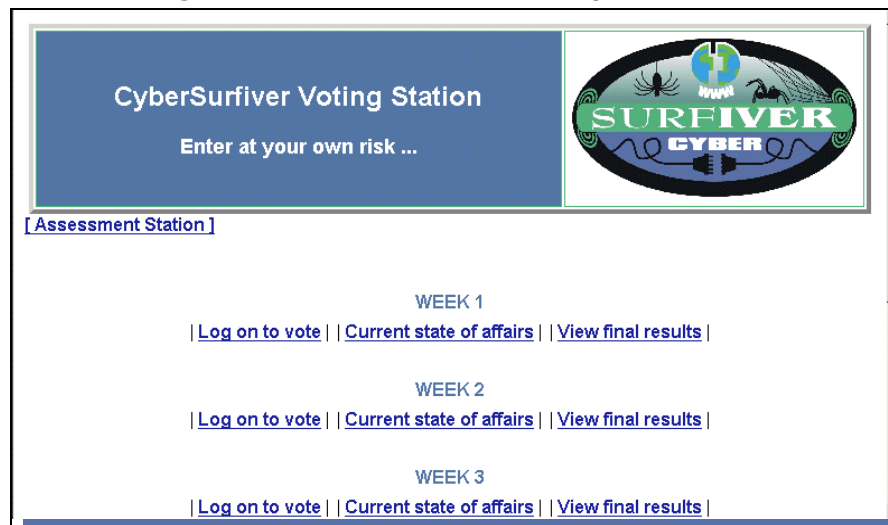
The main task this week is for you to FTP your site to the virtual classroom/island on Hagar. The idea is for you to get acquainted with the concept of 'ftp-ing' stuff over the Internet. See Johannes's Elearn2000 e-mail in this regard. Have your personal virtual island up and running by 17:30 Wednesday, 31 July 2002.

Figure 4.5: The virtual island

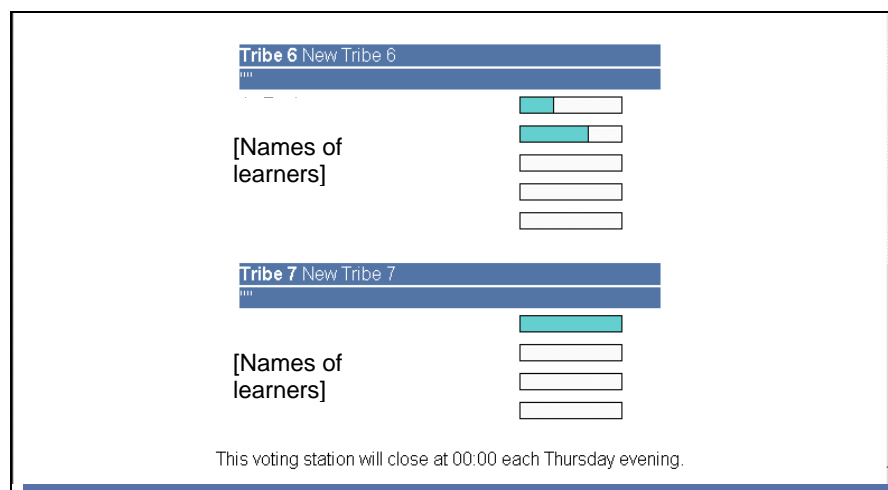
4.3.6. The voting station

The objective of *CyberSurviver* was that members got voted off on a weekly basis, until only one final survivor remained. At the end of each week's activities, the tribes had to vote off one member of their team, based on a number of pre-set criteria. The 'outcast' then joined other evicted tribal members (learners) in a separate Tribe 5. This particular tribe had to complete all the assignments as they were given to the tribal members still in the game, but no one from Tribe 5 was eligible to win the final prize.

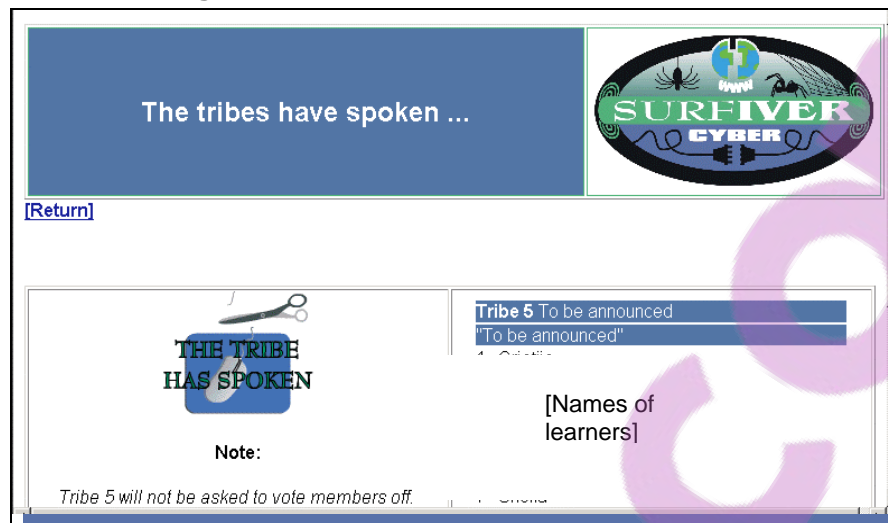
Working in the online environment meant that voting had to happen online. For this exercise, a web-based voting station was created with PHP (recursive acronym for Hypertext Preprocessor), a widely used open source server-side general purpose scripting language that is especially suited for Web development and that is embedded into HTML (PHP, 2003). Figures 4.6 to 4.8 provide a graphical representation of the voting station.

Figure 4.6: Access to the voting station

Each tribal member could only access the voting station with a username and password and cast one vote for a particular tribal member that s/he thought needed to leave the tribe. A tribal member could not vote for himself/herself.

Figure 4.7: Voting in progress

The voting station closed on a Thursday evening at midnight.

Figure 4.8: The 'outcast' is removed

The 'outcast' was automatically transferred to Tribe 5.

4.3.7. Facilitator adjustments

Merely providing the learners with these various pieces of online technology might just enhance their feeling of isolation and incompetence (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). However, the important link between the learners and the online technology was the online facilitator who transformed the lonely online environment to a knowledge-rich and supportive community of practice. The fact that the four tribes had to create a name and a slogan for themselves, immediately encouraged interaction with the other group members in a fun and creative way. In Exhibit 4.14 the online facilitator confirmed the tribes and indicated the tribal names and slogans.

Exhibit 4.14 [YG]: The four *CyberSurfiver* tribes

Just to confirm the tribes with you guys.

Tribe 1: Uno
Slogan: Uno, we are number 1!
Players: [Six names listed]

Tribe 2: e-Learn-a-long
Slogan: To be announced (Please let me know asap)
Players: [Six names listed]

Tribe 3: e-Go
Slogan: e-Go, We Go, All Go!
Players: [Six names listed]

Tribe 4: Virtual-Eve
Slogan: Strike a woman, strike a rock
Players: [Six names listed]
Could someone in Tribe 4 please let _____ know that he is with you? Kindly ask him to take part in this week's programme as far as possible.

Tribe 5: To be seen ...
Good luck to you all! L

The online facilitator, as person, also had to make adjustments in the online environment. The traditional guidelines on facilitation took on a 'new look' when applied to the online environment. Keeping Rogers's (1969:164-166) ten Guidelines for Facilitation in mind, the online facilitator is evaluated in terms of her role in the online environment:

- 1. The facilitator was largely responsible for setting the initial mood/climate of the program.** During the face-to-face contact session the facilitator introduced herself and set the scene for the course. She also posted the course introduction to *Yahoo Groups*. The introduction contextualised the online module in terms of the specific outcome, assessment criteria and content to be covered. The online facilitator emphasised the importance of self-study and exploration in terms of tribal tasks and individual tasks. The module was based on constructivist learning (Dick, 1991); thus requiring active participation and critical thinking of all learners. The online facilitator stressed the fact that there would be a mark awarded for collaborative behaviour and that interaction was imperative, starting with the creation of web pages, conducting peer evaluations to voting off a tribe member as is emphasised in Exhibit 4.15.

Exhibit 4.15 [YG]: Extract from *CyberSurviver* Introduction

Welcome to CyberSurviver, the game where your vote counts!
--

- 2. The facilitator helped to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals in the class as well as the more general purposes of the group.** The learners had to experience eLearning in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of the online module was to search the Internet for appropriate tools, services and applications. Collaboratively, play around and experience these tools to critically evaluate their worth in an educational setting. Presentations had to be performed in different ways.

The online facilitator clearly indicated the tribal assignments, individual assignments, and individual assignments with tribal assistance and collaborative behaviour.

3. The facilitator relied upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes that had meaning to him/her as the motivational force behind significant learning. Exhibit 4.16 is an extract from the individual assignment 2, where each learner had to create his/her own web page and add answers to two questions.

Exhibit 4.16 [YG]: Your motivational force, extracted from
CyberSurviver Introduction

What are your expectations in terms of the module?
What is your current level of comfort with the Internet?

In this way the online facilitator acquired information on each learner.

4. The facilitator endeavoured to organise and make easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning. The learners were fortunate in this regard, as they had various search engines available to assist them in their endeavours. However, the online facilitator designed this online course to ensure that the learners experienced the Internet and eLearning from many possible angles.

Each week the online facilitator clearly described the specific learning outcomes according to Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain (Bloom, Mesia & Krathwohl, 1964). The particular action verb was highlighted by means of a bold typeface as is highlighted in Exhibit 4.17.

Exhibit 4.17 [YG]: Learning outcomes extracted from
Assignment for the week

Design a website in one of these free applications.
Post the address of your website to Yahoo Groups.
Vote on the different tribal member's level of participation.
Select one of the free resource and/or communication tools.
Experiment with the various functionalities of the tool.
Critically evaluate the educational value of the tool/service/product.
Write a report/review on the tool's usefulness in an educational setting.
Upload the report to your tribal website.
Test your system's compatibility with the technical staff prior to the session.
Arrange to meet one another online at a convenient time.
Evaluate the quality of the other tribes' work and give them a mark out of 25.
Add the other 'Survivors' in your current tribe to your list of friends.

Exhibit 4.17 [YG]: Learning outcomes extracted from
Assignment for the week

Draw up a table comparing the educational value of the functionalities.

Add this concept map to your tribal website.

Add a horizontal bar with scrolling text.

Write a paragraph about the use of special techniques such as scrolling.

Prepare for the online test.

It is apparent from the examples that the learners were definitely at the centre of the learning experience – they were actively involved in gathering information and also applying it in the eLearning environment. The learners were kept involved in the learning process in terms of the following actions (Williams *et al.* 1999; Moore, 1989; Palloff & Pratt, 1999):

- Talking by utilising the synchronous communication tool.
- Writing by utilising the asynchronous communication tool and compiling reports.
- Watching by evaluating the other tribal sites.
- Thinking by reflecting on past experiences and compiling criteria to be assessed against.
- Doing by creating and building various components into the individual and tribal website.

In Exhibit 4.18 a learner reflected on the learner-centredness of the first week's assignments.

Exhibit 4.18 [SF]: A learner reflecting on his learning

I am sure we will all agree that we have experienced true constructivist learning the past week. It was a big shock for a behaviourist like me, but I must say that I can see the positive influence of constructivist learning. The fact that your own knowledge is constructed with very little guidance makes sure that you really know what you are working with at the end.

If specific Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) were important in terms of reaching a learning objective, the online facilitator clearly indicated these links in the assignment for the week as is listed in Exhibit 4.19.

Exhibit 4.19 [YG]: Extracts from important URLs

Download the following two applications to your computer:
<http://messenger.yahoo.com/messenger/download/dinstructions.html>
<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/netmeeing/>
 FTP your site to the virtual island on Hagar. See Johannes's Elearn2002 e-mail in this regard.
 Check out the animated gifs of previous groups for inspiration (<http://hagar.up.ac.za/rbo/1999/classroom.html>).
 You will be getting e-mail in this regard from Zeldie van Vuuren from CampusWise. Follow her instructions to the letter.
 Make use of the free 30-day trial period provided by QUIA <http://www.quia.com/web/index.html> or any similar web-based tool for this assignment.
 You may want to use this site <http://www.jigzone.com> or something similar.
 For an example - <http://mailbox.co.za/index.pwm>.

5. The facilitator regarded herself as a flexible resource to be utilised by the group.

The course took place over six weeks, with a set start date, usually on a Thursday morning and an end date, the following Wednesday evening at midnight. The online facilitator was flexible in terms of time frames, because certain learners only worked from their office computers, whilst other learners worked from home, after hours, on their personal computers. The online facilitator was also more flexible with regard to individual assignments, but tribal assignments had to be completed on the indicated time as is explained in Exhibit 4.20. This extract was taken from a message in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.20 [YG]: Completion of Individual and Tribal assignments

Yahoo Groups
 Date: Thu Aug 8, 2002 3:57 pm

I am not strict with the deadlines for the individual assignments as I understand that there could be reasons why people aren't ready in time (computers packing up and other personal reasons).
 The tribal assignments though, need to be done in collaboration with other people and need a measure of synchronicity. The deadlines for these are therefore clearly indicated (usually 17:30 on a Wednesday). The moment Voting and Peer assessment starts, these assignments should be in place. As we work on a tight schedule we need to stick to those times. I also need to allow people who only have access from home to do the assessments at night and for those who access from work to be able to still do so the next morning.

The online facilitator was not in favour of giving extensions for tribal assignments. However, she did try to accommodate the learners in another way as is described in Exhibit 4.21. This scenario clearly indicated flexibility on the part of the online facilitator.

Exhibit 4.21 [WCT]: Flexibility on the side of the online facilitator

Subject Tribal Assignment: Week 5
 Message no 76 Posted by Linda Tue Aug 20 22:53
 Hi everyone
 I know that this week was hectic and that the work load was heavy (as usual ;-). However, next week has its own set of assignments and if we extend this week's deadline, we may run into trouble then whilst trying to fit in everything that still needs to be done.

So, in order to accommodate those of you feeling the pressure of time, I am willing to make the following adjustment:

Instead of giving you the opportunity to peer-assess your rival tribes (which in itself is a learning experience of magnitude), I will handle the marking myself this time round.

How is this beneficial to those asking for extension? I will not get round to marking these tribal assignments until next week and as such you will still be able to add 'stuff' to your map until then.

This is, however, not an official extension. I would still like the majority of you to finalise your work on the map by tomorrow evening, as I need you to focus on the assignments for week 6.

Hope this helps! eGreetings L

The online facilitator took cognisance of asynchronous time lines when providing dead lines for the learners as is stipulated in Exhibit 4.22.

Exhibit 4.22 [YG]: Time line considerations, extracted from Assignments for the week

Post the address of your website to Yahoo Groups before 17:30 on Thursday, 25 July 2002.

To avoid duplication, you must post a message to the bulletin board stating which tool you intend to report on, no later than Sunday, 21 July 2002.

Add this table to your tribal website and be sure to have the latest version of this site ready by 17:30 on Wednesday, 31 July 2002.

Have your personal virtual island up and running by 05:30 Wednesday, 31 July 2002.

Due date: 17:30, Wednesday, 7 August 2002. Mail these slide shows to _____ (CampusWise) by Tuesday 17:30 at the latest so that she can upload them to the system prior to our contact session.

Add these links to these activities to your tribal page.

Exhibit 4.22 [YG]: Time line considerations, extracted from Assignments for the week

Deadline is 17:30 Wednesday, 14 August 2002.

Post your criteria to the WebCT bulletin board by Tuesday, 13 August 2002.

On Wednesday, 28 August 2002, any time that suits you, you need to go to WebCT and write a formal test on what you have learnt so far in this module. The duration of the test is about 3 hours. This test will be available on Wednesday as from 00:00 till 23:59.

6. In responding to expressions in the group, the facilitator accepted both the intellectual content and the emotionalised attitudes, endeavouring to give each aspect the appropriate degree of emphasis, which it had for the individual or the group. The online facilitator created an informal and relaxed atmosphere for the learners where each learner knew that s/he could talk as freely as possible on any topic, be it the course work (intellectual content) or how they felt about group dynamics and their various concerns (emotional attitudes). The extracts in Exhibits 4.23 to 4.26 reflect the online facilitator's responses to several intellectual and emotional messages, taken from *Yahoo Groups*, *Yahoo Messenger* and *WebCT*. In each exchange the online facilitator answered the learner in a professional and caring manner, never losing her cool or showing any irritability. The online facilitator definitely took cognisance of the learners' concerns, frustrations and comments.

Exhibit 4.23 reveals the online facilitator's responses to intellectual content regarding the *Yahoo Groups* confusion; queries on individual and group assignments; a technical problem and a frustrated learner seeking assistance!

Exhibit 4.23: The online facilitator's responses to intellectual content**Yahoo Groups e-mail and website confusion [YG]:**

>Your e-mail message on my screen does not have a frame on
>the left side, never mind a link. Furthermore I cannot
>access E-Learn2002 from my present Yahoo ID!
Online facilitator: I was obviously in Yahoo Groups when I
replied (late last night!) and completely forgot that most
of you would probably receive my message as an e-mail.
Apologies! However, you need to ask Johannes to link your
ID to the course asap!

Information on assignments [YG]:

>Linda did you post us an update of the (rest) of the
>assignments??
Online facilitator: Not yet, I will put them up tomorrow
once all the other assignments are in (the cut-off time is
12:00). I think it is fair to give all the tribes the same
amount of time.

Query on individual assignment 2 [YG]:

>What must we do with the URL of our own web site
>(Individual Assignment 2)?
Online facilitator: You must mail the address to Elearn2002

Exhibit 4.23: The online facilitator's responses to intellectual content

so that everyone else can also go and have a look at your masterpiece!

A technical problem regarding shelter space [YG]:

>1. Get your web site up and running on Hagar. BTW the
>"icons" for our shelters are rather small, so even though
>they have been personalised, one cannot read our names on
>them... could they be made a little bigger.

Online facilitator: I will ask Johannes whether he wants to make the shelters bigger.

A frustrated learner, asking for assistance [YG]:

>Linda please help me I can't find games, and tasks for
>different > tribes/groups. Frustrated.

Online facilitator: Forget about last week's game and assignments. All this information can however be found in the 170+ emails that was sent last week. If you work through them systematically you will get the answers to most of your questions.

Queries on individual and tribal assignments [YG]:

>Vote on the collaborative participation of group members.

>On point 3 - when do we do this points 1 and 2 must be
>finished by 17:30 on Wednesday I assume.

Online facilitator: Individually you only need to upload your sites to Hagar, change your shelter.gif and upload the sound file this week. This needs to be done by this week Wednesday, 31 July 2002.

In your tribe you need to play around with Yahoo Messenger and NetMeeting - the table consolidating your findings in this regard should be ready by 7 Aug. 2002.

Exhibit 4.24 reveals the online facilitator's responses to emotional messages on e-mail problems; concerns about the *InterWise* session that was imminent; a learner griping about marks; a learner who will have to miss class because of work commitments and problems with a collaborative exercise.

Exhibit 4.24: The online facilitator's responses to emotional attitudes**A learner experiencing e-mail problems [YG]:**

>Due to a gremlin on my mail system all mail was returned to
>me unsent. It seems that e-mail is sometimes worst than
>snail mail. At least you have the Post Office to blame for
>the cheque that got lost in the mail.!The URL for the site
>of the tribe with the most members on AWOL is: tribe-e-
>go.20m.com A very g..vol

Online facilitator: I wondered what had happened to you over the weekend. Hope you get your email sorted out soon. Well done for hanging in there despite difficult conditions (both technical and tribal)! Keep it up, girl!

A clearly distressed learner ... [YG]:

>I give up!!! What am I doing wrong?

Online facilitator: Nothing wrong on your side. It was only my Yahoo Mailbox that was overflowing! I cleaned it up now so it shouldn't happen again.

A learner's concern with InterWise [YG]:

>Just to let you know that I am familiar with InterWise from
>Israel and I am expecting many troubles because of the band
>widths. With a good modem but at speed of 14.4 kbps what
>can you do? Not much!

Online facilitator: Yes, you're right, InterWise is an

Exhibit 4.24: The online facilitator's responses to emotional attitudes

Israeli product! We will definately need you Wednesday then. It always helps when some people are already familiar with the system. I agree that bandwidth is still a HUGE problem in our country, but I attended an online conference once using the system, and found it to be adequate. We'll see how things go on Wednesday evening.

A learner griping about exemplary work and marks [YM]:

Learner (08:09:01 PM): Just making a point about why no one has posted anything to webct yet ... everyone is waiting for someone else ... just to be sure their post is beter .. many are too concerned (says he) with marks than with how much they are learning!

Linda (08:14:51 PM): You make me laugh out loud! What is it with students and their preoccupation with MARKS?!

Learner (08:10:52 PM): Certain students are more concerned than others ... you decide who's who!

Linda (08:17:24 PM): Thanks for the insight though, it makes sense

Learner (08:13:11 PM): For the games ... how did you think this up ... its easy to do ... but bloody difficult to do well! Does it matter if we have a composite topic e.g. the advantages and disadvantages of E-learning and the requirements for your organisation....

Linda (08:19:24 PM): No problem, are you doing the one topic

A learner having to miss class for a week [YM]:

Learner (08:34:23 PM): I will be away for the whole of next week (Grade 6 tour). We will have a problem with my individual assignments and the tribal assignments (I'm the webmaster).

Linda (08:34:03 PM): O dear, that's trouble

Linda (08:34:12 PM): When are you leaving?

Learner (08:35:11 PM): monday morning 5:00

Linda (08:35:20 PM): We'll make a plan with the webmaster workload. Do you think you'll be able to work on your individual assignments over the weekend?

Linda (08:36:02 PM): The individual assignment for next week involves a lot of reading.

A learner battling with a collaborative exercise after the tribal shuffle [YM]:

Learner (11:41:28 AM): Things are quiet!

Linda (11:42:16 AM): I see! Are you guys settled in your new tribe?

Learner (11:44:27 AM): Good question ... no one is online ... I think were a little out of sync ... between the async and sync comms. This is a difficult project to do collaboratively!

Linda (11:45:13 AM): I know, I think this tribal shuffling has caught most people offguard

Linda (11:46:55 AM): I would have wanted everyone to brainstorm on the various elements related to elearning and then maybe split the topics amongst themselves to go and research

Linda (11:47:25 AM): People will probably wake up again on Monday.

Learner (11:48:54 AM): Yep ... just getting everyone together is a problem ... No, I think most people in our tribe like to get things done on the weekend ... I'm hoping we can set up a synchronous session, since this is the best way to brainstorm and get things sorted out I think....

Exhibit 4.25 reveals the online facilitator's humorous responses to emotional 'tongue in cheek' comments made by the learners.

Exhibit 4.25: The online facilitator's responses to humorous emotional attitudes**How to register for Yahoo Groups [YG]:**

>How do I get in contact with the creature????

Online facilitator: Hopefully this will become clearer when you get access to the pages that were uploaded to Yahoo Groups.

Learners' distress with the online test [YG]:

>Subject: Re: *&^%\$ TEST!!!

>Thought we were through with that!!!!!!

>:-0000000000h noooooooooo!

>:-)

>_____, I'm lippe teen die klippe!

>You, afraid of a test?! How must the rest of us feel?

>_____ :-O

>WWWWhen why hhhhow is this going to happen ????

>_____

Online facilitator: When we do things in an unconventional manner, you guys moan! When we then do things in a more traditional manner, you moan even more!

What AM I to do ...?!??

Don't panic(this is what YOU need to do!). The test will be web-based. The idea is once again to provide you with the opportunity to personally experience e-testing. This test will form part of the assignments for Week 6, for which you will only get instructions next week Thursday (22 Aug 2002).

A pun on pyjama drill [YG]:

>A sweating and teeth-gnashing me in pyjamas!

Online facilitator: This module seems to give 'pajama drills' an entirely new perspective, doesn't it? ;-) Hang in there.

Rebuttal on constructivism [YG]:

>Again all the panic pills and stressed e-mails is just a

>good example of how things can get wrong in a

>constructivist adult academic environment.

Online facilitator: _____, my darling behaviourist, you knew that I would react on your comment, right? So here goes: Even though most of us experienced this week as nerve-wrecking, sleepless and stressful to say the least, I am happy with the (steep) learning curve that I detect in most of the tribal members even after only one week in the online class.

There was a nasty incident where a learner verbally attacked the online facilitator because this particular learner received naught for assignments. Exhibit 4.26 shows the emotional outburst of the learner and the online facilitator's calming influence on the learner.

Exhibit 4.26 [YM]: The online facilitator's reply to an emotional outburst and verbal attack

Learner (08:24:39 PM): My puzzle is op my site by Hagar.
Almal het dit gesien en ek kry 0
[Translation: My puzzle is on my site at Hagar. Everyone saw it and I get 0.]
Linda (08:37:12 PM): Moenie so moan nie
[Translation: Don't complain so much]
Linda (08:37:34 PM): Ek het genoem in my epos dat ek bereid is om te kyk na goed as julle net vir my die URL's stuur
[Translation: I mentioned in my email that I am willing to look at the stuff if you just send me the URL]
Learner (08:26:44 PM): Ek werk hard aan die graad net soos jy aan joune. Gaan in op Hagar
[Translation: I am working hard for this degree just as you for yours. Go in on Hagar]
Learner (08:30:55 PM): Nul gee as assignments wel op die blaaie is. Wat moet ek nog doen om jou te oortuig al my assignments is op tyd en datum nog altyd in
[Translation: Giving naught if assignments are indeed in place. What else should I do to convince you that all my assignments have always been in on time]
Linda (08:43:20 PM): Raak rustig
[Translation: Calm down]
Learner (08:41:04 PM): Jammer, dit is my fout. Ek vra om verskoning. Dit lê onder my tweede icon (persoonlike goed), maar die link werk nie , ek wil nou eers kyk wat daar aangaan. Nogmaals jammer
[Translation: Sorry, my mistake. I apologise. My stuff is under the second icon (personal stuff), but the link is not working. I first want to see what is the matter. Once again, I apologise]
Linda (08:54:28 PM): Apologies accepted!:)
Learner (09:02:31 PM): Skryf tog in jou dokorsgraad dat jy "stupid" persone kry soos ek. Ek was 100% seker dit was daar (lank lank gelede). Die file is om een of ander duister rede nie op geocities nie- verstaan dit gald nie - nogmaals jammer
[Translation: Document this in your doctoral thesis that you get stupid people like me. I was 100% sure that it was there (long, long ago). For some strange reason, the file is not on geocities - I really do not understand this - I apologise, once again]
Linda (09:15:09 PM): Alles reg, dit gebeur. Ek wou sê ek het baie deeglik gekyk.
[Translation: It is ok, things like this happen. I must say, I thought I checked it thoroughly.]

- 7. As the classroom climate became established, the facilitator was increasingly able to become a participant learner, a member of the group, expressing her views as an individual.** The following two examples were taken from synchronous discussions on *Yahoo Messenger*.

In Exhibit 4.27, the online facilitator was voicing her opinion about the upcoming *InterWise* session that was to happen the next day.

Exhibit 4.27 [YM]: The online facilitator's views on technology

Linda (08:57:05 PM): Don't worry too much, it's really all about getting hands-on experience
Linda (08:57:32 PM): If things do go wrong (and something is bound to!) we'll learn from that as well

In Exhibit 4.28, the online facilitator was chatting informally to a learner about a job change.

Exhibit 4.28 [YM]: The online facilitator's views on a learner's change of job

Linda (11:42:27 PM): Are you starting the new job next month?
Learner (11:39:19 PM): ...No, I start 1st Oct... that's why I'm finding this course so beneficial. I will be working with an LMS (IBM learning space) and E-Learning!!
Linda (11:45:04 PM): Perfect timing then!
Linda (11:46:34 PM): You'll be able to make a reasonable comparison between IBM's LS and WebCT when you get started there.
Learner (11:43:33 PM): Yes I hope so... have been reading a lot about LS from their site though and will begin working on it before I actually start!

8. The facilitator took the initiative in sharing herself with the group – feelings as well as thoughts – in ways which neither demanded nor imposed, but represented simply a personal sharing which the learner might take or leave.

The learners really got to know the online facilitator as she was willing to share information from her past as well as how she felt about situations. The following three examples are taken from synchronous discussions on *Yahoo Messenger*.

In Exhibit 4.29, the online facilitator shared her experience of being a teacher – only for a short period!

Exhibit 4.29 [YM]: The online facilitator on being a teacher

Linda (06:37:48 PM): Wat is jou plan met die MEd?
[Translation: What are your plans with the MEd?]
Learner (06:39:31 PM): Hoop om goed genoeg te doen om 'n werk in die veld te kry.
[Translation: Hope to be good enough to get work in the field.]
Linda (06:38:34 PM): Of is jy 'n gebore onderwyser?
[Translation: Or are you a born teacher?]
Learner (06:40:17 PM): Nee, ek weet nie van gebore onderwyser nie! Dink dit sal lekker wees om bietjie met groter mense te werk!
[Translation: No, I don't know about a bore teacher! I think it could be pleasant to work with adults!]
Linda (06:39:28 PM): My sentiment ook
[Translation: My sentiments exactly]

Exhibit 4.29 [YM]: The online facilitator on being a teacher

Linda (06:39:48 PM): Ek het net vir 3 jaar uitgehou toe gee ek op (ter wille van my eie 'sanity'!)

[Translation: I only lasted for 3 years and then resigned in the name of sanity!]

Learner (06:41:10 PM): Voel amper so!

[Translation: I feel that way too]

Linda (06:40:31 PM): Hoe lank hou jy al skool?

[Translation: How long have you been teaching?]

Learner (06:41:45 PM): 7 jaar!!

[Translation: 7 years!!]

In Exhibit 4.30, the online facilitator reflected on her younger days working on a kibbutz.

Exhibit 4.30 [YM]: The online facilitator on working on a kibbutz

Linda (09:33:19 PM): How long have you been in the country?

Learner (09:33:59 PM): Just one year

Linda (09:34:18 PM): Are you planning to go back?

Learner (09:36:44 PM): yes my husband contract will finish some day (in a year or two) and by that time my second son will be in the army and i want to be there for him

Linda (09:37:16 PM): I spent a couple of months on a kibbutz when I was younger. It was way up North, close to Nahariya. It was one of the best experiences I ever had.

Linda (09:38:06 PM): When I was there it was compulsory for all army soldiers to spend time doing community work on a kibbutz

Linda (09:38:24 PM): I enjoyed the interaction tremendously.

Learner (09:39:15 PM): oh!! do you remember the name

Linda (09:39:50 PM): I am trying to remember now, but it wasn't Hanita, no.

Learner (09:42:36 PM): ok we will soon find that we are relatives, like every two Israelis that meet together...

Linda (09:43:35 PM): I checked quickly, it was Kibbutz Eilon

Linda (09:44:29 PM): They had a fish factory, a mosaic thingy, bananas, avocados, kiwi's and lots more

Linda (09:44:51 PM): I remember working my hands to the bone there!

Learner (09:45:37 PM): that's right and i think that in that kibbutz were many volunteers from South Africa.

In Exhibit 4.31, the online facilitator shared her thoughts on moving house – a nightmare experience!

Exhibit 4.31 [YM]: The online facilitator on moving house

Linda (10:38:49 PM): Hoe gaan dit in die nuwe huis?

[Translation: How are you finding the new house?]

Learner (10:48:16 PM): Nie te sleg nie - kan darem al my haardroëer kry ... Dankie dat jy vra - dit klink of jy soortgelyke omstandighede gehad het?

[Translation: Not too bad - have retrieved by hair dryer ... Thanks for asking - it sounds as if you had similar circumstances?]

Linda (10:42:40 PM): Ek het sowat 2 jaar gelede deur die nagmerrie ervaring gegaan. Bly gelukkig nou so lekker dat ek geen begeerte het om ooit weer daardie drama te gaan nie.

[Translation: About 2 years ago I went through the

Exhibit 4.31 [YM]: The online facilitator on moving house

nightmare experience. Living so comfortably at present that I have no wish to ever experience that drama again.]

9. Throughout the course, the facilitator remained alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings. Strong feelings were expressed regarding the lack of collaboration as is evident in Exhibit 4.32.

Exhibit 4.32 [YM]: The lack of collaboration ...

Most of our group seems to be incommunicado. Our tribe (2) as I have it are down to 4 members
Struggling to get things for our tribal assignment!!!! Only _____ has given me anything!
my nuwe tribe is nog stil- ...
[Translation: my new tribe is still quiet ...]
Linda (09:07:58 PM): Julle moet maar so gou moontlik probeer kontak maak, die Tribal Assignment is nogals lywig
[Translation: You have to try to make contact as soon as possible, the Tribal Assignment is quite lengthy]
This has been our first real collaborative assignment .. I think the new improved tribes have everyone working. It is more difficult to do the tasks by Internet Collaboration!
I could do it by myself .. not that negotiation is a problem, its just not that easy online!
The problem is not the online. it is the cats in the group. Getting everyoone oding their job is like herding cats!
Again .. while you mentioned the importance of product, I think there is still some process here ... as I mentioned, the learning curve on collaborative work continues to be steep!

In Exhibit 4.33, the online facilitator responded in the following way:

Exhibit 4.33 [YM]: The online facilitator's response to the lack of collaboration

Linda (06:01:30 PM): It remains a challenge to keep things going in a virtual async environment
Linda (06:02:09 PM): As I said to the guys in Tribe 3 last week, take those who are on board with you, and make the best of it.

Monetary costs were a bone of contention! For the first time the learners actually realised that online learning comes at a price. The learners were perturbed about the time spent online for all their assignments, which indirectly boiled down to monetary costs in terms of paying the telephone account.

Hardware and software were not always up to standard. However, as the online facilitator reflected in her face-to-face interview, 'this course revolves around computer-based instruction. A person would imagine that learners would have the state of the art equipment. One would also assume that learners would have achieved

a minimum requirement to participate in this type of course'. Some learners had to acquire speakers and microphones for the *InterWise* session. Exhibit 4.34 provides a snapshot of the learners' feeling regarding the issue of costs.

Exhibit 4.34: The learners' feelings on monetary issues

[SF] On the negative side, maybe I can just say it is taking up a bit of time and maybe a little bit of money, but in our work we have to deal with this.

[YM] I enjoyed it very much, but still waiting for the phone bill.

[YM] The other problem is the time. 1 hour became 2½hours – that is a lot of money online lecturing, please can't we get a better telephone company in South Africa ??????????????

[YM] Only negative: my wife is going to kill me if she sees this month's phone bill!

[YM] Money...Money...Money...The sound of \$\$\$\$ is haunting me as well!

[YM] My wife is talking about divorcing me (money for my child's clothes used for the discussion). You know, it is all well and said that if you take this course and see what you learn each day, money musn't be a problem. What if you have R350 to survive with until 23 August 2002 ? That's the facts !!

10. The facilitator endeavoured to recognise and accept her own limitations as a facilitator of learning. The online facilitator admitted that she was uncomfortable with the concept of collaborative learning as is noted in Exhibit 4.35 and had sympathy with the learners who found it difficult to work as a group.

Exhibit 4.35 [YM]: The online facilitator on collaborative learning

Linda (08:57:41 PM): **I am not the best team player there is**

In her face-to-face interview, the online facilitator clearly stated that she worked better as an individual than as in a team set-up. This is reflected in Exhibit 4.36.

Exhibit 4.36 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on individual learning

die eerlike antwoord is: ek werk baie beter individueel as wat ek in 'n span werk. So ek wil dit graag my manier doen.

[Translation: the truth is: I work much better as an individual as opposed to a team set-up. I like to do things my way.]

In Exhibit 4.37 the online facilitator recalled that she found group work to be a nightmare.

Exhibit 4.37 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the frustrations of group work

ek onthou die groepwerk was vir my as persoon, regtig 'n straf. Ek het gevoel ek het 'n bepaalde standaard wat ek wil handhaaf, en ek was geweldig gefrustreerd as ander ouens nie saamgewerk het nie, of as hulle ander idees gehad het wat ek nie mee saamgestem het of so nie.

[Translation: I recall that I found group work to be a nightmare. I had a certain standard that I wanted to maintain and I was particularly frustrated if the rest of the team did not co-operate or if they had other ideas, which I did not agree with.

The online facilitator reminisced about individual work and collaborative work in Exhibit 4.38.

Exhibit 4.38 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on individual work and collaborative work

Maar ek onthou in een van die kursusse moes ons juis ook op so 'n lyn staan, in die een hoek die ouens wat van collaborative learning hou, en die ander ouens nie. En ek was die enigste een wat in die hoekie by individual learning gestaan het. En die ander was almal van die helfte af meer collaboratively.

[Translation: I remember a certain course where I had to place myself on a continuum – this time around it was individual or collaborative work. I was the only learner that went to the furthest side of working individually. All the other learners positioned themselves from the middle of the continuum to the opposite site, which was collaborative work.

Smilingly, the online facilitator admitted that she believed in the value of collaborative learning. This is revealed in Exhibit 4.39.

Exhibit 4.39 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the value of collaborative work

weet ek dat my styl anders is, maar ek moet die meerderheid akkomodeer, en die meerderheid mense leer beter wanneer hulle interaksie het met ander. So ek glo in die waarde van collaborative learning, ek hou net nie persoonlik self daarvan nie. Ek sal veel eerder regtig suffer op my eie, as wat ek minder werk het, maar ek moet worry oor wat is die ander persoon se benadering

[Translation: I admit that my learning style was different, but I had to accommodate the majority of learners who learnt better when they had interaction with one another. I confess that I believe in the value of collaborative learning, however, on a personal level, I don't like it! I would rather suffer alone as to do less work and worry about the other team member's approach to the assignment.

The online facilitator also felt strongly about the unfairness regarding formal summative assessment as in reflected in Exhibit 4.40.

Exhibit 4.40: The online facilitator on the unfairness of formal summative assessment

[YM] Linda (09:25:28 PM): You know how I feel about formal test situations ...

[YG] I would like to put your mind at ease and say that the test you will write tomorrow is not the end of the world! Once again the test assignment is all about being a learning experience in itself. You will be on the receiving side and will gain first hand experience of doing an online test. I make the assumption that you will then be in a better position to advise people about the various aspects of online /networked learning once you have experienced all the aspects yourself. (Challenge me on this if you disagree!)

[YG] The fact that many of you are really worried about writing the formal test, even though it is an open book (browser) test, just proves to me that **formal summative testing is an evil practice that burdens students with unnecessary levels of stress! ;-)**

4.3.8. Summary

The adjustment to the online environment boiled down to good planning and lateral thinking. The online facilitator created a safe virtual environment for the learners and provided communication tools so that the learners could optimally operate in the virtual world. During the initial face-to-face contact session the online facilitator immediately formed an online community to ensure that social interaction could take place between the learners to create a sense of belonging. The online facilitator emphasised teamwork and various group activities had to be completed, which indicated a strong drive towards collaboration. The learners also had to complete various individual assignments, which indicated a strong drive towards learner-centredness. There was a strong relationship in terms of participation and interaction in 'what' was learned and 'how' it was learned. Mentally (in terms of acquiring new knowledge), physically (in terms of acquiring new skills) and emotionally (in terms of coping with time pressures and group dynamics) each learner participated and interacted in the learning process.

The online facilitator pre-selected certain communication tools for the learners that would be used in the online environment. *Yahoo Messenger* was selected as the synchronous communication tool and *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* would be the asynchronous communication tools. By talking, writing, watching, reflecting and doing activities online the learners acquired new knowledge, skills and attitudes to broaden their horizons and experience eLearning from all possible angles.

Not only did the online facilitator provide the learners with a variety of eLearning tools, she also put processes and guidelines in place to guide the learners on their learning paths. Clear learning outcomes were posted on a weekly basis. Vital URLs were included in the weekly assignments for downloading purposes. Time frames were clearly indicated, taking asynchronous time lines and working conditions into account. Regular notifications and reminders were posted to remind the group to vote, upload information and assess collaborative tasks.

Apart from the fact that the online facilitator created an online environment for the learners, she also had to make adjustments in terms of her facilitation approach.

The facilitator was responsible for setting the mood of the learning intervention. She contextualised the game metaphor and helped to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals and the groups so that the learners could experience eLearning in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. The online facilitator organised the widest possible range of resources to ensure that the learners experienced the Internet and eLearning in every possible way. Although the online facilitator was flexible in terms of time frames and individual assignments, collaborative work had to be completed on the indicated times. The online facilitator accepted both the intellectual content and emotionalised attitudes from the groups and individuals, allowing for reflection and gripe sessions. On several occasions the online facilitator could voice her own opinions and share herself with the group. This personal touch created a relaxed atmosphere where the learners felt safe to express their views on several non-content topics. After all, learning remains a social task that is built upon social interaction. The online facilitator remained alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings. In these instances the online facilitator responded to each message, provided emotional support and reflected on the particular situation, often acknowledging her own limitations in similar circumstances.

In conclusion, it is evident that the facilitator made several adjustments to accommodate the learners in the online environment. These adjustments were not exclusive to environment and process issues, but also in terms of the facilitation approach of the facilitator, indicating that the online facilitator had to have a caring persona as she operated on the side in a learner-centred virtual world.

4.4. How did the online facilitator ‘talk’ to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?

During the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator, she specifically stated that the online facilitator could not rely on her personality or the ‘grape-vine’ to establish rapport with a new group of online learners. Each group is different and has an own identity. Although the facilitator could fall back on previous experiences, the facilitator starts from scratch every time a new course commenced.

Fifty-three exhibits have been selected from the raw data to show how the online facilitator ‘talked’ via the text messages (my emphasis).

4.4.1. *Formulate clear messages*

According to the online facilitator, one had to think very carefully about how messages were formulated to ensure that the message was transmitted without sarcasm and in an unambiguous manner. The online facilitator had to be aware of how s/he was communicating and whether the message that was written was indeed the message that she wanted to send to the group as in made clear in Exhibit 4.41. She really laboured this point during the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.41 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on ‘talking’ via text messages

Jy moet twee keer dink aan die manier waarop jy eintlik terugkommunikeer.
[Translation: You have to think twice about the manner in which you will be responding.]
Jy moet tussen die lyne leer lees – jy het nie liggaamstaal of 'n stemtoon wat vir jou kan terugvoer gee nie. Jy moet net gaan op dit wat daar staan!
[Translation: You have to learn to read between the lines – there is no body language or tone of voice to provide you with feedback. You have to depend on the written word.]

As the online facilitator commented in the self-administered questionnaire that is revealed in Exhibit 4.42, a person needs to be aware of the power of the written word in the absence of non-verbal communication.

Exhibit 4.42 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the power of the written word

As an online facilitator has to rely strongly on the written component of communication, it is important that he/she has the skills to communicate clearly in this manner. I found that often I first drafted a copy of my immediate reactions and comments in a Word document, left it on my computer whilst I break to have a cup of calming coffee, after which I would return, reread, rewrite and only then send a severely edited version of my initial reaction. I had to consciously be aware of the power of the written word in the

Exhibit 4.42 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the power of the written word

absence of other indicators such as body language and intonation.

During Week 5 the online facilitator announced that the learners were going to write an electronic test and this caused a bit of a stir throughout the class. A few of the learners wanted more information on the test. On the spur of the moment, the online facilitator replied to their questions and concerns. However, the following day she responded to the one particular learner, explaining that she did not mean to be harsh or abrupt as is clearly described in Exhibit 4.43. She was actually responding, tongue in cheek!

Exhibit 4.43 [YG]: The online facilitator clarifying her intentions in a previous *Yahoo Group* message

Date: Fri Aug 16, 2002 12:10 pm
 Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] Re: *&^%\$ TEST!!!
 Hi
When I reread my message this morning I was surprised to see how cold and cross it sounded, when I actually thought I was joking lightheartedly last night.
 Emoticons helps to convey emotions like sarcasm, humor and others, but still leaves the field wide open for misinterpretation, doesn't it?
 Anyway, in this module you are allowed to moan all you want, just as I am allowed to only hear what I want to! ;-)
 Good luck!
 L
 When we do things in an unconventional manner, you guys moan! When we then do things in a more traditional manner, you moan even more! Just kidding as usual Linda ... just wanted some detail ... mainly 'when' just so I could plan to be there!
 Cheers,

4.4.2. Create a relaxed and supportive online environment

The online facilitator reiterated the importance of establishing a **relaxed and supportive** online environment. The learners had to know that they were allowed to ask questions. The online facilitator also invited the learners to ask questions or ask for help, if necessary, as is emphasised in Exhibit 4.44.

Exhibit 4.44 [YG]: The online facilitator created a relaxed and supportive online environment

Yahoo Groups
 Date: Wed Jul 24, 2002 12:23 am
 Subject: Re: What do we need for Thurs?
 _____, I am not sure whether you don't understand what is expected of you, or whether you simply haven't read the assignment file that was uploaded to Yahoo Groups last Thursday? If you did read through the assignments that was posted under 'FILES' in your Elearn2002 Yahoo Group and you

Exhibit 4.44 [YG]: The online facilitator created a relaxed and supportive online environment

still experience problems, you are welcome to e-mail me personally so that I can talk you through the assignments. This offer stands for all the other 'Survivors' as well.

Do you need help? Let me know if I can help. We need to get going with assignment 8!

Please let me know in time if you battle with the clues. Don't spend too much time on them, I would much rather prefer you to spend your time reading the articles.

Hiss (2000:24) referred to components of 'teacher talk' that online facilitators should take cognisance of. For the purposes of this study, the term '**facilitator finesse**' was developed. 'Facilitator finesse' encompasses the same components of 'teacher talk', namely using an andragogical approach, incorporating humour and special language and using control talk. However, two components were added, namely Greetings and Closings and Clear Subject lines. 'Facilitator finesse' is a term that should display the skill of the online facilitator in terms of how s/he interacts with learners and tactfully handles difficult situations. This section displays examples of facilitator finesse as was evident in the study.

According to the online facilitator, following an **andragogical approach** meant that she treated the learners as adults and never 'talked down' at the learners; she also made adjustments to accommodate the adults when it was necessary; she was aware of the experts in the tribes and relied on them to share their knowledge and skills with the rest of the learners; she established an informal atmosphere where the learners could chat about their problems and ask for help and she never dominated the discussions.

The online facilitator was aware of the fact that the learners were adults and this group of people could not be treated as children as is apparent in Exhibit 4.45.

Exhibit 4.45 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's andragogical approach

Onthou, ons werk met volwasse nes; dit help nie jy sê maar die reëls sê dit, en ons gaan nou by die reëls hou nie. Waar nodig, het ons aanpassings gemaak.

[Translation: Remember, we are working with adults; it doesn't help to say the rules say this and we are going to stick to them. Where necessary, adjustments had to be made.]

Being adults, the various tribe members did try to sort out differences amongst themselves as is apparent in Exhibit 4.46.

Exhibit 4.46 [YG]: The learners' andragogical approach

Hulle het regtig probeer om dit op hulle eie uit te sorteer.
[Translation: They really tried to sort it out on their own.]

Hi, Tribe -5 are you alive, ready to survive?
Let's contrive a strategy to revive ourselves
and show those voters they can also take a dive!
Let 5 stay alive and strive to survive!

According to the online facilitator, the tribal members were also willing to play open cards when their work suffered. This is explained in Exhibit 4.47.

Exhibit 4.47 [FtoF]: The learners played open cards with the online facilitator

As ouens op 'n punt gekom het waar hulle so gefrustreerd was, of so ongelukkig was, of so benoud was dat dit hulle punte en prestasie sou beïnvloed, dan het hulle nogals oop kaarte gespeel, en gesê luister, ek het hierdie ding op my eie gedoen, want die ander ouens was nie daar nie

[Translation: When guys reached a point that they were so frustrated or so unhappy, or anxious that it would affect their marks and performance, they really played open cards, and then said, listen, I did this assignment on my own, because the others were not there.]

The online facilitator was 'watching' and 'listening' to the group dynamics and made adjustments to the collaborative, tribal tasks when tribal members from Tribe 5 had problems getting the momentum going. Exhibit 4.48 describes the tricky situation.

Exhibit 4.48: Trouble in Tribe 5

[FtoF] Jy moet akkomoderend en oop en approachable wees.
[Translation: You have to be accommodating and open and approachable.]

[YM] Most of our group seems to be incommunicado.

[YM] My nuwe tribe is nog stil- ...
[Translation: My new tribe is still silent-]

[YM] _____ has asked to be allowed to participate with one of the stronger groups
Learner (08:49:13 PM): So has _____.
Linda (08:55:09 PM): I have no problem if they do, the idea is to learn as much as you can from the module.
Linda (09:05:14 PM): For the sake of the quality of their learning experience, I think it is just 'fair' (smile) to let them take part in a functional tribe.

The online facilitator then specifically informed a tribal member that she could team-up with a stronger, functional tribe as is revealed in the *Yahoo Messenger* extract in Exhibit

4.49. After all was said and done, the main reason for the course was to construct knowledge about the educational strengths and weaknesses of the Internet.

Exhibit 4.49 [YM]: An invitation to team up with a stronger group

Linda (01:11:06 AM): Daar behoort nou genoeg ouens in Tribe 5 te wees wat nog aktief wil wees, maar dit gaan maar bars gaan om almal te mobiliseer. As jy sien dat jy nie voldoende reaksie by jou nuwe Tribe kry nie, is jy welkom om saam met die ander in te spring en saam te werk. Jy weet hoe ek voel oor 'collaboration'.

[Translation: There ought to be enough guys in Tribe 5 now who still want to be active, but it will be a battle to mobilise all of them. If you do not get sufficient co-operation from your new tribe, **you are more than welcome to team up with another group.** You know how I feel about 'collaboration'.]

Linda (01:12:17 AM): Ek's bly as die ouens jou wil akkommodeer. Dit beteken daar het reeds 'n sterk 'online community' gevorm, en dit is natuurlik net goeie nuus.

[Translation: I am pleased if the guys want to accommodate you. This means that a strong online community has already been formed and this is great news.]

Linda (01:15:48 AM): Doen dit dan gerus (onoffisieel). Al kwalifiseer jy nie meer vir die groot prys nie, is daar geen rede hoekom jy nie die meeste uit die module moet haal nie. Maak maar net seker dat almal in die groep tevrede is met die besluit.

[Translation: Do it with pleasure (unofficially). Although you do not qualify for the big prize anymore, **there is no reason why you should not get the most from this module.** Just ensure that every one in the group is happy with the decision.]

On two occasions the online facilitator thanked the 'experts' in the various tribes for sharing their knowledge and skills with the rest of the group. The 'thank you' notes were extracted from *Yahoo Groups* and appear in Exhibit 4.50.

Exhibit 4.50 [YG]: 'Thank you' notes to experts

And a great big thank you to those of you who are more advanced, for sharing your knowledge and skills so freely with the others. Rika, where is that crown you were talking about? I think we have a couple of deserving candidates out there.

Must say I am soo impressed with you guys. Your willingness to help each other and to share your knowledge is great and shows that we have indeed created a lively, caring online learning community!

During the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator, she commented that at stages she was thinking about whether she was doing things the right way and she admitted, she was relying on her gut feeling as well, and that the 'guys was giving her a hammering'. On reflection, she admitted that she could motivate why she did specific actions and activities, but at the time her reasoning may not have been clear to all the learners.

The course was designed for a purpose and all the activities had meaning in the bigger picture. This was evident in her explanations in Exhibit 4.51, where she informed the learners about the thinking behind the tribal reshuffle and the online test. These activities did not just happen; there was a purpose for them. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.51 [YG]: The online facilitator's motivations for the tribal reshuffle and the online test

Subject: Tribal Shuffle: PLEASE READ URGENTLY
 I am sure that you all would agree that it **has become difficult to function in tribes where only 2 or 3 active Survivers remain**. You are therefore randomly shuffled into new formations for the rest of the game.

Subject: Tomorrow's test
 I would like to put your mind at ease and say that the test you will write tomorrow is not the end of the world! Once again the test assignment is all about being **a learning experience** in itself. You will be on the receiving side and will **gain first hand experience of doing an online test**. I make the assumption that you will then be in a better position to advise people about the various aspects of online /networked learning once you have experienced all the aspects yourself.

According to the online facilitator, it was important to create an **informal and relaxed atmosphere** for the learners where each learner knew that s/he could talk as freely as possible. The learners had to feel free to challenge one another and could feel comfortable with being challenged (Brookfield, 1988:14). The learners had to 'enjoy' the learning experience and share their feelings with the rest of the tribe. For this reason, the online facilitator incorporated various activities to ensure that 'talking' took place online. There was **dialogue** in terms of speaking to each other using the *Yahoo Messenger* synchronous communication tool. Here the various tribes had to exchange thoughts and ideas on a number of collaborative tasks, for example which six web-based games or learning activities should be selected. **Conversation** happened via *Yahoo Messenger* when informal chats took place late at night between team members and the online facilitator. **Discussions** focussed on particular topics such as the learners' impressions on the *InterWise* session. **Debates** occurred when tribal marks had to be assigned for work done and **arguments** arose throughout the course to reach agreement on collaborative exercises. The learners did most of the 'talking' and the facilitator 'listened' (Bentley, 1994:10).

4.4.3. 'Listen' to the learners

The online facilitator deliberately did not participate in all the 'talking' and explained the eLearning environment in her face-to-face interview which is described in Exhibit 4.52.

Exhibit 4.52 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's views on eLearning

'n e-leer omgewing is 'n klimaat waar jy wil hê die groepe moet mekaar ondersteun en saam werk. Jy moet jou rol verstaan. Hulle moet leer om saam te werk. As hulle nie met mekaar praat nie en net vir Linda vra, sy antwoord, gebruik jy die e-leer omgewing verkeerd.
[Translation: an e-learning environment is a climate where you want the groups to support each another and work together. You must understand your role (as online facilitator). They (the learners) must learn to work together. If they do not speak to each other and merely ask Linda (the online facilitator's name) to answer all the questions, then you are using the e-learning environment incorrectly.]

The online facilitator did comment on the fact that the learners were more expressive (Siegel *et al.* 1986) and that she obtained information about her learners that she normally would not have known about. The learners' openness is noted in Exhibit 4.53.

Exhibit 4.53: The online facilitator on learner openness

[FtoF] Dis wat die medium so lekker maak. Dis omdat jy half agter 'n skerm sit, en jy voel so half anoniem, die ouens is baie meer ekspressief as wat hulle in 'n klassituasie voor my sou wees. So jy's in 'n bevoordeelde situasie as jy online fasiliteer, want jy kan hoor wat mense vir mekaar sê, terwyl as jy in 'n klaskamer is, sal hulle nooit daai openlike tipe gesprekke eers met mekaar gehad het nie.
[Translation: This is what makes this medium so fascinating. You are sitting behind a screen and you feel a bit anonymous and the guys are much more expressive than they would normally be in a classroom situation in front of me. As an online facilitator, you have an advantage, because you can 'hear' what the people are saying to each other, whereas in a classroom, the learners would never even had those openhearted chats.]

[YM] Jy weet nie hoe nie! Ek is ma van kind met outisme en woon in koshuis met sowat nog 45 en hulle hou van hulle roetines!
[Translation: You just don't know how! I am the mother of an autistic child and we live in a hostel with 45 other autistic children and they like their routines!]

According to the online facilitator, it was important to 'listen' to all the discussions that were taking place; otherwise it would be impossible to provide guidance or support on a personal level.

Exhibit 4.54 clearly indicated that the online facilitator listened to her learners, considering the apt comments that were made to the particular learners.

Exhibit 4.54 [YM]: The online facilitator listened to the learners

Linda: Well done for hanging in there despite difficult conditions (both technical and tribal)!
Keep it up, girl!

Learner (10:22:04 PM): Thanks! Ek het dit half nodig- dink ek is te oud vir hierdie stories!
[Translation: Thanks. I kind of need it - I think I am too old for this kind of thing.]

Linda (10:11:00 PM): Ek verstaan jou frustrasie goed. Dis darem nog net 2 weke van hierdie moordende pas, dan kan die lewe weer normaliseer!
[Translation: I understand your frustration. At least there is only 2 weeks of this killing pace left then everything will be back to normal again!]

It was also important to 'listen' to the discussions to establish that the groups understood the assignments. If a group was battling, it was important to steer them in the right direction, without providing the answer. Exhibit 4.55 clearly indicated that the online facilitator listened to group discussions, considering the apt comments that were made to the particular group.

Exhibit 4.55: The online facilitator listened to the groups

[YM] Linda (09:19:25 PM): Miskien moet julle net weer na die opdrag kyk. Die idee is juis dat dit nie NET kernwoorde moet wees nie, maar eerder volledige notas oor elkeen van die areas wat julle besluit om af te baken
[Translation: Perhaps you should revisit the assignment. The idea is that it must NOT merely be keywords, but rather extensive notes on each of the areas that you decide to select.]

Linda (09:20:13 PM): In julle tribe is julle veronderstel om konsensus te bereik oor die aspekte wat op so 'n 'map' tuis hoort
[Translation: In your tribe you are supposed to reach consensus on the aspects that belong to such a 'map'.]

[YG] _____ suggested I download from "tucows" an application (?) called "cut/tp", which I was unable to locate.
Here it is: **CuteFTP** Download site
<http://www.cuteftp.com/download/cuteftp.asp>

The online facilitator wanted the group to ‘struggle’ to a certain extent. It was in this struggling and the exploration that learning happened as is explained in Exhibit 4.56. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.56 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on learners’ struggling

Ek wou gehad het hulle moet maar op 'n manier struggle ook, want dis hoe jy leer! As jy eksplloreer, gee iemand nie vir jou die padkaart en sê loop hierdie roete wat klaar beplan is nie. Jy leer nie daaruit nie.
[Translation: I wanted them to struggle in a way, because this is how you learn. If you explore, nobody gives you a map and says walk this already planned route. You do not learn from that experience.]

If the struggling continued for a longer than expected time period, the online facilitator provided the learner or group with tips on how to do a certain task. The online facilitator made screen dumps with arrows on how to ‘ftp’ and loaded the screen dumps to *Yahoo Groups* under the ‘Files’ section. Figure 4.9 is a graphical representation of the type of files developed by the online facilitator to assist the learners with technical problems. However, the online facilitator did stress the fact that she was not going to spoon-feed the learners.

At times the online facilitator provided step-by-step action settings for the learners to check their software as is evident in Exhibit 4.57.

Exhibit 4.57 [WCT]: The online facilitator helping the learners

Subject **Please check your Browser Settings ...**
Message no 64 posted by Linda Fri Aug 16 20:35
Hi everyone
Could I ask you all to check your Internet Explorer options? I found that if your settings aren’t correct, you will not be able to see the **latest updates** in the course. Please go to Tools (in your browser) then to Internet options, Temporary Internet Files, Settings, Every visit to the page, ok). If your browser is set up to AUTOMATICALLY look for updates, you may very well have been staring at the same old page you first saw when you accessed this course (this page was hiding in your cache). In the mean time, however, I updated quite a number of courses.

Figure 4.9 provides an example of help given to the learners.

Figure 4.9: Help for the learners



4.4.4. Only 'speak' when spoken to

The online facilitator only 'spoke' when a question was directed at her and then she had to guard against 'losing her cool' (Hiss, 2000:24) because she had the background as to why these particular questions were asked. The facilitator needed to stay impartial, answer the questions to the best of her ability, without becoming irritable because the same question could have been asked for the umpteenth time!

The examples below highlight the online facilitator's answers to various questions. In Exhibit 4.58, a learner wanted to know how to 'upload' a file.

Exhibit 4.58 [YG]: Learner question – how do I upload a file?

Yahoo Groups
 Date: Sat Jul 27, 2002 11:28 pm
 Subject: Re: Halfpad katswink!
 Answering _____
 Must I upload them separately too?
 Yes, everything needs to be uploaded to the same directory,
 any special files and all your gifs and jpgs.

Although the online facilitator's answer was short, it addressed everything that the learner needed to know.

Exhibit 4.59 and 4.60 reveal two 'classic' examples in terms of learners who wanted to know whether their assignments were received. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.59 [YG]: Learner question – did you receive my assignment?

Subject: Re: Linda, did you receive my assessment results?
Not yet, _____. Did you send it to my MWeb address?
 Here it is again: lindavr@m...

Very politely the online facilitator said that she had not yet received the results and was not abrupt in merely answering 'No!' To make it easier for the learner, the online facilitator, once again, provided the learner with the e-mail address.

Exhibit 4.60 [YG]: The same learner question – did you receive my assignment?

Hi Linda
 Did you get my Assessment?
 Got it, thanks!

In this example the online facilitator could very easily have responded with a 'Yes'. However, she thanked the learner for sending the work.

Exhibit 4.61 to 4.64 dealt with the arrangements for the *InterWise* session where the learners had the opportunity to play around with a synchronous communication tool. However, the learners experienced several problems to get their test-runs completed before the actual event. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.61 [YG]: Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 1

Subject: Re: Interwise SetUp arrangements
 Hi Linda
 I have problems with step 1.Pls check
You're right. He changed the address to sign on.
It is now:<http://66.8.37.114/campuswise/>
Try it.

In a positive and supportive way the online facilitator acknowledged that the learner was not at fault and that the technical crew changed the Internet address to sign-on to the site as is reflected in Exhibit 4.61. The online facilitator also gave the learner the new Internet address and asked her to try it out.

Exhibit 4.62 [YG]: Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 2

Subject: Re: Interwise connection
Hi _____ (and all others with the **same problem**)

Please note you will not be able to get into the site immediately as **Interwise needs to verify that you are in the class**. I sent them a list of names last week. This is necessary as it is a 'paid for' service and they don't want every Tom, Dick and Harry to access their free demo sessions.

In Exhibit 4.62 the online facilitator explained to the learners why they were unable to access the *InterWise* site at this stage. Learner verification was at stake and the learners just needed to be patient for a while!

Exhibit 4.63 [YG]: Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 3

Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] InterWise arrangements
I have been trying all morning to set up a test with _____
this is the message
"In order to work with the Interwise Communications Center, you need to use a browser that enables cookies. At this time, we are unable to support browsers that are not cookie enabled."
Hi _____
Try the following and see if that doesn't help:
In Internet Explorer, on the Tools menu, click Internet Options.
1. Click the Privacy tab, and then click Advanced.
2. Click Override default settings, and then specify that you want Internet Explorer to always allow to be saved on your computer, by clicking Accept.

In Exhibit 4.63 the learner received a technical message from the *InterWise* crew that she clearly did not understand. The online facilitator provided the learner with steps to set up the Internet Explorer browser.

Exhibit 4.64 [YG]: Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 4

Subject: Wake up call!
Could the rest of you please **arrange with Ian to have your connections tested asap**? We only have 2 hours tomorrow evening and will not be able to sort out technical problems then!

The online facilitator was clearly worried about the rest of the learners who had not yet tested their connections for the *InterWise* session. She requested them to make arrangements as soon as possible as is expressed in Exhibit 4.64.

4.4.5. Be visible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

During the focus group interview the learners commented on the online facilitator's promptness and availability and they wondered whether the online facilitator ever slept, because as soon as they asked a question, she answered it, be it early morning or late at night. She was always there! Exhibit 4.65 revealed the online facilitator's visibility.

Exhibit 4.65 [FG]: The learners on the visibility of the online facilitator

I liked the promptness of her replies.

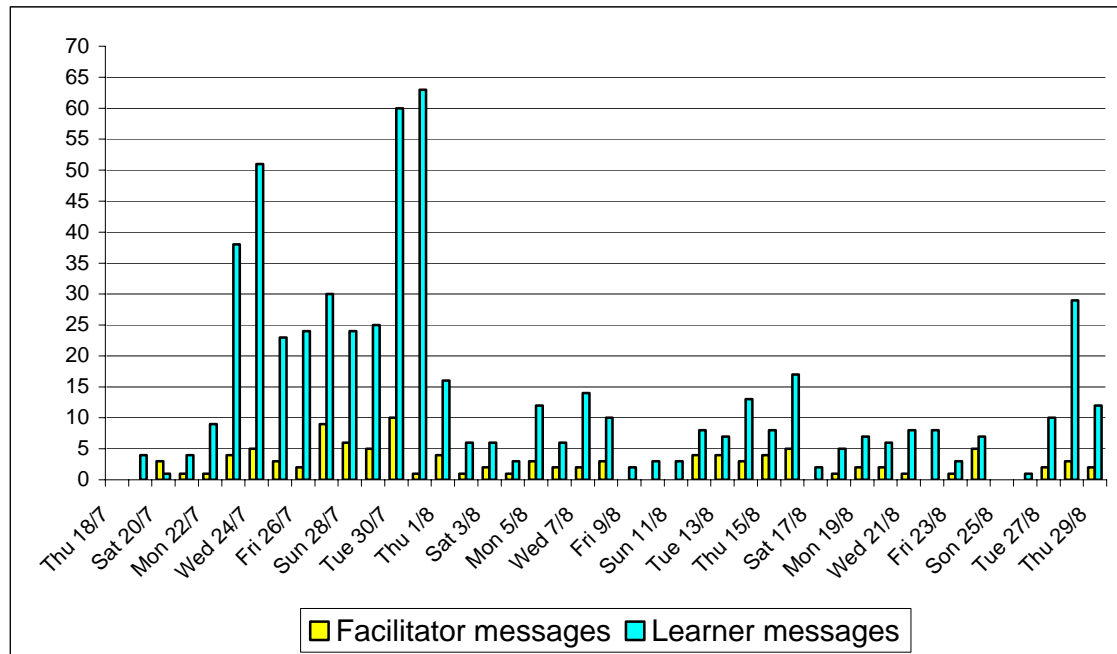
If you got her on Yahoo Messenger, which was always, she would reply straight away, and either say to you: yes, she can help you now, or say to you: listen, I'm busy. Send me an email. If you sent her an email, within a day, you got a reply. That to me was very positive, because I think it can be extremely frustrating if you're in the middle of a course, having to do stuff, and you can't get hold of your facilitator.

I want to add that she was really available, and she accommodated us. I was doing the course during the day from my office, and was not available after hours, and most of you worked after hours, and I mean, she accommodated all of us all the time.

I recall when I sent her an email during the day, it wasn't a minute, and I got a reply back.

Figure 4.10 provides a summary of all the messages posted by the online facilitator and the learners to *Yahoo Groups* for the six-week period. The online facilitator was clearly visible for the duration of the course, but did not dominate the discussions on *Yahoo Groups*.

Figure 4.10: Visibility of the online facilitator on *Yahoo Groups*



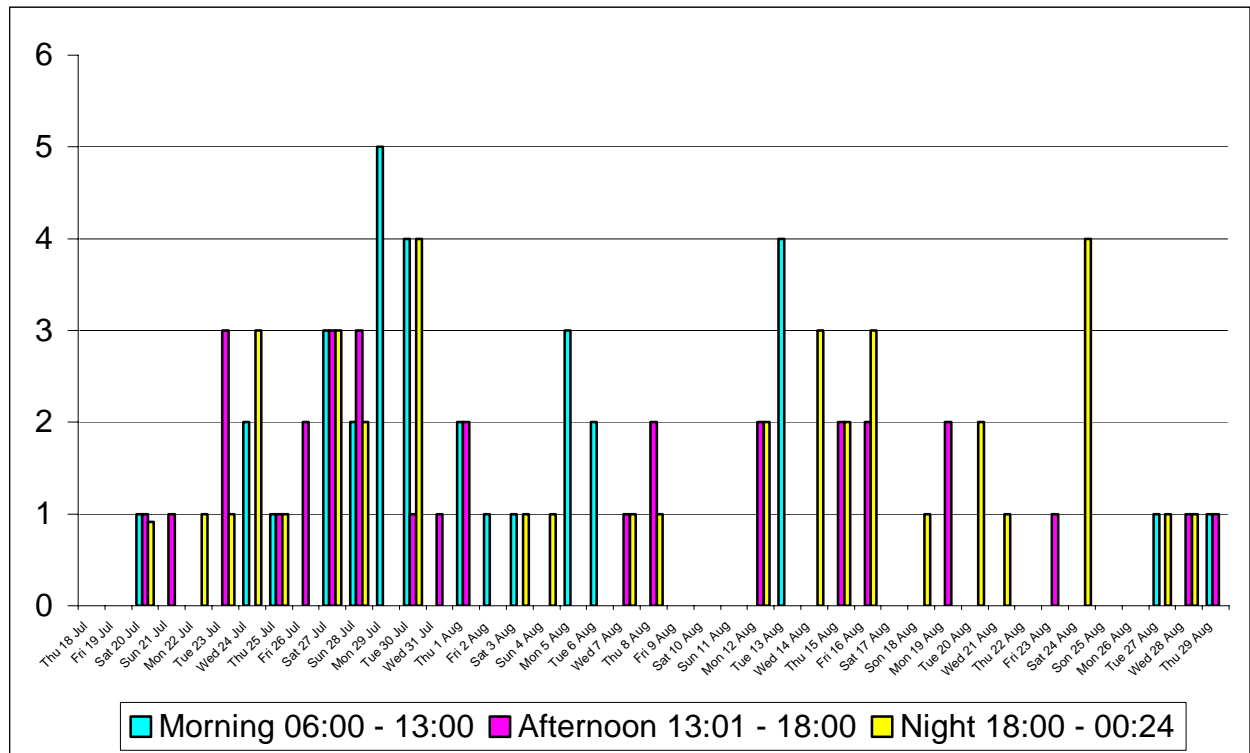
The online facilitator concurred with the remark on ‘availability’ and in Exhibit 4.66 she added ...

Exhibit 4.66 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on her visibility

I think I was approachable. Ek dink die feit dat ek daar was. Die feit dat ek beskikbaar was as hulle my nodig gehad het
 [Translation: I think the fact that I was there. The fact that I was available when they needed me.]

It was evident from the *Yahoo Groups* messages that the online facilitator worked around the clock. Figure 4.11 provides a graphical representation of the time frames when the online facilitator posted messages or responded to messages on *Yahoo Groups* for the six-week period.

Figure 4.11: Time of online facilitator postings on *Yahoo Groups*



The online facilitator definitely did not dominate the discussions. This was evident from Exhibit 4.67, extracted from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.67 [FG]: The learners on the non-interference from the online facilitator

I think it was good that Linda didn't interfere when we had our discussions on Yahoo, she didn't take over any discussions that happened among ourselves, because learning took place between us, and it wasn't led by Linda.

4.4.6. Use humour and special language (emoticons)

From time to time the online facilitator used **humour** and **special language** when talking to the learners as is revealed in the extracts in Exhibit 4.68, taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT*.

Exhibit 4.68: The online facilitator using humour and special language

[WCT] Thanks _____ for getting us up and running!
Your reward is attached for **consumption** (a picture of a bottle of beer)

[WCT] There will be a reward for the first posting related to Assignment 8!
(No _____, _____ and _____, it won't be extra marks, **sorry! ;-)**

[YG] (unless you are like me and prefer to take a hard copy to bed or even into a foam bath at times!).

... and the learners reciprocated as is reflected in Exhibit 4.69. Extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups* and *Yahoo Messenger*.

Exhibit 4.69: The learners using humour and special language

[YM] Now where am I supposed to find out what a LMS is?
Sounds dangerously close to PMS!! :-)
Linda **LOL!** And almost as much of a pain at times:)

[YG] >A sweating and teeth-gnashing me in pyjamas!
This module seems to give 'pajama drills' an entirely **new perspective**, doesn't it? ;-)
Hang in there.
L

As the online facilitator reiterated in Exhibit 4.70 ...

Exhibit 4.70 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on humour

Ouens was gestres en gespanne en as jy bietjie 'n smile kan bring, dan relax ouens weer en sien maar dis net werk. Dis nie lewe en dood nie. Ons kan maar grapias maak ook.
[Translation: The guys were stressed and anxious and if you brought a smile then they would relaxed again and realise that it was only work. This is not a matter of life or death. We can make the odd joke.]

4.4.7. Use ‘facilitator finesse’

The online facilitator used **control talk** (Hiss, 2000:24) cleverly and did not offend the learners. During the focus group interview the learners commented on the fact that the online facilitator never lost control of the group and that she knew what she was doing. This is summarised in Exhibit 4.71.

Exhibit 4.71 [FG]: Learners’ thoughts on the online facilitator’s control of the group

She’s clued up. She’s sympathetic. She knew what she was doing.
She watched things. Throughout the whole course, I felt that she was in control.

Throughout the course, the online facilitator remained calm and relaxed. It is imperative that a ‘caring persona’ (Hiss, 2000:25) was revealed throughout the course; otherwise the mere process of facilitation would suffer. The online facilitator explained the importance of this quality in her face-to-face interview and is explained in Exhibit 4.72.

Exhibit 4.72 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on remaining calm and relaxed

Ek het probeer om gemaklik en relaxed te bly. Ek moet sê die online onderrigervaring is vir my baie beter as ‘n face-to-face een, want in face-to-face, raak ek maklik hetig. As ouens my kwaad maak, sal ek dalk met aggressie terug reageer, terwyl online, weet jy, skryf jy jou boodskap,
[Translation: I tried to stay calm and relaxed. I must say that to me the online teaching experience is much better than face-to-face teaching, because during face-to-face I can easily get upset. If guys make me cross, I react with aggression, whilst online, you know that you have to write your message.]

The online facilitator revealed an inquisitive and caring nature, especially when ‘talking’ to the learners individually via *Yahoo Messenger*. Some of her opening lines are listed in Exhibit 4.73:

Exhibit 4.73 [YM]: The online facilitator’s opening lines

Linda (08:52:10 PM): How are things on your side?
Linda (08:10:23 PM): How are things going?
Linda Hoe vorder jy met hierdie week se dinge?
[Translation: How are you progressing this week?]
Linda Hi, you've been working late!
Linda (09:48:16 PM): Hoe gaan dit daar by jou?
[Translation: How are you going on?]
Linda (11:42:16 AM): Are you guys settled in your new tribe?
Linda (08:46:33 PM): Het jy al kontak kon maak met die nuwe ouens?
[Translation: Have you already made contact with the new guys?]

Exhibit 4.73 [YM]: The online facilitator's opening lines

Linda (08:47:17 PM): How are things going?
 Linda (01:04:35 AM): Jy werk laat!?
 [Translation: You're working late!]
 Linda (07:49:55 PM): Hoe gaan dit daar?
 [Translation: How are you?]
 Linda (07:54:44 PM): Is julle groep in die knyp?
 [Translation: Is the group in trouble?]
 Linda (01:51:24 PM): Hi, welcome back!
 Linda (09:25:42 PM): Welcome here in Messenger!

On 27 August 2002 the online facilitator posted the message, indicated in Exhibit 4.74, to all learners, wishing them well for the 'dreaded' online test.

Exhibit 4.74 [YM]: The online facilitator's 'good luck' message

Linda (10:12:45 PM): Good luck for tomorrow!

4.4.8. Be organised

The online facilitator worked in a very systematic way. Two authors (Hobgood, 2003; Ko & Rossen, 2001) specifically indicated that the syllabus for an online course should be organised by 'weeks'. This unit of time is familiar to learners and gives learners more flexibility to complete assignments within their own workspace. Assignments should then be due at the end of the week. If readings or forum postings must be completed within the basic unit of time, then allow two to three days for learners to complete the activity (Hobgood, 2003; Ko & Rossen, 2001). This guideline was clearly adhered to by the online facilitator as is indicated in Exhibit 4.75.

Exhibit 4.75 [YG]: The schedule for the course

Planning: Week 1 (18 - 24 July 2002)
 Planning: Week 2 (25 - 31 July 2002)
 Planning: Week 3 (1 - 7 August 2002)
 Planning: Week 4 (8 - 14 August 2002)
 Planning: Week 5 (15 - 21 August 2002)
 Planning: Week 6 (22 - 28 August 2002)

In addition, each week should begin and end during the 'middle of the week' rather than on a Monday (Elbaum, McIntyre & Smith, 2002:25) to accommodate learners whose busy schedules require that they complete assignments over the weekend. On checking the 2002 calendar, it reflected that each 'week' started on a 'Thursday'.

On a weekly basis, the online facilitator posted the new assignments to *Yahoo Groups*. In each week's planning, she also indicated what the learners should have done to date and what would happen during 'this' specific week, as is described in Exhibit 4.76.

Exhibit 4.76 [YG]: The week's planning

Individual Assignment 9:
By now your web site contains

- Some personal information,
- A photograph,
- A paragraph or two stating your expectations about the cour
- A poll,
- A sound file, and
- Links to sites that do conversions on your behalf.

This week you should add the following to your site:
A jigsaw puzzle using a picture of yourself (that way I will be convinced that you didn't just grab any old picture that was available on the web!) You may wish to use this site <http://www.jigzone.com> or something similar. [25%]

There was a clear distinction between tribal and individual assignments as well as collaborative behaviour. Marks were allocated per assignment. This methodical way of working was clearly appreciated by the learners as is expressed in Exhibit 4.77.

Exhibit 4.77 [FG]: Learners' comments on the course planning by weekly intervals

I liked the fact that we received our assignments on a **weekly basis** and that we didn't receive it all at once at the beginning of the course.
What I liked, I can't remember how regularly she did it, but I can recall that at times she said: by now, you should have done this and this. And then she'd make a **list**, and that **would remind me of what I haven't done yet**.

Keeping to her nature of working in a systematic way, the online facilitator announced when she was not available in the online class as is revealed in Exhibit 4.78. This occurrence only happened once!

Exhibit 4.78 [YG]: Online facilitator away for the long weekend

Yahoo Groups
Date: Thu Aug 8, 2002 8:07 pm
Subject: Long weekend ...
Hi everyone
Just to let you know that I will be away for the long weekend. 'See' you all again next week.
Enjoy

The learners adopted the same transparency regarding their whereabouts, as is reflected in Exhibit 4.79. These extracts were taken from a message in *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT*.

Exhibit 4.79: A learner away for a week and a learner's e-mail address change for a weekend

[YG] Subject **Away for the week ...**
 Thu Aug 15 11:07
 Hi all
 I will be away for the whole week (Grade 6 tour to Mpumalanga!!)
 Please forgive me if I bug you over next weekend for work that I have missed.
 Please keep me in your thoughts, 55 11-year olds are no joke!!!

[WCT] Subject **Change of e-mail for this weekend**
 Message no 69 Posted by _____ on Sat Aug 17 11:46
 Hi I was informed by Mweb that on this weekend I will not receive any mail, therefore I would like to give an alternative mail address: [e-mail address provided.]
 Thank you

The learners often received reminders from the online facilitator, especially regarding the voting ritual on a Thursday evening. Exhibit 4.80 lists various reminders to the learners extracted from *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.80 [YG]: Reminders to the learners

Subject: **VOTING CLOSES IN LESS THAN 2 HOURS!**
 Please vote before 00:00 tonight as I need know who is voted off in order to finalize the shuffle of the remaining Survivers.

Date: Tue Aug 20, 2002 11:12 pm
 Subject: Voting and Collaborative Behaviour: Week 5
 Please note that we will still proceed with our voting and collaborative behaviour exercises tomorrow evening and Thursday. As usual each person will only have one vote. Use it carefully this time round.

Date: Wed Aug 21, 2002 10:30 pm
 Could everyone please remind their tribal mates to go and vote either tonight or tomorrow up until 00:00?

Date: Tue Aug 27, 2002 10:15 pm
 Subject: About the FINAL SURFIVER ...
 Final votes to be casted on Wednesday before midnight. NB! This is your last opportunity to vote. After tomorrow evening's vote, only 5 sturdy SURFIVERS will be left.

Date: Wed Aug 28, 2002 11:21 pm
 Subject: **EVERYONE: PLEASE VOTE BEFORE 18:00!**
 I would like to confirm that everyone is entitled to vote for the final winner, the SOLE SURFIVER, not only the ones who remained in the final tribes.

The online facilitator notoriously stuck to deadlines regarding the tribal assignments as is indicated in Exhibit 4.81.

Exhibit 4.81 [YG]: The online facilitator on deadlines for tribal assignments

Yahoo Groups

Date: Thu Aug 8, 2002 3:57 pm

I am not strict with the deadlines for the individual assignments as I understand that there could be reasons why people aren't ready in time (computers packing up and other personal reasons).

The tribal assignments though, need to be done in collaboration with other people and need a measure of synchronicity. The deadlines for these are therefore clearly indicated (usually 17:30 on a Wednesday). The moment Voting and Peer assessment starts, these assignments should be in place. As we work on a tight schedule we need to stick to those times.

She also stuck to her promise regarding the marking of assignments as is described in Exhibit 4.82.

Exhibit 4.82 [YG]: The online facilitator on deadlines for marking assignments

I also still remember my promise about the Individual Assignments. **Those marks will be ready by Sunday.** I will post your results to both ELearn2002 and WebCT.

In a very endearing manner and not to upset the learners, the online facilitator asked each learner individually via *Yahoo Messenger* to let her know where s/he had placed Individual Assignment 1, because the online facilitator could not retrieve the assignment that had to be marked. The online facilitator's plea for Individual Assignment 1 is described in Exhibit 4.83.

Exhibit 4.83 [YM]: The online facilitator's plea for assignments

Dit mag wees dat ek dit net miskyk, maar ek sien nie jou Individual Assignment 1 op die tribal site nie. Kan jy asb vir my laat weet waar ek daarna kan gaan soek – ek wil graag vandag die merkwerk afhandel. Dit is die werksopdrag waar jy 'n verslag geskryf het oor die opvoedkundige waarde van een of ander Freebie wat jy opgespoor het.

[Translation: It may be that I am missing it, but I don't see your Individual Assignment 1 on the tribal site. Please let me know where I can find it – I want to complete the marking today. It is the assignment where you had to write a report on the educational value of one of the Freebies that you found.

The learners had not responded to the online facilitator's message, and she posted the assessment results as is shown in Exhibit 4.84.

Exhibit 4.84 [YG]: The online facilitator posting assessment results

Subject: Assessment: Individual Assignments
Hi everyone
Please note that I have posted the assessments of the Individual Assignments to the 'Files' section of ELean2002. **You are welcome to discuss any problems with me.** You will note that I gave you 0 if I couldn't find a specific assignment, whilst missing links also influenced your marks. If you let me know where I can find the assignments and fix the links soon, however, **I may reconsider your marks.**

As soon as the marks were visible, the learners started explaining what had happened to Individual Assignment 1, as is evident in Exhibit 4.85.

Exhibit 4.85 [YG]: A learner quibbling about marks

Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] Assessment: Individual Assignments
Assignment 1 had to be uploaded to your tribal website at the time. But, don't worry about it now, I will follow the link from your e-mail.
Thanks you.
L
Hi Linda
There is a mark missing for Individual Assignment 1. I was not sure what to do with the URL. I reported on Nicenet's Internet Classroom Assistant (ICA). The URL for this report is: [URL provided.] Where must I link this URL to??

Once again, in her relaxed manner, the online facilitator responded that she would follow the link from this e-mail message.

4.4.9. Use your personal touch

Messages sent by the online facilitator came across naturally and personally. During the focus group interview the learners commented about this kind of approach of the online facilitator as is apparent in Exhibit 4.86.

Exhibit 4.86 [FG]: The online facilitator's personal approach to all the learners

She always made it sound as if she was only speaking to you. She never gave you the idea that she was actually talking to ten other people also. She made it personal.

The online facilitator energised the learners. One learner's comments are reflected in Exhibit 4.87. This comment was extracted from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.87 [FG]: A learner comments on the energy of the online facilitator

I felt her energy ...- if I can imagine her in class, she would be the kind of teacher who jumps all the time, and get things happening

... and the online facilitator reciprocated in Exhibit 4.88. This extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.88 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on her own curiosity

Ek het gebrand van nuuskierigheid om elke keer te kyk wat het nou gebeur in die tyd wat ek nie online was nie.
[Translation: I was dying with curiosity to see what was happening while I was not online.]

Greetings and Closings. In *Yahoo Messenger*, the specific learner was always addressed by his/her name. When the online facilitator used *Yahoo Groups* or *WebCT*, she made a habit of greeting the whole group as is reflected in Exhibit 4.89.

Exhibit 4.89: The online facilitator on greeting the learners

[WCT] Hi everyone
[WCT] Hi there, again
[YG] Good going, you guys!
[YG] Wow, this is quite a nice start, _____ and Tribe e-Learn-a-Long!
[WCT] Thanks, _____, your quick and thorough response definitely qualify for the reward.
[YG] The following people have been voted off
[WCT] An impressive score, _____!
[YG] Let's make life easier on all of us and use the tools we have in Yahoo Groups to their full potential.
[WCT] Well done to _____

The online facilitator often used the subject line to start the message and continued with the rest of the message as the salutation as is indicated in Exhibit 4.90. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.90 [YG]: The online facilitator's use of the subject line

Testing, testing
One, two, three

Your names ...
for the voting exercise were entered as follows:

Well done ...
once again to those who managed to get their sites FTPed to Hagar.

Another caring touch was revealed by the apt endings that the online facilitator wrote at the end of each message. Exhibit 4.91 lists various endings and the 'L' in die closing, indicates the initial of the online facilitator. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.91 [YG]: The online facilitator's various endings to messages

Good luck to you all! L

Remember to check this space regularly!
Good luck. L

May the best photographer win ...
L

How are the tribal assignments coming along?
EGreetings L

Go out there and get your hands dirty ...
Good luck
Linda

Who will it be ...?
EGreetings L

Any takers on this one?
eGreetings
L

Keep up the good work! L

Hope you will find this arrangement agreeable.
EGreetings L

Hang in there, week 3 will be a breeze in comparison to the previous two, I promise.
EGreetings L

Let me know how you progress.
Good luck! L

Good luck with the preparation.
EGreetings L

Exhibit 4.91 [YG]: The online facilitator's various endings to messages

```
"See" you all there!  
eGreetings  
L  
  
Be fair!  
Egreetings  
L  
  
Please also check that all your links are working.  
Egreetings  
L  
  
Good luck with the assignments.  
Egreetings  
L
```

The online facilitator wrote clear subject lines to avoid any confusion regarding assignments as is indicated in Exhibit 4.92. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.92 [YG]: The online facilitator's use of a clear subject line

```
Week 1: Logistics and assignment notes  
  
Week 1: Immunity  
  
Individual assignments  
  
Ground Rules  
  
Re: Tribe 2 e-mail addresses  
  
Important notice  
  
Immunity: Week 2  
  
NB Announcement: 7 August 2002  
  
Votes and Peer Assessment  
  
Tribal Assignment 2: READ PLEASE  
  
The tribe has spoken ...  
  
Re: [Elearn2002] Typingmaster - Best so far  
  
IP addresses  
  
InterWise addresses  
  
Calling Tribe 5  
  
Please scroll down ...  
  
Please READ! Communication Channel
```

4.4.10. Summary

The online facilitator ensured that the learners got a feel for the online environment by 'talking' to the learners in three different communication media. The online facilitator made it quite clear to the learners that the only way of communication would be the electronic medium as is described in Exhibit 4.93.

Exhibit 4.93 [YG]: The online facilitator on using electronic media

This part of the module is all about virtual community formation. That implies that you should **transfer** your normal mode of communication (telephone/face-2-face contact) to the virtual environment (the www).

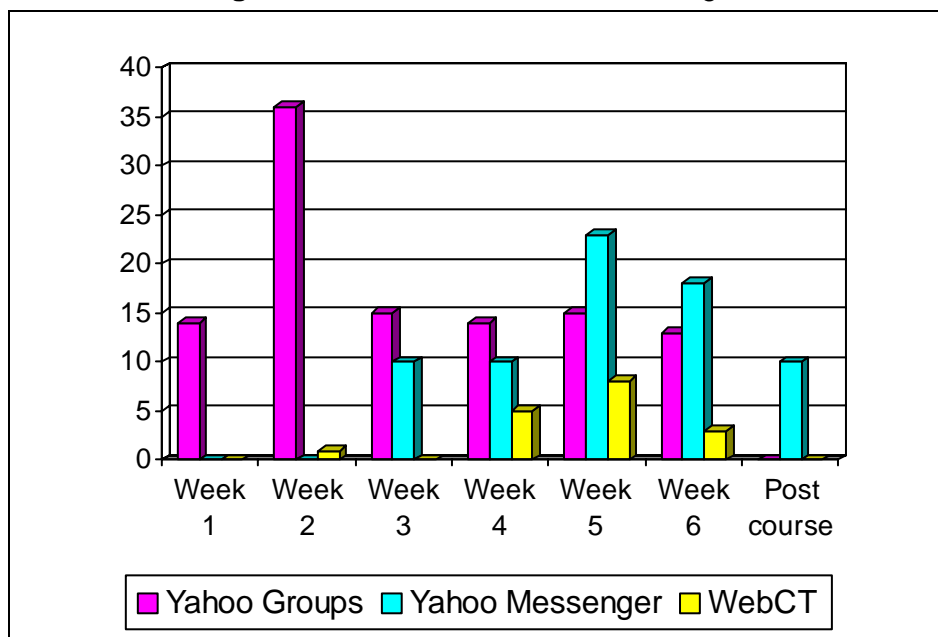
You are therefore encouraged to **e-mail** one another, to schedule tribal **chat sessions** where you brainstorm your ideas for tribal assignments, to leave messages for one another on the **bulletin board** and to send each other **instant messages online** (the Internet alternative for SMS).

The idea is to **have your conversations in cyberspace** and to refrain from taking the easy way out - by discussing them in class on a Thursday evening.

You need to know how the Internet works, how this medium can enhance your teaching/training process and you must be able to use the tools, facilities and products that are available online.

Figure 4.12 provides a summary of all the messages posted by the online facilitator during the six-week period.

Figure 4.12: Online facilitator messages



The online facilitator was aware of the fact that 'talking' happened via text messages. At stages, the online facilitator first drafted her initial reaction to the group, took a break,

reread her message to the group, rewrote the message and sent a severely edited version to the group. In the absence of body language and tone of voice, the online facilitator was particularly conscious of the power of the written word.

The online facilitator established a relaxed and supportive online environment and the learners knew that they could ask questions at any stage. On several occasions the online facilitator asked the group whether they needed help! By having such a caring disposition the learners played open cards with the online facilitator when times were tough and teams were dysfunctional. The learners could talk to their heart's content, knowing that the online facilitator was there for them at any time. The learners did a lot of 'talking' in the form of dialogues, conversations, discussions, debates and arguments and the online facilitator 'listened' to all the discussions in order to provide guidance and support. The online facilitator utilised the expertise in the group to answer questions and at no stage did she dominate the group discussions. The online facilitator pertinently admitted that she only 'talked' when questions were directed at her specifically. When 'talking' to the learner/s, the online facilitator provided supportive and comprehensive feedback to the question. The online facilitator never merely responded with a 'Yes' or 'Fine', but added additional information to provide the learner with all the facts at that stage to be able to continue with the rest of the assignment. The online facilitator tried to close the loop at all stages.

The online facilitator used an andragogical approach towards the learners and made adjustments to accommodate the adults, when necessary. At any stage the online facilitator could substantiate her actions and there was a purpose why all the activities had to be done in the way they were designed. If a group struggled longer than anticipated, the online facilitator provided tips on how to do certain tasks, but at no stage did she spoon-feed any learner.

The online facilitator displayed 'facilitator finesse' by incorporating humour and emoticons in her discussions and never offending the learners. She never lost control of the group and remained calm and relaxed. During her synchronous 'talks' with each learner, the online facilitator displayed an endearing nature, always establishing how the learner was. The online facilitator always greeted the learner/group by name, used clear subject lines and appropriate endings to all messages.

In conclusion, it was evident that the online facilitator 'listened' and 'talked' to all learners in a very personal way, which was indicative of the fact that she made a choice to be more 'interpersonal' on the Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum (White & Weight, 2000).

4.5. What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?

4.5.1. Analysing the postings against the Blignaut and Trollip taxonomy

The 122 postings that the online facilitator created in the asynchronous communication tools of *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* were analysed against the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments. The 61 synchronous postings created in *Yahoo Messenger* were also analysed against the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. In this case the complete conversation between the online facilitator and the particular learner was analysed in order to provide the context for the posting.

The various individual postings per communication tool were collated into three separate text files and uploaded into *ATLAS/ti*, a qualitative data analysis program. Figure 4.13 provides a graphical representation of the online facilitator's postings in *Yahoo Groups*.

Figure 4.13: Online facilitator postings from *Yahoo Groups*

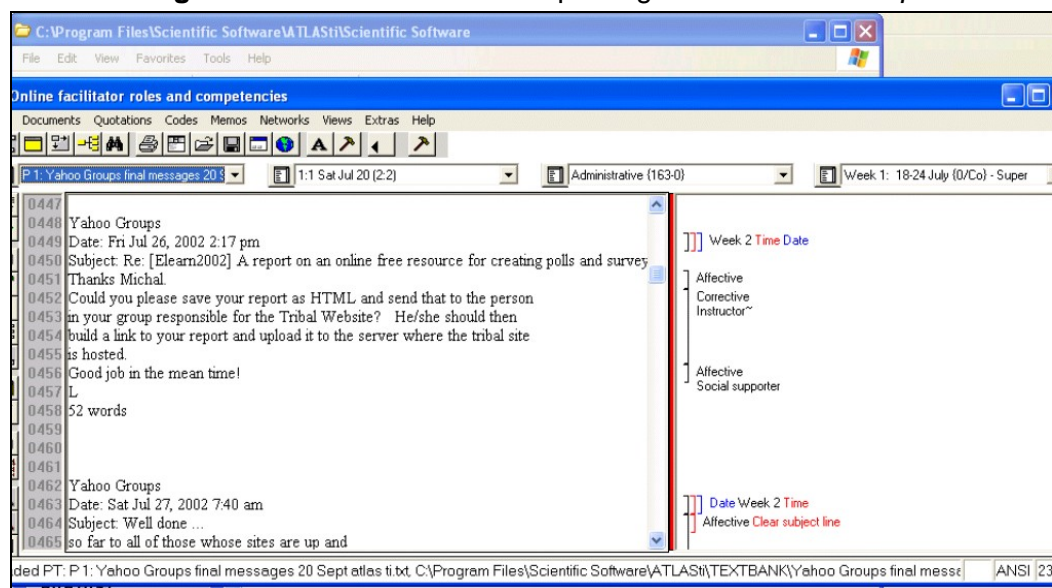


Figure 4.14 provides a graphical representation of the online facilitator's postings in *WebCT*.

Figure 4.14: Online facilitator postings from *WebCT*

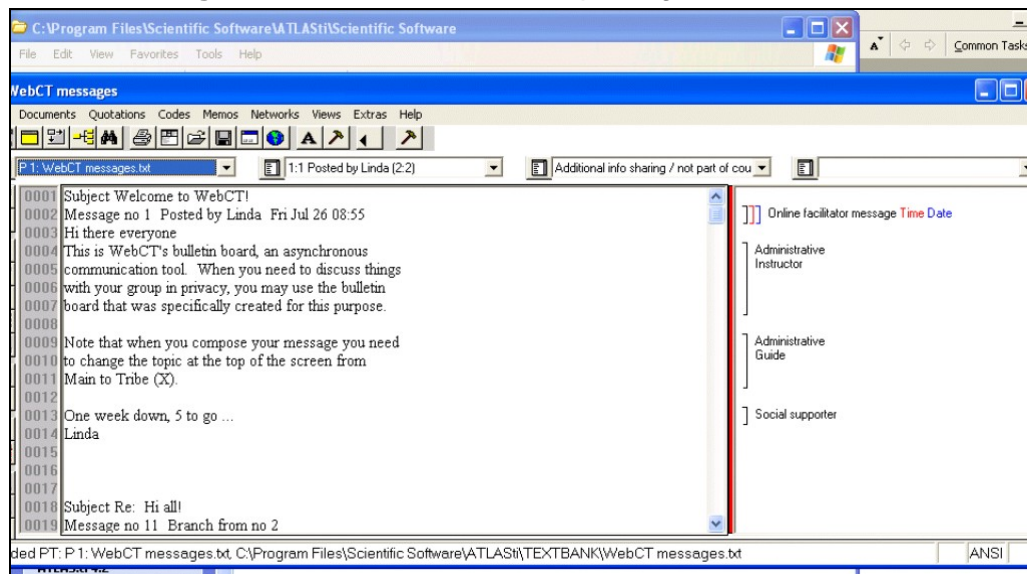
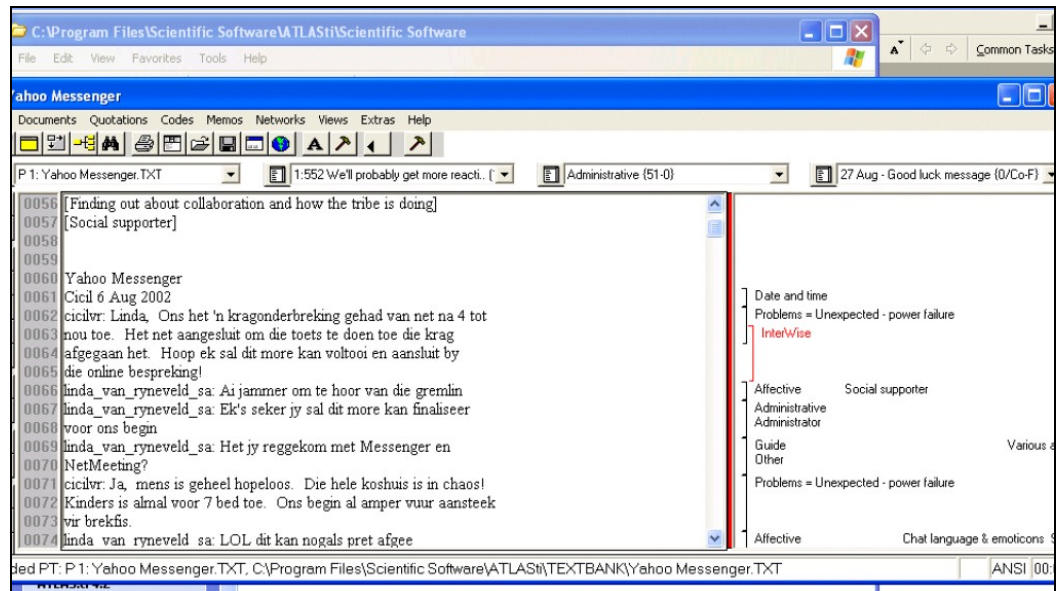


Figure 4.15 provides a graphical representation of the online facilitator's postings in *Yahoo Messenger*.

Figure 4.15: Online facilitator and learner conversation from *Yahoo Messenger*



The taxonomy was user-friendly and the thematic units could be categorised with ease. A discussion of the results from the various analyses follows. Evidence is provided per category, indicating how the researcher interpreted the taxonomy:

Administrative (with no academic content)

Exhibit 4.94 lists messages that fall within the Administrative (with no academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.94: Administrative (with no academic content) messages

[YG] Just to confirm the tribes with you guys.

[YG] Could each tribe please appoint a spokesperson for the week? Post the name of this person to the Yahoo Groups message board. This person will then negotiate a time for Tribal Council (which must take place before next Thursday!) with all the players and with myself in an online chat room of your choice.

[YG] For this purpose you will also need to have access to a free FTP application such as CuteFTP.

[YG] Play this game as often as you want throughout the week and upload a screen dump of your highest score into the files section of your Yahoo Groups.

[WCT] Please remember to check your WebCT bulletin board on a regular basis. I am not going to duplicate all my messages in both these mediums.

[WCT] Remember that all the assignments for this week should be ready for evaluation by 17:30 on Thursday evening.

[YG] You will also notice that I only added those students who responded to my email asking for your student numbers, initials and surnames.

[YG] The assignments are all listed in the .pdf file that was uploaded to this site.

[WCT] I would still like the majority of you to finalize your work on the map by tomorrow evening, as I need you to focus on the assignments for week 6.

[YG][WCT] Those marks will be ready by Sunday. I will post your results to both Elearn2002 and WebCT.

[YG] Note that when you compose your message you need to change the topic at the top of the screen from Main to Tribe (X).

In the final analyses, the Administrative (with no academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 169 transcript segments.
- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 51 transcript segments.
- In *WebCT*, there were 29 transcript segments.

Affective (with no academic content)

Exhibit 4.95 lists messages that fall within the Affective (with no academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.95: Affective (with no academic content) messages

[YG] I hope that you are all well on you way with both your individual and your tribal assignments by now

[YG] May the best photographer win ...
How are the tribal assignments coming along? eGreetings

[WCT] Great stuff!! Good going, you guys!

[YG] You are welcome to e-mail me personally so that I can talk you through the assignments. This offer stands for all the other 'Survivors' as well.

[YG] I am happy with the (steep) learning curve that I detect in most of the tribal members.

[WCT] Thanks, _____, your quick and thorough response definitely qualify for the reward.

[YG] Good job in the mean time! Hang in there!

[YG] Well done ...so far to all of those whose sites are up and running!

[YG] I recognise the fact that this has been a first for many of you and are so proud of you for getting it in such a short space of time.

[WCT] a great big thank you to those of you who are more advanced, for sharing your knowledge and skills so freely with the others

[YG] (unless you are like me and prefer to take a hard copy to bed or even into a foam bath at times!).

In the final analyses, the Affective (with no academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 137 transcript segments.
- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 122 transcript segments.
- In *WebCT*, there were 7 transcript segments.

Other (with no academic content):

Exhibit 4.96 lists messages that fall within the Other (with no academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.96: Other (with no academic content) messages

[YG] About the fairness of the synchronicity of this particular Competition. Who ever said that anything in life was fair? ;-)

[YG] That is correct. _____ decided not to continue. I don't know of anyone else who officially left the course.

[YG] As for the UP Discussion Board, it has nothing to do with our course and are there for a different purpose.

In the final analyses, the Other (with no academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 4 transcript segments.
- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 23 transcript segments.
- In *WebCT*, there were 0 transcript segments.

Corrective (with academic content):

Exhibit 4.97 lists messages that fall within the Corrective (with academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.97: Corrective (with academic content) messages

[YG] If changes are made to sites after the deadline, tribes may very well be penalized if some people already did their assessments.

[YG] Are you sure that you are using the right address? I can access it without problems both from home and from the office (read: from behind the dreaded firewall).
https://vc.up.ac.za/vc.cgi?port=login_sos

[YG] Some people gave another tribe a really solid mark when the Tribal Assignment has not even been posted to the Tribe's web site!

[YG] Others didn't bother to vote or assess their tribal mates in terms of their collaborative behaviour which leaves big gaps in the value of the entire exercise.

[YG] Could I ask you all to take things seriously this week?

[YG] If we find that it works better this time round, I will consider a re-assessment session. We will then draw up the official assessment criteria for the prior 2 Tribal Assignments as well, and go through the process again.

[YG] This week immunity is not awarded for a game, but for a typing test. See my previous email in this regard.

[YG] There was not necessarily serious academic discourse (yet).

[YG] Because their address runs over 2 lines, the browser only recognizes the first part as an http:// ... address

In the final analyses, the Corrective (with academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 20 transcript segments.
- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 0 transcript segments.
- In *WebCT*, there were 0 transcript segments.

Informative (with academic content):

Exhibit 4.98 lists messages that fall within the Informative (with academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.98: Informative (with academic content) messages

[YG] It is ESSENTIAL for you guys to talk to one another about the game and about the assignments! This part of the module is all about virtual community formation.

[YG] _____, I am not sure whether you don't understand what is expected of you, or whether you simply haven't read the assignment file that was uploaded to Yahoo Groups last Thursday?

[YG] Keep our assessment template in mind in order to be fair.

[WCT] Assignment 1 had to be uploaded to your tribal website at the time. But, don't worry about it now, I will follow the link from your e-mail.

[WCT] Please also check that all your links are working.

[YG] Yes, a thread makes it easy for you to see which email is a reply to a previous one as the thread keeps them together.

[YG] However, there is still a second question that remains unanswered...

[YG] Good! That's the idea, even though I realise that it must be stressful even to guys like yourself with a solid Internet background

In the final analyses, the Informative (with academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 91 transcript segments.
- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 111 transcript segments.
- In *WebCT*, there were 4 transcript segments.

Socratic (with academic content):

Exhibit 4.99 lists messages that fall within the Socratic (with academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.99: Socratic (with academic content) messages

[YG] Do their comments show that they actually experimented with these tools (I suspect that many did play around with Yahoo Messenger, but did anyone really get to use NetMeeting to its fullest potential)? Did they give a clear indication of the perceived educational value of each of the functionalities?

[YG] Did they compare the value of the two products or did they simply list their attributes in the table? Is there substance in their evaluation of the functionalities?

[YG] It's true, there must be a thousand of new words, acronyms and concepts in this course. Thanks for your explanations above.

[YG] The value of transparency is debatable, as it may also inhibit people to give an honest assessment (due to a number of inexplicable human nature issues). But, the opposite is also true, I give you that much.

[YG] I wish to encourage people to comment freely on the sites of other tribes AND individuals in the ELearn2002 group.

[YG] When I reread my message this morning I was surprised to see how cold and cross it sounded, when I actually thought I was joking lightheartedly last night.

[YG] The fact that many of you are really worried about writing the formal test, even though it is an open book (browser) test, just proves to me that formal summative testing is an evil practice that burdens students with unnecessary levels of stress! ;-)

[YG] I would have wanted everyone to brainstorm on the various elements related to elearning and then maybe split the topics amongst themselves to go and research

In the final analyses, the Socratic (with academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 9 transcript segments.
- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 5 transcript segments.
- In *WebCT*, there were 0 transcript segments.

Figure 4.16 provides a graphical representation of the analyses of all the message units.

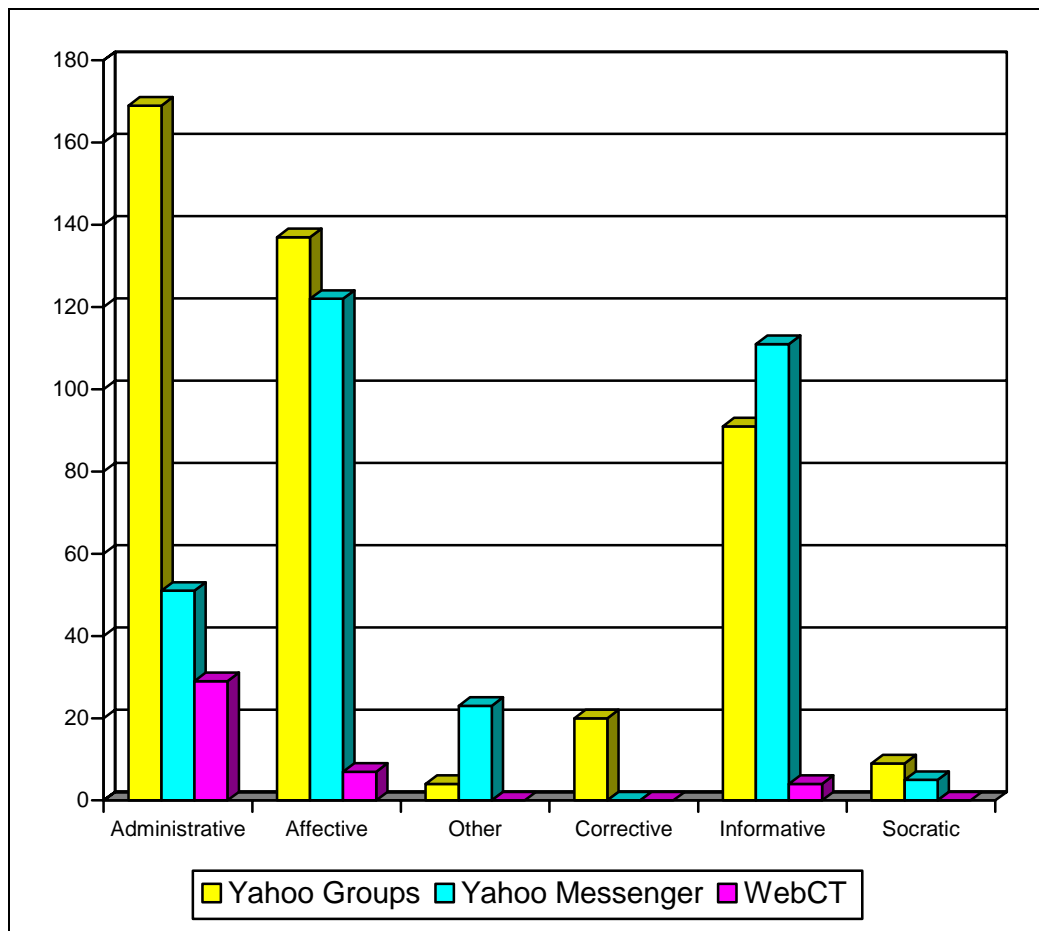
It is important to note that the 'Other' category is low. This might be an indication that the learners really stuck to discussing the topics at hand. A possible reason for 'Corrective'

being low was because the course revolved around process and not product. Exhibit 4.100 describes one of the learner's reflections during the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.100 [FG]: A learner's reflections on the course as process and not product

This may sound contradictory, but I actually had a long discussion again over Yahoo with Linda about some of the work that we've done, and about the quality of the web pages I think it was at that stage. And I said to her: you know, **this is about process**, and she said: yes, **it is about process**, but she also wanted quality in the web page. And if you wanted feedback, I mean, if you really want to learn HTML, you should go to one of these colleges and write in for a three-day course or something. That's how I feel about it. So I felt that it was entirely about process. And **I don't think that you really need Linda to tell you that your web page was nice**, was pretty.

Figure 4.16: Summary of message units according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy



The online facilitator gave the learners a variety of assignments. These assignments often dealt with the hands-on skill of uploading content, 'ftp-ing' a page to the server and making hyperlinks. If the learners were successful in completing the various assignments, little corrective feedback was needed, indicating the low 'Corrective' score.

During the focus group interview, some of the learners commented that they would have enjoyed having more in-depth discussions on various topics as is reflected in Exhibit 4.101.

Exhibit 4.101 [FG]: Learners' request for deeper discussions

What would have been nice, is if you really had some interesting or controversial contents, which was about online learning or something like that. And there may have been a debate about that,

I would have liked more discussions. Ja, deeper discussions. **Deeper discussions.** You said some more cognitive discussions. Ja, I agree with you. I think the... learning that should have taken place, well maybe it did take place in the end if you look back at it, and then it took place in a constructive way. But also, I really felt that at times that I **missed discussing** things, and to be able to say what I've learned from this, or what I haven't learned from it, while it was taking place, ... I think that the course equipped you very well to sit and have a discussion with someone on online learning and what it's about, where as if it had been a very structured behaviourist course, here's the first guide in HTML: follow these tutorials – it would not have had the same effect

No, I think it's on the student's side. A lot of what you were learning depended upon yourself. How much you learn, how deep you learn, and how driven you are yourself.

On the flip side, some learners replied that they did not think there was time to go into these 'deeper discussions' as is evident from Exhibit 4.102.

Exhibit 4.102 [FG]: Learners' rebuttal on deeper discussions

I think if we had more time to work through the stuff, I think we could have gone deeper into those discussions, but there **wasn't really time to go into deep-deep discussions** regarding a certain point.

This could possibly indicate why the 'Socratic' score was so low.

On completion of the various analyses according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy, the researcher could deduct that the online facilitator provided comprehensive administrative information, supported the learners in an affective manner and ensured that learners received comments on their postings as well as individual feedback. There was still no indication which roles made the online facilitator 'visible' to the learners. The researcher also had a concern in terms of how the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy would accommodate a conflict situation, as conflict is a pervasive part of all human relationships, including those in the electronic classroom (White & Weight, 2000).



Refer to:

- Annexure H for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Groups* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. (On CD ROM).
- Annexure I for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Messenger* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. (On CD ROM).
- Annexure J for an analysis of the message units in *WebCT* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. (On CD ROM).

4.5.2. 'Visible' facilitator roles

The researcher conducted a second content analysis to identify the 'visible' facilitator roles. The content analysis of postings of asynchronous online courses can be analysed according to five methods, namely by participants, form, content, reference to participants and the function of the communication (Fulford & Sakaguchi, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a content analysis of postings created by the online facilitator to categorise the various 'visible' roles of the online facilitator. Content analysis can be defined as a set of research procedures that include identifying and defining a target variable, collecting examples of representative text and devising reliable and valid rules for categorising segments of the text (Anderson *et al.* 2001:10).

There are five units of analysis for research on computer conferencing (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer, 1999), namely proposition, sentence, paragraph, thematic and message units. Thematic units can be defined as a 'single thought unit or idea unit that conveys a single item of information extracted from a segment of information' (Rourke *et al.* 1999:60). Thematic units were used as the unit of analysis for this part of the study because it enabled the researcher to capture the essence of each communication and more than one code could be assigned to each posting.

'Visibility' was the crux of this investigation. The researcher used the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy as a base line. The various categories were transformed into roles, taking into account how each category was defined and ring fenced. However, the researcher looked for indicators that would reflect 'visibility' on the part of the online facilitator. The researcher also considered what the learners and online facilitator had to say regarding the 'visibility' of the online facilitator and what the learners and online facilitator recommended could improve the 'visibility' of the online facilitator. Five roles

were identified (administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator) and five different coding schemes were designed. Thereafter, all the online facilitator postings in *Yahoo Groups*, *WebCT* and *Yahoo Messenger* were categorised against the five 'visible' roles.

4.5.3. *Role of Administrator*

The 'Administrative' category was converted to 'Administrator'. The online facilitator fulfilling the role of the administrator had to ensure timeous and smooth course operations to enhance the learners' comfort levels. The administrator's actions provide the framework for learning and reduce learner anxiety with regards to course content and procedures (Learning Peaks, 2001).

The online facilitator also saw the necessity for this role and indicated that Frequently Asked Questions could be used as a help tool. Exhibit 4.103 provides evidence for the role of the Administrator as extracted from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.103 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Administrator

Daar was ook 'n sterk administratiewe komponent - deurgaans moes jy ouens herinner van goed wat gedoen moet word en dan kontroleer of hulle dit gedoen het.
[Translation: There was also a strong administrative component. On a continual basis you had to remind the guys of things to do and then check whether everything was done.]

Dis hoekom ek in die volgende een definitief FAQ sal gebruik wat 'n tipe van 'n helpdesk is
[Translation: That is why, in the next one (online course) I will definitely use FAQ that can be utilised as a type of help desk]

In Exhibit 4.104 one of learners suggested that prerequisites could be posted to the site to give the 'to be learners' an indication of what the course consisted of. The extract was taken from the focus group interview. This clearly falls within the realm of the Administrator.

Exhibit 4.104 [FG]: Post pre-requisites for an online course

I think what should have been done, is to post a set of prerequisites before you start this course. You need to be able to do this and this and this...

Table 4.1 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Administrator. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.1: Coding scheme for the Administrator

Indicators	Examples
Share group names	[YG] Just to confirm the tribes with you guys
Confirm communication protocol, communication tools and passwords	[YG] You are encouraged to e-mail one another, to schedule tribal chat sessions, to leave messages on the bulletin board and to send each other instant messages on line
Supply tools, URLs, links and download options	[YG] One last web page ...to be visited as part of the Surfiver module! http://207.89.188.135/eoti.htm
Post important dates and times	[YG] I will collate the votes and let you know who's been voted off into the new Tribe 5 by Sunday 14:00 at the latest.
Post reminders	[WCT] EVERYONE: PLEASE VOTE BEFORE 18:00!
Present information on the course and assignments	[YG] This week's assignment is once again listed under 'Files'.
Inform learners about 'office hours' or when the online facilitator will not be available	[YG] Subject: Long weekend ... Hi everyone Just to let you know that I will be away for the long weekend. 'See' you all again next week.

4.5.4. Role of Social Supporter

The 'Affective' and 'Other' categories were converted to 'Social Supporter' (Choden, 2002). The online facilitator fulfilling the role of the social supporter has to maintain the social and emotional rapport within the group. The social supporter needs to connect with the learners in an informal way, look after the social interaction within the group, be alert to individual emotional turmoil and introduce some fun into the learning experience, irrespective of the course content. 'Remember the 4-F motto – Be Firm, Fair, Flexible, and *Fun!*' (Hiss, 2000:26).

The learners felt that this was an important role for the online environment as is revealed in Exhibit 4.105. The extract was taken from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.105 [FG]: A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – from a learner's perspective

Yes, so there must be a role like a supporter of something like that. I do not have the exact title, but she looked after us. I often spoke to her on Yahoo Messenger and she was always supportive, not only in terms of the course work. She wanted to know how I was doing.

The online facilitator concurred to the role of the social supporter as is described in Exhibit 4.106. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.106 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – from the online facilitator's perspective

Ook om emosionale ondersteuning te gee. Ek het dikwels gesê die einde is amper daar of volgende week sal ligter wees.
[Translation: to give emotional support as well. I often said the end is in sight or next week will be easier.]

According to the online facilitator, it was also important to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere as is indicated in Exhibit 4.107. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview. This is a role that the social supporter would fulfil.

Exhibit 4.107 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere

Ouens was gestres en gespanne en as jy bietjie 'n smile kan bring, dan relax ouens weer en sien maar dis net werk. Dis nie lewe en dood nie. Ons kan maar grabies maak ook.
[Translation: The guys were stressed and anxious and if you brought a smile then they would relaxed again and realise that it was only work. This is not a matter of life or death. We can make the odd joke.]

Table 4.2 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Social Supporter. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.2: Coding scheme for the Social Supporter

Indicators	Examples
Create a friendly environment	[YM] That's good, you'll find it encouraging to see others online as well when you work late at night
Provide emotional support	[YG] Hang in there
Provide one-on-one exchanges	[YM] Do give it a try, you can't go wrong with Yahoo Messenger, smile.
Reveal something personal about yourself and use I-messages	[YM] I had a lovely weekend in Messina of all places! In the bush all weekend long, with no Internet connection within at least 50 km!
Enhance collaboration	[WCT] Wow, this is quite a nice start, Dave and Tribe e-Learn-a-Long!
Give learners the opportunity to ask for help	[YG] you are welcome to e-mail me personally so that I can talk you through the assignments. This offer stands for all the other 'Survivors' as well.
Introduce humour and use emoticons	[WCT] I'll keep that in mind (just so you know, ;))
Reflect on happenings	[YG] I recognize the fact that this week's voting is going to be really difficult for you guys.
Thank learners for what they are doing	[YG] Must say I am soo impressed with you guys. Your willingness to help each other and to share your knowledge is great and shows that we have indeed created a lively, caring online learning community!
Use appropriate and personalised endings in all messages	[YG] Good luck with this last stretch! Hope the test goes well tomorrow for all of you! eGreetings L

4.5.5. Role of Instructor

The 'Corrective' and 'Informative' categories were converted to 'Instructor'. The online facilitator, fulfilling the role of the instructor, has to facilitate the learning process, which involves direct instruction that utilises his/her subject matter expertise. The instructor refers learners to information resources and organises activities that allow the learners to construct their own personal meaning (Anderson *et al*, 2001). Asking questions and assessing learners form part of this role. It is for this reason that individual feedback needs to be frequent, consistent, timely and diplomatic (Bischoff, 2000). Instructors play a crucial role in maintaining the viability of their online course because they keep learners motivated and focused on the instructional objectives of the course and facilitate interactive information exchanges (Mazoué, 1999:108).

The learners also experienced the online facilitator as an instructor as is described in Exhibit 4.108. The extract was taken from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.108 [FG]: A role for the online facilitator as Instructor –
from the learners' perspective

Can we say that she was also a SME – she knew a lot about elearning and to make the face puzzle and all the games that we had to play – she knows the Internet. I don't know where she sometimes got all her ideas. That Morse code exercise for example. Perhaps she could also be seen as an instructor/teacher. At a stage I was very confused with the mindmap and then she gave our group ideas what to look for. Remember she also said that we were doing things wrong – on the mindmap. Then I spoke to her on Yahoo Messenger and she gave us examples of what to do.

Table 4.3 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Instructor. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.3: Coding scheme for the Instructor

Indicators	Examples
Focus on the learning process	[YG] There was not necessarily serious academic discourse (yet). Tomorrow evening we'll discuss this some more.
Provide explanations	[YG] It is ESSENTIAL for you guys to talk to one another about the game and about the assignments! This part of the module is all about virtual community formation. That implies that you should transfer your normal mode of communication (telephone/face-2-face contact) to the virtual environment (the www).
Provide individual feedback	[YG] _____, I am not sure whether you don't understand what is expected of you, or whether you simply haven't read the assignment file that was uploaded to Yahoo Groups last Thursday?
Ask questions	[WCT] Does everyone know ...what I am talking about when I use terms such as SYNCHRONOUS and ASYNCHRONOUS communication? Would anyone like to try and explain what they mean?
Give instructions	[YG] Individually you only need to upload your sites to Hagar, change your shelter.gif and upload the sound file this week.
Use your subject matter expertise	[YG] You could also log onto one of the servers and have your name listed there, but sometimes that leaves you open for unwanted interest from other 'interesting' people out there. Best way of doing this type of thing is to remain in contact using Yahoo Messenger whilst trying to connect through NetMeeting. That way if something goes wrong, at least you have a backup.

4.5.6. Role of Guide

The 'Socratic' category was converted to 'Guide'. The online facilitator fulfilling the role of a guide has to encourage interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge. The guide needs to make time so that the learners can reflect on experiences. The guide provides direction and advice to the individual and group in terms of the course content to encourage all learners reach their full potential.

In Exhibit 4.109, one learner commented on his sound file about a guidance role:

Exhibit 4.109 [SF]: A role for the online facilitator as Guide –
from a learner's perspective

I have heard from other team members that they are completely lost and I think that a little bit more guidance would be necessary to help everybody through.

The online facilitator asked the following question during the face-to-face interview, which is captured in Exhibit 4.110.

Exhibit 4.110 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Guide –
a question by the online facilitator

sometimes I suggested what to do, is that a guide?

Table 4.4 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Guide.

Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.4: Coding scheme for the Guide

Indicators	Examples
Inform learners that you, as online facilitator, are addressing their problem or issue	[YG] I will follow up and ask Johannes.
Provide helpful and additional information	[YG] Set the time to 2 minutes.
Encourage collaboration	[WCT] This week it shouldn't be a problem as all the tribes still have at least 3 members
Keep learners motivated	[YG] I am happy with the (steep) learning curve that I detect in most of the tribal members even after only one week in the online class.
Provide a challenge	[YG] The first person to respond to this e-mail with the correct answers will win a (real) reward on Thursday evening.
Work one-on-one with an individual to fulfil his/her potential	[WCT] But, don't worry about it now, I will follow the link from your e-mail. Thanks you.
Put learners at ease	[YG] Nothing wrong on your side. It was only my Yahoo Mailbox that was overflowing! I cleaned it up now so it shouldn't happen again.

4.5.7. Role of Mediator

An extra role was added, which is the role of mediator (Ambrose, 2001). This role was necessary as the group experienced conflict situations. The online facilitator fulfilling the role of the mediator has to ensure fair play within the group.

Exhibit 4.111 reveals a learner's answer in her formal test response on working with other team members.

**Exhibit 4.111 [FTR]: A role for the online facilitator as Mediator –
a learner's perspective on team work**

I hated the first tribe. The only other person that was more or less active – only when it suited him – refused to work on his own cost at night and during weekends with the result that he only worked during office hours from his office ... while I tried to run a business during the day and only worked at night – like most of the other students. With the new tribes formed I was in seventh heaven!

Exhibit 4.112 reveals a learner's reflections on his sound file regarding peer evaluation.

**Exhibit 4.112 [SF]: A role for the online facilitator as Mediator –
a learner's perspective on peer evaluation**

The only negative, and perhaps it is actually a positive, is accepting the criticism of others. I did not like peer evaluation. Everyone seemed to be applying different criteria for the evaluation of websites.

In Exhibit 4.113 the online facilitator acknowledged that she played the role of a mediator. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

**Exhibit 4.113 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Mediator –
the online facilitator's perspective**

Ek moes op 'n stadium konflik ook uitsorteer, so dit was miskien 'n konflikhanteerder. Arbiter tipe rol.
[Translation: At one stage I had to handle conflict, so that could be a mediator. Arbitrator type role.]

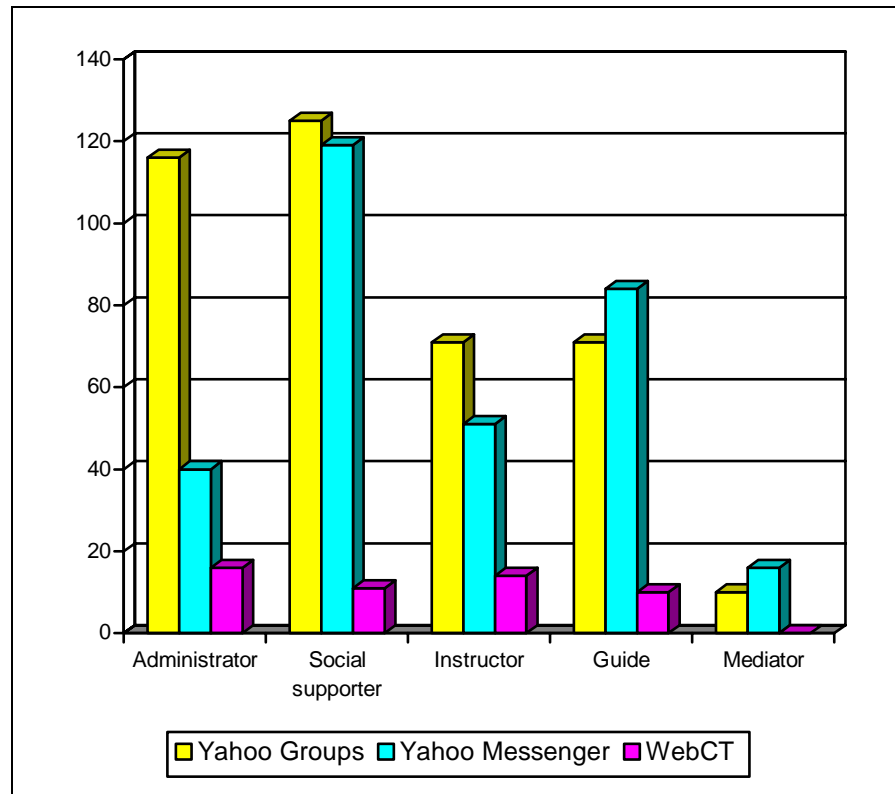
Table 4.5 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Mediator. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.5: Coding scheme for the Mediator

Indicators	Examples
Ensure standards of fair play	[YG] If changes are made to sites after the deadline, tribes may very well be penalized if some people already did their assessments.
Intervene in difficult situations	[YG] How are things going in Messenger and NetMeeting? Have all the tribes started playing with these tools yet? Let me know well in advance if you are not getting any joy from your tribal mates so that we can arrange for you to 'play' along with another tribe. It is important that you get hands-on experience with these tools.
Build consensus	[YG] If we find that it works better this time round, I will consider a re-assessment session. We will then draw up the official assessment criteria for the prior 2 Tribal Assignments as well, and go through the process again.
Sort out disputes	[WCT] This time round I will not take the first correct answer (thanks to all who pointed out that it was totally unfair the previous time round;-).

Figure 4.17 provides a graphical representation of the analyses of all the message units according to the five roles of Administrator, Social Supporter, Instructor, Guide and Mediator.

Figure 4.17: Summary of message units according to the five online facilitator roles



Refer to:

- Annexure H for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Groups* according to the five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).
- Annexure I for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Messenger* according to the five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).
- Annexure J for an analysis of the message units in *WebCT* according to the five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).

4.5.8. Summary

For visibility the online facilitator fulfilled five roles. As **administrator**, she conducted timeous course administration. This was evident from the following indicators: share group names; confirm communication protocols, communication tools and passwords;

supply tools, URLs, links and download options; post important dates and time; post reminders; present information on the course and assignments and inform learners when the online facilitator will not be available. As **social supporter**, she maintained social and emotional support. This was evident from the following indicators: create a friendly environment; provide emotional support; provide one-on-one exchanges; reveal something personal about yourself and use I-messages; enhance collaboration; give learners the opportunity to ask for help; introduce humour and use emoticons; reflect on happenings; thank learners for what they are doing and use appropriate and personalised endings in all messages. As **instructor**, she facilitated the learning process. This was evident from the following indicators: focus on the learning process; provide explanations; provide individual feedback; ask questions; give instructions and use your subject matter expertise. Just because learners are not physically present does not mean that an instructor can forget about their learners (Mazoué, 1999). As **guide**, she encouraged interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge. This was evident from the following indicators: inform learners that you are addressing their problem or issue; provide helpful and additional information; encourage collaboration; keep learners motivated; provide a challenge; work one-on-one with an individual to fulfil his/her potential and put learners at ease. Clued-up guides do not risk losing their learners by abandoning them in cyberspace (Mazoué, 1999). As **mediator**, she ensured fair play. This was evident from the following indicators: ensure standards of fair play; intervene in difficult situations; build consensus and sort out disputes. If problems occurred, the online facilitator intervened to resolve the problems. Fulfilling these five roles would provide for online facilitator visibility.

4.6. What challenges did the online facilitator face?

Fifty-six exhibits have been selected from the raw data to show that the online facilitator had to manage various challenges during *CyberSurviver*.

In the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator she explicitly stated that good planning was imperative for an online course and that the facilitator had to consider time implications for assignments as is stated in Exhibit 4.114. She concluded that an online facilitator had to anticipate the potential for trouble and plan accordingly.

Exhibit 4.114 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on anticipating the potential for trouble

Ek dink 'n ou moet baie gestruktureerd wees. Jy moet baie deeglike beplanning doen. Jy moet baie pertinent weet waarvoor jy jou inlaat. Jy moet antisipeer hoe lank goed vat om te doen. 'n Mens moet weet byvoorbeeld dat online discussions neem langer as 'n telefoongesprek. So waar 'n telefoongesprek 10 minute gaan neem voor 'n ding uitgesorteer gaan wees, gaan online dieselfde oefening dalk 'n week vat. 'n Ou moet die heeltid antisipeer wat die potensiaal vir moeilikheid is, en dit probeer ondervat. [Translation: You have to be well structured. You have to plan thoroughly. You have to know what you are letting yourself in for. You have to anticipate the time implications for various activities. You must realise, for example, that online discussions take longer than telephone calls. Where a telephone discussion may take 10 minutes, to sort out the same problem online may take a week. One constantly has to anticipate the potential for trouble and plan accordingly.]

On reflecting on this course, the online facilitator had her fair share of problems, dilemmas, conflict and confusion as is revealed in Exhibit 4.115. This abstract was taken from the self-administered questionnaire that the online facilitator completed during August 2003.

Exhibit 4.115 [Q]: The online facilitator reflected on the challenges of *CyberSurviver*

In CyberSurviver practically everything that could go wrong did. Learners didn't listen properly to the instructions at the first f2f encounter we had, and this meant that the entire first week was chaotic. Learners didn't access regularly and missed deadlines due to confusion. Seeing how things can go horribly wrong, even when details had received careful planning and attention, means that an online facilitator needs to have a tolerance for stress that is almost supernatural.

I battled the first week in particular, when nothing happened as I anticipated it would, and had a hard time masking my own insecurities as a facilitator.

4.6.1. Mayhem during Week 1

There was mayhem during Week 1 of the course. During the first weekend the online facilitator, eager to assist and guide the learners on *Yahoo Groups*, realised that something had to be wrong because very little interaction took place. Exhibit 4.116 gives a detailed account of the anguish of the online facilitator during the first weekend of the course. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.116 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's anguish during Week 1

Die heel eerste naweek ... was ek die heeltyd online, en ek het gewag vir daai response wat moet kom, en ek was geweldig bekommerd toe ek sien niks gebeur nie, want ek weet mos nou hulle het net die week, so as hulle 'n naweek laat verbygaan is daar net drie dae, en dan is die week klaar. Die kursus het van Donderdag tot Donderdag geloop. En dit het my groot laat skrik. En die Maandag toe die ouens so begin praat, het ek onmiddellik gereageer, en onmiddellik probeer terugvoer gee. Dan het ek onmiddellik ge-e-mail en gesê: Wat is dit! As jy nie die opdrag het, hier moet jy dit kry. As jy dit nie verstaan nie, dit is wat jy moet doen.
[Translation: I was online throughout the whole of the first weekend and waited for responses which did not materialise, and I was extremely worried when I realised that nothing was happening, knowing that they had only a week, so if a weekend passed, there are only three days left to complete the assignment. The course ran from Thursday to Thursday. This gave me a big fright. On the Monday when the guys started responding I immediately reacted and responded with feedback. I would immediately e-mail, saying what is the matter. If you haven't got the assignment, this is where to get it. If you do not understand, this is what you must do.]

The online facilitator soon realised what the mistake was as is reflected in the *Yahoo Groups* message in Exhibit 4.117.

Exhibit 4.117 [YG]: The Yahoo Groups mistake

Yahoo Groups
Date: Tue Jul 23, 2002 5:13 pm
Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] Great stuff!!
Answering _____
Your e-mail message on my screen does not have a frame on the left side, never mind a link. Furthermore I cannot access E-Learn2002 from my present Yahoo ID!
I was obviously in Yahoo Groups when I replied (late last night!) and completely forgot that most of you would probably receive my message as an e-mail. Apologies!
However, you need to ask _____ to link your ID to the course asap! All your assignments for this part of the module will be posted there.

During the face-to-face interview session with the online facilitator, she was reflecting on the mayhem of Week 1 and tried to pinpoint where the confusion had crept in, because she really thought that she had planned this course well – the *CyberSurviver* Introduction

and Planning for Week 1 were uploaded to the 'Files' section on *Yahoo Groups*. Exhibit 4.118 provides evidence for the confusion of Week 1, taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.118 [FtoF]: The origin of the confusion of Week 1

Op die heel eerste aand het ons mos die kontakssessie gehad wat Johannes so half vir my die geleentheid gegee het om net vinnig te sê waaroor dit gaan, en om hulle in groepe in te deel, en om die bal net aan die rol te sit. En op daai eerste aand toe hulle nou in hulle groepe ingedeel is, toe sê ek vir hulle: OK, as groep moet julle nou na die web toe gaan. Onder daai hofie lê nou julle eerste week se assignment. En dit het die ouens nie gehoor nie. So daai hele eerste naweek se stilte en stilswe en histerie toe hulle nou actually agterkom wat hulle alles moet doen, was onnodig gewees.

[Translation: On the first evening we had the face-to-face contact session where Johannes gave me the opportunity to quickly reveal what the course was about and to group the learners so that the course could commence. On this occasion, after the groups were formed, I told the learners, you now have to go to the web and under a certain heading you will find the first week's assignment. And this instruction the guys did not hear. So the first weekend's silences and hysterics when they discovered what actually had to be done, was quite unnecessary.]

The online facilitator acknowledged that she made two mistakes with regards to the mayhem of Week 1. In Exhibit 4.119 the online facilitator suggested solutions that she could have used to avoid the learner confusion during the face-to-face contact session on 18 July 2002. This extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.119 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's solutions to the learner confusion during the face-to-face contact session

So my fout was twee-erlei: ek kon of een, vir hulle al die opdragte gegee het voordat ons die oefeninge gedoen het, sodat ek nog hulle onverdeelde aandag gehad het, of alternatiewelik, moes ek vir hulle weer 'n e-mail onmiddellik daai aand uitgestuur het.

[Translation: I made two mistakes. Firstly, I could have given them all the assignments before doing the group exercise so that I had their undivided attention, or alternatively, I should have sent e-mail again that evening.]

In Exhibit 4.120 the online facilitator admitted that she did not know *Yahoo Groups*. She further explained what the *Yahoo Groups* dilemma was and that she was not the only ignorant person who was unaware that in *Yahoo Groups* a setting existed to receive messages as e-mails. Some of the learners were unaware that a website was linked to the e-mail message. However, she took it for granted that the learners knew how to use this tool because all the learners and instructors who participate in the Master's degree in

Computer Assisted Education use *Yahoo Groups* as their asynchronous communication channel. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.120 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's ignorance with *Yahoo Groups*

Maar die groot verwarring het by my ingekom. Yahoo Groups het 'n web presence, maar hy't ook 'n opsie wat jy as individu kan kies om te sê dat as ouens met mekaar kommunikeer in Yahoo se web presence, dat dit as 'n e-mail na jou toe gestuur word. Die ouens wat die email gekry het, het nooit na die website gaan kyk nie. En ek, dom wat ek is, wat van die kant af inkom, ek gebruik nie Yahoo – ek gebruik WebCT as 'n reël met my goed. Dis Johannes se kursusspasie. So ek verstaan nie hierdie dilemma nie. Ek kom as 'n guest lecturer in en gebruik nou maar sy tools. Ek gaan in, sien hier's 'n bulletin board, skryf my boodskappe daar, post my goed onder file, so ek neem aan almal is in daai omgewing. En dit was eers later, hier by die tweede helfte van die week, hier by die Maandag of die Dinsdag rond, wat ek toe agterkom, maar die ouens is nie op die web nie. Die ouens kry hulle boodskappe per e-pos, en dit was 'n groot probleem, want ek het ge-antisipeer dat as ek sê dit is in jou website, gaan hulle presies weet waar. Maar hulle weet nie, baie van hulle het nie eers geweet dat daar 'n web site is wat aan daai email gekoppel is nie. [Translation: I caused the confusion. Yahoo Groups has a web presence, but it also has an option that an individual can set to receive e-mails. The guys receiving the e-mail never went to the web site. And in my ignorance I had never used Yahoo and I am only accustomed to WebCT. Yahoo Groups is Johannes' course space and I was not aware of the Yahoo setup. I was a guest lecturer and used his tools. On entering the site, I saw a bulletin board and wrote my message there, posted my files and took it for granted that everyone knew this environment. It was only later, during the second half of the week, around Monday or Tuesday that I discovered that the guys were not on the web. The guys received their messages as e-mail messages, which caused a great problem. As I anticipated, if I said go to the website, they would know where to go. But the guys were not aware of this fact that there was a website linked to the e-mail message.]

In order to remedy the first week's mayhem, the online facilitator decided to arrange another face-to-face contact session with the learners on the following Thursday evening, 25 July 2002.

In Exhibit 4.121 the online facilitator admitted that she had to provide ‘first aid’ to this very confused group in order to put them on track again. All of a sudden the group was receptive to the same information that was revealed during the first contact session. In conclusion, the online facilitator confessed that this type of treatment would not happen again, because she would, in future, be much more explicit in her instructions to the learners. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.121 [FtoF]: The online facilitator’s ‘first aid’ to a confused group of learners

En in daai sessie het ek toe die ground rules gestel, wat ek gesê het: vergeet van die geld, jy gaan moet online wees. Vergeet van die en daai, commit tot hierdie, commit tot daai. Toe't ek so half dit wat ek in die inleidingsdokument gesit het, eksplisiet gesê. Die goed wat hulle nie mooi verstaan het nie, het ek vir hulle verklaar en verduidelik - toe't hulle geluister. Die vorige keer was dit net: o, dis 'n kursus, ons gaan 'n game speel, en hier's ons nou in groepies, en goed het by hulle verby gegaan, terwyl met hierdie sessie het hulle nou 'n week se trauma, genuide trauma, agter die rug, en toe was hulle baie ontvanklik en oop, en toe't hulle acutally regtig geluister. Hulle was ontvanklik. Ek moes die leerders akkommodeer. Dis nou maar die enigste ding. Ek sal nie in die vervolg weer doen nie, want ek sal dit vervang deur vooraf, in die begin, die goed baie eksplisiet te stel. Maar dit was noodhulp wat nodig was op daai stadium, die stresvlakke was so hoog.

[Translation: In the second face-to-face session I spelt out the ground rules and I told the group to forget about the money, you have to be online. Forget about irrelevant stuff and commit to the necessary. I sort of covered the introductory document explicitly. Those issues that they did not understand, I now again clarified and they listened. With the first face-to-face session they thought oh, this is a course, we are going to play a game, we are going to be put into groups, and important information just went by them. Now, after a first week of trauma, genuine trauma, they were receptive and open and actually listened. I had to accommodate the learners. But this won't happen again. In future, I will start off right, by being very explicit in all my instructions. I had to provide first aid because the stress levels were so high.]

4.6.2. Computer literacy

The online facilitator commented that she had thought that the learners would have had a certain level of computer competence when they enrolled for this course. Unfortunately, this was not the case. This was an important learning curve for the online facilitator – do not take things for granted, especially when it concerns computer proficiency. The online facilitator admitted that it was important, although difficult, to place herself in the learner’s place.



In Exhibit 4.122 the online facilitator suggested ideas how to establish learners' computer skills, in future, by making use of a questionnaire or organising a training session. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.122 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's views on establishing learners' computer skill level

Ek dink 'n ander aspek wat geweldig belangrik is, is dat jy die heeltyd jouself in die skoene van die leerder moet sit, want ek het baie keer 'n ding gestel, en aangeneem hulle rekenaarskerms lyk soos myne. 'n Ou moet bewus wees van die vlak waarop jou studente operate. Dit was vir my moeilik. Ek het net aanvaar almal is ...dit gaan oor rekenaargestesteunde onderwys. Ek het 'n minimum intreevlak aanvaar, wat baie beslis nie so was nie. So dit was verseker, ek dink miskien kan 'n ou aan die begin dalk op 'n manier met 'n vraelys of iets daai tipe van informasie kry. Selfs met 'n opleidingsessie byvoorbeeld. So as jy wil hê hulle moet net leer hoe om die bulletin board te gebruik, kan jy vir julle sê, gaan skryf op die bulletin board watter rekenaarvaardighede het jy, wat voel jy gemaklik mee, en wat is nuut vir jou, watter rekenaar het jy? Het jy 'n Pentium, of sit jy nog met 'n 486, of wat ookal, sodat 'n ou net 'n bietjie beter begrip het, want as jy verstaan dat jou leerders dinge anders sien, dan maak dit van jou misverstande duideliker

[Translation: I found that it was important to put yourself in the learner's place, because I often took for granted that their screens were the same as mine. You have to be aware of the level at which the students are operating. I found that difficult. I just took it for granted that everybody was on the same level ... this is about computer-based education. I anticipated a minimum entry level, but this was definitely not the case. Perhaps in future, one could establish this through a questionnaire, even with a training session. So if you want to teach them how to use a bulletin board, you can tell them to enter their respective computer skills, level of ease, what is new to them and type of computer they own? Do you own a Pentium or do you still have a 486 or whatever... to enable the facilitator to understand their computer levels and to eliminate misunderstandings.]

Apart from the fact that the learners were placed under tight deadlines, the learners experienced problems working with various eLearning tools. This is evident in Exhibit 4.123, extracted from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.123 [FG]: A worried learner, not knowing how to use eLearning tools

I still feel Linda should be aware the next time about the time constraints that are placed on the learners for achieving so much without really being provided with the necessary tools and to use them to do what you should do by the end of each week.

One learner, in the formal test response, commented on the technical capabilities of the learners in general and questioned the fairness of the module. The learner's thoughts are stated in Exhibit 4.124.

Exhibit 4.124 [FTR]: A learner questions the fairness of the module

I think there was a distinct element of exclusivity in the module. Only the ones with highly developed computer skills could ever feel comfortable with the course expectations. I do not think the expectations of what students are supposed to master, was spelled out clear enough. Too many students could not cope technically – were they supposed to be allowed to enrol for it if they did not have sufficient skills? Did anyone do them a favour?

In order to alleviate the problems with eLearning tools, the online facilitator indicated that she would adjust the course to incorporate a training session during the first face-to-face contact session. In Exhibit 4.125 the online facilitator suggested various exercises that the learners could complete in a computer laboratory to give the learners the opportunity to experience the eLearning environment before starting with the actual course assignments. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.125 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on giving the learners the opportunity to experiment with eLearning tools

En wat ek dalk ook sal doen is ek sal daai eerste sessie, as mens die inleidingsgesprek met hulle het, bietjie opleiding inbring. Face-to-face. Kontak. Nie opleiding oor wat hulle moet doen nie, bloot opleiding in die tools, sodat hulle die tools kan gebruik. Ek sal vir hulle 'n halfuur lank – net 'n halfuur – in a lab wil hê, en sê hier's die adres. Gaan in, en stuur een email vir die ander mense wat jy kan sien. Reply op een email, sodat jy kan sien hoe reply mens. Laai 'n dokument op, dat jy kan voel hoe werk dit, en skryf die toetsie, wat sommer iets sal wees soos hoe voel jy oor die kursus vat voorlê. Net dat hulle die ervaring kry. Net die basiese goed? En dit hoef nie meer – ek vra nou 'n halfuur, maar 'n uur sal tien-teen-een genoeg wees om regtig almal gemaklik te hê in die omgewing wat 'n ou gaan gebruik.

[Translation: What I would probably also do is to use the first introductory session for a bit of training. Face-to-face. Contact. Not training about what they have to do, simply training in the use of the tools so that they can use them. I would want them in a lab for half an hour – only half an hour – and say here is the address, go in and send an e-mail to the other people present, reply to one e-mail so that you can see how it is done, load a document so that you can feel how it works and write the test which will simply ask them about their feelings on the course ahead, just so that they can get the experience. Just the basics. I say half an hour, but I will probably need an hour to get everybody comfortable in the online environment.]

In hindsight, the online facilitator agreed that this group of learners wasted time and mental energy on trouble-shooting and not necessarily on eLearning. This is evident in Exhibit 4.126, extracted from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.126 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on spending time on trouble-shooting

So ek dink dis 'n onnodige leerkurwe wat die ouens met hierdie sessie hoef deur te gegaan het. Hulle het tyd en mental energie spandeer op goed wat nie noodwendig oor e-learning gegaan het nie, maar oor trouble shooting - van waar kry ek hierdie goed, en hoe kom ek daarby uit, wat ook leer is

[Translation: Thus, I think that it was an unnecessary learning curve that these guys had to go through in this course. They spent time and mental energy on matters not necessarily related to elearning, but concerning trouble shooting about where do I find this and how do I do that, which is learning.]

The online facilitator concluded that she did not think that anything in the course was a waste of time, as is expressed in Exhibit 4.127, because the learners were involved in hands-on experience. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.127 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the *CyberSurviver* experience

Ek voel niks in die kursus was tydmors nie. Alles wat hulle ervaar het, maak van hulle in die toekoms beter e-learning fasiliteerders, want hulle het die goed aan hulle lyf ervaar.

[Translation: At the same time, I do not think anything in this course was a waste of time. Everything they went through in this course will contribute to making better facilitators of them because of hands-on experience.]

4.6.3. Conflict

There was a great deal of conflict in *CyberSurviver*. During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she found the conflict very difficult and very personal, because this was her course. The online facilitator did not know whether the conflict was directed at her personally, or to her facilitation approach or the course *per se* as is described in Exhibit 4.128.

Exhibit 4.128 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on conflict

Ek dink die konflik was vir my nogal swaar. Wel, ek weet daar was konflik - ek weet nie of dit met my as persoon was nie, maar met my benadering as fasiliteerder, of met die kursus nie - wat ek baie persoonlik ervaar het, omdat dit my kursus is, maar ook die konflik wat hulle tussen mekaar gehad het, was vir my moeilik, en dan ook die ouens wat 'n totaal ander benadering oor e-leer het as wat ek het. Ouens die heelyd gemoan oor geld. Ek ... wou deur die dak spring daaroor, dis een module wat eksplisiet oor e-leer gaan - jy moet online wees om die ervaring te kan kry. En online beteken nou maar een maal geld, so, as 'n ou nie kan nie,

Exhibit 4.128 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on conflict

moet 'n ou maar ry universiteit toe, en daar gaan, gratis, maar die effort is op jou. Die onus rus op jou. As jy hierdie kursus doen, dan is dit waarin hierdie rigting is, dan moet jy dit maar doen.

[Translation: I found the conflict very difficult. I know there was conflict. I do not know whether it was personal, or my approach to facilitation or the course itself. I experienced it as very personal because it was my course. The conflict between the learners was also difficult and of course the guys who had a completely different approach to elearning. Guys constantly moaned about money, which caused me to hit the ceiling. This was one module that explicitly covered elearning for which you had to have the online experience. Online means money. If a guy cannot make it s/he has to travel to the university where s/he can work without cost, but the effort is his/hers. The onus rests with the learner. If you are doing this course, this is what is required and is what you have to do.]

The learners constantly complained about the cost factor, as was previously stated in Exhibit 4.34. The online facilitator responded effectively to the monetary issue, by providing the learners with an alternative solution as is described in Exhibit 4.128. The learners could drive to the university and work in the computer laboratory. In this way, the individual would not be accountable for the Internet account.

During the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator, she emphasised that she would introduce a learner's contract in a next course. One expects that this would probably curb all the unnecessary complaining from the learners' side. In Exhibit 4.129 the online facilitator stated what the learner's contract should consist of.

Exhibit 4.129 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on a learner's contract

Dis ook een iets wat ek anders sal doen as ek 'n volgende kursus doen. Ek sal baie eksplisiet 'n **kontrak** laat teken aan die begin van die kursus. Ek sal vir hulle sê daar is 3 goed wat jy onderneem, en as jy nie daai 3 goed onderneem nie, dan mag jy nie die kursus loop nie. En die eerste een is dat die ouens besef dat daar gaan tyd en effort ingaan. Die tweede ding is dat dit nie gaan maklik kom nie. Dit gaan effort wees. Daar gaan goed wees wat gaan moeilik wees, en dis 'n stywe leerkurwe, en dis baie nuwe goed wat hulle gaan moet leer. En die derde is dat hulle baie pertinent bewus gemaak word van die kostes wat daaraan verbonde is.

[Translation: This is something I would change in a next course. I will have a signed learner's contract at the beginning of the course. I will inform the learners of three undertakings on their part and if these undertakings are not met, they can't enrol for the course. Firstly, they must realise that this is going to take time and effort. Secondly, it is not going to be easy. It will take effort. There are difficult things and it will be a steep learning curve with many new things to be conquered. Thirdly, they must be made aware of the costs involved.]

The game metaphor with the indirect competition element caused conflict amongst the learners. The online facilitator, in Exhibit 4.130, summarised the group's feelings about the game metaphor. These extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.130 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the game metaphor

Wat party ouens baie van gehou het, het ander ouens pertinent gehaat. Die speletjie idee was presies dit.
[Translation: what some guys loved, the other hated. This was the case with the game idea.]
Baie van hulle het die kompetisiefaktor baie geniet, party het dit gehaat.
[Translation: Many enjoyed the competition factor; other hated it.]

The online facilitator, during the face-to-face interview, reflected on her intention for using the competition element. The online facilitator's thoughts are reflected in Exhibit 4.131.

Exhibit 4.131 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the competition element

die idee was nie om een student teen 'n ander af te speel nie. Die kompetisie was nie op 'n vlak van akademie nie. Dit was op die vlak van 'n speletjie en samewerking. Die bedoeling was dat die ouens moet saamwerk en geïntegreerd bydra tot 'n groep in geheel, eerder as met kompetisie met 'n ander individu.
[Translation: it was not my idea to have one student compete against another. The competition was not on academic level. It was on the level of a game and co-operation. The objective was that the guys should co-operate in an integrated group rather than compete with another individual.]

The learners, in their formal test responses, revealed their thoughts on the game metaphor. An array of opinions were put forward, *inter alia* disliking voting people off, feeling like a castaway, slowing down the learning process, nice getting rid of people, causing stress, feeling demotivated and rejected and testing of social skills. Exhibit 4.132 provides a summary of the learners' thoughts.

Exhibit 4.132 [FTR]: The learners on the game metaphor

I did not like voting people off who did their share of the work!

Yes, I could really identify with the metaphor, as I felt like a castaway on a remote island most of the time. I was, however determined to make the most of the learning opportunity, (some people pay a lot of money to spend time on a remote tropical island in the middle of nowhere). There came bottles with messages floating by every now and again, just enough to keep going. I felt quite abandoned, as everybody else were competing for better and cleverer stuff in their shelters and for the prize, I were still learning to swim, which was my own doing for getting on unprepared and halfway through.

As an avoider of conflict and a denier of competition, I think it slowed down my learning. It made me tense, which,

Exhibit 4.132 [FTR]: The learners on the game metaphor

together with the asynchronosity of the communication with the rest of my group and sometimes deliberate unavailability of contact with certain members, made me do more on my own – even if my contributions weren't submitted by them.

Nice getting rid of people who did nothing!

... it was as though this was a separate dynamic to the rest of the process. At times it was distracting.

... the stress it caused in my life is definitely a BIG negative!

VERY GOOD GAME, if taken positively as a game not as a tool to outcase those who are incapable YET.

Not everyone participated and at number 99 you had to do all the work. Cost me about R2000.

Metaphor or not, I have never learned so much in so little time and been so severely challenged in my life before. The game was actually the sweetener to six weeks of real time torture. This is, however the most relevant course and has left me with a new vision and a wish for time to explore the possibilities and nitty gritty of online learning more. Some aspects like the underlying administrative aspects are still a bit of a mystery to me. I came into it with no previous knowledge or experience and walk away limping, but informed.

The whole process affected my learning process as I was voted out and put in a tribe that did not function and the same time felt demotivated and rejected by my group. Since then I did not gain much whereas other members were learning and gaining more experiences. Maybe the Survivor metaphor was introduced too early in the module.

I am not fond of playing games. It makes me feel insecure and not in control and I do not like the feeling. To me it was everything but a game – it was a lot of hard work and asked for many a lonely night in front of my computer. Unfortunately to me time is money – not in the sense of the few rand paid on a telephone bill but to the projects that I did not work on as hard as I was supposed to.

It was clear that not only the content mattered, and gaining in knowledge and computer skills, but also social skills were being tested and developed through the metaphor of a game in which survival of the fittest would be proven. Participants were frustrated, praised, and taken apart, some even fell apart all by themselves and had to learn to cope with all of this.

I personally didn't like this metaphor, it has to do probably with the T.V. show that I don't like. At the beginning it made me nervous,

One learner, during the focus group interview, expressed strong feelings on the game metaphor and indicated that the course changed from being learner-centred to task-centred, just to be able to 'survive'! The learner's viewpoint is captured in Exhibit 4.133.

Exhibit 4.133 [FG]: A learner's view, seeing the course as task-centred

Because once you dropped off, I think the chances that you could finish the module, was slim. I think in that sense it stopped being learner centred. It was really focussed around the survivor thing, the focus was task-orientated, and not learner-orientated

4.6.4. *Learner-group problems*

It was evident that some of the learners missed out on the collaborative, group formation that the game was supposed to offer. Some of the learners could not co-operate, others would not co-operate and then there were those that never became involved. The online facilitator commented on this aspect in Exhibit 4.134 and attempted to give reasons for the dysfunctional groups. These extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.134 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on dysfunctional groups

Party het baie gehou van die feit dat hulle in groepe kon saamwerk en dat hulle baie geleer het by die ander mense. Party groepe was weer disfunksioneel, en dan het hulle dit weer gehaat en dit het gelei tot groot frustrasie.
[Translation: Some enjoyed working in groups and learning from each other. Other groups were dysfunctional and they hated it and that led to frustration.]

Daar was in heelwat van die groepe van die begin af ouens wat glad nie met mekaar kon saamwerk nie, en ouens wat weer glad nie wou saamwerk nie. En dan is daar ander ouens wat weer net glad nie betrokke was nie, en wat geweldige frustrasie by die ouens veroorsaak het.
[Translation: From the very beginning there were learners in the groups who could not co-operate and guys who would not co-operate. There were also guys who wanted to work, but were constantly at loggerheads with others, thus working against each other all the time. There were also guys who never became involved and caused tremendous frustration for the others.]

Ek dink persoonlikhede was deel daarvan, maar ook maar een ou het net in die dag gewerk, en die ander ou het net in die aand gewerk. So ek moes op 'n manier daai tipe van konflik hanteer, en ouens het baie keer agter die skerms by my kom moan en sê: maar hierdie een doen nie haar deel nie. Kan hulle nie asseblief in 'n ander groep wees nie, of hulle wil nou uitgevote wees.
[Translation: There were different reasons for the conflict, one being personalities but also one guy working during the day and another working only in the evenings. Somehow I had to manage the conflict and guys were constantly moaning that others were not doing their part. They actually wanted to go to different groups or wanted to be voted off.]

The learners, in their formal test responses, commented on the problems within the groups. Problems ranged from failing to submit tribal assignments on time, failing to incorporate team member contributions, ignoring team members, working too slowly to being overloaded with work. Exhibit 4.135 provides a summary of the learners' thoughts on the dysfunctional groups.

Exhibit 4.135 [FTR]: The learners on dysfunctional groups

People did not submit their tribal assignments on time. I just left their stuff out of the tribal website.

At first all my tribal members were dead. I refused to meet in person – it got me voted off.

I was quite put off after I had spent considerable time preparing information to be added to the concept map and was told that an existing map would be used, as there was no time to do otherwise.

The fact that Dave and I worked well together contributed to my learning – especially on the technical side of things! This made up for the fact that the other members of our tribe did not contribute to our learning – they are the ones that missed out.

Whenever I tried to participate according to my level of understanding the task, I would be ignored ... instead of receiving constructive and positive guidance. I was labelled an 'online entertainer' – this was discouraging and demotivating.

Tribal members who did not 'play the game' caused some irritation as they affected the progress of the group negatively, but it was not too bad. Other members who just went ahead and did things without involving the other members or giving them a chance to participate was also a small stone in my shoe. Spending time to give others a hand up, instead of just voting them off would have been more ethical. (Interesting to note that in the real game the strong ones fell first and here the weaker ones got trodden on!)

Just irritated with tribe members not available during off-peak hours and over weekends and tribe members not taking part.

I did not experience any direct confrontation but there was an explosion wanting to set off. I was frustrated with the situation I was put in and felt that it was unfair. The workload was just too much for me to carry and I had to make a decision to do everything half or to do only half. This was a decision that within my personal make-up caused a lot of frustration to the point that I wanted to withdraw. Members from other teams were very supportive and that kept me going.

I experienced a conflict where I couldn't bring to the group summaries that I have made because I do the work slowly.

Some tribal members experienced the tribal shuffle very positively, but it also caused hysterics, according to the online facilitator. In Exhibit 4.136 the downside of the tribal shuffle was re-iterated. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.136 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the downside of the tribal shuffle

Dit het by party ouens histerie veroorsaak, want hulle het nou net lekker 'n comfort zone gehad, en hulle het nou lekker saamgewerk.
[Translation: This caused hysterics because some people were in a comfort zone and working well together.]

Some learners experienced the tribal shuffle as very disturbing as was revealed in Exhibit 4.137. The extracts were taken from the formal test responses.

Exhibit 4.137 [FTR]: The learners on the downside of the tribal shuffle

I felt more confused as it become NOBODY's task to build a new website and have it up and running.

Disorientating.

Not very happy, 5 of the top people were in a group and the other group was not very good and I and another person had to do all the work

It was necessary to reshuffle, but challenging as the work got more difficult and challenging and some time was needed to settle into a new tribe.

Badly, collaboration wasn't on the same level as in the initial tribe.

It didn't influence much because I was already in a big tribe that had not acquired much direction and the shuffling did not affect the tribe except adding more members.

During the focus group interview the learners were reflecting on the dilemma of Tribe 5 and empathised with these team members. The focus group participants thought that the online facilitator could have managed this group differently and made suggestions of what could have been done to ensure that these members were not neglected.

An ethical question was raised about evicting a learner from the course that had been paid for. An extract from the focus group interview is revealed in Exhibit 4.138.

Exhibit 4.138 [FG]: The learners on the evicted members of Tribe 5

Tribe 5. What happened to those students? They just disappeared. It was wrong. The fact that up front everybody knew that those who were evicted would be landing in this specific tribe, and nobody asked the question: but what will happen with these students? And I mean it was a growing tribe in terms of numbers, and nothing happened there. So that was a problem.

I think she (online facilitator) should have seen that if people dropped off, and they go and they all stay in one tribe, she (online facilitator) should have built in something to either give them a different type of assignment to do then, but also to enable them to finish the course then.

The groups were evenly divided to begin with. So we should have been kept in those groups. Maybe vote off the person, but the person can come back on again by doing certain things. I was thinking about the ethical side of that. If a student pays for a full course ...

I think here again this whole course is structured somewhere along the lines of an MBA or that kind of course where you're actually at certain times put under pressure, and having just started work in this field now as it were, you are either gonna sink or swim. So it's perhaps not entirely a hundred per cent correct to say this, but perhaps that's some of the things you have to learn on the course as well, it's the sink or swim part. She (online facilitator) could have looked after the people that fell out during the first phase of the game. Then they should give a bridging course for the people who can't do it.

4.6.5. *Learners lagging behind*

The online facilitator, in her face-to-face interview, also commented on the fact that she was extremely worried about the learners who were lagging behind. During Week 3 and Week 4 learners were asking for help on assignment one and the online facilitator did not know how to cope with this situation. This dilemma compelled the online facilitator to ask for help and she sent e-mail to the course co-ordinator, Johannes, asking for assistance and guidance.

Exhibit 4.139 provides a snapshot of the online facilitator's frustration and despair, taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.139 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's frustration and despair with learners who are lagging behind

Ek het een keer spesifiek 'n email na hom gestuur en gesê ek is bekommerd oor hierdie ouens wat hier in die 3de week en in die 4de week met assignment 1 se goed begin, en nou vreeslik in diepte raad soek. Ek vra vir hom: wat moet ek nou byvoorbeeld met hulle maak? Moet ek hulle support en probeer deurkry, of wat? Dis net vir my moeilik. Ek het my hande vol met die groep wat by is, en hulle vra oor daai onderwerp. Om nou weer terug te dink aan goed en hulle is agter. Verstaan, dis nie - nou's die moral support van die groep nie meer daar waar hulle mekaar help nie, so ek moet al die hulp voorsien. Dit was net vir my onmoontlik om stap vir stap alles te verduidelik; want ek kan nie met hulle praat nie.

[Translation: I once sent a specific e-mail to Johannes, saying how worried I was about guys who, in the third and fourth week, were enquiring about assignment 1 and needed intense help. I asked him (Johannes) what I should do? Should I support them and try to pull them through, or what? It was very difficult for me. I was fully occupied with the on track group and their questions on the current work. It is very difficult to think back to the group lagging behind. At this stage there was no moral support in terms of group co-operation and they were solely dependent on my help. It was exceedingly difficult to explain everything step-by-step because I could not speak to them, (which meant that everything needed to be written).]

Johannes, the course co-ordinator, responded to the online facilitator and indicated that she only had to worry about those learners that were on track. The online facilitator, during the face-to-face interview, admitted that this was not necessarily her viewpoint, as is evident in Exhibit 4.140.

Exhibit 4.140 [FtoF]: The course coordinator's thoughts on learners lagging behind

As die ou nie by is nie, is hy uit, volgens Johannes. So, dis nie noodwendig my spel nie. Ek dink ek is van nature meer akkommoderend. Ek sou probeer het om maar te probeer nice wees en te probeer gaaf wees, maar hy't so half vir my die carte blanche op daai stadium gegee om te sê jy moet maar by bly. Ek hoef nie te worry oor die wat afval nie. Ek werk met die wat by is, en dis dit.

[Translation: Johannes felt that if the learners could not keep up, they were out, which was not necessarily my feeling as I am more accommodating by nature. I would have tried to be nice about things, but Johannes gave me carte blanche at that stage to say you must keep up. I do not need to worry about those who cannot cope. I work with those who are on track and that's that!]

Thus, learners lagging behind might have experienced the course as negative. During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she gave abrupt answers to those learners who were not on track and told them to move on as is evident in Exhibit 4.141.

Exhibit 4.141 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on being abrupt with learners lagging behind

Die ouens wat vir my vrae gevra het na die deadline van 'n assignment en sê hulle is ook nou by, het 'n kortaf antwoord by my gekry. Vergeet daarvan en gaan aan met hierdie goed, ...hulle sou miskien weer 'n negatiewe ervaring daarvan gehad het.
[Translation: Guys who questioned me about the first assignment after the deadline of that assignment, saying that they have now caught up, got an abrupt answer from me. Forget about it and carry on from here ... they would perhaps have considered it a negative experience.]

Exhibit 4.142 is an extract from a message posted to *Yahoo Groups* where the online facilitator informed a learner about the appropriate assignment for the week.

Exhibit 4.142 [YG]: The online facilitator informing a learner to get on track

Forget about last week's game and assignments. All this information can however be found in the 170+ emails that was sent last week. If you work through them systematically you will get the answers to most of your questions.

This week's assignments are once again listed under 'Files' in your ELearn Yahoo Group. You have to go to the web-based version of the group to find this link (<http://groups.yahoo.com>).

This week immunity is not awarded for a game, but for a typing test. See my previous email in this regard.
Good luck!
L

The online facilitator responded effectively to the dysfunctional teams because she created a relaxed atmosphere where the learners could communicate with her on any subject. The online facilitator was accommodating and approachable and she provided 'the shoulder to cry on'. The online facilitator always responded in a caring and understanding manner as is evident in Exhibit 4.143. The extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview and *Yahoo Messenger*.

Exhibit 4.143: The online facilitator's caring manner with dysfunctional team members

[FtoF] Jy moet akkomoderend en oop en approachable wees.
[Translation: You have to be accommodating and open and approachable.]

[YM] Linda (06:01:30 PM): It remains a challenge to keep things going in a virtual async environment
Linda (06:02:09 PM): As I said ... take those who are on board

Exhibit 4.143: The online facilitator's caring manner with dysfunctional team members

with you, and make the best of it.

[YM] Linda (09:05:14 PM): For the sake of the quality of their learning experience, I think it is just 'fair' (smile) to let them take part in a functional tribe.

[YM] Linda (01:11:06 AM): As jy sien dat jy nie voldoende reaksie by jou nuwe Tribe kry nie, is jy welkom om saam met die ander in te spring en saam te werk. Jy weet hoe ek voel oor 'collaboration'.

[Translation: If you do not get sufficient co-operation from your new tribe, you are more than welcome to team up with another group. You know how I feel about 'collaboration'.]

[YM] Linda (01:15:48 AM): Al kwalifiseer jy nie meer vir die groot prys nie, is daar geen rede hoekom jy nie die meeste uit die module moet haal nie.

[Translation: Although you do not qualify for the big prize anymore, there is no reason why you should not get the most from this module.]

It is important to note that the online facilitator informed the learners that eviction did not imply dropping off the course. The purpose of Tribe 5 was that all the evictees would gather in this tribe and still perform all assignments. However, these tribal members would not be eligible to win the grand prize.

There was conflict within the group because the online facilitator pressurised the learners to meet certain deadlines. In the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she really made the groups work. According to the online facilitator, if too much time is permitted for assignments, the quality of work does not necessarily improve. According to the online facilitator, pressurising the group brought forth phenomenal work! In Exhibit 4.144 the online facilitator reflected on her way of work and why the learners could have been upset with her.

Exhibit 4.144 [FtoF]: The online facilitator reflecting on her way of work

Ek het hulle hard laat werk. Ek het hulle genuine gedruk. Ek gee dit absoluut toe! My uitgangspunt was nog altyd – en dis 'n vreeslike verkeerde uitgangspunt om te hê, maar dis 'n persoonlike benadering, en ek voel dat hoe meer jy het om te doen, hoe meer kry jy gedoen. En ek voel dat as jy vir ouens te veel tyd gee, dan dra dit nie by tot die kwaliteit nie. Dis nie asof hulle dieper in goed grou omdat hulle meer tyd het nie. Hulle doen nogsteeds die oppervlakkige goed, maar hulle het net meer tyd om dit oppervlakkig te doen. Terwyl, as jy vir hulle baie stres gee, en die lading swaar maak, dan oorpresteer party ouens party keer, en dis fenomenaal wat daar uitkom. ...ek dink hulle was baie dikwels ontsteld oor die feit dat wat ek van hulle gevra het, het hulle online tyd gekos, wat tyd is, maar ook kostes. Die feit dat hulle weg van hulle families was, en hulle het net 'n week tyd gehad om sekere goed in te doen.

Exhibit 4.144 [FtoF]: The online facilitator reflecting on her way of work

Ek het die druk op hulle gehou – daar was nie so 'n ding soos ek het hierdie naweek 'n ding met my kind aan, maar ek sal volgende naweek inhaal, nie. Daar was nie 'n volgende naweek nie. Ek dink baie van hulle het geaffronteerd gevoel daaroor.

[Translation: I made them work hard. I genuinely pressurised them. I admit that! My viewpoint is – it is considered very wrong – but it is my personal feeling that the more you have to do, the more you get done. I feel that if you allow too much time it does not contribute to the quality of the product. It is not as though they delve deeper just because they have more time. They still have more time to do it superficially. Whilst, if you really pressurise them and the load is heavy, some over achieve and it is phenomenal what the outcome sometimes is. I think they were sometimes upset by the fact that what I expected from them cost them online time, which is time but also costs. The fact was that they were withdrawn from their families and still had only a week to complete their tasks. I kept the pressure on them – there was no such thing as a date with a child causing work to be caught up in the next week. There was no next week. I think many of them felt affronted because of this attitude.]

The online facilitator maintained that, in future, she would keep the same amount of pressure on the course. In the face-to-face interview she admitted that she could have provided more scaffolding at the beginning of the course but the learners need to feel pressure in order to know that they can swim. The online facilitator's thoughts are revealed in Exhibit 4.145.

Exhibit 4.145 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on keeping pressure on the course

Ek dink ek sal aan die begin baie meer scaffolding gee, en ek sal dit aan die einde wegneem. Daar moet maar ook 'n stadium wees wat die ouens voel hulle sink, sodat hulle kan agterkom maar hulle kan swem. Dis die enigste manier.

[Translation: I think I will give much more scaffolding in the beginning, which can be removed at the end. There must be a stage when the guys feel they are sinking so that they can discover that they can swim. It's the only way.]

Surprisingly enough, one of the learners also commented on the 'sink or swim' analogy in his formal test response, and explained why it was necessary to be put under pressure. The learner's thoughts are revealed in Exhibit 4.146.

Exhibit 4.146 [FTR]: A learner on pressure in the course

I think here again this whole course is structured somewhere along the lines of an MBA or that kind of course where you're actually at certain times put under pressure, and having just started work in this field now as it were, you are either gonna sink or swim. So it's perhaps not entirely a hundred per cent correct to say this, but perhaps that's some of the things you have to learn on the course as well, it's the sink or swim part.

The online facilitator, during the face-to-face interview, commented that the learners might have been upset because they did not receive clearer guidelines. This is evident in Exhibit 4.147.

Exhibit 4.147 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on clearer guidelines

Buiten die kostes, buiten die tyd, miskien was hulle kwaad oor ek nie vir hulle meer duidelike riglyne gegee het nie. Meer handjie-vat riglyne. Jy weet, stap-vir-stap-tipe goed gegee het nie. Ek het hierdie keer baie min spoonfeeding gegee.
[Translation: Apart from the costs and apart from the time, perhaps they were upset because I did not give them clearer guidelines. Perhaps I needed to hold their hands more, and guide them step-by-step. This time I did very little spoonfeeding.]

One learner, in her formal test response, specifically stated that the ground rules were never purposefully discussed as is revealed in Exhibit 4.148.

Exhibit 4.148 [FTR]: A learner on clearer guidelines

Guidelines were never purposefully discussed. However, I believe that there may have been an underlying common understanding of what is acceptable

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator reflected that she did post guidelines for the current course, but evidently it was not good enough. The online facilitator's reflective thoughts are revealed in Exhibit 4.149.

Exhibit 4.149 [FtoF]: The online facilitator, reflecting on the current guidelines for the course

Ek het tog gedink ek het dit gedoen, maar ek het nie - daar's sekere goed waar ek gesien het is gaps, so ek sal die ground rules meer eksplisiet stel, en ek sal seker maak, van die begin af, dat die ouens actually weet waar die ground rules is, want daar's ouens wat eers hier teen die 3de, 4de week die ground rules vir die eerste keer raakgesien het.
[Translation: I thought I had done all this, but I did not - there are certain things where I left gaps, so I will make the ground rules more explicit and I will ensure that the guys actually know where the ground rules are because there were guys who only discovered the ground rules in the 3rd and 4th week.]

Exhibit 4.150 serves as evidence that the online facilitator did, in fact, post 'Ground Rules' for the learners on *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.150 [YG]: The ground rules for the current course

Yahoo Groups
Date: Wed Jul 24, 2002 12:55 am
Subject: Ground Rules
It seems that we need to lie down a couple of ground rules (Please feel free to add to these):
1. You need to check your Elearn2002 Yahoo Groups web site on a regular basis for new additions. This means that you have to visit the site AT THE VERY LEAST once every two days.

2. The Elearn2002 Group will be the hub for all our mainstream communication. You MUST therefore, have access to the web-based version of the group, even if you continue to receive your messages via e-mail.

3. All new assignments will be clearly labelled (per week) and posted to the 'File' section in the Elearn2002 Group. It is YOUR responsibility to go and find them there. The following week's assignments will normally be posted on a Thursday evening.

4. You need to discuss your plan of action in terms of the tribal assignments with your fellow 'Survivors' as soon as possible after the new assignments are posted. This is important as each week will be packed with activities which you will not be able to complete to an acceptable standard if you leave it until the last minute.

Please feel free to contact me personally should you have ANY difficulties. I can normally be reached at lindavr@t... or lindavr@m...

In order to assist learners in a pressurised course, the online facilitator suggested that she would provide explicit logistical guidelines in future and ensure that the learners knew where the guidelines were placed. Exhibit 4.151 provides the online facilitator's ideas for improved guidelines for a future course.

Exhibit 4.151 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on improved guidelines for a future course

TTTTTTT Wat ek wel sal anders doen, is ek sal van die begin af baie meer eksplisiete, logistieke riglyne gee. Soos byvoorbeeld: This is how to log in. Hier is waar jy al jou goed gaan kry. Hier is dit wat ek van jou verwag. Hier is dit wat jy van my kan verwag. Die ground rules.
[Translation: What I will change is that right from the beginning I will give more explicit logistical guidelines, for example: This is how to log in. This is where you will get your assignments. This is what I expect from you and this is what you can expect from me. The ground rules.]

Another solution would be to introduce a database of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). The FAQ would form part of the learner contract, where learners would be encouraged to find the answers in the database or ask a friend, instead of merely asking the online facilitator.

Exhibit 4.152 suggested FAQ as another solution to assist pressurised learners. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.152 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on utilising FAQ

Ek sal tien-teen-teen- 'n databasis van Frequently Asked Questions opbou. Dit sal deel wees van die kontrak, wat sê dat as jy vrae het, gaan kyk eers na die FAQ, soos byvoorbeeld, How do I ftp? Gaan kliek daar en kyk na die beskrywing. Werk eers daardeur. As jy dan nogsteeds sukkel, vra jou pelle. En as jy dan nogsteeds sukkel en julle kom nie reg nie, dan vra jy my. Want dan sal dit dalk die kultuur van ons help mekaar en ons leer by mekaar uitbring.

[Translation: I will probably create a database of Frequently Asked Questions. This will form part of the learner's contract, instructing them to first view FAQ, should they have any problems, such as How to ftp? If they still have problems, they should ask their friends and if they still have not found the answer, then they can ask me, the online facilitator. This might just bring out the culture of helping each other and learning together.]

4.6.6. Learners not 'reading' properly

The online facilitator found that misunderstandings occurred because the learners did not read the lengthy e-mail messages, as is evident in Exhibit 4.153. The online facilitator indicated that she wrote five to six long e-mails, providing details on various topics and guidelines. However, the learners only responded to the first two e-mail messages. This caused immense frustration for the online facilitator. As she clearly explained, a person thought that an issue was clarified from an online facilitator's perspective. However, because the learners did not read the lengthy message, they would ask a question that had already been answered in a guideline and were awaiting feedback from the online facilitator.

The lesson learned was not to combine different topics in one e-mail message. The extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.153 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on learners that do not read lengthy e-mail messages

Misverstande wat kom oor mense nie gelees het nie. Ek het regtig moeite gedoen om die goed eksplisiet uit te spel omdat ek geweet het dis die enigste medium. Wel, ek dink nie ek het dit noodwendig reggedoen in hierdie kursus nie. Ek sal dit met 'n volgende kursus regmaak.

[Translation: Misunderstanding arose because people do not read. I really went to trouble to give explicit instructions, knowing that this was the only medium. Perhaps I did not do it correctly in this course. I will rectify it in the next course.]

Ek het lang e-mail geskryf, waarin ek sê: die volgende goed moet ons aan aandag gee. En dan het ek nou gelys: log aan elke tweede dag, commit om in jou groep met die ouens kontak te maak so gou as moontlik na die nuwe assignments gestel is want ouens moet saamwerk. Verskeie riglyne. Ek het alles gesê so tussen 5 of 6 e-posse. Dan't ek pertinent opgemerk dat die ouens miskien op die eerste 2 gereageer het, en nie op die res nie. It was just like that. So hulle lees nie

[Translations: I wrote long e-mail messages, giving details of what had to receive attention. I listed several things for example: log on every second day, commit yourself to the group to establish contact as soon as possible after receiving a new assignment because groups have to work together. Various guidelines were stipulated. All this information was revealed in about 5 - 6 e-mails. I noticed that the guys responded to the first two e-mail messages, but not the rest. It was just like that. So they do not read]

So ek gaan nie weer goed kombineer nie, want dan het ouens dit net eenvoudig nie gelees nie, en dan's ek gefrustreerd, want ek het dan gedink: maar ek het dit dan gekommunikeer. Wat's julle storie? En hulle dink weer: maar ons het haar gevra, nou maar hoekom reageer sy nie? Dis maar die medium. Jy moet die medium verstaan as jy 'n online instructor is - soos ek sê: dis nou 'n les wat ek geleer het, wat ek op 'n volgende keer hopelik sal fix.

[Translation: I will not combine various topics again, because they are not read and that is frustrating, because I think I have communicated. What's the matter with you? And they think but we asked her and why does she not respond? It has to do with the medium. You have to understand the medium if you want to be an online instructor - as I say, this is a lesson that I have learnt which will be fixed next round]

To rectify this problem, the online facilitator, in her face-to-face interview, indicated that she would write many more short e-mails and stick to one topic per e-mail message. This would imply that, on receipt of each e-mail message, the learner would have to click on each e-mail message to read it, and in that way, the learner would get the gist of each e-mail message.

The shorter e-mail message solution is indicated in Exhibit 4.154.

Exhibit 4.154 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on using shorter e-mail messages

Jy moenie meer as een onderwerp per e-pos hanteer nie. Jy moet eerder 3 e-posse hê, want dan moet jy op elkeen klik. Jy sien dis nog 'n nuwe email, jy lees en al lees jy net die eerste paragraaf, het hy die jist van dit. En dan moet die volgende mail die volgende belangrike punt vat. So dis een les wat ek definitief geleer het, ek sal my emails baie korter maak, en meer gekonsentreerd. Een onderwerp per e-pos.

[Translation: I feel that you must not handle more than one subject per e-mail. It is better to have 3 e-mails because the person has to click on each e-mail to open it and read it. At least then the person has the gist of the e-mail. The one lesson that I learnt is that my e-mail messages will be much shorter and focus on one subject. One subject per e-mail.]

4.6.7. Learners uncomfortable with online assessment

The online facilitator was clued up with online assessment, but the learners found this component of the course very troublesome, which caused major conflict between the online facilitator and the learners. As soon as the learners were aware of the online test, stress levels peaked! This is evident from the message from *Yahoo Groups*, displayed in Exhibit 4.155.

Exhibit 4.155 [YG]: The learners' anxiety for the online test

Yahoo Groups
Date: Fri Aug 16, 2002 1:45 am
Subject: Re: *&^%\$ TEST!!!

Thought we were through with that!!!!!!
:-00000000000h noooooooooo!
:-)
_____, I'm lippe teen die klippe!
You, afraid of a test?! How must the rest of us feel?
_____-:-O
WWWhen why hhhhow is this going to happen ????

As the online facilitator explained in the face-to-face interview, it was not about testing *per se*. The learners had to experience the stress and frustration of an online test.

The online facilitator's motivation for the online test is explained in Exhibit 4.156.

Exhibit 4.156 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on online testing

dis dieselfde rede hoekom ek hulle die online toets laat skryf het. Dit was hoegenaamd nie om punte te kry nie, ek bedoel ek toets nie op so 'n manier nie – Dit was meer om vir hulle die ervaring te gee van 'n online toets. As 'n leerder, wat is die stres wat jy deurgaang, hierdie tydsbeperking, hierdie monkey puzzle vrae, hierdie invulvrae, my tikvermoë.
[Translation: it is for this same reason that I gave them the online test. It was not at all to gain marks, I do not test that way – It was simply to give them the experience of an online test. As a learner they needed to experience the stress involved, the time limit, monkey puzzle questions, fill-in questions and their typing ability.]

The online facilitator clashed with one learner in terms of assessment. The learner, in his formal test response, indicated his unhappiness with the assessment of the module because he felt that the online facilitator was more interested in gathering data for her studies. The learner's opinion is stipulated in Exhibit 4.157.

Exhibit 4.157 [FTR]: A learner on the online facilitator as researcher

Not happy with the assessment. This mark on this module means a lot to me (working for 80% for all my modules). I got the idea that for the facilitator it was more important what you contributed to her Doctoral thesis and for that you got marks.

The online facilitator was clearly upset by this accusation. In the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator commented about this incident as is evident in Exhibit 4.158.

Exhibit 4.158 [FtoF]: A online facilitator's rebuttal to the research accusation

Ek weet _____ het op en af gesprong en gedink als wat ek doen, doen ek vir my swottings. En dit het my vreeslik geaffronteer, want my uitgangspunt was hoegenaamd nie om data te kry vir 'n studie nie. So ek voel half dit was klein bietjie onregverdig, maar hy was definitief kwaad daaroor.
[Translation: I know _____ performed and considered that everything was being done simply for my swottings. And that upset me because this was not my intension. I feel that this was a bit unfair but he was definitely upset about this.]

4.6.8. Marks for individual assignments

Marks for individual assignment were another bone of contention and caused immense conflict. The learners were upset because the online facilitator awarded a zero for certain assignments. Once again, the learners did not read the course assignment in detail, because the online facilitator gave pertinent instructions what to do with each assignment. The online facilitator was lenient with regards to individual assignments and informed the

learners that a mark will only be zero until such time that the online facilitator received the assignment before the end of the course.

This conflict situation clearly upset the online facilitator, as is evident in Exhibit 4.159.

Exhibit 4.159 [FtoF]: Conflict with individual assignments

Hulle was kwaad oor, toe hulle hulle punte kry, die eerste rondte, om te sien maar daar's sekere assignments wat hulle glo hull't gepos op die regte plekke, en op die regte plekke gesit het, waar dan nie 'n punt voor was nie. Ek het baie eksplesiet vir hulle gesê dat ek lenient en gaaf en 'kind' is, sodat as daar iets is wat ek nie kon kry nie, die punt is nie nul nie, die punt is nul tot tyd-en-wyl ek die werk sien, en as ek dit sien voor die einde van die kursus, gee ek vir hulle hulle regmatige punt daarvoor. So, in die eerste plek was ek upset dat hulle nou so 'n bohaai maak as hulle weet hulle gaan anyway hulle punte kry. In die tweede plek het ek met elkeen van die assignments, het ek regtigwaar baie pertinent gesê presies wat dit is wat hulle moet doen, presies hoe dit opgeskryf moet word, en presies waar dit gepost moet word.

[Translation: They were upset on receiving their marks on the first round and finding that they had been given no marks because they thought they had posted their assignments in the right places. I had been explicit in explaining to them that I would be lenient and sweet and kind when awarding marks. The mark would not be a 0, it would simply be a 0 until such time that I see the work before the end of the course, when I would give them their valid mark. So, firstly, I was upset with them for performing when they knew that they were anyway going to get their marks. Secondly, with each assignment I really gave clear and pertinent instructions of what to do, exactly how it had to be compiled and exactly where it had to be posted.]

4.6.9. Institutional support for the online facilitator

Although the online facilitator was solely responsible for this *CyberSurviver* course, she did have the backing of the institution and had technical support. If something happened to the server, she could telephone the course co-ordinator for assistance. She also made use of a technical person to build the secure voting station.

The online facilitator found it comforting to know that the course co-ordinator, Johannes, was around, as is depicted in Exhibit 4.160.

Exhibit 4.160 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on support from colleagues

Toe Johannes op 'n stadium sien die ouens skryf vir my vreeslike lelike e-mails, het hy vir my baie nice supportive e-mails gestuur, wat sê: hulle leer alles wat hy wil hê hulle moet leer. Hy dink dis baie nice wat ons doen. En so dit het vir my ongelooflik baie beteken.

[Translation: When Johannes noticed that I was receiving unflattering e-mail, he sent me very supportive e-mails, saying they (the learners) are learning exactly what he wants them to learn; he thought what we were doing was

Exhibit 4.160 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on support from colleagues

great. This meant a great deal to me.]

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator revealed that, as an online facilitator, there was a definite need for supportive feedback. The online facilitator constantly had to manage stress and calm nervous, as is explained in Exhibit 4.161.

Exhibit 4.161 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on supportive feedback

'n Mens is so involved, jy besef nie hoe nodig jy dit het dat iemand vir jou positiewe terugvoer gee nie. Die studente doen dit nie. Hulle vra vrae en hulle moan en hulle raas en hulle is histeries, en hulle is gestres, en ek stres oor hulle stres, so ek probeer net almal se stres manage, dat jy nie tyd het om te besef: maar dit is 'n definitiewe behoefte. Maar ek het nie eers besef dis 'n behoefte voor Johannes nie die behoefte vervul het nie. En vir my gesê het maar hier's 'n tap op jou skouer. Jy's oraaait, jy's op die regte pad!

[Translation: The facilitator is so involved and one does not realise how necessary supportive feedback can be. The students do not give it to you. They ask questions and moan and become hysterical and are stressed and I stress because they are stressed and I simply try to manage everybody's stress and one does not realise that you have a definite need for supportive feedback. I did not realise the need until Johannes, patting me on my shoulder, fulfilled this need by saying 'you are ok, you are on the right road!']

4.6.10. Using the team-teach approach

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator commented that team teaching could work well if the roles were properly defined. The online facilitator admitted that she had a need for a technical/administrative assistant, not because she was incapable of fulfilling this role, but because the technical enquiries took a long time to answer. If these roles could be split, it would imply that the online facilitator, as instructor, could concentrate on the learning outcomes. She further commented that there is merit in team teaching as the learners acquire a perspective from two sides, especially if there are contrasting viewpoints. However, contrasting opinions could cause conflict and become counter productive if the learners receive differing messages. Exhibit 4.162 revealed the online facilitator's thoughts on team teaching with a definite indication to split the role of the online facilitator into an administrative role and an instructor role.

Exhibit 4.162 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on team teaching

Soos met enige team effort ding, dink ek as die rolle mooi uitgespel word, sal dit baie goed kan werk. Ek het nogals 'n behoefte gehad aan iemand wat die tegniese vrae kan antwoord. Hoegenaamde nie omdat ek nie weet hoe nie, maar net omdat dit soveel tyd vat om die tegniese vrae te antwoord, terwyl ek eerder wil konsentreer op die leeruitkomste en die regtige e-leer omgewing goed.

[Translation: As with any team effort project, I feel that

Exhibit 4.162 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on team teaching

if the roles are properly defined, it should work well. I had a need for somebody who could take care of the technical enquiries. Not because I am not knowledgeable, but because it takes such a long time to answer these questions, and I would prefer to concentrate on the learning outcomes and the elearning environment matters.]

So ek sou nogal daarvan gehou het as ek kon team-teach met iemand wat een persoon die adminimstratiewe deel vat, en een persoon die leerfasiteringsrol/instrukteur vat. Ek sal versigtig wees om die leerfasilitering te split, tensy dit in mooi gedefinieerde ek-doen-hierdie-gedeelte-en-jy-doen-daaigedeelte. Daar is verseker meriete daarin om te team teach, want die leerders kry dan perspektiewe van 2 kante af. Veral as 'n ou dan dalk kontrasterede invalshoeke het. Sodat jy die leeromgewing kan verryk met die ouens dan uit verskeie hoeke kan sien, maar dit kan ook baie teenproduktief wees vir 'n ou as hy nou hierdie boodskap kry, maar daai ou kry weer 'n ander boodskap, en die konflik wat dit ook weer sal maak. 'n Administratiewe persoon wat tegnies vrae, al die admin vrae, al die logistiek hanteer, en jy hanteer die leergedeeltes. Dit sal baie lekker werk. [Translation: I would have liked to have worked in a team where one person looks after the administrative component and the other takes care of the learning facilitating/instructor role. I would be careful about splitting the facilitating role, unless you know exactly who is doing what. There are certain merits in team teaching as the learners acquire a perspective from two sides, especially if one has contrasting viewpoints. Contrasting opinions are apt to cause conflict and can be counter productive if people receive differing messages. An ideal situation would be where an administrative person takes care of the technical and administrative enquiries as well as the logistics and the facilitator concentrates on the learning portions. That would work very well.]

4.6.11. Providing constructive feedback

Some of the learners felt that they did not get constructive feedback. This issue were raised during the focus group interview. As is revealed in Exhibit 4.163, the learners wanted to know whether they were on the right track.

Exhibit 4.163 [FG]: The learners on receiving constructive feedback

We talked about her (online facilitator) reaction to all kinds of small situations, but we didn't give feedback for the things that we have done. In a class situation, we do get feedback from our teachers. Do we need feedback here? Once the course ended, or her part of the course ended, that was it. You didn't get any feedback.

The first I saw anything of that course again was at the end of the year when I got my final mark from the university. I would have liked a bit of feedback. I like feedback. We're doing this course to get a good mark to be able to get a good job one-day once we've got this. She did it to do research. So I think that she should have seen our side as well.

Exhibit 4.163 [FG]: The learners on receiving constructive feedback

That we need to know, for me to get a good mark at the end of this module, I need to know whether I'm on the right track or not. She was there if you wanted to ask her something, but once you did a task and you put it on the web, you never got feedback to say: right, you did it right, or it was sort of okay, or you did it wrong.

Remember, it wasn't about the work. It was about the process: experiencing an online course.

but I think the feedback was - and maybe it's just because I argued so much - but I had enough feedback.

This problem touched on the 'process and product' debate that was raised in Exhibit 4.100. If learners successfully completed assignments, little feedback was needed. This same answer was provided to the particular learner again and one learner specifically stated that he received sufficient feedback.

4.6.12. Abrupt ending to the course

The same group of learners were also unhappy about the abrupt ending to the course. Exhibit 4.164 revealed some of the learners' feelings on the abrupt ending to the course.

Exhibit 4.164 [FG]: The learners on the abrupt ending to the course

The moment the course ended, it was like Linda ended. She was not there anymore. I wanted to do things afterwards. I can remember that I was looking for Linda. Eventually I picked up the phone and called the Technikon to find out where's Linda, and they said that she was in a conference, or she was on leave. That I experienced in a negative sense. Oh, it was when we had to do our articles. Yeah, you're right. I needed to get in touch with her. I wished to communicate with Linda, but she wasn't available.

But you see the articles were Johannes's part. Together, they're responsible for that module. So Linda could have said: okay, this is where I end. Any questions regarding the article go to Johannes. You expected her to still be available.

Some of the learners were frustrated because they could not get hold of the online facilitator because she was attending an eLearning conference in Cape Town. These particular learners never communicated via *Yahoo Messenger*. As is clearly evident in Exhibit 4.165, the online facilitator informed the learners that she was going to attend the WWW conference and she also announced her return. In fact, the online facilitator was speaking to the learners until 24 September 2002. The extracts were taken from *Yahoo Messenger*.

Exhibit 4.165 [YM]: The online facilitator speaking to the learners after the course ended

31 Aug 2002

Exhibit 4.165 [YM]: The online facilitator speaking to the learners after the course ended

Linda (05:43:33 PM): Ek is ook van Woensdag af uitstедig (Kaap toe vir 'n WWW konferensie!)

[Translation: I will be out of town as from Wednesday (going to the Cape for the WWW conference!)]

8 Sep 2002

Linda (02:46:24 PM): Hi everyone

Linda (02:47:14 PM): Just a short message to let you know that I am back in town after a wonderful couple of days in Cape Town at the Stellenbosch, 4th WWW conference.

Linda (02:50:31 PM): I know that some of you are keen to get some response with regards to your articles. Please be patient though if you can? I will try to get round to them asap!

Yahoo Messenger

Learner 24 Sep 2002

Learner (05:26:29 PM): Hi Linda

4.6.13. Language problems

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator expressed her concern for learners who did not speak English as a first language. The learners had a difficult time participating in academic discourse. The online facilitator did not have a solution to this problem. The online facilitator's concern on a second or third language is described in Exhibit 4.166.

Exhibit 4.166 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's concern on a second or third language

Dis moeilik om in 'n tweede taal, akademiese gesprekke te voer, en hulle moet dit nou in 'n taal voer wat nie hulle eerste taal is nie. En ander ouens wie se tweede of derde taal dit ook is, moet nou lees en interpreteer en terugreageer. Dis 'n geweldige moeilik ding om by verby te kom.

[Translation: It is always difficult to carry out academic discussions in a second language and they are now required to do just that in a language which is not their mother tongue. Other learners are even required to respond and interpret in what may be their third language. This is really a big obstacle.]

4.6.14. Changes to the existing course

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she had learnt many lessons and there were certain changes that she would like to make to the current course. The first change that she would make is to allow for more in-depth studying of various subjects. Her thoughts are captured in Exhibit 4.167.

Exhibit 4.167 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on changing the course to reach more depth per topic

Ek dink daar's baie goed wat ek op 'n ander manier sou

Exhibit 4.167 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on changing the course to reach more depth per topic

struktureer sodat 'n ou meer in diepte met van die goed kon gaan. Daar was leemtes wat ek gedink het 'n ou graag sou wou aanspreek. Goed soos, om byvoorbeeld meer tyd te spandeer aan byvoorbeeld 'n spesifieke week se assignment, sodat die ouens bietjie meer diepte kon kry in die onderwerp, eerder as net 'n breë oppervlakkige 'vat nou, en hier's die volgende ingeedom'

[Translation: I think there are various things that I would structure in a different way so that more depth could be achieved. There were deficiencies that I would like to have addressed, for example to have spend more time on a specific assignment of the week so that the guys could achieve a greater depth in the subject rather than a superficial 'take it and here is the next due date']

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator gave a clear indication that she would adjust the online environment. She would implement *Yahoo Messenger*, the synchronous communication tool, from the start. She would not use *Yahoo Groups* again and rather opt for *WebCT*, which is a clean, stable and secure environment. Implementing one synchronous and one asynchronous communication tool from the start would also mean that the learners would not have to hop around between tools.

The online facilitator's ideas are reflected in Exhibit 4.168.

Exhibit 4.168 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on changing the online environment

Ek sal Yahoo Messenger van die begin af implementeer. Dit sal van die begin af ons sinchroniese medium van kommunikasie wees, want dit help so ongelooflik baie as die ouens dit eers het. En ek sal ook nie meer van Yahoo groups gebruik maak nie, want dis te omslagtig, daar is te veel advertensies, en dis 'n klomp schlep. Ek sal veel eerder van WebCT gebruik maak, wat 'n baie nice, stabiele, skoon, veilige omgewing is. So ek sal dit as die hub gebruik. Ek dink dat die ouens nogals op 'n stadium ervaar het dat 'n mens rondspring van een tool na 'n ander, en hulle weet nie meer waar is hulle nou nie, watter tool het ons nou laas gebruik vir wat nie. So ek sal graag een baie vaste, sekure omgewing gebruik wat almal verstaan,

[Translation: I will implement Yahoo Messenger right from the start. This will be the synchronous medium of communication because it is unbelievably beneficial. I will also not make use of Yahoo Groups, because it is too cumbersome with too many advertisements and schlep. I would rather make use of WebCT, which is a nice stable and clean and safe environment - I will use this as the hub. I think the guys found themselves lost with the chopping and changing from one tool to another. I will use one stable and secure environment that everyone understands.]

4.6.15. Summary

The challenges that this online facilitator had to face were not that different from what had been experienced by other facilitators as was mentioned in Chapter 2.

The mayhem of Week 1 could slot in with Challenge 6: Learners need support apart from the course work support provided by the online facilitator. This particular online facilitator clearly indicated suggestions how to resolve this matter. A questionnaire could be compiled to measure learners' computer proficiency. The online facilitator suggested a short training session in a computer laboratory as a possible solution to introduce potential learners to various eLearning tools.

The online facilitator was partly responsible for the confusion of Week 1 in that she did not know how *Yahoo Groups* operated. This problem could link to Challenge 5. Although the online facilitator knew how to design a course, she should have tested this asynchronous communication system before loading the files to the site.

The online facilitator had to cope with various conflict situations. These conflict situations fall into the ambit of Challenge 9. Learners complained that a lot of time and money were spent on this course. The online facilitator responded effectively to this problem. An alternative was provided for the learners in that they could work in the computer laboratory at the university. In future, this problem could be solved with the signing of a learner contract at the beginning of the course. In this contract the learners would be informed of three undertakings in terms of time, effort and money. The online facilitator would also compile explicit logistical guidelines so that the learners would know what to do, what was expected from them and what they could expect from the online facilitator. A database of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) would also serve as support for the learners. The online facilitator realised that many more shorter e-mail messages should be written to the learners. If too much information is provided in e-mails, the learners simply did not read the message. The online facilitator designed the rule of 'one topic, one e-mail'.

The online facilitator effectively managed the conflict within the groups and dysfunctional teams. The online facilitator was accommodating and approachable and made adjustments to assist individual team members. The online facilitator provided continuous social and emotional support to the distressed learners.

In this course, it was the learners that had a problem with assessment. The online facilitator effectively managed this conflict situation by explaining to the learners why it was important to experience the stress of an online test. The rule for awarding marks for individual assignments was that a learner would obtain zero until such time that the online facilitator received the assignment before the course ended. Then the learner would receive his/her fair mark.

Although the online facilitator was solely responsible for this course, she did feel that it was important to have the backing from the institution. This feeling could link to Challenge 5. The supportive e-mail messages that she received really helped her through difficult times. She commented that she was in favour of team teaching and specifically indicated that the role of the online facilitator could be split into an administrative role and an instructor role.

Some learners felt that the online facilitator did not provide constructive feedback. This issue relates to Challenge 8. The particular learner wanted to know whether she was on track or not. As the rest of the group pointed out to her, the course was not about the 'product', but about the 'process'. If assignments were successfully completed, there was no need for feedback.

During a peer review session on 24 February 2004, I asked the online facilitator to describe a typical day in her life as *CyberSurfiver* online facilitator. Exhibit 4.169 gives some insight into a day in the life of this online facilitator.

Exhibit 4.169 [PR]: A day in the life of the *CyberSurfiver* online facilitator

Typically a weekday would start with normal household activities, breakfast, packing lunchboxes, getting 2 boys into a presentable state, etc. Arriving at work, I would immediately check my emails to see whether there was any activity since I logged off the previous evening. I got into the habit of responding immediately. However, there were times that I refrained from responding, as I wanted to see how/if the group would react. At times I responded immediately, but went to have a cup of coffee before I came back, reread and reworded the response (often then a toned down version of my first immediate reaction) and only then send the item.

As my workplace provides 24/7 access to the Internet, I was immediately notified when new messages came in. That made it easy to respond quite quickly to individual emails, and made the workload lighter (it felt like that as the bulk was spread throughout the day).

Between 17:00 and 20:00 I preferred to spend time with my kids, typically attending extramural 'bulletjierugby' with them, checking homework, having dinner and taking care of the bath-to-bed routines. After the kids were asleep I would log onto my home computer (I am on the R 7 deal and would thus remain online until I logged off later to go to bed). I would then once again respond to comments on the emails, and would also log onto Yahoo Messenger. I often had lengthy discussions (some over work, and some 'sommer net' to connect with individual students) with individual students. Some time I would initiate these synchronous discussions, and other times the learners approach me.

As I had to keep up my daily work responsibilities, and also the preparation for the next week's Surfiver activities, I

Exhibit 4.169 [PR]: A day in the life of the *CyberSurviver* online facilitator

did that in between and thus use to go to bed very late at night.

The online facilitator admitted that she thoroughly enjoyed facilitating this course. She learnt a lot and would do many things differently. The online facilitator's final thoughts are reflected in Exhibit 4.170.

Exhibit 4.170 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's final thoughts on *CyberSurviver*

O, dit was vir my heerlik. Ek het elke oomblik daarvan geniet. Selfs die stresvolle gedeeltes was vir my nice, want ek het gevoel ek leer daaruit en ek groei as 'n online fasiliteerder. So ja, as ek teruggedink aan dit, dan was dit vir my 'n baie positiewe ervaring. Dat ek baie goed baie anders sal doen omdat ek baie geleer het, is vir my goed. [Translation: Oh, it was wonderful. I enjoyed every moment of it. I even enjoyed the stressful parts because I felt I was learning and growing as an online facilitator. On looking back, it was a very positive experience. I learnt a lot and will do many things very differently, and that is good for me.]

The aforementioned information provided a description of the online environment, changes that the facilitator had to make in the online environment, the five roles that the online facilitator played in the online environment as well as the challenges that the online facilitator had to face. It was imperative to analyse the abovementioned topics and to provide clear descriptions of the various situations in order to be able to select the applicable people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for the online facilitator.

By scrutinising the online facilitator in the online environment, the researcher could obtain a 'detailed picture' of an online course. Observing the online facilitator, selecting and analysing the virtual artefacts and interviewing the online facilitator and learners provided a better insight into the required competencies for the role of the online facilitator. In the next section the *Work Profiling System* session will be discussed in detail. In this section the people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for this role of the online facilitator will be discussed.

4.7. What people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

4.7.1. WPS session

One week prior to the *Work Profiling System* session the researcher distributed the *CyberSurfiver* field notes, content analysis printouts, formal test responses and transcriptions of both the focus group session and face-to-face interview to the three verifiers as mentioned in Chapter 3. The verifiers had to study the documentation to acquaint themselves with the happenings of *CyberSurfiver* to have an understanding of the roles and activities of the online facilitator and the challenges of the job.

The *Work Profiling System* session took place on 19 October 2003, from 11:00 to 15:30. Profiling a job meant collecting job data using the *WPS* Job Analysis Questionnaires (JAQs). The researcher, a subject matter expert and two verifiers provided ratings using the structured Service questionnaire and the profile generated by the *WPS* directly reflected the information provided by the abovementioned individuals, obtained from the data from the *CyberSurfiver* case study. The two verifiers fulfilled a dual role because they also observed the *WPS* process. The *Work Profiling System* session was conducted as a joint team effort. The four members received a standard *WPS* questionnaire booklet. Each group member was asked to respond to each item out loud, while members of the group either agreed or disagreed. If necessary, a discussion followed to seek consensus. In this way no specific group member dominated the process.

The *Work Profiling System* session began where the researcher, subject matter expert, two observers and the *WPS* facilitator identified and agreed upon the work objectives for the job of an online facilitator. According to SHL (1998) objectives have to be specific and measurable. Measurable indicates that there will be proof of evidence what the job incumbent has done to fulfil the objectives, be it in terms of a paper trial, observing the job incumbent and interviewing peers.

For the purpose of the study, the online facilitator fulfilled five roles and the objective of each role is indicated below:

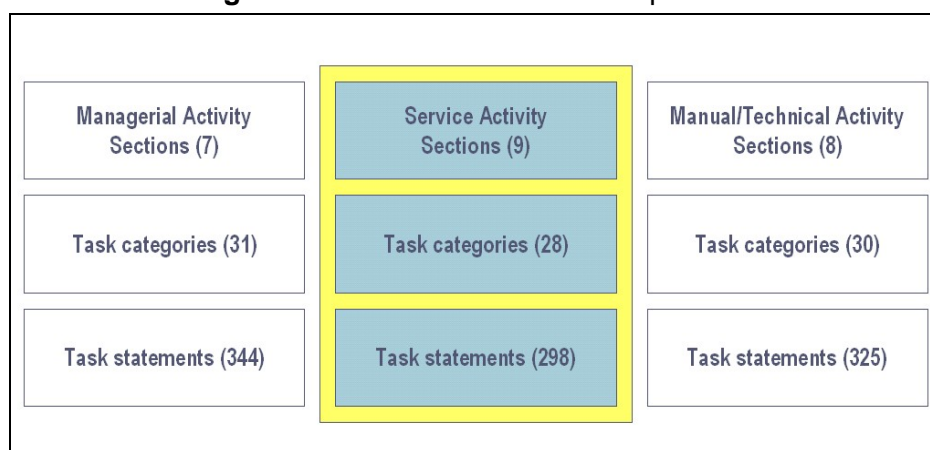
- Role of Administrator: To conduct timeous administration.
- Role of Social supporter: To maintain social and emotional rapport.
- Role of Instructor: To facilitate the learning process.
- Role of Guide: To encourage interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge.

- Role of Mediator: To ensure fair play.

The world of work is defined as a series of profiles that display the relevance of specific tasks and behaviours to work outcomes, the context in which these tasks are performed and the competencies or human attributes needed for workers to perform the most relevant work activities (SHL, 1998:27). Tasks and behaviours refer to the content of the work. These are the essential activities workers perform to meet the objectives of their jobs. The focus is on the work itself, not on the characteristics of the worker and is referred to as work-orientated information.

The structure of *WPS* questionnaires is indicated in Figure 4.18. Information is divided into a three-level hierarchy, with Activity sections at the highest level, task categories at the middle level and task statements at the lowest level. The number in the parentheses refers to the total activity sections, task categories and task statements per questionnaire (SHL, 1998:28).

Figure 4.18: Structure of *WPS* questionnaires



Currently, there are three versions of *WPS* questionnaires, each designed for a particular type of employment (SHL, 1998:44). The 'Type 101 Managerial questionnaire' is appropriate for most jobs with managerial responsibilities. This questionnaire emphasises managing tasks and human resources. The 'Type 102 Service questionnaire' is appropriate for jobs in the service industry. This questionnaire emphasises using information, solving problems, communication and administrative functions and assisting people. The 'Type 103 Manual/Technical questionnaire' is appropriate for jobs such as production worker, machine operator and engineer. The questionnaire emphasises following plans, working with equipment and performing physical activities. The 'Type 102 Service questionnaire' was selected for this study as is highlighted in Figure 4.18, because the online facilitator was rendering a service to the learners in that she assisted them throughout the course. The online facilitator, with the learners, used information in

several ways to explore the Internet and eLearning capabilities. Several problems were solved in the virtual community using the three communication tools. The online facilitator had to perform numerous administrative tasks and she also assisted the learners in their quest for knowledge and skills.

The job of the online facilitator is new to many organisations. It was important to indicate this to the *WPS* facilitator. Given the pace of today's technological innovations, the rate of change in work activities is greater than ever before and there is likely to be occasions when a job analysis is to be conducted on a job that does not currently exist. Subject matter experts for future jobs should be people who are involved in the design of the new job and these may include designers of new technology, trainers who provide the know-how that workers will need to perform the new job and others who understand what activities and contextual demands the new job involves (SHL, 1998:51). Generally speaking, to ensure a thorough job analysis somewhere between three to fifteen people (SHL, 1998:47) should complete a *WPS* questionnaire. Three people is obviously quite a small group and should only be used when a job is very structured, does not change much over time, when it is extremely difficult or costly to identify subject matter experts or when a job is relatively new (SHL, 1998:48). The reasons for using only four members are *inter alia* that the role of the facilitator is new to many organisations, but the researcher had sufficient evidence about a particular online facilitator to warrant the profiling of this job. The rest of the team members also received all the documentation related to the case study and had a good understanding what activities and contextual demands the job involves.

The second step was for the team members to review the deck of work activities and select the 8 – 12 work activity cards that best describe the activities leading to successful job performance. For Service jobs, work activity cards are organised into nine major work functions as is reflected below (SHL, 1998:29):

- Managing tasks.
- Managing people.
- Receiving information.
- Thinking creatively.
- Working with information.
- Communicating.

- Administering.
- Serving.
- Physical activities.

Each task category is printed on a section card with a brief description of the types of tasks and behaviours involved. Team members read each of the cards and decided whether the task category was a key part of the job. Two piles of cards were then created – a 'part-of-the-job' pile and a 'not-part-of-the-job' pile. According to the *WPS* facilitator, if more than 12 cards are selected, it is possible that the respondents have not differentiated those task categories that are of primary importance from those that are of secondary importance. The objective of the card sort is to limit the size of the overall questionnaire from approximately 300 items to 100 items. This saves not only administrative time, but ensures that only the most relevant activities are identified as 'key' to job success (SHL, 1998:75).

For the purposes of this study, seven cards were selected, namely:

- B1: Supervising / Directing.
- B3: Motivating.
- E1: Assessing / Evaluating.
- E2: Analysing / Diagnosing.
- E8: Learning / Researching.
- F1: Influencing / Advising.
- F3: Informing / Discussing / Interviewing.

The next step in the process required that the team members work from a questionnaire booklet and the *WPS* analysis form. The inside-cover of the booklet folded out to reveal the rating scales that would be used to rate the task statements contained in the questionnaires. Each task category is made up of a list of task statements. For each task statement chosen as part of the job, the team members were asked to decide if any time is spent performing the task or behaviour as described in the statement. If not, the item was skipped and no response provided. If time was spent performing the task or

behaviour, then the team members indicated the amount of time spent using the rating scale, as is indicated in Table 4.6.

The percentage scale for rating time spent was selected to force precision of the ratings, therefore making it able to identify infrequently performed tasks (SHL, 1998:28). Task overlap was expected, which meant that the percentage ratings of time spent did not need to add up to 100% since it was assumed that the task statements were interrelated to some degree.

Table 4.6: WPS task statement rating scale: Time spent

Scale position and description	Average week index
a Up to 5% of annual time spent	Up to 2 hours
b 6 to 10% of annual time spent	2.1 to 4 hours
c 11 to 20% of annual time spent	4.1 to 8 hours
d 21 to 50% of annual time spent	8.1 to 20 hours
e 51% or more of annual time spent	20.1 hours or more

Next, the task or behaviour was rated for its importance in achieving the job objectives. Again, a rating scale was provided as is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: WPS task statement rating scale: Importance to job objectives

Scale position and description	Effect of poor performance
7 Essential to total job objectives	Completely prevent total objectives from being met
6 Very important to total job objectives	Substantially hinder total objectives from being met
5 Important to the job objectives	Substantially hinder part of the objectives from being met
4 Moderate importance to objectives	Moderately hinder part of the objectives from being met
3 Little importance to job objectives	Small impact on part of the objectives
2 Very little importance to objectives	Very small impact on part of the objectives
1 No importance to the job objectives	No impact at all on the objectives

It is important to note that a task statement had to be rated both for time spent and importance, or be completely skipped. On reaching consensus, the appropriate answer was indicated on the machine-readable form, which was completed in pencil.

Once the task statement in all of the chosen task categories were rated for time spent and importance, the team members were required to rank order the task categories from 1 to 8 according to their importance to the job objectives (1 indicating the highest ranking, 8 the

lowest). The purpose of the ranking exercise was to differentiate the most from the least essential activities (SHL, 1998:78).

The final step was to complete the work context section (SHL, 1998:30). Work context referred to the background requirements required by the job, the responsibilities and accountabilities, the demands of the job in terms of dealing with change, travel, danger conditions or the physical environment. Work context information is often useful for describing work conditions to job candidates, as candidates often make employment decisions based to some degree on the contextual demands of the job. For example, some candidates may not want to travel or others may dislike standing for long hours (SHL, 1998:30). Important work context information for this job would be extended hours of work. An online facilitator also needs to be online during the evenings and over weekends.

The *WPS* facilitator then checked and validated the completed questionnaires to ensure that each item had been appropriately coded, to check for incomplete information, to check for inconsistencies and to check the ranking order. It was easier to make appropriate corrections whilst the team members were still present rather than obtain the information at a later stage. The *WPS* facilitator concluded the session and thanked the team members for their participation. The *WPS* facilitator then collected all the booklets, pencils and machine-readable answers forms. The following day the *WPS* facilitator would enter the responses from the group into the *WPS* database so that reports could be generated.

On 29 October 2003 the *WPS* facilitator contacted the researcher to inform her that the online facilitator reports were ready for collection. On collecting the reports, the *WPS* facilitator spent about one hour explaining the reports to the researcher. The *WPS* facilitator indicated that it would be difficult to find an online facilitator that possessed all the competencies as indicated in the report!

4.7.2. *WPS* report information

Essential activities are defined as task statements with ratings equal to or greater than 60 on a 100 point scale of task criticality. Criticality ratings take into account the importance of the task in meeting job objectives and the time spent performing the task. The following essential work activities were selected:

E2: Analysing / Diagnosing:

- Diagnosing problems in physical process or machinery.
- Diagnosing problems in non-physical system/procedure.
- Analysing written information.
- Identifying patterns or trends within data.
- Breaking down a procedure into logical steps.

F3: Informing / Discussing / Interviewing:

- Providing written information about a problem/issue.
- Challenging instructions or orders.
- Making constructive written criticism.
- Discussing issues for clarification or explanation.
- Answering critical questions about activities.
- Interviewing informally to establish facts.

B3: Motivating:

- Encouraging co-operation between team members.
- Creating a good team spirit.
- Sustaining interest of others in projects or continuing tasks.
- Gaining willing co-operation.
- Getting an individual to carry out an unappealing task.
- Emphasising the importance of reaching a work objective.
- Providing reassurance for those suffering anxiety.
- Putting people at ease in stressful situations.
- Stimulating interest in activities.
- Encouraging slow learners.

- Understanding the personal needs or motives of others.
- Encouraging a faster rate of work.
- Appealing to people to increase their motivation.

E8: Learning / Researching:

- Undertaking informal training or coaching (self/others).
- Rehearsing a role.
- Learning new systems, methods or processes.

E1: Assessing / Evaluating:

- Evaluating the written work of others.
- Evaluating information for purposes of recommendation.
- Critically examining information for accuracy/quality.
- Evaluating content of written material for style.
- Making a logical evaluation of new ideas.
- Identifying points of danger.

F1: Influencing / Advising:

- Setting out arguments for/against a course of action.
- Summarising salient points in debate or disagreement.
- Defending a position against critical attack.
- Negotiating on points of dispute.

B1: Supervising / Directing:

- Supervising to ensure compliance with laws/regulations.
- Supervising people at a distance.
- Administering formal tests to people.

- Issuing directions in an emergency or unexpected situation.
- Directing others to repeat a task not satisfactorily done.
- Controlling the behaviour of individuals.

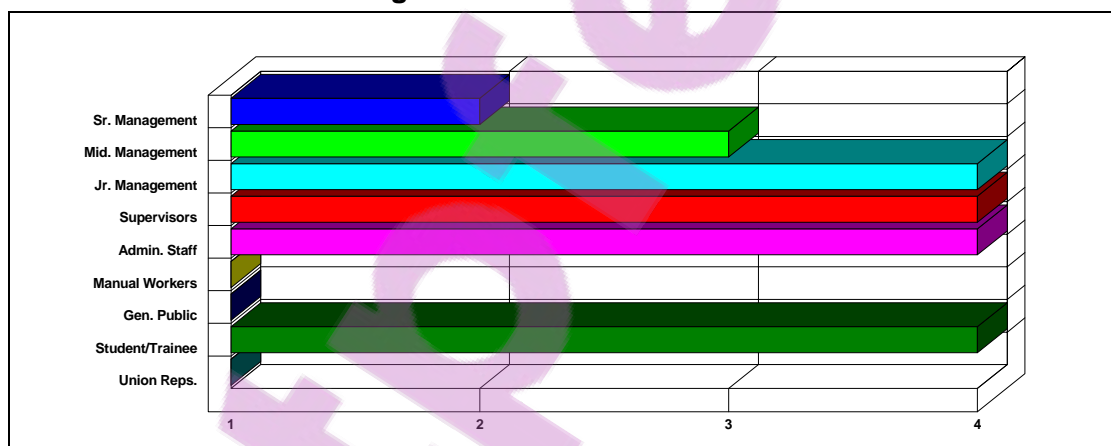
Keeping the essential work activities in mind, the following information was revealed with regards to **interpersonal contact**. Note the usage of the word 'interpersonal'. It is evident, as was indicated in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, that the online facilitator must make a conscious decision to be more interpersonal and want to interact with people. The key below serves as a guide to interpret Figures 4.19 and 4.20.

Key:

- 1: None
- 2: Occasional (1-9% of time)
- 3: Moderate (10-20% of time)
- 4: Frequent (21%+ of time)

Figure 4.19 shows the nature and frequency of interpersonal contact required by the job.

Figure 4.19: Contact with whom?

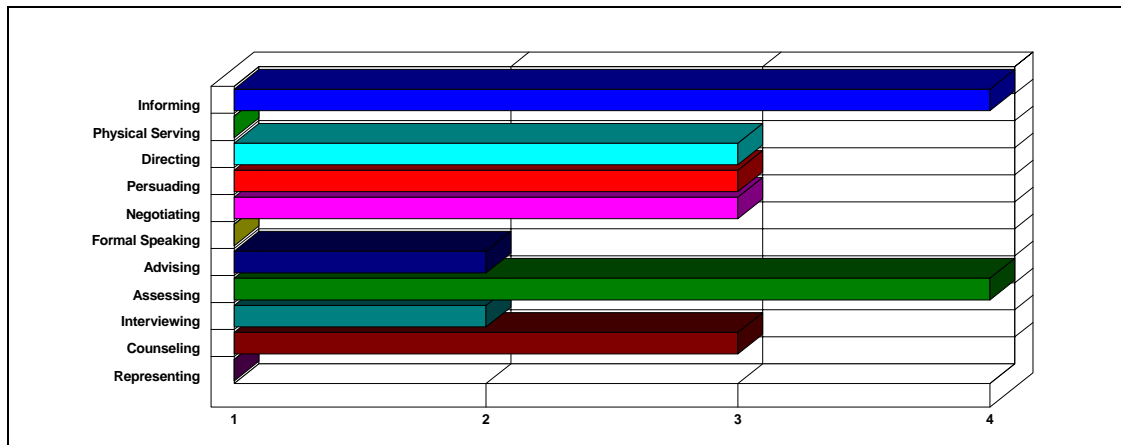


Manual workers work outdoors in the open where there is no online connectivity. Under normal circumstances, an online facilitator would not interact with the general public. The online facilitator forms part of a learning environment within an organisation or institution. A contact centre representative would rather work with the general public. The online facilitator will also not have contact with union representatives. Middle and senior management and supervisors would have contact with union representatives in a working environment. In essence, the online facilitator can interact with all level of workers in an organisation or institution.

Figure 4.20 shows the type and frequency of interpersonal contact required by the job. Physical serving, formal speaking and representing somebody do not fall in the ambit of

this job. It is important to note that 'informing' and 'assessing' happen frequently, which epitomises the role of the instructor.

Figure 4.20: Type of contact



Depending on the course content, the online facilitator could 'direct' learners in the role of instructor or guide. 'Persuading' and 'negotiating' could fall in the realm of the guide. The instructor would do 'advising' and 'interviewing'. The social supporter would do 'counselling'.

Apart from looking after the learning component, the online facilitator will have the following additional responsibilities. The online facilitator has functional impact in an organisation because s/he carries out non-routine operations, which, in the relation to the organisation's objectives, are a large part. The online facilitator's breadth of job knowledge will have to be substantial. This job also has its demands of change because the job frequently has new situations to deal with.

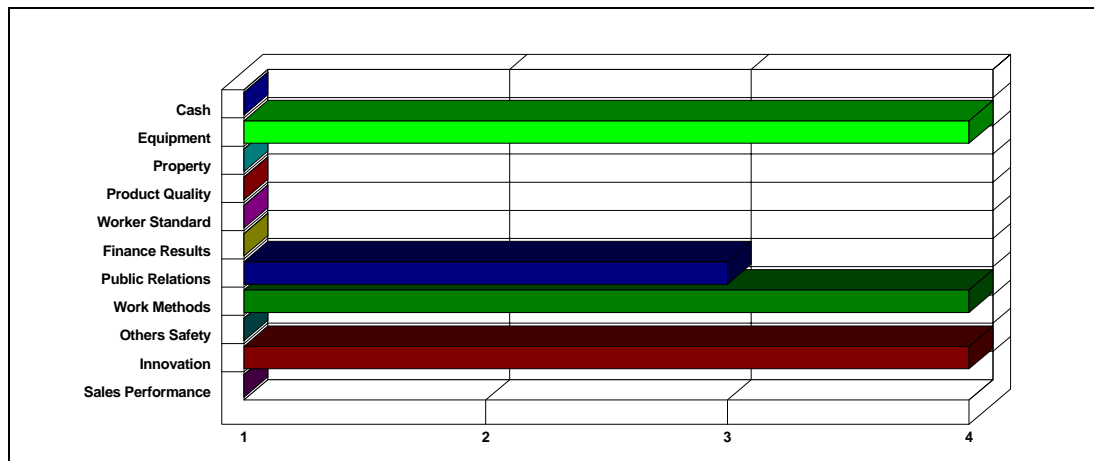
The online facilitator will have specific accountabilities as is shown in Figure 4.21. The key below serves as a guide to interpret Figure 4.21.

Key:

- 1: None
- 2: Low
- 3: Moderate
- 4: High

The online facilitator will be accountable for equipment infrastructure in terms of what equipment works the best for optimal usability. Public relations are important because the online facilitator represents the new way of work in an organisation. With eLearning and technology, workers are forced into different work methods and the online facilitator will have to be a change agent for the virtual classroom in the organisation. The online facilitator needs to be innovative and make adjustments in the online environment.

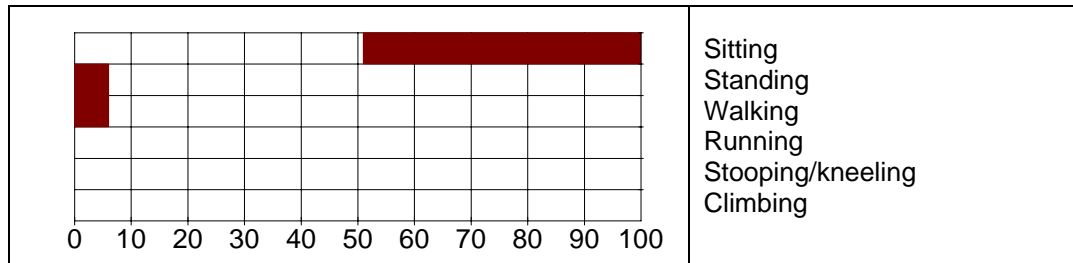
Figure 4.21: Accountabilities for the job



The online facilitator's working hours will be a mix of day and night working as is indicated by the 'sun and moon' icon.

In the working environment, the online facilitator needs to consider the impact on posture as is indicated in Figure 4.22. The job demands a substantial amount of sitting and it is necessary to identify Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD) or Repetitive Stress Injury (RSI) risk factors in the office settings (Raghurama, Garud, Wiesenfeld & Gupta, 2001).

Figure 4.22: Posture – percent time spent ...



The rise of computer usage and flat, light-touch keyboards that allow high speed typing have resulted in an epidemic of injuries of the hands, arms and shoulders. The thousands of repeated keystrokes and long periods of clutching and dragging a mouse slowly accumulate damage to the body (Westmoreland, 1993). CTD affect a person's back, arms and wrists, legs and feet and shoulders and neck. Many methods of preventing CTD exist, most of which are extremely simple and require very little time. The online facilitator needs to be aware of these risks.



Refer to Annexure O for ways to combat CTD.

The *WPS* report profile identifies the most job relevant competencies based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job. This report profile shows each competency organised by factor. The importance level of each competency for this job is shown in the bar graphs in Tables 4.8, 4.10 and 4.12 according to the scale definitions indicated below (SHL, 1998):

Baseline: Basic level of competency expected in all jobs, not unique to this job or directly linked to job objectives.

Moderate: Slightly more important for this job – relatively more important for meeting at least some job objectives.

High: More important for this job – relatively more important for meeting **most** job objectives.

Extreme: Much more important for this job – essential for meeting **nearly all** job objectives.

The *WPS* facilitator indicated that it would be difficult to find an online facilitator that possessed all the competencies indicated in Tables 4.8, 4.10 and 4.12. When examining the competencies, it is important to concentrate on the 'high' and 'extreme' scales, because these are the competencies that would be used most of the time to meet the job objectives for the five roles of the online facilitator.

The people competencies for the online facilitator are represented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: The online facilitator profile – people competencies

People Competencies		Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
Importance Level					
Leadership					
	Providing direction		■		
	Empowering		■		
	Motivating others				■
	Developing others			■	
	Attracting and developing talent		■		
Interpersonal					
	Interpersonal sensitivity				■
	Teamwork			■	
	Building and maintaining relationships			■	
	Flexibility		■		
	Stress tolerance		■		
	Tenacity		■		
	Cross cultural awareness	■			
	Integrity		■		

The scale definitions for people competencies, as generated on the actual report, are explained in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Scale definitions for people competencies (SHL, 1998)

People Competencies	
Leadership	
Providing direction	Provides team with a clear sense of direction; takes charge, organises resources and steers others' towards successful task accomplishment.
Empowering	Delegates responsibilities to appropriate subordinates; gives others latitude to exercise their own initiative, and invests them with the power and authority to accomplish tasks effectively.
Motivating others	Enthuses others and facilitates successful goal accomplishment by promoting a clear sense of purpose, inspiring a positive attitude to work, and arousing a strong desire to succeed among team members.
Developing others	Actively seeks to improve others' skills and talents by providing constructive feedback, coaching, training opportunities, and assignments which challenge their abilities and encourage development.
Attracting and developing talent	Attracts and recruits high calibre individuals; puts time and effort into developing high fliers.
Interpersonal	
Interpersonal sensitivity	Shows consideration, concern and respect for other people's feelings; demonstrates interest in others opinions; is tolerant of differing needs and viewpoints.
Teamwork	Co-operates and works well with others in the pursuit of team goals; shares information; supports others.
Building and maintaining relationships	Able to establish and maintain relationships with people at all levels; puts others at ease; promotes harmony and consensus through diplomatic handling of disagreements and potential conflict.
Flexibility	Adaptable; receptive to new ideas; willing and able to adjust to changing demands and circumstances.
Stress tolerance	Remains calm, objective and in control in stressful situations; maintains a stable performance under pressure; accepts criticism without becoming over defensive.
Tenacity	Resilient and persevering; continues to strive for a goal (as long as it is realistically attainable) even in the face of adversity; copes with disappointments and setbacks.
Cross cultural awareness	Able to communicate with, relate to and see issues from the perspective of people of other cultures.
Integrity	Maintains high ethical standards both personally and professionally; shows integrity and fairness in dealings with others; is reliable and trustworthy.

The thinking competencies for the online facilitator are represented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: The online facilitator profile – thinking competencies

Thinking Competencies		Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
Importance Level					
Analytical					
	Judgment				■
	Information gathering			■	
	Problem analysis				■
	Objective setting	■			
	Management control		■		
	Written communication skills			■	
	Technical skills and competence			■	
Business Awareness					
	Organisational awareness		■		
	Strategic perspective		■		
	Commercial orientation	■			
	Cross functional awareness		■		
	Innovation		■		
	Career and self development		■		

The scale definitions for thinking competencies, as generated on the actual report, are explained in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Scale definitions for thinking competencies (SHL, 1998)

Thinking Competencies	
Analytical	
Judgment	Makes rational, realistic and sound decisions based on consideration of all the facts and alternatives available.
Information gathering	Seeks all possible relevant information for problem solving and decision making; consults widely, probes the facts, analyses issues from different perspectives.
Problem analysis	Breaks problem into constituent parts and differentiates key elements from the irrelevant or trivial; makes accurate use of logic, and draws sound inferences from information available.
Objective setting	Produces detailed project plans in which objectives are clearly defined and action steps for achieving them are clearly specified.
Management control	Establishes clear priorities; schedules activities to ensure optimum use of time and resources; monitors performance against objectives.
Written communication skills	Produces written communications that are clear, fluent, concise, and readily understood by intended recipient(s).
Technical skills and competence	Demonstrates detailed knowledge and expertise in relation to the job; readily absorbs new technical information and keeps up to date in specialist areas.
Business awareness	
Organisational awareness	Attuned to internal 'politics' and alert to changing dynamics with the organisation; forges links with other departments and establishes useful supportive networks.
Strategic perspective	Takes a long term view, thinks on a broad canvas, and entertains wide ranging possibilities in developing a vision for the future of the organisation.
Commercial orientation	Knowledgeable about financial and commercial matters; focuses on costs, profits, markets, new business opportunities and activities which will bring the largest return.
Cross functional awareness	Has knowledge and experience of a range of different functions; takes account of all the different functions in developing strategy and plans.
Innovation	Comes up with new and imaginative ideas; identifies fresh approaches; breaks away from tradition.
Career and self development	Takes responsibility for own development; actively pursues learning and career development opportunities; seeks out and acts upon feedback on own performance.

The energy competencies for the online facilitator are represented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: The online facilitator profile – energy competencies

Energy Competencies		Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
Importance Level					
Dynamism					
	Self-confidence				
	Impact				
	Decisiveness				
	Drive				
	Initiative				
	Persuasiveness				
	Oral communication skills				
Operational					
	Concern for excellence				
	Customer service orientation				
	Execution				

The scale definitions for energy competencies, as generated on the actual report, are explained in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Scale definitions for energy competencies (SHL, 1998)

Energy Competencies	
Dynamism	
Self-confidence	Independent and self reliant; conveys a realistic confidence in own ability to select appropriate courses of action and in likely success of own initiatives; able to stand ground in face of opposition.
Impact	Makes an immediate positive impression on others; has “presence”; comes across with force and credibility.
Decisiveness	Willing to make firm and speedy decisions and commit to definite courses of action - on the basis of limited information if necessary.
Drive	Enthusiastic and committed; demonstrates capacity for sustained effort and hard work over long time periods.
Initiative	Proactive and self starting; seizes opportunities and acts upon them; originates action and actively influences events.
Persuasiveness	Able to influence attitudes and opinions of others and gain agreement to proposals, plans and ideas; skilful at negotiating.
Oral communication skills	Communicates orally in a manner that is clear, fluent, and to the point, and which holds the audience's attention, both in group and one-to-one situations.
Operational	
Concern for excellence	Committed to the achievement and maintenance of quality; sets high standards of performance for self and others.
Customer service orientation	Concerned to provide a prompt, efficient and personalized service to clients; goes out of way to ensure that individual customer needs are met.
Execution	Drives projects along, gets results, ensures that key objectives are met.

In conclusion, a comprehensive overview was provided of the *Work Profiling System* session. The objectives of the five roles of the online facilitator, namely administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator, formed the basis from where applicable competencies were selected according to time spent performing a certain task or behaviour and rating the task or behaviour for importance in achieving the job objectives. Information from the *WPS* person specific report indicated that the online facilitator could interact with all level of workers in an organisation or institution, from Senior Management to students/trainees. The type of contact that the online facilitator would have with people would be in the form of informing, directing, persuading, negotiating, advising, assessing, interviewing and counselling.

The online facilitator has functional impact in an organisation because s/he carries out non-routine operations. This person's breadth of job knowledge will have to be substantial and s/he will have to be able to manage change, because the job often has new situations to deal with. Working hours will be a mix of day and night working. The job demands a substantial amount of sitting, emphasising the necessity to pay attention to the ergonomics of the workstation to minimise the risk of Cumulative Trauma Disorder.

Competencies are plotted on a bar graph according to a scale, representing 'baseline', 'moderate', 'high' and 'extreme' positions. The 'high' and 'extreme' competencies form the core competencies for the job because these are the competencies that would be used most often to meet the job objectives.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' people competencies are *inter alia*: motivating others; developing others; interpersonal sensitivity; teamwork; building and maintaining relationships.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' thinking competencies are *inter alia*: judgment; information gathering; problem analysis; written communication skills; technical skills and competence.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' energy competencies are *inter alia*: self-confidence; persuasiveness and oral communication skills.

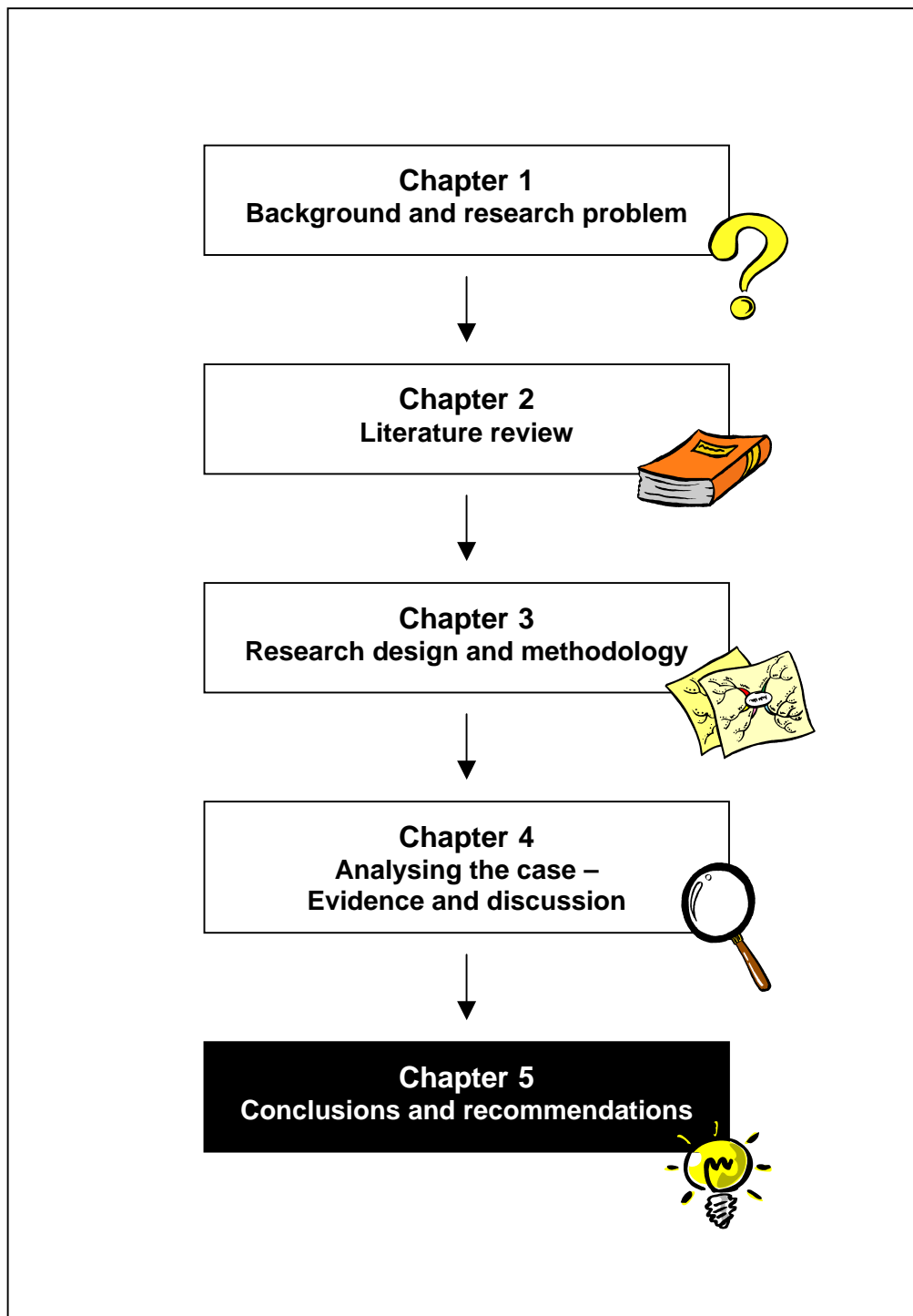


Table of contents

5.1. PRELUDE	274
5.2. SUMMARY	274
5.3. THE ANSWERS TO THE SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS	276
5.4. DISCUSSION	279
5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS	291
5.6. CONCLUSION	293

5.1. Prelude

Curiosity as restless questioning, as movement toward the revelation of something hidden, as a question verbalized or not, as search for clarity, as a moment of attention, suggestion and vigilance, constitutes an integral part of the phenomenon of being alive. There could be no creativity without the curiosity that moves us and sets us patiently impatient before a world that we did not make, to add to it something of our own making (Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom).

5.2. Summary

With the emergence of technology and the increased demand for online courses, traditional classroom facilitators, instructors and trainers are nervous, reluctant and sceptical to teach in the online environment because they do not know what is expected of them. Although used as a fun exercise, the Paradigm quiz in Annexure A corroborated this fear because traditional facilitators, instructors and trainers did not grow up with powerful technologies and they were not prepared for a world of constant change (McCain & Jukes, 2001). Furthermore, Taylor (2002) and Choden (2001) issue a warning to instructors to face the challenge. This means in effect that some trainers will make the change while others may be forced to look for another job. Learning and performance improvement is what is important and trainers and instructors need to utilise the technology in the delivery of learning interventions and to perform optimally in their jobs (Rosenberg, 2001:311). Our skills and knowledge need constant development if we wish to keep up with new technologies and trends.

The research problem was to establish what different roles the online facilitator played in the online environment as well as to identify competencies for the roles.

This study focused on the following research question:

What are the roles and competencies of an online facilitator?

In order to find an answer to this question, the following subsidiary questions were asked:

- How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?
- How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?
- What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?
- What challenges did the online facilitator face?
- What people competencies were identified for the online environment?
- What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?
- What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

Chapter 2 explored the literature pertaining to the various subsidiary questions. A literature study did not fulfil the requirements of identifying this new set of skills for the online facilitator and it was necessary to conduct a case study to establish what really happened during the facilitation of an online course. Similarly, a literature study could not provide sufficient information on the competencies to operate in the online environment. From information retrieved, a conceptual framework was established for each subsidiary question so that the researcher could focus on specific concepts and parameters when analysing the results.

Chapter 3 presented the detailed research design, which was in the form of a case study because an in-depth understanding of the facilitator in an online situation needed to be gained. A specific online case was explored over a six-week period through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, rich in context (Creswell, 1998). The basis for this instrumental case study was the 2002 ORO 880 online module on eLearning for the Master's degree in Computer Assisted Education. The module simulated the popular reality television series, *Survivor*, using the same rules and events

as in the television series – the location just shifted to cyberspace. The name was adapted to *CyberSurfiver*, with an emphasis on 'surf' to indicate that 'surfing' the Internet needed to be done to get to various locations. A specific online facilitator was selected because she had experience in teaching and facilitating online classes. She was also one of the students who obtained a distinction for this module in 1998 and had experience of the demands of this module. She was particularly interested to facilitate this module for personal development reasons. Observer participant observation, various written texts, a face-to-face interview and a group focus interview were selected as data collection methods.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of this researched case study, which was designed to arrive at the answers to the subsidiary questions. Collectively, the answers contributed to answering the research question.

5.3. The answers to the subsidiary questions

The section provides the crux of each answer.

5.3.1. How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?

The adjustment to the online environment was based on good planning and lateral thinking. Firstly, the online facilitator created a safe virtual environment for the learners and provided pre-selected communication tools so that the learners could operate in the virtual environment. She then formed an online community to ensure that social interaction could take place between the learners to create a sense of belonging. Teamwork was accentuated to drive collaboration. The online facilitator deliberately put resources in place to guide the learners on their learning paths. These resources were *inter alia*, course guidelines, clear learning outcomes, vital URLs, notifications and reminders.

The online facilitator also had to make adjustments in terms of her facilitation approach. She was responsible for setting the mood of the learning intervention at the initial face-to-face contact session. She was flexible in terms of individual assignments. She provided time for intellectual discourse as well as time for learners to reflect on their learning experiences. As online facilitator, she created situations in which learners felt safe to question and reflect on their own processes, either privately or during group discussions. The online facilitator remained alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings and in these instances she provided emotional support and also reflected on the particular situation, often acknowledging her own limitations in related circumstances. The online

facilitator had to have a caring persona as she operated on the side in a learner-centred online environment.

5.3.2. How did the online facilitator ‘talk’ to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?

The online facilitator was aware of the fact that ‘talking’ only happened via text messages and that, in the absence of body language and tone of voice, the online facilitator was particularly conscious of the power of the written word. The online facilitator established a relaxed and supportive online environment and the learners knew that they could talk freely and at length, knowing that the online facilitator was there for them at any time. The online facilitator ‘listened’ to all the talking that the learners were doing in the form of dialogues, conversations, discussions, debates and arguments in order to provide guidance and support. At no stage did the online facilitator dominate the group discussions and she admitted that she only ‘talked’ when questions were directed at her specifically. When ‘talking’ to the learners, the online facilitator provided supportive and comprehensive feedback to each question, and even providing additional information at times. The online facilitator displayed ‘facilitator finesse’ by incorporating humour and emoticons in her discussions with the learners. She never lost control of the group and remained calm and relaxed. The online facilitator ‘listened’ and ‘talked’ to all the learners in a very personal way.

5.3.3. What roles did the online facilitator play to be ‘visible’ in the online environment?

Five roles were selected to enhance the visibility of the online facilitator. As **administrator**, the online facilitator conducted timeous course administration. As **social supporter**, the online facilitator maintained social and emotional support in the group. As **instructor**, she facilitated the learning process. As **guide**, she encouraged interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge. As **mediator**, she ensured fair play within the group.

5.3.4. What challenges did the online facilitator face?

The challenges faced by this online facilitator were less than the nine challenges listed in Chapter 2, but the challenges were not that different from what had been experienced by other online facilitators. In Chapter 4 the online facilitator provided clear solutions how to avoid similar challenges in future.

The online facilitator experienced two major challenges whilst facilitating this online course. Firstly, the learners needed support apart from the course work support provided by the online facilitator. The online facilitator felt that valuable facilitation time was spent on helping learners with administrative and technical queries. While the online facilitator took it for granted that the learners would have had a minimum level of computer proficiency when entering for the course, this proved to be inaccurate. To minimise this problem, the online facilitator suggested that a short training session, prior to the beginning of the course, might be held in a computer laboratory to introduce potential learners to the various eLearning tools.

Secondly, the online facilitator had to cope with various conflict situations. Learners complained about the time and the expense of having to be online. The online facilitator provided an alternative for these learners by inviting them to use the computer laboratory at the university. In future, this problem probably could be solved with the signing of a learner contract at the beginning of the course. In this contract the learners would be informed about three undertakings they would have to make in terms of time, effort and money. In future, the online facilitator suggested that she would be more explicit in providing logistical guidelines so that the learners would know what would be expected of them.

The online facilitator effectively managed the conflict within the groups and dysfunctional teams and made adjustments to assist individual team members. In other words, she provided continuous social and emotional support to the distraught learners.

The learners experienced the online assessment as stressful. The online facilitator effectively managed this conflict situation by explaining to the learners why it was necessary to experience the stress of an online test.

Although some learners felt that the online facilitator did not provide constructive feedback, the rest of the group clearly indicated that the course was not about 'product', but about the 'process'. If assignments were successfully completed, there was no need for feedback.

5.3.5. What people competencies were identified for the online environment?

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' people competencies were *inter alia*: motivating others; developing others; interpersonal sensitivity; teamwork; building and maintaining relationships.

5.3.6. What thinking competencies were identified for the online environment?

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' thinking competencies were *inter alia*: judgment; information gathering; problem analysis; written communication skills; technical skills and competence.

5.3.7. What energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' energy competencies were *inter alia*: self-confidence; persuasiveness and oral communication skills.

5.4. Discussion

Reflection or reviewing is learning from experience. I was in a fortunate position where I worked very closely with my supervisor. Our various reflective activities served a two-fold purpose. I provided input and then my supervisor made his contribution. Greenaway (2003:1) defined this reviewing process very aptly as follows:

- Sense 1: Reviewing = Learning. This is the process of learning from experience itself. One may, for example, keep a diary, confide in a friend or talk to one's mentor. Sense 1 is about what the *learner/student* does.
- Sense 2: Reviewing = Helping others to learn. This is the process of facilitating learning for others. Thus, for example, one may ask questions, give feedback or explore alternatives. Sense 2 is about what the *facilitator/supervisor* does.

When I got stuck at particular stages of the research process, my supervisor was there to provide guidance to move beyond this stage. Reflection helped me to clarify, achieve and celebrate objectives attained. Through reflecting, I received the sense that my supervisor cared. He was interested in my progress! Reflection was a valuable safety net for me. At stages I needed the reassurance that support was only a cell phone call or e-mail message away, especially late at night or over a weekend.

5.4.1. Methodological reflection

I am convinced that I explored and explained the world of the online facilitator in *CyberSurviver*. What was gratifying was the fact that the transcripts of the focus group interview and the face-to-face interview corroborated what was produced in the actual text messages. I did not influence the initial data that was generated for this study. In fact, I did not even make contact with the online facilitator during the six-week period. This was

difficult for me because I had thought about various ways to assist the learners and I felt that the online facilitator might have benefited from my suggestions. I would also have appreciated the opportunity to find out how the online facilitator felt at certain stages during the six-week period. But being an 'observer as participant' meant that I had to go with the flow of the course. I was not allowed to take part in the activities – my only duty was to observe.

CyberSurviver happened at a stage when I was extremely busy at work and at various times during that six-week period it was difficult to logon to *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* to observe what was happening. One evening I simply did not have the strength to tackle this job. To this day I regret that moment because I have subsequently learnt to place myself in a learner's position – what if it were I that had been a learner and I had posed a particular question that night that needed an urgent answer? Being an observer made me realise that whoever fulfilled the role of an online facilitator had to be a dedicated person who was willing to work extended hours under adverse circumstances.

It would have been interesting to observe this online facilitator in a 'team teach' situation, where two facilitators facilitated the course. Although this facilitator did use other resources, for example the *InterWise* technical crew, it was very much 'Linda's course' because of the way in which she had designed the structure and assignments for the course. This was a once-off course. But if the course had been repeated again and again, the online facilitator might have considered using guest lecturers as well, just to give the online facilitator some help. Perhaps I am over critical at this point, because this online facilitator mentioned in her face-to-face interview that she was not aware of the fact that she could have made use of a co-facilitator. However, she also acknowledged that she 'liked doing things her way'. It would have been an interesting exercise to observe a possible 'power play' between course facilitators in the online environment.

I do not think that the roles and competencies of the online facilitator would have changed in a case study with no competition or game element. I am of the opinion that the teams would have been less dysfunctional. The online facilitator probably would have a lesser mediator role to fulfil, although conflict is not necessarily linked to competition and games. Different personalities and work pressure can also cause conflict. In any online situation the online facilitator would have to fulfil the five indicated roles of administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator, because these roles provide visibility for the learners. Irrespective of the game element, the online facilitator would still need the selected people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies to function in the learning environment. Depending on the content of the course, the online

facilitator might not be as technically skilled and competent in the subject matter or the online facilitator could call upon a subject matter expert to co-facilitate a course. The online facilitator would then look after the learning process and the subject matter expert would concentrate on the specialised course content.

In any learning environment the online facilitator would still motivate and develop learners and be interpersonally sensitive to the dynamics of the group in order to promote teamwork and build and maintain relationships. Any learning is directly related to information gathering, problem analysis and making judgment calls. Irrespective of which didactical metaphor is used, written and oral communication skills will always be important to function optimally in any learning community. The stronger the technical skills and competence, the better the judgment and interpretation that could be made to guide the learners to new insights. Teaching online requires self-confidence, knowing that you, as the online facilitator, can persuade and motivate learners to learn and develop in order to acquire new skill sets.

In Chapter 3 I provided extensive notes on each data collection instrument used for this study. I also mentioned the disadvantages of each data collection instrument and focused on the corrective measures put in place to address the disadvantages. This is clearly reflected in Tables 3.7, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11. The online facilitator did have permission to change to her mother tongue during the face-to-face interview. I did not realise how time-consuming it would be to transcribe the interview and then to translate it as well for the sake of those readers who do not read and write Afrikaans. There are many spelling mistakes in the exhibits used in Chapter 4. I did not correct any of the spelling or grammar mistakes and used the data as it appeared in the original text messages. The purpose of these text messages was not to check for spelling and grammar mistakes, but to encourage participation, share experiences and provide feedback.

Peer reviews were used to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in this study. I found that the online facilitator and learners were slow in providing feedback on information sent to them to review. This frustrated me because I wanted to obtain 'sign-off' and get closure on a particular research question before moving on to a next section. I worked to a set schedule and had to obtain certain milestone dates in order to complete this study during 2004. The online facilitator and learners could not understand why the reviews were urgent. At the time of the peer reviews many of the learners were busy with their own dissertations for the master's degree and the online facilitator was in a state approaching panic because of her work pressure.

5.4.2. Substantive reflection

It is evident from the literature that the role of the online trainer is crucial in the learning process. Consider the impact of the following quotations on the training profession.

What is emerging most clearly from the technological explosion is, ironically enough, a refocusing on people (Winer et al. 1999:891).

I agree with Winer *et al.* (1999). In my estimation, providing social support with a high degree of interpersonal sensitivity, building and maintaining relationships, gathering information, analysing problems, and having writing and oral communication skills would constitute a 'refocusing on people'.

The classroom will no longer be the default delivery system. ... the synergies between e-learning and classroom learning will become more refined. There will be less teaching and more facilitating (Rosenberg, 2001:121).

The ability of the facilitator to recognize which facilitation roles are necessary for them to play as the learning project progresses is another key component of successful telementoring facilitation (Harris & Figg, 1994:3).

I concur with Rosenberg (2001) and Harris and Figg (1994). This study focussed on the role and competencies of the online facilitator to identify the crucial facilitation skills needed for the online environment.

Instructors are faced with steep learning curves. How good their online lessons become depends heavily on how they are able to adapt to the computer age (Taylor, 2002:24).

e-moderators are the new generation of teachers and trainers who work with learners online ... online teachers (e-moderators) need special training if online learning is to be successful and productive (Salmon, 2000:1).

Instructors would only be able to adapt if they knew what the online environment looked like and what was expected of them when conducting online lessons. I am in agreement with Taylor (2004) and Salmon (2000). It is for this reason that Dewar and Whittington

(2000) also recommended that newcomers to online facilitation needed a prior course in the requisite skills.

The professors who facilitate the online courses seem to me to need to be active, involved, skilled, and knowledgeable well beyond their colleagues who inhabit the traditional classroom
(Langan, 1997:131).

Being 'active' and 'involved' would indicate 'visible' roles. Similarly, 'skilled' and 'knowledgeable' indicate a set of competencies for this position such as judgment, written communication skills, competence in technical skills, self-confidence and oral communication skills, as was reflected in the *Work Profiling System* report.

As is evident from the abovementioned quotations, the role of the online facilitator has been researched and reported on. Many articles (Anderson *et al.* 2001; White & Weight, 2000; Rykert, 2002; Dewar & Whittington, 2001; Murray, 2001; Barclay, 2001; Bentley, 1994) deal with the importance of this role and suggest reasons why the role is so strategically vital. A few attempts have been made to operationalise the roles (Berge, 1996; Ambrose, 2001; Broadbent & Legassie, 2002; Hootstein, 2002; Learning Peaks, 2001), but not to the extent of identifying five 'visible' roles with matched competencies to fulfil these roles.

The literature was very explicit about the differences between the classroom environment and the online environment, as I indicated in Chapter 2. According to the literature, the major adjustment in the online environment is the creation of learning communities. This was widely mentioned (Newton *et al.* 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Rheingold, 1994; Rourke *et al.* 1999; Peté *et al.* 2002; Picciano, 2002; Westera, 1999; Schrum & Hong 2002; Zimmer *et al.* 2002; Selwyn, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Moller, 1998; Mantyla, 2000b; Ko & Rossen, 2001). I strongly agree with this adjustment, and the *CyberSurviver* online facilitator also designed her module around collaborative learning and 'tribal' (group) assignments. The literature listed typical features of web-based environments that could be used in online courses, as is indicated in Table 5.1 (Kaplan, 2002; Harasim, 1993; Gunasekaran *et al.* 2002). When comparing *CyberSurviver* to the examples provided below, it is apparent that the online facilitator did indeed provide the learners with the opportunity to experience a true web-based environment. I agree that the online facilitator should provide an easy-to-use collaborative environment.

Table 5.1: Typical features of a web-based environment

Tools	Example	This study
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List of research project topics and materials

Table 5.1: Typical features of a web-based environment

Synchronous tools	Audio-conferencing	N/A
	Web-conferencing	N/A
	Video-conferencing	N/A
	Chat	✓
	Instant messaging	✓
	Whiteboards	N/A
Asynchronous tools	Discussion boards	✓
	Calendar	✓
	Links	✓
	Group announcements	✓
	e-Mail	✓
	Surveys and polls	✓
Content integration	Courseware	✓
	Streaming media	Learners' choice
	Narrated slideshows	Learners' choice
	eBooks	Learners' choice
Document management	Resource library	✓
	Version tracking and control	✓
	Permission-based access	✓

Murray (2001) stated that the people who need to make the biggest adjustment from the classroom environment to the online environment are the teacher, instructor and education staff (Murray, 2001). Although various authors reiterated the fact that this change involves moving from teaching to facilitating (Rosenberg, 2001; Duckworth, 2001; Hofmann, 2001a; Harris & Figg, 1994; Nichols, 2002; Rykert, 2002; West & Luetkehans, 1998; Taylor, 2002; Mazoué, 1999), I missed the person-specific indicators that identify this change. On a closer reading of the literature, it would appear that by creating and maintaining learning communities, the change to facilitated learning is complete. Duckworth (2001:2) states 'promote interaction'. Darling (2000:1) emphasises 'the class is the thing'. I disagree with this reasoning. There is more to online facilitation than just the creation of learning communities. The facilitator *per se* needs to show a willingness to 'change' to work in the online environment.

Online facilitation does not imply merely some minor adjustments in the qualities, attitudes, habits and activities that trainers and instructors require for face-to-face teaching. It implies possessing a different set of competencies. One of these 'competencies' would be 'interpersonal sensitivity' or a 'caring persona', as is noted by Hiss (2000). However, I disagree from her interpretation of control talk for the online environment. By being a facilitator, this person relinquishes the controlling function – hence my suggestion of the need for 'facilitator finesse' in the online environment when talking to the learners.

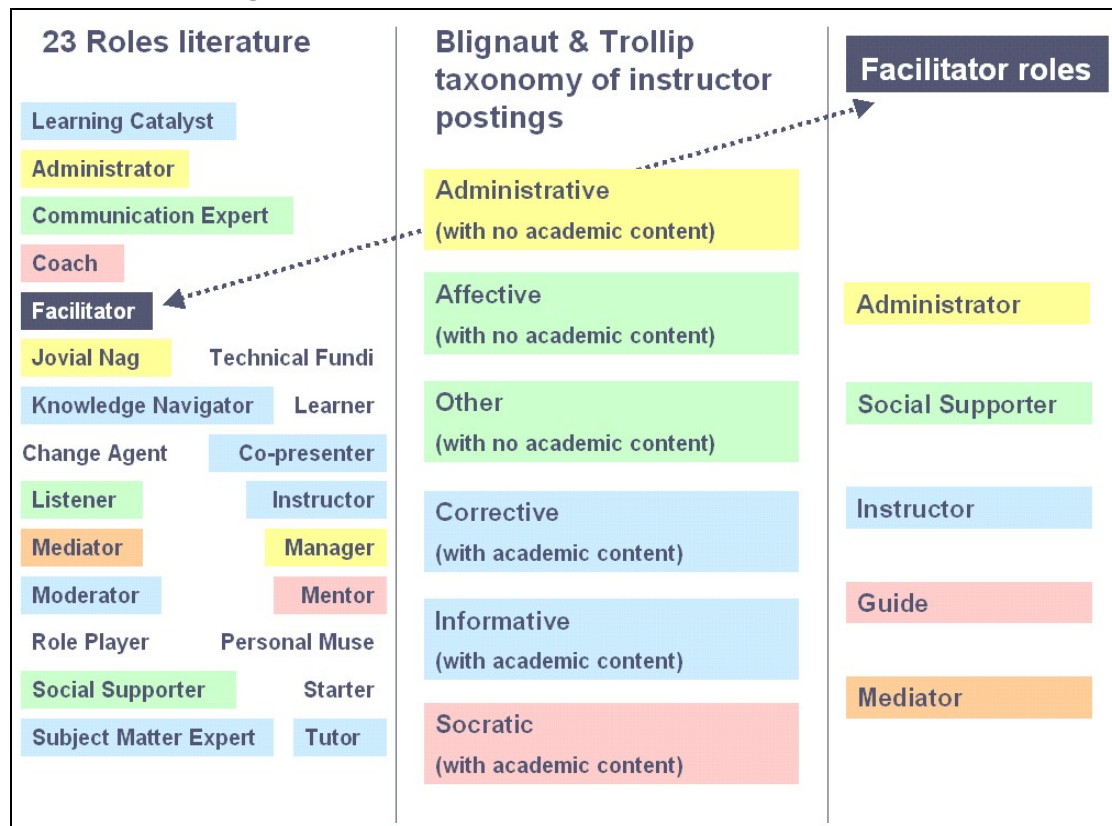
The online facilitator is juxtaposed. The online facilitator works from the side (so to speak), and no longer holds centre stage. He or she has to fulfil 'visible' roles such as those of administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator.

5.4.3. *Scientific reflection*

The researcher scrutinised the roles of the online facilitator in this study. The 23 roles indicated in the literature could not give a clear indication of visible roles that the online facilitator needed to fulfil. All the text messages that were generated throughout the course were processed in terms of the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments. Once again, the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy did not provide for 'visible' online facilitator roles. Using the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy as a base line, I transformed the taxonomy into roles, taking into account how each category was defined and delimited. I was looking for indicators that would reflect visibility on the part of the online facilitator. I also considered what the learners and online facilitator had to say about the visibility of the online facilitator, and what steps the learners and online facilitator recommended to improve the visibility of the online facilitator. Five different roles were identified and five different coding schemes were designed. Thereafter, all the online facilitator postings in *Yahoo Groups*, *WebCT* and *Yahoo Messenger* were categorised in terms of the five visible roles.

The online facilitator, to be visible in the online environment, needs to fulfil the five roles that are indicated in Figure 5.1 under Facilitator roles.

Figure 5.1: The five roles for the online facilitator



Expertise in these roles would assist newcomers to online facilitation to be less frustrated and worried about what they should be doing when they are facilitating an online course. I designate the main objective of each role as follows:

- Role of Administrator: to conduct timeous administration.
- Role of Social supporter: to maintain social and emotional rapport.
- Role of Instructor: to facilitate the learning process.
- Role of Guide: to encourage interactivity so as to foster the acquisition of new knowledge.
- Role of Mediator: to ensure fair play.

The identified five roles were then put through *Work Profiling System* Job Analysis Questionnaires (JAQs) to rate high and extreme people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for the role of an online facilitator. The results

generated in the *Work Profiling System* report indicated that the online facilitator needed 13 competencies to be effective in the role of an online facilitator.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' people competencies were *inter alia*: motivating others; developing others; interpersonal sensitivity; teamwork; building and maintaining relationships. In Table 5.2 each competency is contextualised in the way that the online facilitator displayed it.

Table 5.2: Interpretation of people competencies

Competencies	Application
Motivating others	Throughout the course the online facilitator motivated the learners on their learning paths. This competency is associated with the role of guide.
Developing others	This succinctly describes the reason why learning occurs and the reason for learner-centred courses. Learners had to acquire new skill sets. Although the learners were working in a constructivist manner, on completion of each assignment, the online facilitator could have provided more tips or easier ways to go about creating certain assignments. At times the learners were struggling with technical issues, and the online facilitator did not provide solutions to their problems. This competency is associated with the role of instructor.
Interpersonal sensitivity	The online facilitator did display a caring persona in the online environment. This means caring about learners and being aware of learners' frustrations, difficulties and fears. This competency is associated with the role of social supporter.
Teamwork	The online facilitator encouraged teamwork so that the learners would not experience the online environment as lonely. On reflection, the initial forming of the teams might have been done differently. Prior to the course, the online facilitator should have issued 'minimum requirements' for the course so that all the learners had a fair change to 'survive' on this course. It seemed that the more computer-literate the learners were, the longer they were able to 'survive' without being evicted to Tribe 5. Learners had to exchange ideas and learn to negotiate with others and to evaluate contributions in a socially acceptable manner. This is also essential to success in the real world. This competency is associated with the role of social supporter.
Building and maintaining relationships	Learning is <i>per se</i> a social task (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). The online facilitator promoted social skills and communications skills when learners had to exchange ideas. The online facilitator also placed the learners into various groups and she regularly 'talked' to the learners in a group environment (or individually) to maintain a relationship with the group. This competency is associated with role of social supporter.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' thinking competencies were *inter alia*: judgment; information gathering; problem analysis; written communication skills; technical skills and competence. In Table 5.3 each competency is contextualised in the way that the online facilitator displayed it.

Table 5.3: Interpretation of thinking competencies

Competencies	Application
Judgment	In the role of instructor, the online facilitator constantly made judgment calls on the work received in order to be able to provide individual feedback and allocate marks. The online facilitator could have made a better judgment call regarding the workload of the course. The six-week period was not enough time to complete the course.
Information gathering	The online facilitator analysed various issues from different perspectives. She was gathering information to be able to ask questions and to direct the learners. This competency is associated with the role of administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator.
Problem analysis	The online facilitator remained alert to expressions indicating deep or strong feelings and she also had to solve problems that involved intellectual content. Learners had to solve problems and investigate topics and use a variety of resources to find solutions. As the learners explored, the online facilitator guided them. This competency is associated with the role of instructor, guide, mediator, social supporter and administrator.
Written communication skills	This competency is the only way of communication in the virtual world. The online facilitator acknowledged that she should have written shorter e-mail messages, because the learners did not read long messages. This competency is associated with the role of administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator.
Technical skills and competence	The online facilitator had to be a subject matter expert. This is associated with the role of instructor. Because the online facilitator had the technical skills and competence, she could provide learners with a rich learning experience. Perhaps, at times, the online facilitator could have suggested more practical tips and warned the learners about traps. As a guide she challenged individual learners to reach bigger heights.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' energy competencies were *inter alia*: self-confidence; persuasiveness and oral communication skills. In Table 5.4 each competency is contextualised in the way that the online facilitator displayed it.

Table 5.4: Interpretation of energy competencies

Competencies	Application
Self-confidence	Although the learners indicated that the online facilitator was in control of the course, the online facilitator experienced the first week as chaotic, because the online facilitator did not know how the <i>Yahoo Groups</i> platform operated. Perhaps the online facilitator should have tested the <i>Yahoo Groups</i> platform before the course started to be able to inform the learners about what they needed to do. This would have made for a much easier start to the course. It was imperative that the online facilitator could substantiate her actions for the course, especially when working with adults. The online facilitator's self-confidence was never in question because she was an expert in the subject matter and so was able to stand her ground in disputes with learners. This competency is associated with the role of administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator.
Persuasiveness	The online facilitator had to be able to influence attitudes and gain agreement. She used this competency in her role as guide when she encouraged collaboration, and as a social supporter when she thanked learners for what they had done. The online facilitator also used persuasiveness in her role as mediator to reach agreement not to extend the deadline, but rather to extend the time required for the marking of the assignments.
Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills were needed to provide clear guidelines at the face-to-face contact session. At this point in time the online facilitator could have been more explicit about the <i>Survivor</i> metaphor, because many of the learners did not know about the television programme. Although this online facilitator only used the pre-selected communication media, White and Weight (2000) indicated that it might be necessary to make the odd telephone call to a learner who was experiencing problems or who was not participating in discussions or who had not submitted assignments. For this, oral communication skills would be necessary.



Exhibit 5.1 reveals the online facilitator's thoughts on self-confidence, extracted from the self-administered questionnaire.

Exhibit 5.1 [Q]: The online facilitator on self-confidence

It is essential to belief in yourself, as any hesitance from a facilitator is immediately spotted by learners. If they don't experience you as 'in control' and confident, it is easy to lose the positive dynamics in the entire group. I battled the first week in particular, when nothing happened as I anticipated it would, and had a hard time masking my own insecurities as a facilitator. Afterwards it seemed that most learners thought the initial chaos was part of my well-planned introduction to elearning, which of course it was, however not at all on the scale as it eventually took place!

Table 5.5 provides a breakdown of my contribution to the 'body of knowledge'. An online facilitator, to be visible in the online environment, would have to fulfil five roles. To be able to fulfil these five roles, the online facilitator would need 13 competencies for this role because these are the competencies that would be used most often to meet the job objectives.

Table 5.5: The five roles and 13 competencies for the online facilitator

 Online facilitator	Roles				
	Administrator	Social supporter	Instructor	Guide	Mediator
 People competencies					
Motivating others				✓	
Developing others			✓		
Interpersonal sensitivity		✓			
Teamwork		✓			
Building/maintaining relationships		✓			
 Thinking competencies					
Judgment			✓		
Information gathering	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Problem analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Written communication skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Technical skills and competence			✓	✓	
 Energy competencies					
Self-confidence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Persuasiveness		✓		✓	✓
Oral communication skills	✓	✓	✓		✓

5.5. Recommendations

5.5.1. *For policy and practice*

The following is recommended.

Organisations and institutions considering eLearning, should, at **strategic** level, take cognisance of the importance of online facilitation. Online learners do not want to be left alone in cyberspace. The study reiterates the importance of the role that online facilitators have to play in the success of any eLearning endeavour. Organisations and institutions that have implemented eLearning might want to look more closely at the staff that they have appointed as online facilitators. They might find it necessary to re-train their staff to fulfil visible roles in online facilitation.

At **tactical** level, this study could be used to obtain buy-in from line managers in organisations and institutions to support the development of skills needed for the delivery of online courses.

At **operational** level, the study has provided the framework for the selection of online facilitators. Five roles and 13 competencies have been identified to function in the online environment. Organisations and institutions might want to revisit their policies on ergonomics, flexi-time and teleworking. Individual development plans for online facilitators should include training opportunities to improve competencies that did not rank under 'high' and 'extreme'.

Each online facilitator-to-be needs to be given the opportunity to experience the process first hand – to enrol in an online course and to experience what it is like from a learner's perspective. Conduct 'dress rehearsals' where each facilitator and co-workers participate in a ten-minute online session every day. Such practice may improve skills.

Online facilitators also need to learn everything they need to know about the technology they use. An online facilitator needs to fully understand the capabilities and limitations of the virtual classroom before facilitating an online course. Knowing how the technology works will also increase the online facilitator's comfort level, self-confidence and credibility. Each online facilitator, with his/her manager, should go through a performance management process to discuss development areas and jointly create a development plan to achieve the goals. If this is done, the development of online facilitators will contribute to organisational goals as well as professional growth.

5.5.2. For further research

The following is recommended.

For **fundamental** research purposes, this case study needs to be verified by means of replication. Replication of this study means using the same module on another group of learners with a different online facilitator. Transferability can be obtained by sending questionnaires on the five roles and 13 competencies to practising online facilitators and following the Delphi technique to reach consensus. Focus group interviews could also be conducted to elicit this information.

Applied research could be conducted by investigating a hierarchy of competencies. Which competencies would be considered non-negotiable and which competencies would be considered 'nice-to-have'? Further investigation could consider a team-teach approach towards online facilitation, designing a co-facilitation matrix, identifying essential team competencies and individual competencies.

5.5.3. For further development work

The following is recommended.

- The design of a development plan to achieve the 13 competencies, with listed Service Providers who offer various courses.
- The design and development of a performance management matrix for online facilitators, indicating the key performance areas, weighting, key performance indicators, objectives, measurement and a column for rating purposes.
- The enhancement of the help-desk function to incorporate a support function for online facilitators if no team-teaching is taking place.
- The development of a formalised 'buddy system' or back-up system for online facilitators in the event of the absence of a specific online facilitator who may be ill or on leave.
- The design and development of tools to be used as guidelines for some of the competencies, for example, a job aid that lists appropriate 'Greetings' and a database of Frequently Asked Questions.
- The creation of a 'facilitator learning community' in which facilitators can reflect on tricky situations, share success stories and obtain different viewpoints.

- The compilation of a 'start-up toolkit' for an online learning project. This would include 'to do lists' and checklists for the whole team, including the technical support team, instructional designer, online facilitator etc.
- The design of an online learner dashboard and online facilitator dashboard that provides the online facilitator with training status and activities per online course in terms of synchronous and asynchronous participation. Workflow and process flow will have to be investigated to provide an indication of what the dashboard should consist of.
- The alignment of roles and competencies of the online facilitator with those of the ETD Practitioners for the South African environment.

5.6. Conclusion

The five roles and 13 competencies of an online facilitator were scrutinised in this instrumental case study. The subsidiary questions (namely adapting to the online environment, 'talking' online, roles, challenges and competencies of an online facilitator) were investigated in a specific order to ensure that a comprehensive and descriptive picture was obtained from this natural setting to arrive at understanding and interpreting how the online facilitator and learners created and maintained their social worlds.

An online facilitator, to be 'visible' in the online environment, would have to play five roles (*administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator*) and would need a combination of five people competencies (*motivating others, developing others, interpersonal sensitivity, teamwork and building and maintaining relationships*), five thinking competencies (*judgement, information gathering, problem analysis, written communication skills and technical skills and competence*) and three energy competencies (*self-confidence, persuasiveness and oral communication skills*).

ELearning strategists should take serious cognisance of the role of the online facilitator.

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Annexure A: Paradigm Quiz

Which of these statements describes your life experience before you reached the age of 20?	Describes my youth	Does not describe my youth
1. I remember when bubblegum cost 1c.		
2. I remember when world events were things you read about.		
3. I grew up without a microwave oven.		
4. I remember when the Russians were the bad guys.		
5. Our household telephone had a rotary dial.		
6. I remember the assassination of President Kennedy.		
7. I rode a car that was not equipped with seat belts.		
8. I grew up never owning a Sony Walkman or similar device.		
9. I remember when smoking was considered acceptable.		
10. I remember our family getting our first TV.		
11. I remember when "Made in Japan" meant cheap junk.		
12. I remember when encyclopedias were only printed on paper.		
13. I never played video games in my youth.		
14. I wore low-tech running shoes with canvas uppers.		
15. I washed dirty dishes by hand.		
16. I have no videotapes of my youth.		
17. I had 45 rpm and 33 rpm records.		
18. I saw learning as the memorization of facts.		
19. I remember the first time a man stood on the moon.		
20. My father worked for one company for 20 years or more.		

Adapted from:

McCain, T. & Jukes, I. (2001). *Windows on the Future – Education in the Age of Technology*. California: Corwin Press, Inc. p 26.

Analysing the score:

If **three or fewer** of the statements describe your youth, then you possibly experienced a technology-rich environment as you grew up, where change was an ever-present factor to be dealt with. The changes taking place in life today are not likely to be causing you a great deal of mental anguish.

If **four to six** of these statements describe your youth, then your youth likely began before the new age of technology and extended into it. You have also experienced a relatively technology-rich environment, and you know the effects of increasing change as a common part of life. However, you will possibly have more difficulty in adapting to change than those who experienced this environment all their lives.

If **seven or more** of these statements describe your youth, then you probably grew up before microelectronic technology exploded into our lives. The majority will fall into this category. The life you experienced when you were growing up did not prepare you for a world of constant change and increased use of powerful technologies.

Annexure B: Observation Sheet

Week 1
18 – 24 July 2002

Activities and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm tribes. Appoint spokesman. Week 1 = Immunity = Photo shoot. Info on Tribal and individual assignment.
Unusual situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited interaction. Online facilitator inviting interaction (22/7). Eventually activity 23/7 – week is nearly over. Technical confusion = <i>Yahoo Groups</i> e-mail and website. Everything said during F2F is repeated again. Learner confusion – cannot find files in <i>Yahoo Groups</i>. Technical incompetence.
Conversations and writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lengthy messages stipulating Tribal assignment. Obtain ftp program. Discussing what needs to be done. Pleasant to learners. Online facilitator offering help. Online facilitator keeping her cool, not getting upset. Assisting as comprehensively as she can.
My own behaviour and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few postings – Linda must be worried. I wonder what has happened to the learners. Why are they so 'silent'? Why are the learners not interacting? Is something wrong? Linda pleased – something is happening. Reiterating ground rules and offering help – going with the flow. Online facilitator not forcing anything. Only answers questions that are posted directly to her.

Annexure B: Observation Sheet

Week 2
25– 31 July 2002

Activities and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immunity challenge = Typing test. Working on tribal assignment = most messages. Technical issues being discussed.
Unusual situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many technical problems (____, _____) even online facilitator experienced problems with voting station. Unfairness of synchronicity – learners moaning. One learner still totally lost – trying to find Photoshoot. Several learners – did you receive my assignment? Learners wanting confirmation. I haven't heard from these people – still on course = [7 Names]. See you all tonight – another F2F session to sort out technical difficulties.
Conversations and writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick responses. Like online facilitator's humour – 'who ever said anything in life is fair?'. Linda's messages much shorter. Giving specific content info to individual questions – SME role. Support = proud of you / hang in there. Providing a lot of social and emotional support. Good or bad = mention learners by name.
My own behaviour and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like the idea that Linda informs the group which learners have done what by name. Set timer to 2 minutes – importance not stressed / learners are going to miss this instruction. Sweet message to Dr _____ – for encouragement. Good explanation of competition element = fun way to share information. Learners are really collaborating / online facilitator only answering specific questions aimed at her. Interaction much better & learners seem more at ease. Online facilitator repeating information for re-enforcement. Extremely quick responses from Linda. Well done online facilitator = mentioning learners names for assessment received ... [9 Names] = the online facilitator is specific. What a busy and exciting week – great collaboration!

Annexure B: Observation Sheet

Week 3

1 – 7 August 2002

Activities and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ InterWise arrangements = Ian de Villiers and Zeldie van Vuuren. ▪ Learners have to test system. ▪ Only 3 tested = [3 Names]. ▪ .ppt slides = [4 Names]. ▪ Provide criteria for group work. ▪ Started chatting on <i>Yahoo Messenger</i>.
Unusual situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technical problems to logon to InterWise = [2 Names]. ▪ 'Calling Tribe 5' – paying attention to them.
Conversations and writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inviting participation <i>NetMeeting</i>. ▪ Always addressing learners by name. ▪ Using coloured fonts when responding to learner's message.
My own behaviour and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wake up call to start testing = well done / proactively. ▪ <i>InterWise</i> session = Good. ▪ Like the person specific lists. ▪ Colour coding works well.

Annexure B: Observation Sheet

Week 4

8 – 14 August 2002

Activities and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Move to <i>WebCT</i> – only 4 learners accessed Bulletin Board = [4 Names]. ▪ Many discussions on <i>WebCT</i>. ▪ Also chatting on <i>Yahoo Messenger</i>.
Unusual situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peer assessment different approach – changes to tribal assignment after voting has taken place / tribal members not participating / no critique on other tribal sites – unfair mark allocation. ▪ Online facilitator away for the long weekend.
Conversations and writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linda clearly asked the groups whether they need help. ▪ Very clear answers to individual questions. ▪ Dual discussions on <i>Yahoo Groups</i> and <i>WebCT</i>.
My own behaviour and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nice touch Linda, taking a break and informing learners about it. ▪ Using <i>WebCT</i> for reflective sessions. ▪ Ouch ... a bit harsh and sarcastic and facetious = ... somewhere exciting over weekend – assumption all somewhere else; awfully quiet!

Annexure B: Observation Sheet

Week 5

15 – 21 August 2002

Activities and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shift from process to product. ▪ Many reading exercises. ▪ Feedback / marks on Individual assignments. ▪ Online facilitator very busy on <i>Yahoo Messenger</i>.
Unusual situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great news = Prize announcement – weekend away for winner. ▪ Asking for extension = not given. ▪ Havoc with tribal shuffle and test announcement.
Conversations and writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online facilitator – good motivation for shuffle, not giving extension and online test. ▪ Online facilitator keeping her cool in all messages, except losing it in the test e-mail message – but she did apologise to the learner.
My own behaviour and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cute = Morse code as a clue. ▪ Nice going = informing learners about changes / online facilitator transparent – has definitely thought this through – not a haphazard decision. ▪ Test caused chaos. ▪ Online facilitator apologises to learner for harsh and cold e-mail message – was actually joking about the test – message can easily be misconstrued! ▪ Well done Linda, for apologizing to the open forum.

Annexure B: Observation Sheet

Week 6

22 – 28 August 2002

Activities and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparing for the test. ▪ Chatting on <i>Yahoo Messenger</i>. ▪ Final arrangements for Thursday evening to announce the winner / social committee – bring some eats.
Unusual situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online facilitator guiding learner to use <i>Yahoo Messenger</i>. ▪ Still wrong postings – not to <i>WebCT</i>. ▪ Test still an issue.
Conversations and writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online facilitator made contact with each learner via <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> to wish each learner well for the test of tomorrow. ▪ Last bit of motivation for the groups. ▪ Putting learners at ease for the test. ▪ Begging learners to please VOTE.
My own behaviour and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online facilitator cares for her learners. ▪ Guiding and helping learners individually. ▪ The end is in sight ...

Annexure C: Roles Matrix

Week 1
18– 24 July 2002

Roles	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Learner							
Administrator			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Change agent						✓	
Coach / Guide			✓			✓	✓
Communication expert							
Co-presenter							
Facilitator							
Instructor			✓		✓	✓	✓
Jovial nag							
Knowledge navigator							
Learning catalyst							
Listener							
Manager							
Mediator							
Mentor							
Moderator							
Personal muse							
Role player							
Social supporter			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Starter							✓
Subject matter expert						✓	
Tutor							
Technical fundi							
Communication media	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
<i>Yahoo Groups</i>			3	1	1	4	5
<i>WebCT</i>							
<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>							

Annexure C: Roles Matrix

Week 2
25– 31 July 2002

Roles	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Learner							
Administrator		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Change agent					✓		
Coach / Guide	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communication expert							
Co-presenter							
Facilitator							
Instructor	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Jovial nag				✓			
Knowledge navigator							
Learning catalyst							
Listener							
Manager							
Mediator	✓	✓					
Mentor							
Moderator							
Personal muse							
Role player							
Social supporter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Starter							
Subject matter expert			✓			✓	
Tutor							
Technical fundi							
Communication media	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	3	2	9	6	5	10	1
<i>WebCT</i>		1					
<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>							

Annexure C: Roles Matrix

Week 3

1 – 7 August 2002

Roles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learner							
Administrator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Change agent							
Coach / Guide	✓		✓		✓		
Communication expert							
Co-presenter							
Facilitator							
Instructor			✓	✓		✓	✓
Jovial nag							
Knowledge navigator							
Learning catalyst							
Listener							
Manager							
Mediator							
Mentor							
Moderator							
Personal muse							
Role player							
Social supporter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Starter							
Subject matter expert							
Tutor							
Technical fundi	✓				<i>IWise</i>	✓	
Communication media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	4	1	2	1	3	2	2
<i>WebCT</i>							
<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>				1		2	7

Annexure C: Roles Matrix

Week 4

8 – 14 August 2002

Roles	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Learner							
Administrator	✓				✓		✓
Change agent							
Coach / Guide					✓		✓
Communication expert							
Co-presenter							
Facilitator							
Instructor	✓				✓	✓	✓
Jovial nag							
Knowledge navigator							
Learning catalyst							
Listener							
Manager							
Mediator	✓				✓		✓
Mentor							
Moderator							
Personal muse							
Role player							
Social supporter	✓				✓	✓	✓
Starter							
Subject matter expert							
Tutor							
Technical fundi					✓		
Communication media	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	3	0	0	0	4	4	3
<i>WebCT</i>					4	1	
<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>	1				4	3	2

Annexure C: Roles Matrix

Week 5

15 – 21 August 2002

Roles	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Learner							
Administrator	✓	✓				✓	✓
Change agent							
Coach / Guide	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Communication expert							
Co-presenter							
Facilitator							
Instructor	✓	✓					
Jovial nag					✓	✓	
Knowledge navigator							
Learning catalyst							
Listener							
Manager							
Mediator							✓
Mentor							
Moderator							
Personal muse							
Role player							
Social supporter	✓	✓				✓	✓
Starter							
Subject matter expert		✓					
Tutor							
Technical fundi							
Communication media	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	4	5	0	1	2	2	1
<i>WebCT</i>	2	3	0	1	0	2	0
<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>	4	2	2	5	4	4	2

Annexure C: Roles Matrix

Week 6

22 – 28 August 2002

Roles	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Learner							
Administrator		✓	✓			✓	✓
Change agent							
Coach / Guide			✓			✓	✓
Communication expert							
Co-presenter							
Facilitator							
Instructor							✓
Jovial nag							✓
Knowledge navigator							
Learning catalyst							
Listener							
Manager							
Mediator							
Mentor							
Moderator							
Personal muse							
Role player							
Social supporter		✓	✓				✓
Starter							
Subject matter expert						✓	
Tutor							
Technical fundi							
Communication media	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
<i>Yahoo Groups</i>	0	1	5	0	0	2	3
<i>WebCT</i>						3	
<i>Yahoo Messenger</i>	4	0	2	2	1	7	2

Annexure D: Self-administered questionnaire on the online facilitator**Please do the following:**

- Think back and reflect on the *CyberSurviver* module in terms of the Online Facilitator ...
- Indicate **your** level of importance to each indicator in terms of Baseline, Moderate, High or Extreme.
- From each competency, select the **three** most important indicators.
- As evidence for selecting these three indicators, provide three examples why you selected these specific indicators.

People Competencies	Indicator	Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
Leadership	Providing direction				
	Empowering				
	Motivating others				
	Developing others				
	Attracting / developing talent				
Interpersonal	Interpersonal sensitivity				
	Teamwork				
	Building and maintaining relationships				
	Flexibility				
	Stress tolerance				
	Tenacity				
	Cross cultural awareness				
	Integrity				

Thinking Competencies	Indicator	Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
Analytical	Judgement				
	Information gathering				
	Problem analysis				
	Objective setting				
	Management control				
	Written communication skills				
	Technical skills and competence				
Business awareness	Organisational awareness				
	Strategic perspective				
	Commercial orientation				
	Cross functional awareness				
	Innovation				
	Career / self development				

Energy competencies	Indicator	Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
Dynamism	Self confidence				
	Impact				
	Decisiveness				
	Drive				
	Initiative				
	Persuasiveness				
	Oral communication skills				
Operational	Concern for excellence				
	Customer service orientation				
	Execution				

Annexure E: Interview schedule for the online facilitator

Question 1:

Describe your **experience** being the online facilitator.

- What did you do that the learners really liked? Mention your 'moments of truth'.
- What did you do that really made the learners angry, upset or irritated?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 2:

How did you, as online facilitator, **establish** rapport with the group?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 3:

How did you, as online facilitator, **maintain** rapport with the group?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 4:

In what way did you guide the learners?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 5:
What **roles** did you play?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 6:

What did you as online facilitator do that was **unique** to your personality?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 7:

What sort of tricky situations did you encounter?

- How did you handle these situations?
- Did you have to call in help at any stage?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 8:

How often did you consult with your Mentor?

- What type of advice did he give you?

Field notes	Analysis



Question 9:

How hectic or difficult was this course to facilitate?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 10:

If you have an opportunity to implement this course again, will you do things differently? Yes/No

If Yes:

- What will you do differently and why?

If No:

- Why will you not change it?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 11:

What was your motivation for **not** using a co-facilitator for this course?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 12:

What was your motivation for **not** introducing a help desk function for this course?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 13:

What is your opinion about online facilitation as a team effort, rather than an individual effort?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 14:

In your opinion, what **qualities** should an online facilitator possess?

Field notes	Analysis

Annexure F: Interview schedule for the focus group interview

Question 1:

What was your **experience** of the online facilitator?

- What did she do that you really liked? Mention the 'moments of truth'.
- What did she do that really made you angry, upset or irritated?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 2:

How did the online facilitator **establish** rapport with the group?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 3:

How did the online facilitator **maintain** rapport with the group?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 4:

In what way did the online facilitator **guide** you?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 5:

What **roles** did the online facilitator play?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 6:

What did the online facilitator do that was **unique** to her personality?

Field notes	Analysis

Question 7:

What could the online facilitator have done **differently**?

Field notes	Analysis

Annexure G: Informed Consent

8 May 2003

Dear participant

Voluntary focus group interview for ORO CyberSurviver learners

Working title

The roles and competencies of an online facilitator (PhD (CAE)).

Your participation

This information will help you to understand the importance of this research. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. Your participation is extremely important and your co-operation in this regard is appreciated and valued for the planning of future eLearning courses.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to establish what an online facilitator does in order to develop an online facilitator in terms of roles and competencies.

What is expected of you?

You are requested to participate in the focus group interview by answering the questions put to you with regards to the ORO Surfiver module. However, you may only respond when you want to, as a response is not compulsory.

What are your rights as a participant?

Your participation is completely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or walk out of the interview at any time without stating any reason.

Sources of additional information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to approach one of my supervisors or myself:

Supervisor: Prof JC Cronjé
012 420 3663

icronje@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr I Eloff
012 420 5503

ieloff@hakuna.up.ac.za

Researcher: Debbie Adendorff
082 557 5295

debbiea@absa.co.za

Confidentiality

All information retrieved during the course of this study / interview will be treated as strictly confidential. Data that may be reported on in the research report will not include information that identifies you as a participant in the study. Your informed consent form will be filed in a safe place and it will only be accessible to the research team.

Informed Consent

I hereby confirm that the researcher, Mrs DE Adendorff, has informed me of the nature of this study. I have received, read and understood the *Voluntary focus group interview for ORO Survivor learners*.

I understand that:

- My identity will remain anonymous during the analysis, processing of data and reporting of the study.
- I am free to withdraw from the interview at any point, without giving any reason for my termination of the interview.
- My verbal descriptions and interpretations of my experiences during the ORO Survivor module will be analysed for this research.
- I will have sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

I, _____, declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

Participant's name: _____ (Please print)

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of witness: _____ (Please print)

Signature of witness: _____

Date: _____

I, Mrs DE Adendorff, hereby confirm that the participant has been informed in full of the nature and the manner in which the focus group interview and study will be conducted.

Researcher's name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Annexure K: Transcribed and verified transcript of focus group interview

Lack of planning	<p>Q What was your experience of the online facilitator?</p> <p>Nobody wants to make eye contact with me all of a sudden. I think sympathetic, if I can use the word. Sympathetic. I would like to add to that, although it started off sympathetically, I, later on, what I thought about this whole thing was that it could have been planned better, because due to a lack of good planning, it resolved in some experience in a negative way. But from the instructor's point, she was always very sympathetic.</p> <p>Q: So what should have been planned better?</p> <p>The whole course. The whole presentation. The whole thing wasn't well planned. For example, tribe 5, the language was just off. What happened to those students? They just disappeared. It was wrong.</p> <p>Q: So there were loose ends?</p> <p>Ja. I haven't been at any of these focus groups before, but the first thing that strikes me about this study of the whole thing, is that we were actually learning about online learning through online learning. So I don't know what that says to research, but there must obviously be some issues around that.</p>
Learning about process	<p>I think in terms of planning. I thought it was the best course that I've done, certainly in a long time, because of what we learnt. But we were not learning things, which could have been scripted beforehand. So I think that was part of – it was about process for me, in any case, it was about process, and not the actual content and hard skills, like learning to program in HTML. That was not the point, so I think from that point of view, it was fine. I think a lot of people felt insecure in the beginning. That was partially solved by a face-to-face session, which I think went a long way to ... people's fears. And being involved myself now with e learning, I've seen that this is a problem. People would like to have face-to-face stuff before they just go online.</p>
Feeling of being insecure in the beginning	<p>Q: So what did Linda do to facilitate this process that you talk about?</p> <p>Well, there was a lot of communication, but I think it depended on the individual. I mean, I know that Willem here wanted to</p>
Need for face-to-face contact	

<p>Need to have more structure</p> <p>Facilitator in background was experienced as positive</p>	<p>study e-mails. The e-mails tell a very small part of the whole story. I had very long conversations and arguments with Linda about Yahoo Messenger, and I don't know if those logs were kicked, but – unfortunately that was not – everyone was not gripping to those arguments and debate.</p> <p>Q: But you would have liked us to be?</p> <p>Ja, no, it would have been fine. I think it would have been quite interesting. I mean, obviously on Yahoo Messenger you can choose to exclude other people from your conversation, which is a nice thing. I think what we were learning about was also as I said, about, perhaps what the pitfalls were of online learning.</p> <p>[Let's just focus you back to Linda. We're talking about Linda, and we're talking about the role that she played.]</p> <p>Looking at the planning that Willem has mentioned, you can't plan some dynamics and things that happened there. You cannot predict them either. I must disagree there. The fact that up front everybody knew that those who were evicted would be landing in this specific tribe, and nobody asked the question: but what will happen with these students? And I mean it was a growing tribe in terms of numbers, and nothing happened there. So that was a problem, and I know that Linda was aware of that, for somebody else told her up front. Long before this module started, somebody did mention it to her. So she knew about that. I would also like to comment on the learning that took place. All right, I agree, a lot of accidental learning took place due to this method, but we would have accomplished more if it was structured in a more, maybe behaviouristic manner. There's no sense in instructing hours and hours and hours, figuring out how to do something and then do it, and now when I tried to do it again, I still can't do it. There's no sense to that, I mean personally, that's my –</p> <p>That's why I think it's about the process, and not about what you're actually learning.</p> <p>Ja, but it is about Linda's role here. I would –</p> <p>So you would like her to give more structure, to be more structured.</p> <p>The online course must be well structured and well planned.</p> <p>I can see –</p> <p>Sorry, I think I felt the fact that Linda didn't interfere when we had our discussions on yahoo, the bulletin board, she didn't take over any discussions that happened among ourselves, which I thought was a good thing as well, because learning took place between us, and it wasn't led by Linda.</p>
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<p>Knowledgeable</p>	<p>Just two points, I think the metaphor of the survivor game – unfortunately I think there were certain pitfalls, and I've foreseen that point, um, in terms of what happened to the people that were thrown out of the tribe – but I think you've just actually answered the effectiveness of the programme, if you have learned that online courses need to be more thoroughly planned, then the programme has succeeded. And hence my argument – I have a different question, because, what's a good teacher? Because I can't find an answer to say: okay, if he has great eyes, a great smile and so on, a list of – then he's a good teacher. I can't answer that. So can we answer what a good facilitator is? Or are we dealing with other issues like planning the course, which is not the facilitator.</p> <p>Let's then talk about – she said what was positive for her. Let's talk about what Linda did as a facilitator that you experienced as positive. What was positive that Linda did?</p> <p>I experienced her as very clued up.</p>
<p>Control/reflective observant</p>	<p>She's clued up, she's sympathetic.</p> <p>She knew what she was doing.</p> <p>She knew what she was doing.</p> <p>She watched things. Throughout the whole thing, I felt that she was in control, and she did something for a reason. Some of the things.</p> <p>What did she do that made you feel that she was in control?</p> <p>The way that – the type of things that we had to do, and the way everything worked.</p> <p>I think –</p> <p>No, I think that direction was provided to a certain degree –</p> <p>Ja</p> <p>In the sense that, those weekly things that we needed to do. I liked the fact that it was on a weekly basis and that we didn't receive it all at once in the beginning, for example.</p> <p>So in a way, she did structure it.</p> <p>It was structured.</p>
<p>Gave guidance on a weekly basis</p>	<p>Ja, it was structured.</p> <p>So, whenever we got that weekly plan, or whatever you'd like to call it, we knew what was expected of us for that week.</p> <p>For the week, but just for the week.</p> <p>Ja, we didn't know what to expect for the next week, but you –</p> <p>You know what, online, I –</p>
<p>Keeping students on track through feedback and measurable outcomes/clues</p>	<p>Sorry, what I liked, I can't remember how regularly she did it, but I can recall that at times she said: by now, you should have done this and this. And then she'd make a list, and that would remind me of what I haven't done yet.</p> <p>Ja, stuff like that.</p> <p>And what was that – was that positive, or was it less positive?</p>

Transparent Available	<p>No, I thought it was positive for me personally. So she reminded you continuously? Although I think in certain cases it was because of pleas of desperation. Oh, probably yes, from her side, but – I think it could be, ja. I needed it. It helped me. I think what happened there was, on all the questions asked to her, be it via yahoo messenger, she replied to the whole group using the bulletin board. When she picked up, there were a number of questions that came up, like frequently asked questions that came from the students. Then she answered it using the bulletin board. So, which was, I felt, also quite positive. And she was always available. Yes, that's what I wanted to say</p>
Respectful	<p>Always available She was always available. And sometimes I wondered, you know, if she sleeps. And she always made it sound as if she was only speaking to you. She never gave you the idea that she was actually talking to ten other people also. She made it personal That was – at the end of this thing, she wasn't available. Did you pick that up? Really Lindie, I didn't – And when we got to the last – at some stage I could sense it, because on yahoo you could see the smiley faces and who is online. And she was away, I didn't know that. She was away on leave. You're right.</p>
Separation anxiety in the end	<p>The moment the course ended, it was like Linda ended. She was not there anymore. Because I wanted to do things afterwards. I just – I can remember that I was looking for Linda. Eventually I picked up the phone and called the Technikon to find out where's Linda, and they said that she was in a conference, or she was on leave. And that I experienced in a negative sense. Oh, it was when we had to do our articles. I had to do it online. Yeah, you're right. And, so I needed to get in touch with her. So the course didn't end, because we still had to do our articles afterwards. So for me – But the communication – I wished to communicate with Linda, but she wasn't available. But you see, the articles were Johannes's part. Ja. No, but still, I mean, to get –</p>

Separation anxiety	<p>Ja, no, I understand.</p> <p>Together, they're responsible for that module. So Linda could have said: okay, this is where I end. Any questions regarding the article go to Johannes.</p> <p>You expected her to still be available.</p> <p>I expected her. I was like: joe-hoe, where are you? Then, cyber space-like, she didn't come back to me.</p> <p>Guillome, you wanted to say something.</p>
Immediate feedback	<p>No, I wanted to say previously, but that was now before Lindie, what I wanted to say, what I experienced very positively during the whole thing, is the promptness of her replies. If you sent her – okay, first of all, if you got her on yahoo messenger, which was always, she would reply straight away, and either say to you: yes, she can help you now, or say to you: listen, I'm busy. Send me an email. If you sent her an email, within a day, you got a reply. So that to me, I think, that to me was very positive, because I think it can be extremely frustrating if you can't get hold– if you're in the middle of a course, having to do stuff, and you can't get hold of your facilitator.</p>
Promptness	<p>I want to add to that she was really available, and she accommodated us. I was doing it in the day from my office, and was not available after hours, and most of them worked after hours, and I mean, she accommodated all of us all the time. I mean, I recall, when I sent her an email during the day, it wasn't a minute, and I got a reply back.</p>
Humour	<p>I think she was –</p> <p>She was so prompt.</p> <p>She was sitting in front of this thing all of the time.</p> <p>First of all, she has humour, which I find very important. She brought that in. the second thing is something that they've said, and I'm putting it in a different way: I find her – the conversation you were talking about, okay – I wanted her to make a conversation with us, beside the individual task, beside the group task, I thought it was a good opportunity to discuss the things that were happening.</p> <p>You mean the technical stuff?</p> <p>Not the technical stuff. Something more valuable, like the a-synchrony situation. Let's talk about – I wanted to talk, and that didn't happen.</p> <p>There were some debates about that.</p> <p>Ja. But one-on-one. Not as a group.</p> <p>Ja</p> <p>And I find that she needs to make a group discussion.</p> <p>It's one of the rules – I see it – in the e-learning situation.</p> <p>But you know what, there was another thing that I've picked up: we were very – well, I felt very stressed during that time period,</p>

Continuous re-evaluation and planning	<p>so the moment Linda asked questions about – she just threw the question: what is asynchronise learning? I was just like quickly look it up and sending it through, so that I've done that part. I now need to carry on. That's maybe something negative, so, because I didn't really go into thinking about those types of questions, because of the time constraints that was placed on us.</p> <p>Very superficial.</p> <p>I think if we had more time to work through the stuff, I think we could have gone deeper into those discussions, but there wasn't really time to go into deep-deep discussions regarding a certain point.</p> <p>So is that then a constraint on Linda's side, or -?</p> <p>No, I think it's on the student's side. A lot of what you were learning – but you were learning – depended upon yourself. How much you learn, how deep you learn, and how driven you are yourself. I have to disagree there, because I didn't react to those, because I knew that...and I just printed out, I learnt it. So I didn't bother. I didn't stress, I didn't bother, because I knew they were going to respond to it and give us the correct answer. So I didn't worry about that.</p> <p>So the way in which she presented the questions was actually well planned in a way.</p> <p>I don't know. I think, I'm just wondering about the value of those questions in terms of learning from it.</p> <p>You see, I think –</p> <p>Because still I feel Linda should be aware the next time about the time constraints that are placed on the learners for achieving so much without really being provided with the necessary tools to do what you should do by the end of each week. So I feel if you want to learn that way, then there should be more time available for us to go through all those questions.</p>
Process of submission	<p>I just want to –</p> <p>Let's just remember that we talk about Linda. Let's focus on Linda. The positives, and the less positives.</p> <p>I would like to – what they said about not being able to plan a thing like this, what I found positive of Linda, is that I think she kept ...I got the idea that towards the end, she saw that the amount of work that she had planned for us, was too much, and I got the idea that she re-looked at her weekly tasks and made it less, for more students to be able to cope with that.</p>
Game = Linda thing	<p>She customised the course halfway through.</p> <p>What I wanted to say about Linda, and this is quite a neutral statement: she obviously got into this whole survivor thing with</p>

<p>No feedback</p> <p>Separation anxiety</p> <p>Lack of feedback General problem in literature</p> <p>Need more feedback and alliance of interviews between facilitator and students – good motivator</p> <p>Researcher</p>	<p>her mind set, because this is her thing now. None of us know from which point of view she entered into this. So we don't know what her intentions was with this and that. Maybe it's something that we experienced as bad, but intentionally done so because she wanted to see what the reaction would be. I don't know. I don't know whether any of us know, but I just think I was constantly aware of her reacting in a certain way, but there is an agenda which we're not aware of.</p> <p>She's got a plan.</p> <p>She's got a plan. What it is, we don't know.</p> <p>Ja, but what about, for example, we talked about her reaction to all kinds of small situations, but we didn't give feedback for the things that we have done. In a class situation, we do get feedback from our teachers. Do we need feedback here?</p> <p>I didn't find it necessary for me to have feedback, because I was not critical. But in a way the atmosphere was, it's an atmosphere where you don't know what the other side wants.</p> <p>That's not clear. Let me just, can I just welcome the people that came in just now. We're talking about the online facilitator. We're talking about positive and less positive aspects of the online facilitator.</p> <p>I must agree with Michelle that I also experienced that as negative. Once the course ended, or her part of the course ended, that was it. You didn't get any feedback. The first I saw anything of that course again was at the end of the year when I got my final mark from the university. I would have liked a bit of feedback. I like feedback.</p> <p>You would like feedback.</p> <p>I need feedback. Yes.</p> <p>You see, we had a session –</p> <p>To come back to what they've said in the beginning, that it was about a process. I'm sure maybe all of us realise by now it wasn't about the actual technical stuff –</p> <p>Yes, but you see now –</p> <p>I know what you're saying, and I agree.</p> <p>Yes, you see, we're doing it for a different reason that she did it.</p> <p>Ja.</p> <p>We're doing it to get a good mark to be able to get a good job one-day once we've got this.</p> <p>She did it to do research. So I think that she should have seen our side as well. That we need to know, for me to get a good mark at the end of this module, I need to know whether I'm on the right track or not. And –</p> <p>You need feedback.</p> <p>I need feedback. Yes.</p>
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<p>Process not product</p>	<p>You said that she was there continuously. And so I don't understand you say you want feedback, but she was there. What kind of feedback?</p> <p>She was there if you wanted to ask her something, but once you did a task and you put it on the web, or you did it where ever, you never got feedback to say: right, you did it right, or it was sort of okay, or you did it wrong.</p> <p>Ja, I think only when you asked, because I think that's actually where I feel the motivation part of her came in. I feel she was a good motivator as well, because a few times you read there: hang in there and "moenie moed opgee nie" type of thing. But for example that one time with that Java script scroll type of thing which we had to do. I don't know how long I – I think it was one o'clock that evening, when eventually I got it right, and I was like: aha! And immediately I went into yahoo to see if Linda's there, and I saw her, and I said: go to my site, go have a look and see. And she was like: wow! It was something small for me, but she acknowledged the fact that I've gone through all this trouble to eventually get this on there, which was a good motivator for me. But it's not the same as feedback on the quality of your work.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>Ja, but isn't that what Dave said? It wasn't about the work. It was about the process: experiencing an online course.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Okay, but what's an online course? Isn't feedback part of it? An instructor doesn't give you feedback? He should do. I think he should do, 'cause it's not just a way of...what happens to you? But I think the course fills the process.</p>
<p>Flexibility and accommodating</p> <p>Sufficient feedback</p> <p>Set clear limits and expectations</p>	<p>This may sound contradictory, but I actually had a long discussion again over Yahoo with Linda about some of the work that we've done, and about the quality of the web pages I think it was at that stage. And I said to her: you know, this is about process, and she said: yes, it is about process, but she also wanted quality in the web page. And if you wanted feedback, I mean, if you really want to learn HTML, you should go to one of these colleges and write in for a three-day course or something. That's how I feel about it. So I felt that it was entirely about process. And I don't think that you really need Linda to tell you that your web page was nice, was pretty. What would have been nice, is if you really had some interesting or controversial contents, which was about online learning or something like that. And there may have been a debate about that, but I think the feedback was – and maybe it's just because I argued so much – but I had enough feedback.</p> <p>Any other positives about Linda?</p>

<p>Humour</p> <p>Inhibiting factors – more support / structure for those who could not perform – lost focus – task orientated and not learner orientated</p> <p>Group 5 = deserted</p>	<p>Once I had, I was very disturbed, and it was late at night, and I opened Winnie the Pooh, and I thought I'd send it on to her, I thought okay. And she replied back. And I found it very funny. Did we mention flexibility? We all missed our time deadlines, and she was just so flexible and accommodating. She was flexible and accommodating. What else? What did you experience as positive?</p> <p>Ja, the constructive approach to the whole thing. In a way she was very strict. At first she was very strict, and I found it as a positive thing. You have to hold the group. Let's look at less positive aspects. You've already mentioned a few. Anything else that you would like to add?</p> <p>As a teacher I think...represent a teacher. In a group where I teach, I would like to ...know it worked up towards the end, but the way this course was structured, it was in such a way that they encouraged people to drop out right in the beginning. You say that she encouraged people?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>What specifically did she do?</p> <p>The way it was structured.</p> <p>The way it was structured.</p> <p>Not she.</p> <p>Oh, so the way the game was structured?</p> <p>The planning. I think it boils down to the planning.</p> <p>Ja.</p> <p>Ja, unfortunately it meant that if you were not great at HTML, then you couldn't participate in the first part, so you dropped off, and landed in a group with other people who couldn't do HTML either, so all the people who really needed help, all ended up in the same group. And as I've said: it's not about HTML, it's about – if there's a negative, it's definitely –</p> <p>And what would that be less positive for Linda if you look at Linda as facilitator?</p> <p>I think she should have seen that if people dropped off, and they go and they all stay in one tribe, that, she should have built in something to either give them a different type of assignment then to do, but also to enable them to finish the course then. Because once you dropped off, I think the chances that you could finish the module, was slim.</p> <p>I think in that sense it stopped being learner centred. It was really focussed around the survivor thing, and she lost focus there a bit.</p> <p>On the learner's –</p>
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<p>Problem - Deeper online discussions</p> <p>Discuss online learning</p> <p>Creative</p> <p>Inability to read non-verbal behaviour – less sympathy</p>	<p>Ja, deeper discussions.</p> <p>Deeper discussions. You said some more cognitive discussions. Ja, I agree with Michelle. I think the... learning that should have taken place, well maybe it did take place in the end if you look back at it, and then it took place in a constructive way. But also, I really felt that time, you know, that I miss discussing this, and to be able to say what I've learned from this, or what I haven't learned from it, while it was taking place, and not only just -. We would have had time, but –</p> <p>I think that the course equipped you very well to sit and have a discussion with someone on online learning and what it's about, where as if it had been a very structured behaviourist course, here's the first guide in HTML: follow these tutorials –</p> <p>No, that's not what I –</p> <p>No, I'm just saying. So obviously there are two extremes that we are looking at.</p> <p>If you look at Linda as a facilitator – 'cause she's a person – what was unique about Linda specifically as the facilitator that you had for this module?</p> <p>The fact that she never slept.</p> <p>Imaginative.</p> <p>She must have been very motivated.</p> <p>Creative.</p> <p>Ja, very motivated</p> <p>She must have been very motivated.</p> <p>Very creative.</p> <p>Creative, yes.</p> <p>I felt her energy and her – if I can imagine her in class, it would be the kind of teacher who jumps all the time, and get things happening. That's the kind of teacher.</p> <p>Anybody else that would like –</p> <p>And then you know if you're a teacher...the learners...they seek out what you wish to give them. What are you doing-</p> <p>But the other tribe –</p> <p>What if it was not online?</p> <p>Ja.</p> <p>She would see the faces of the other people. What would she –</p> <p>What you're saying, is that online she can't see all the faces, and she can't see that some people don't understand, or some people feel neglected.</p> <p>Ja</p> <p>Or left out.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>And, because you talked about her energy and that she was positive.</p>
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<p>Pre-requisites Bridging course</p>	<p>I think what should have been done, is to post a set of prerequisites before you start this course. You need to be able to do this and this and this.</p> <p>And when you can't, would they have supplied us with – Then they should give a bridging course for the people who can't do it.</p> <p>I just want to, you at the back, yes?</p> <p>You know, I think that certain things... what I wanted to do is...other things is out of your control, because if you were a student there at a specific time, if your telephone was not working, it was out of reach.</p> <p>Okay, what is the – that's, we discussed that during a focus group a few weeks ago. What does that say about Linda specifically?</p> <p>No, what I'm trying to say is she gave us the terms of communicating on whatever. We never received any form of it. We even asked her to give us that, because we were really interested in that online thing. And we missed it, and we're really, really –</p> <p>Because of the technical problems.</p> <p>Ja, because of the technical problems.</p> <p>I know Telkom presented some problems your PC was stolen. Some people didn't have PC's.</p>
<p>Motivator Supporter Researcher Strategist Facilitator Project manager SME Administrator Instructor Guide</p>	<p>What roles did Linda play?</p> <p>She definitely was a motivator – when she said things like jy moenie nou moed opgee nie and she always supported us. Yes, so there must be a role like a supporter of something like that. I do not have the exact title, but she looked after us. I often spoke to her on Yahoo Messenger and she was always supportive, not only in terms of the course work. She wanted to know how I was doing. She definitely played the role of a researcher. This survivor thing was a Linda thing. I also told her at a stage to put this information into your thesis. Students get lost in space and also document it in your research that you get stupid students. She was a type of a strategist to design a game like this – it was strategy that made you win. She was a facilitator – that is what she was named, because she did give guidance what to do and even provided us with screen prints when to ftp etc. She also played the role of an administrator where she told us to keep our diaries open for the Inter Wise session and to go and vote. Won't that be a project manager rather?</p>

We were flooded with those messages and all the assignments that we had to hand in and when she was looking for all the assignments. Can we say that she was also a SME – she knew a lot about eLearning and to make the face puzzle and all the games that we had to play – she knows the Internet. I don't know where she sometimes got all her ideas from. That Morse code exercise for example. Perhaps she could also be seen as an instructor/teacher. At a stage I was very confused with the mindmap and then she gave our group ideas what to look for. Remember she also said that we were doing things wrong – on the mindmap. Then I spoke to her on Yahoo Messenger and she gave us examples of what to do. Perhaps that could also be seen as a guide – she definitely did guide us on our way. Yes, this will be a guide function – if she was an instructor she will tell us exactly what to do. This might be the IP address story, for example. Linda told us exactly what we need to do on the PC to get to a IP address.

5421 words

Annexure L: Transcribed and verified transcript of face-to-face interview with the online facilitator

Interviewer: 'Linda is very pleasant to speak to, often smiles and uses her hands to get the message across!'

Positive experience – it can work	Q Wat was jou belewenis van hierdie online fasilitering?
<i>Looks pleased</i>	A My hele werksopset is mos so dat ek moet die ander ouens heelyd oortuig daarvan dat dit die manier is om dit te doen. En ek kry die heelyd terugvoer van die ouens af wat sê: ja, dit sal werk, maar dit sal nie vir my werk nie. Ja, dit sal werk, maar dit sal verseker nie werk nie. En ek dink die grootste – as ek terug dink aan daai ervaring, is dit vir my die een bewys van: maar dit kan werk. Alles wat ek gedink het is moontlik, is moontlik online. Ek sal wel 'n hele – daar's 'n horde goed wat ek weer – as ek dit weer moet doen – wat ek anders sal doen. En 'n ou leer maar. Ek dink elke keer wat 'n ou so iets aanbied, gaan jy nog goed kry, en, verbeter half. Dis maar daai hele aksie –
Process of learning and change	
Formal qualification / recognition leads to external motivation	Q Was dit ook vir jou 'n leerervaring?
Look at theory	A Ook, ja. Kyk, ek het al van tevore kursusse aangebied, maar hierdie was nou half op 'n groot skaal, en dit was deurlopend. Ek het al baie keer informele dit gedoen vir opleidingskursusse wat die ouens nie eers 'n sertifikaat voor kry nie. So die deelname en die commitment was op 'n ander vlak. Dit was vir my nice dat hierdie 'n formele kursus is, met 'n formele kwalifikasie, en as hulle dit nie kry nie, gaan hulle nie kan aangaan met iets nie. So daar was daai half eksterne motivering wat hulle verplig het om deel te neem, al was hulle – dink ek – baie keer lus om uit te val as gevolg van werksdruk en kostes en – Sommer net alles. So ja, vir my was die lekkerste van die hele ding, die feit dat ek half aan myself bewys het dat die goed wat ek in teorie vir ander mense sê, is goed wat regtig kan werk. En al waarop dit neerkom, is net goeie bestuur. 'n Ou moet net weet wat jy gaan doen. Jy moet beplan, en jy moet op 'n ander manier dink as wat jy dink wanneer jy voor 'n klas staan. So jy kan nie met jou klasstyl in 'n online ongewing instap en dink jy gaan sukses hê nie, want jy gaan miserably vaal. Jy moet maar net sekere goed anders doen.
Proper prior planning – feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction	
Excitement / motivation based on continuous feedback and communication curiosity	Q Wat was vir jou lekker? Of wat was vir jou lekker was, het jou online leerders ook van gehou?
	A Wat was vir hulle lekker? Ek dink daar was min goed wat vir hulle lekker was. Vir my. Die excitement was vir my daarin om elke keer as ek aan log, te sien: ah, hier's kommunikasie. Hier's nuwe ouens wat nou gereageer het. So ek het gebrand van nuuskierigheid om elke

<p>Process of immediated feedback</p> <p>Motivation based on observed success and motion. Stumbling blocks more time needed for assignments</p> <p><i>Smiling</i></p>	<p>keer te kyk wat het nou gebeur in die tyd wat ek nie online was nie. Ek dink hulle sal ook vir jou gesê ek was so te sê feitlik heeltyd online. Wel ek was bedags by die werk anyway. Ons het 'n permanente lyn. So as daar iets nuuts was, kon ek onmiddellik sien, en ek my GroupWise was op notify, so as daar e-pos aankom, het ek dadelik daarvan geweet en het ek onmiddellik gespring en dit gelees. En dit was vir my nogals lekker om daar onmiddellike kommunikasie te hê. En in die aande het ek 'n R7 deal by die huis. So as ek by die huis kom, klaar die kinders gebad het en in die bed gesit het, dan sit ek aan, en dan's 'k aan vir die aand, dan doen ek ander werk, en ek doen my goed, en as daar 'n ander iets kom, sien 'n ou dit ook maar. Vir my was die lekkerte daarin dat, ek dink dit gaan maar saam met die vorige punt van dat ek ervaar het dat sekere goed werk wat mense nog nie in glo nie, wat nog nie die goed probeer het nie, my besweer het sal nie werk nie. So dit was vir my lekker, die feit dat daar suksesse was in daardie opsig. Ek dink daar's baie goed wat ek op 'n ander manier sou struktureer sodat 'n ou meer in diepte met van die goed kon gaan. Daar was leemtes wat ek gedink het 'n ou graag sou wou aanspreek. Goed soos, om byvoorbeeld meer tyd te spandeer aan byvoorbeeld 'n spesifieke week se assignment, sodat die ouens bietjie meer diepte kon kry in die onderwerp, eerder as net 'n breë oppervlakkige 'vat nou, en hier's die volgende ingedatum'.</p>
<p>Stumbling block – game and gebrek aan insig and betekenis in the game</p> <p><i>Hands do a lot of talking</i></p>	<p>Q Sê vir my, as jy moet dink aan wat jy gedoen het, wat jy kon agterkom, wat die studente van gehou het. Wat was 'n moment of truth?</p> <p>A Ja, 'hou' is ook baie selektief, want wat party ouens baie van gehou het, het ander ouens pertinent gehaat. Die speletjie idee was presies dit. Een van die genuine totaal onbelangrike assignments in een week – ek dink dit was die eerste week, was waar hulle 'n game moet gaan speel op die Internet, waar hulle diere moet afneem/fotografeer, elke keer as die diere oor die skerm hardloop. As jy klaar afgeneem het, kry jy ekstra film, of jy kry langer tyd of wat ook al. Die idee was nie om die speletjie te speel vir enige – wel, my idee was meerledig. Ons praat nou – dis nou sommer detail wat ek nou praat, wat dalk nou regtig nie die punt is nie, maar die idee met die speletjie was byvoorbeeld, met daar spesifieke een, was om vir hulle te wys daar's goed op die web wat baie oulik is en baie cute is, en as jy nie gaan soek daarvoor nie, gaan jy dit nie kry nie. In die tweede plek, om vir hulle ervaring te gee van 'n online speletjie, dat hulle kan weet dat dit deel is van hulle e-learning. Dat hulle kan weet dat daar gaan elektroniese speletjies wees, of simulaties of goed wat hulle moet gaan gebruik, en hierdie gee net vir hulle ervaring van wat die</p>

<p><i>Big smile</i></p> <p>Yahoo = continuous contact and communication</p> <p>“Medium” sharing of personal experiences and joining outside “study” context</p>	<p>effek is – beide in terme van die koste en die tyd wat ‘n ou daaraan spandeer – en ek wou ook vir hulle die gevoel gee van ge’hook’ raak, want party mense en kinders raak eenvoudig ge’hook’ daaraan en kan nie ophou nie, en ek het dit ook so ervaar.</p> <p>Q Was dit vir hulle goed? Het party van hulle dit geniet? A Party van hulle het dit verskriklik geniet, soveel so dat party van hulle vreeslike massiewe scores opgemaak het, wat ek nie in my lewe gedink het moontlik is nie. Ek bedoel, ek het self die game al ‘n paar keer gespeel. So ek kon sien dat hulle moes gehook geraak het, maar hulle het heeltemal buite proporsie tyd daaraan spandeer, want dit was – in die groter game – net iets om vir hulle immunity te gee. So die ou wat die eerste, wat die beste en die hoogste gescore het, sou vir daai week immuniteit gehad het, so hy sou nie afgevote kon word nie. So dis eintlik irrelevant. Jy moes eintlik maar tyd en jou aandag aan die amptelik opdragte spandeer het wat, waarvoor jy gaan punte kry. Hierdie was maar net immunity geleentheid as jy bang was die ouens skop jou uit en dan moes jy nou maar moeite doen met speletjie. En die ouens het heeltemal buite verhouding tyd en aandag daaraan gaan spandeer.</p> <p>Q So jy het die idee gekry dat hulle baie daarvan gehou het? A Wel, van hulle het.</p> <p>Q Waarvan het hulle nog baie gehou as jy nou dink aan oomblikke? A Wel, toe ons die Yahoo Messenger gelaai het en daai kommunikasie oopgemaak het, het hulle nogals regtig baie positief beleef, want voor dit het hulle net die e-pos kommunikasie gehad, wat asynchronies was, maar toe Yahoo kom, en hulle sit in die aande laataand, elfuur of twaalfuur, en hulle kan as hulle onlog, sien hulle hier’s drie ander van hulle palls wat ook op is, en ek is op, dan het hulle baie keer sommer het gesê ‘hi’ en dan het ons sommer net baie keer oor ditjies en datjies gepraat – ek onthou ek en een vrou, het een keer lank gesels oor die kibbutz-ervaring en waar ek in Israel was want sy kom van Israel af. Sy’t ‘n Labrador gehad wat baie vet was in daai tyd, en ek het ‘n Labrador wat oud en siek was - ‘n mens het sommer net so oor en weer gepraat, nie eers oor werkgoed nie, en dit was, dink ek, vir hulle lekker om so te kuier. Lekker om bietjie oor iets anders te praat.</p>
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<p>Availability of facilitator motivates the process</p>	<p>Ja, maar nie net met my nie, maar met mekaar ook. Om net te kan sien maar daar is ander mense ook wat hierdie tyd van die nag sit en werk, en so dit was vir hulle dalk 'n aangename ervaring. Baie van hulle het die kompetisiefaktor baie geniet, party het dit gehaat. Party het baie gehou van die feit dat hulle in groepe kon saamwerk en dat hulle baie geleer het by die ander mense. Party groepe was weer onfunksioneel, of disfunksioneel, en dan het hulle dit weer gehaat en dit het gelei tot groot frustrasie. So ek dink dis moeilik vir my om te sê of daar een spesifieke ding is wat almal van gehou het. In meeste van hierdie goed was die mense of baie positief of baie sterk daarteen - min het nie 'n opinie gehad nie.</p>
<p>Onsekerheid oor die feit dat fasiliteerder onbekend is</p>	<p>(Dit is die goed wat in die leerprogram ingebou was, maar spesifiek)</p> <p>Q Wat jy gedoen het wat hulle van gehou het?</p> <p>A O, as 'n fasiliteerder? Ek dink die feit dat ek daar was. Die feit dat ek beskikbaar was as hulle my nodig gehad het. Alhowel, ek dink daar's miskien van die studente wat gaan sê hulle het nie genoeg hulp gekry nie, en dit was ook met 'n rede. Die ouens wat van die begin af aktief was, het ek onmiddellik op gerespond. Die ouens wat vir my 4 weke na die deadline van die eerste assignments vrae gevra het oor die eerste assignment en sê hulle is ook nou by, hulle doen nou die tribal assignment vir assignment one, en dan't ek vir hulle kortaf geantwoord en gesê maar ons is nou by tribal assignment 4, en jy kan nie 'n tribal assignment as 'n individu doen nie, so jy weet, vergeet daarvan en gaan aan met hierdie goed, sou hulle miskien weer 'n negatiewe ervaring daarvan gehad het. Ek weet nie. Ek dink ek was approachable. Hulle kon my vra as daar iets was wat hulle onseker oor was. Ek is onseker oor die waarde daarvan dat ek half agter die skerm was, want hulle het my nie persoonlik geken toe ons die kursus begin het nie. Hulle het my net die eerste keer gesien, toe nooit weer nie! Hulle kon nie op my persoonlikheid aanklank vind nie. Hulle moes bloot gaan wat hulle op skrif gesien het. Ek het die gevoel gekry dat die ouens met gemak vir my vrae gevra het, en ek het baie moeite gedoen om die ouens onmiddellik te antwoord, en so deeglik as moontlik, maar ek wou ook nie alles met spoon feeding vir hulle gee nie. So ek sou vir hulle baie duidelike riglyne gegee het, maar ek het nie vir hulle 'stap 1 doen dit; stap 2 doen dit' gegee nie. Dit was ook vir my belangrik.</p>

<p><i>Frowning</i></p> <p>Pressure as way of motivation to perform</p> <p><i>Agitated – money issues</i></p> <p>Process of continuous internal reflection for facilitator</p> <p><i>Upset about learner's response</i></p> <p>Clear guidelines and expectationis regarding marks and assignments</p>	<p>Q Wat het jy gedoen wat hulle kwaad gemaak of ge-irriteer het?</p> <p>A Ek het hulle hard laat werk. Ek het hulle genuine gedruk. Ek gee dit absoluut toe! My uitgangspunt was nog altyd – en dis ‘n vreeslike verkeerde uitgangspunt om te hê, maar ek, dis ‘n persoonlike benadering, en ek voel dat hoe meer jy het om te doen, hoe meer kry jy gedoen. En ek voel dat as jy vir ouens te veel tyd gee, dan dra dit nie by tot die kwaliteit nie. Dis nie asof hulle dieper in goed grou omdat hulle meer tyd het nie. Hulle doen nogsteeds die oppervlakkige goed, maar hulle het net meer tyd om dit oppervlakkig te doen. Terwyl, as jy vir hulle baie stres gee, en die lading swaar maak, dan oorpresteer party ouens party keer, en dis fenomenaal wat daar uitkom. So ja, ek dink hulle was baie dikwels ontsteld oor die feit dat wat ek van hulle gevra het, het hulle online tyd gekos, wat tyd is, maar ook kostes. Die feit dat hulle weg van hulle families was, en hulle het net ‘n week tyd gehad om sekere goed in te doen. As die week verby is, dan is dit verby. Ek het die druk op hulle gehou – daar was nie so ‘n ding soos ek het hierdie naweek ‘n ding met my kind aan, maar ek sal volgende naweek inhaal, nie. Daar was nie ‘n volgende naweek nie. Ek dink baie van hulle het geafronteerd gevoel daaroor. Ek weet Bartho het op en af gespring en gedink als wat ek doen, doen ek vir my swottings. En dit het my vreeslik geafronteerd, want ek het nie vir een oomblik – wel, ek sal nie sê vir een oomblik nie, maar ek het regtig – my uitgangspunt was hoegenaamd nie om data te kry vir ‘n studie nie. As ek nou teruggedink daaraan, dink ek: shucks, ek moes dit gedoen het, of ek moes dalk daai gevra het, of as ek dit nie op hierdie manier gedoen het, kon ek nou dit gesê het, of wat ookal. So ek voel half dit was klein bietjie onregverdig, maar hy was definitief kwaad daaroor. Hy, en ander, was kwaad oor, toe hulle hulle punte kry, die eerste rondte, om te sien maar daar’s sekere assignments wat hulle glo hulle’t gepos op die regte plekke, en op die regte plekke gesit het, wat dan nie ‘n punt voor was nie. Nou ek het baie eksplisiet vir hulle gesê dat ek is lenient en gaaf en ‘kind’, so dat as daar iets is wat ek nie kon kry nie, die punt is nie nul nie, die punt is nul tot tyd-en-wyl ek dit sien, en as ek dit sien voor die einde van die kursus, gee ek vir hulle hulle regmatige punt daarvoor. So, in die eerste plek was ek upset dat hulle nou so ‘n bohaai maak as hulle weet hulle gaan anyway hulle punte kry. In die tweede plek het ek met elkeen van die assignments, het ek regtigwaar baie pertinent gesê presies wat dit is wat hulle moet doen, presies hoe dit opgeskryf moet word, en presies waar dit gepost moet word.</p>
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<p>Inisieel onmiddellike kontak en terugvoer as wyse om kontak en belangstelling te behou</p>	<p>So ek het byvoorbeeld gesê: gaan skryf 'n verslaggie oor hierdie freebie wat jy nou ondersoek het, en sê wat is die moontlikhede daarvan in die onderwys, van plus-minus soveel woorde. Save dit as 'n HTML-dokument, en laai dit op na 1: jou shelter toe, en 2: na die collaborative site toe. So het dit baie eksplisiet so uitgespel.</p> <p>Q So het jy die goed opgetel? Jy't opgetel wanneer hulle ge-irriteerd en kwaad was oor goed, en dan het jy dit aangespreek. Ja, jy weet, hulle het byvoorbeeld gemoan daaroor as daar nie punte is vir die goed nie, want hulle het dit dan gedoen. Maar ek het spesifiek gaan kyk. Daar, het ek gesê moet hulle dit pos, dat ek daar gaan kyk, en as dit nie daar is nie, dan is dit mos nou nie daar nie. Dan kan ek mos nou nie 'n punt daarvoor gee nie. So ek weet baie keer was die ouens, wel, nie baie keer nie, daar was 'n keer of twee wat die ouens gesê het: maar ek het dit gedoen! Maar ek het! En dan, as hulle na die tyd gaan kyk, dan sien hulle maar hulle het nie. Of hulle het dit op die verkeerde plek gesit, of wat ookal. So daar was, 'n paar keer was ouens bietjie upset oor sulke goed.</p> <p>Q Wat was daar nog wat hulle kwaad gemaak het wat jy gedoen het? Kwaad of ge-irriteerd of omgekrap?</p> <p>A Buiten die kostes, buiten die tyd, miskien was hulle kwaad oor ek nie vir hulle meer duidelike riglyne gegee het nie. Meer handjie-vat riglyne. Jy weet, stap-vir-stap-tipe goed gegee het nie.</p> <p>Q Hoe het jy aanvanklik rapport met hulle bewerkstellig as 'n online fasiliteerder?</p> <p>A Die heel eerste naweek het ek so half – ek was die heeltyd online, en ek het gewag vir daai response wat moet kom, ek ek was geweldig bekommerd toe ek sien niks gebeur nie, want ek weet mos nou hulle het net die week, so as hulle 'n naweek laat verbygaan is daar net drie dae, en dan is die week klaar. Jy weet, want dis van 'n Donderdag tot 'n Donderdag gewees. En dit het my groot laat skrik. En die Maandag toe die ouens so begin praat, het ek onmiddellik gereageer, en onmiddellik probeer terugvoer gee, en onmiddellik, jy weet, as ek agterkom 'n ou is nie lekker op spoor nie – die ou vra byvoorbeeld: wat is hierdie chat room assignment wat ons het? Dan het ek dadelik gewonder maar wat is dit wat hy nie verstaan nie? Dit was byvoorbeeld vir my 'n ding? Dan het ek onmiddellik ge-e-mail en gesê: Wat is dit! As jy nie die opdrag het, hier moet jy dit kry. As jy dit nie verstaan nie, dit is wat jy moet doen.</p>
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<p>Initial confusion during induction <i>Smiling</i></p>	<p>So, jy't baie uitgeklaar met hulle? Ek het nogals probeer. So jy kon deur jou onmiddellike optrede en uitklaring wanneer jy nie verstaan wat hulle nie verstaan nie, het jy rapport bewerkstellig? Ja. Aanvanklik? Dit klink of jy vir hulle 'n opdrag gegee het, of -? Ja, op die heel eerste aand het ons mos die kontakssessie gehad wat Johannes so half vir my die geleentheid gegee het om net vinnig te sê waarom dit gaan, en om hulle in groepe in te deel, en om die bal net aan die rol te sit. En op daai eerste aand toe hulle nou in hulle groepe ingedeel is, toe sê ek vir hulle: OK, as groep moet julle nou na die web toe gaan. Onder daai hofie lê nou julle eerste week se assignment. En dit het die ouens nie gehoor nie. So daai hele eerste naweek se stilte en stilswye en histerie toe hulle nou actually agterkom wat hulle alles moet doen, was onnodig gewees. So ek sal dit byvoorbeeld –</p>
<p>Initial confusion during induction</p>	<p>Q Wat het gemaak dat hulle nie daai boodskap gekry het nie? A Weet jy, ons het 'n fisiese oefening gedoen om hulle in die groepe in te deel. Ek het hulle in 'n lang ry laat staan, van heel Internetvaardig en capable, tot totaal-en-al 'n leek wat die Internet aanbetref het. En daar was soos 'n skuiflyn. Jy moes jouself maar so posisioneer het min of meer waar jy was. En dan't ek hulle getel: een, twee, drie, vier, so af, een, twee, drie, vier, jy weet, en dan het ons die ses groepe so, jy weet al die een's bymekaar, en al die twee's bymekaar. Sodat elke groep iemand het wat 'n totale leek is, en iemand wat 'n totale – jy weet, dat daar 'n goeie balans was. En dan moes julle bymekaar gaan staan. So ek dink dit was 'n kinetiese oefening want hulle het rondbeweeg en in groepies gestaan, en ek dink die excitement van . oe!, ons moet nou 'n naam uitdink, en 'n motto, en al daai goed, en ouens was in 'n motto van eerder uitsorteer, eerder as om ontvanklik te gewees het. So my fout was twee-erlei: ek kon of een, vir hulle al die opdragte gegee het voordat ons die oefeninge gedoen het, sodat ek nog hulle onverdeelde aandag gehad het, of alternatiewelik, moes ek vir hulle weer 'n e-mail onmiddellik daai aand uitgestuur het. 'n E-mail. Maar die groot verwarring by my het ingekom. Yahoo groups het 'n web presence, maar hy't ook 'n opsie wat jy as individu kan dies om te sê dat as ouens met mekaar kommunikeer in Yahoo se web presence, dat dit as 'n e-mail na jou toe gestuur word. So dis eintlik 'n bulletin board wat hier op die web aangaan, maar jy kon vra dat dit as 'n email na jou toe kom. En die ouens wat die email gekry het, het nooit na die website gaan kyk nie.</p>
<p>My mistake! <i>Pointing to herself</i></p>	

<p>Proses van kontak – initial contact – later on continuous feedback provided support</p>	<p>En ek, dom wat ek is, wat van die kant af inkom, ek gebruik nie Yahoo – ek gebruik WebCT as ‘n reël met my goed. Dis Johannes se kursusspasia. So ek verstaan nie. Ek kom as ‘n guest lecturer in en gebruik nou maar sy tools. Ek gaan in, sien hier’s ‘n bulletin board, skryf my boodskappe daar, post my goed onder file, so ek neem aan almal is in daai omgewing. En dit was eers later, hier by die tweede helfte, jy weet, hier by die Maandag of die Dinsdag rond, wat ek toe agterkom, maar die ouens is nie op die web nie. Die ouens kry hulle boodskappe per e-pos, en dit was ‘n groot probleem, want ek het ge-antisipeer dat as ek sê dit is in jou website, gaan hulle presies weet waar. Maar hulle weet nie, want hulle kry ‘n email wat sê watse website. Want hulle het nie eers, baie van hulle het nie eers geweet dat daar ‘n web site is wat aan daai email gekoppel is nie.</p> <p>So jy het hulle aanvanklik gesien – as ek nou terugkom na die vraag toe – dat jy establish rapport. En hoe’t jy dit gedoen? Jy’t hulle gesien, fisies –</p> <p>Ja.</p> <p>Tydens die sessie, en dan het jy wanneer hulle met jou gekommunikeer het, het jy onmiddellik terug gekommunikeer en goed uitgeklaar wanneer hulle dan agterkom die ou is nie op die regte spoor nie.</p> <p>Ja, ek het probeer om ondersteunend te wees en vir hulle te wys dis nie ‘n moeilike omgewing nie, dis net ‘n kwessie van ‘n ou moet mekaar verstaan en uitsorteer. So ek het probeer veral in die begin om nie kwaai te wees of streng te wees nie, maar om maarhalf ‘n gemoedelikheid daar te stel laat hulle – ek weet nie, dis vir my nogals belangrik om aan die begin die klimaat reg te kry ek ook vir hulle aan te moedig om vrae te vra.</p> <p>Q So, hoe het jy hierdie klimaat gelyk gehou? Ons het nou gepraat oor hoe jy dit bewerkstellig het. Hoe het jy dit gehou dat dit aaneenlopend is? Dat jy die rapport aaneenlopend hou?</p> <p>A Ja, ek dink dit gaan maar oor kommunikasie en die verskillende aspekte daar rondom. Op ‘n stadium was daar byvoorbeeld een van die studente wat ‘n baie negatiewe briefie gestuur het oor hierdie games ding wat sy moet speel, en online tyd, en dan verdwyn die skerm, en watse sotlikheid is hierdie? En my eerste reaksie was om onmiddellik in te klim en vir haar ‘n verduideliking te gee van hoekom is dit belangrik, en wat is die waarde daaruit in ‘n e-learning omgewing wat gaan oor e-learning, en wat is dit wat sy daaruit kan dra. En toe’t ek gedink hou terug, hou terug, en kyk of hulle nie mekaar uitsorteer nie, en dit het wel so gebeur.</p>
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<p>Facilitate group dynamics by keeping back</p> <p>Group dynamics and pressure</p> <p><i>Speaking with a slight grin</i></p> <p>Facilitate a process of adult learning – reflective thinking and exploration questioning</p> <p><i>Smiling and using hands to explain the process</i></p>	<p>Ek meen die een na die ander e-mail het ingekom waar die ouens hetsy of saam met haar gestem het, of vir haar ge-reprimand het, en hulle het mekaar half uitgesorteer.</p> <p>Q Soos wat het jy gedoen?</p> <p>A Op sekere tye het ek onttrek. Met sekere doelbewuste voorbedagte rade nie gereageer het nie, om te kyk of kan hulle onder mekaar met half 'n peer support of 'n peer dissiplinerende mekaar uitsorteer eerder as wat dit noodwendig my rol was. So ook, as die ouens nie gereageer het nie, en nie in die tribes aktief was nie, dis nie my tribe nie, dis hulle tribe. Hulle moet hulle tribe funksioneel hou. So ek het nie vir – as daar 6 ouens op 'n tribe was en 4 was nie aktief – het ek hulle nie gekontak nie. Ek het die wat wel gekla het daaroor, het ek moreel ondersteun. Ek sou byvoorbeeld vir hulle gesê het ja, ek verstaan dis moeilik as jy 'n werksopdrag het wat 6 mense eintlik aan moet werk en jy doen dit nou op jou eie, want die ander is nie aktief nie. Maar doen maar jou gedeelte, en stuur ten minste vir my jou gedeelte, en doen dit na die beste van jou vermoë, en hier kan jy hulle adresse kry. So ek het met praktiese raad probeer help, maar ook met ondersteuning van half 'n begrip, of net van ek verstaan, moenie stres daaroor nie, ek sien dit raak, en ek sal dit akkommideer dat dit jy alleen was in plaas van die hele tribe.</p> <p>So jy't 'n ondersteunende rol gehad, maar jy't nie vir hulle goed geoden nie.</p> <p>Ek het niks vir hulle gedoen nie. Niks namens hulle gedoen nie. Ek het, op die beste het ek vir hulle, as hulle regtig nog nie teen die derde of die vierdie keer reggekom het met iets soos ftp of so nie, sou ek dalk vir hulle – ek het ook – screen dumps gemaak van hoe dit lyk, met 'n pyltjie van waar hulle moet kliek en wat hulle moet doen en so. Jy weet, dan het ek meer intensiewe raad gegee as ek sien dit – die oppervlakkige goed – nie help nie.</p> <p>Maar ja, daar was definitief vir my 'n verskil tussen supportive en motiverend en begrip toon aan die een kant, en aan die ander kant tips gee vir hoe hulle die fisiese take moet doen en help. Ek wou gehad het hulle moet maar op 'n manier struggle ook, want dis hoe jy leer! As jy eksplloreer, gee iemand nie vir jou die padkaart en sê loop hierdie roete en dis klaar beplan nie. Jy leer nie daaruit nie. Jy leer dat hierdie tipe van sand is sand waarin jy wegsink as jy eers een keer daarin getrap het en jy't moeilikheid gehad en jy besef wat die redes is, dis dieselfde rede hoekom ek hulle daai online toets laat skryf het. Dit was hoegenaamd nie om punte te kry nie, ek bedoel ek toets nie op so 'n manier nie – nie op meestersvlak nie. Dit was meer om vir hulle die ervaring te gee van 'n online toets.</p>
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<p>Facilitate group dynamics on cohesion</p> <p>Provide guidance and framework</p> <p>Awareness of the 'untold story'</p>	<p>As 'n leerder, wat is die stres wat jy deurgaans, hierdie tydsbeperking, hierdie monkey puzzle vrae, hierdie invulvrae, my tikvermoë.</p> <p>So hoe jy rapport amper deurentyd ondersteun het, is deur vir hulle tipe van werkstukke te gee wat hulle half uitlok om sekere interaksies met jou aan die gang te sit.</p> <p>Ja, alhoewel, die interaksies moes nie regtig, was nie regtig gerig daarop dat hulle met my moes – die interaksie was dat hulle as 'n groep mekaar moes ondersteun en saam moes werk om iets daar te stel.</p> <p>Q So wat het jy gedoen – jy't mou amper hierdie vraag klaar beantwoord – wat het jy gedoen om vir hulle guidance te gee, begeleiding te gee? Wat het jy gedoen om hulle te begelei?</p> <p>A Wel, ek het onmiddellik gereageer as daar vrae was. As daar 'n pertinente vraag was, het ek gewoonlik die pertinente vraag geantwoord. Baie keer het ek agtergekom daar's vrae, maar hulle het my nie pertinent gevra nie. Dan het ek hulle nie geantwoord nie. So ek het gewag tot hulle my baie eksplisiet vra vir my raad of hulp, of kom kla by my, en dan het ek vir hulle antwoorde gegee. En dit was met hoofrede so, want anders neem 'n mens die rol oor van, jy weet, hulle hoef nie met mekaar te praat nie, vra vir Linda en sy sal antwoord. En dis juis nie. 'n e-leer omgewing is 'n klimaat waar jy wil hê die groepe moet mekaar ondersteun en werk. Jy weet, jy moet maar net half die rigting gee in daai rigting, maar hulle moet daar kom. So ek het baie dikwels glad nie geantwoord as daar – ek kom agter daar's 'n probleem, maar dan wag ek, hou hom terug, en kyk of hulle dit onder mekaar uitsorteer, en as hulle my eksplisiet gevra het, het ek gereageer. Daar was kere toe ek gesê het, OK, maar die ouens is almal van die wa af. Op 'n stadium het ek die een of ander opdrag gegee waar hulle moes bladsye skep waarin die konsepte van e-leer alles in 'n – wat is tog nou die woord wat ons gebruik het? – maar amper soos 'n, jy weet, 'n blomdiagram, moes hulle al die goedjies neersit, en dan bietjie in diepte ingaan, en ek het agtergekom, almal van hulle in een groep het gedink dis bloot net konsepte wat hulle moet plot, eerder as om 'n beskrywing en 'n detailed, jy weet, substansie, te gee. So, in daardie geval, het ek gesien maar hulle gaan mekaar net van die wal in die sloot in help, so daar het ek byvoorbeeld onmiddellik ingespring en gesê maar: dit klink vir my of julle op hierdie spoor is. As dit so is, moet ek julle reghelp. Dis wat ons eintlik soek. As dit nie so is nie – gaan terug ...</p> <p>So, jy't hulle deurgaans baie fyn dopgehou om te kyk wat regtig aangaan en waar moet jy help en waar moet jy los?</p>
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<p>Expert Support Guidance Ability to deal with conflict Arbitrator Motivator</p>	<p>O ja, die ding is – dis die ding van online learning! Jy't niks anders as om te gaan op die clues wat jy kry nie. Dit is nie altyd net die woorde wat daar staan nie, maar dis die onderliggende gevoelens. So ek dink jy moet as 'n online fasiliteerder geweldig ingestel wees op, jy weet, die onderliggende goed, die sub text, jy weet, die boodskappe wat nie eksplisiet gestel word nie. Jy weet, 'n uitroepeteken na 'n doodnormale sin, wat partykeer 'n bietjie frustrasie aantoon of 'n angsaanval aantoon, of 'n wat-ookal! Jy moet tussen die lyne leer lees - jy het nie liggaamstaal wat vir jou kan terugvoer gee, of 'n stemtoon wat vir jou 'n ding kan wys nie. Jy moet net gaan op dit wat daar staan. So, ja, dis hoekom jy die dinamika tussen mekaar ook moet dophou, want baie keer gaan ouens vir jou nie vir jou iets sê nie, maar hulle sal baie maklik vir mekaar iets sê. Ag en dis wat die medium so lekker maak. Dis omdat jy half agter 'n skerm sit, en jy voel so half anoniem, is jy baie – die ouens is – baie meer ekspressief as wat hulle in 'n klassituasie voor my ooit sou wees. So jy's in 'n bevoordeelde situasie as jy online fasiliteer, want jy kan hoor wat mense vir mekaar sê, terwyl as jy in 'n klaskamer is, sal hulle nooit daai openlike tipe gesprekke eers met mekaar gehad het nie.</p> <p>Q: So jy het deur onmiddellik te reageer, pertinente vrae te antwoord, ingestel te wees op die onderliggende boodskappe wat hulle stuur, en die dinamika tussen die groeplede, het jy nogal jou mense gelei en probeer begelei dwarsdeur die kursus.</p> <p>Q Watter rolle het jy gespeel? As jy moet dink aan 'n spesifieke rol wat jy gespeel het.</p> <p>A Daar was hordes van hulle. Ek sal nou maar net so vinnig dink. Ek gaan tien-teen-een 'n klompie uitlos, maar, wel, die rol as 'n ekspert, iemand met kennis wat hulle nie het nie en graag wil hê. Ja, miskien kan dit ook gesien word as 'n instructor – by tye het ek voorgestel wat om te doen, is dit 'n guide?</p> <p>Ekspert.</p> <p>'n Baie pertinente ondersteunende rol van ag, jy weet, ek verstaan. Moenie worry nie.</p> <p>So, ondersteuner.</p> <p>Ja, 'n baie sterk rigtinggewende rol van, jy weet, as ouens begin deurmekaar raak, of begin warra-warra, om te sê maar fokus hierop, dis belangriker. Ook om emosionale ondersteuning te gee. Ek het dikwels gesê die einde is amper daar of volgende week sal ligter wees.</p> <p>So, emosionele ondersteuner.</p> <p>Ek moes op 'n stadium konflik ook uitsorteer, so dit was miskien 'n –</p>
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<p>Humor as a way to deal with stress and discomfort</p> <p>Process of reflectivity to maintain, build relationships with students</p> <p>Laughing</p>	<p>So, konflikthanteerder. Arbiter tipe rol. OK, arbiter. Motiveringsrol, van: moenie opgee nie, ek weet dis swaar. Kom weer. Ek weet nie of dit by ondersteuning inpas nie. Ek moes partykeer streng wees ook, so ek moes partykeer die rol van 'n disciplinarian – ek dink iemand wat so half, wat sê nee, maar stop hierdie nonsens. Kom, ruk jou reg. Ons gaan nie nou hieroor sit en sulk nie. Jy weet, fokus op hierdie en hierdie en hierdie. As ek nou bietjie gedink het, sal ek nou verder - Ons kan terug kom daarna. Ek gaan jou nou-nou weer vra. As ons tyd het, gaan ek alles weer vinnig deur run, as daar iets is waaraan jy kan dink. Daar was ook 'n sterk administratiewe komponent – deurgaans moes jy ouens herinner van goed wat gedoen moet word en dan kontroleer of hulle dit gedoen het. En ek het bekend gestaan as die kursus fasiliteerder.</p> <p>Q Wat dink jy, as 'n online fasiliteerder, is uniek van jou persoonlikheid, wat 'n rol gespeel het? A Ek dink miskien twee goed: die een is my sin vir humor, so ek het nogal probeer om partykeer 'n grappie of wat gemaak om dinge half te ontloft. Ouens is gestres en gespanne en as jy bietjie 'n smile kan bring, dan relax ouens weer en sien maar dis net werk. Dis nie die lewe en dood nie. Ons kan maar grapias maak ook. Dit, en die ander ding is: ek het probeer om gemaklik en relaxed te bly. Ek moet sê die online onderrigervaring is vir my baie beter as 'n face-to-face een, want in face-to-face, raak ek maklik hetig. As ouens my kwaad maak, sal ek dalk met 'n aggressie terug reageer, terwyl online, weet jy, jy skryf jou boodskap, en dan het ek baie dikwels in MSWord of in WordPerfect my antwoord in response, of as ek weet die ouens doen nou nie wat hulle moet doen nie, en ek moet hulle nou bietjie bymekaar kry, het ek dit eers in MS Word of in WordPerfect gaan – Jy weet, baie pertinent met die idee om te kan sê maar laat ek dit nou skryf soos ek nou voel, en dan kom lees ek dit nou-nou weer, en as ek nog so voel, stuur ek dit net so. As ek dan agterkom ek was dalk bietjie harsh of, jy weet, geneig tot sarkasme, of ek gaan ouens verloor deur hierdie of hierdie, dan kan 'n ou dit revisit en weer oor skryf en her-evalueer.</p>
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<p>Create a climate conducive to eLearning</p>	<p>Q So jy was nogal selfkontrollerend gewees in jou interaksie met hulle?</p> <p>A Baie, baie ja. Daar was 'n keer of wat wat ek net gesê het: man, ek gaan nou dadelik respond, want dis nou hoe ek voel, en ek wil hê hulle moet weet hoe ek voel. Dit het ek ook gedoen. Maar daar was kere wat ek gedink het: OK, ek sien hierdie probleem kom, dit raak groter, ek moet dit aanspreek, maar ek moet dit op 'n manier doen wat – jy weet, so dit was vir my lekker: die feit dat 'n ou 'n kans gehad het om jou reaksie te kan check, voor jy spontaan dalk ingaan en ouens omkrap!</p> <p>So dit is uniek van wie jy is, dat jy nogal 'n sin vir humor het, dat jy dit gebruik het, en dat jy goed eers bietjie laat gaan voordat jy daarop sal reageer, en dat jy gemaklikheid tipe van oorgedra het. Ja, ja. Ek het gehoop dat hulle in 'n informele, gemaklike omgewing baie pertinente goed gaan kan formeel leer. Dit voel vir my dis maar met kontak ook so, jy weet, dat 'n ou 'n ontspanne atmosfeer moet skep, en die kursus was nie ontspanne nie. Die kursus was geweldig, jy weet, al die game-elemente was stresvol. So ek moes baie hard daaraan werk. Ek dink dit was hoe ek dit reggekry het.</p>
<p><i>Smiling</i></p> <p>Difficulty of dealing with students' external world and resistance</p>	
<p>CONFLICT</p>	<p>Q Watse tricky situasies was daar?</p> <p>A Ek dink die konflik was vir my nogal swaar. Wel, ek weet daar was konflik – ek weet nie of dit met my as persoon nie, maar met my benadering as fasiliteerder, of met die kursus gehad het – wat ek baie persoonlik ervaar het, omdat dit my kursus is, maar ook die konflik wat hulle tussen mekaar gehad het, was vir my moeilik, en dan ook die ouens wat 'n totaal ander benadering oor e-leer het as wat ek het. Dit was vir my moeilik om, of ek moes myself forseer om te verstaan van waar af hulle kom – jy weet, ouens wat die heelyd gemoan het oor geld. Ek het later, jy weet, ek wou deur die dak spring daaroor, want ek – jy weet, dis een module wat eksplisiet oor e-leer gaan – jy moet online wees om die ervaring te kan kry. En online beteken nou maar een maal geld, so, jy weet, as 'n ou nie kan nie, moet 'n ou maar ry universiteit toe, en daar gaan, gratis, maar die effort is op jou. Die onus rus op jou. As jy hierdie kursus doen, dan is dit waarin hierdie rigting is, dan moet jy dit maar doen. Dis ook een iets wat ek anders sal doen as ek 'n volgende keer doen. Ek sal baie eksplisiet 'n kontrak laat teken aan die begin van die kursus. Ek sal vir hulle sê daar is 3 goed wat jy onderneem, en as jy nie daai 3 goed onderneem nie, dan mag jy nie die kursus loop nie. En die eerste een is dat die ouens besef dat daar gaan tyd en effort, tyd, ingaan.</p>
<p>Learning contract</p>	

<p>Inability to reach agreement / consensus</p> <p>Ability to change and adjust groups to facilitate the process</p> <p>Adult learners – make adjustments</p>	<p>Die tweede ding is dat dit nie gaan maklik kom nie. Dit gaan effort wees. Daar gaan goed wees wat gaan moeilik wees, en dis 'n stywe leerkurwe, en dis baie nuwe goed wat hulle gaan moet leer. En die derde is dat hulle baie pertinent bewus gemaak word van die kostes wat daaraan verbonde is. En as 'n ou daai 3 goed in plek het, dan sou die res van die kursus – jy weet, so dit het my nogal gefrustreer, maar wat is die vraag nou weer?</p> <p>Die vraag is tricky situasies?</p> <p>Ja, so dit het my –</p> <p>Jy't gesê dis konflik.</p> <p>Ja, so dit het my –</p> <p>Met jou benadering, konflik wat hulle tussen mekaar gehad het.</p> <p>Ja,</p> <p>En konflik met die tipe van e-learning, en dan die geld.</p> <p>Ja,</p> <p>Vertel vir my meer oor die konflik wat hulle tussen mekaar gehad het.</p> <p>Daar was in heelwat van die groepe was daar van die begin af ouens wat glad nie met mekaar kon saamwerk nie, en ouens wat weer glad nie wou saamwerk nie. So, daar's ouens wat wou werk, maar hulle bots, hulle werk so teen mekaar die heeltid. En dan is daar ander ouens wat weer net glad nie betrokke was nie, en wat geweldige frustrasie by die ouens was, want dan's daar byvoorbeeld 2 in een groep, waar die ander ouens 6 was wat almal saamwerk, en hulle is net 2, en hulle stamp koppe, so hulle is eintlik – ek het by daai een groep 2 tribal assignments gekry, wat een enkele persoon op sy eie aan gewerk het, bloot omdat hulle nie met mekaar kon saamstem nie. Daar was maar verskeie redes. Ek dink persoonlikhede was deel daarvan, maar ook maar een ou het net in die dag gewerk, en die ander ou het net in die aand gewerk, so hulle – en al kon hulle, voel ek, a-sinchronies ook maa rsaamgewerk het, was daar daai blok. So ek moes op 'n manier daai tipe van konflik hanteer, en ouens het baie keer agter die skerms by my kom moan en sê: maar hierdie een doen nie haar deel nie. Kan hulle nie asseblief in 'n ander groep wees nie, of hulle wil nou uitgevote wees.</p> <p>En hoe het jy dit dan hanteer?</p> <p>Ag, ek het ook gevoel ons werk met volwassenes, jy weet, dit help nie jy sê maar die reëls sê dit, en ons gaan nou by die reëls hou nie. So waar nodig, het ons aanpassings gemaak. Op 'n stadium, by die vierdie week, dink ek, het ons tribes ge-shuffle, ander ouens met ander ouens laat saamwerk. Dit het by party ouens histerie veroorsaak, want hulle het nou net lekker 'n comfort zone gehad, en hulle het nou lekker saamgewerk. Ander het weer gesê: maar uiteindelik werk en nou saam met iemand wat actually werk.</p>
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<p>Initial anxiety and anticipation of week one</p> <p><i>Frowning</i></p>	<p>Ek kan nou ook iets leer en iets bydra, en dit word waardeer, en hierdie ouens doen ook, en ons gehalte van die goed is net soveel beter. So ja, dit was vir my, dis maar meer 'n ding van die benadering. Vir party ouens werk sekere goed, en vir ander ouens nie.</p> <p>En wat het jy gedoen wanneer jy die boodskap gekry het dat dit aanvaarbaar is vir party en nie vir ander nie?</p> <p>Ek het probeer om dit eksplisiet te stel wat my beweegredes vir goed is, so as ouens vrae gehad het oor die shuffling, het ek eksplisiet vir hulle gesê wat die redes daarvoor is. Ons moes reshuffle, want die ouens is uitgevote, uitgevote, uitgevote, Daar't te min oorgebly. Jy weet, nou moet tribal assignments moet 2 ouens dit doen, terwyl dit eintlik goed is wat 'n groep moet doen. So ek het maar vir hulle die rasionaal agter die goed probeer verduidelik. En meeste het dit dan nou maar so aanvaar, al het party dit dikmond aanvaar.</p> <p>Wat het jy nog gedoen met hierdie moeilike situasies, om dit te hanteer? Wat was nog wat jy –</p> <p>Nog 'n voorbeeld van so 'n moeilike situasie wat ek as stresvol ervaar het, is maar dieselfde as wat ek netnou gesê het: toe daai eerste week goed nie gebeur het nie, en ek kan nie verstaan hoekom gebeur goed nie, want ek het dan, jy weet, daar's so baie werk! Hulle moet met mekaar begin praat, en hulle praat nie. Sodat as ek dan agterkom wat die rede daarvoor is, het ek probeer om die rede te ondergang. Ek het partykeer agtergekom dat die kommunikasie tussen my en die studente nie altyd 'n lynregkommunikasie is nie, dat ouens, ek wil nou sê baie soos jy vandag, wat die e-mail, die eerste sin lees, en nie die res nie. Dan dink jy hierdie justice dit, en dan aangaan. Maar as hulle die hele e-mail gelees het, sou hulle die –</p> <p>So amper misverstand tipe ding?</p> <p>Misverstande wat kom oor mense nie gelees het nie. Want die goed was – ek het regtig moeite gedoen om die goed eksplisiet uit te spel omdat ek geweet het dis die enigste medium. En hoe't jy dit aangespreek?</p> <p>Wel, ek dink nie ek het dit noodwendig reggedoen in hierdie kursus nie. Ek sal dit met 'n volgende kursus regmaak. Hoe het jy dit hierdie keer gedoen?</p> <p>Byvoorbeeld om, ek het hierdie keer byvoorbeeld 'n lang e-mail geskryf, wat ek sê: die volgende goed moet ons aan aandag gee. En dan het ek nou gelys, hierdie ding van, jy weet, ons moet maar elke twee dae ten minste, aanlog. Jy moet maar commit om in jou groep met die ouens kontak te maak so gou as moontlik na die nuwe assignments gestel is, want, jy weet, die ouens moet saamwerk. Hierdie riglyn, daai riglyn. En dan het ek sê nou maar so 5 of 6 in die e-pos hanteer. En weet jy, dan't ek pertinent</p>
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<p>Change – one e-mail at a time – read and concentrate on one thing/message</p> <p>Frustration and resistance</p>	<p>opgemerk dat die ouens miskien op die eerste 2 gerageer het, en nie op die res nie. It was just like that.</p> <p>So hulle lees nie.</p> <p>Daai hele ding van jy moenie meer as een onderwerp per e-pos hanteer nie. Jy moet eerder 3 e-posse hê, want dan moet ek hom kliek. Hy sien dis nog 'n nuwe email, hy lees en al lees hy net die eerste paragraaf, het hy die gist van dit. En dan moet die volgende mail die volgende belangrike punt vat. So dis een les wat ek definitief geleer het, ek sal my emails baie korter maak, en meer gekonsentreerd. Een onderwerp per e-pos. So ek gaan nie weer goed kombineer nie, want dan het ouens dit net eenvoudig nie gelees nie, en dan's ek gefrustreerd, want ek het dan gedink: maar ek het dit dan gekommunikeer. Wat's julle storie? En hulle dink weer: maar ons het haar gevra, nou maar hoekom reageer sy nie? Dis maar die medium. Dis die medium. Jy moet die medium verstaan as jy 'n online instructor is, en dit gaan nie – soos ek sê: dis nou 'n les wat ek geleer het, wat ek op 'n volgende keer hopelik sal fix.</p> <p>Q Het jy op 'n stadium iemand ingeroep om jou te help met hierdie tammetjies? Om te praat oor hierdie –</p> <p>A Nee, ek het nie noodwendig uitgegaan nie, omdat daar min mense is wat ek ken wat dit op hierdie vlak doen. Johannes was die enigste ander persoon wat ervaring het hiervan, en ek dink hy het van sy kant af die kontak ge-inisieer. Toe hy op 'n stadium sien die ouens skryf vir my vreeslike lelike e-mails, het hy vir my baie nice supportive e-mails gestuur, wat sê: man, hulle leer alles wat hy wil hê hulle moet leer. Hy dink dis baie nice wat ons doen, en ek moet my nie steur aan kritiek nie, want dis alles data vir die 'D'. En so dit het vir my ongelooflik baie beteken. Ek het nie besef –</p> <p>So hy het van sy kant af eerste – want die volgende vraag is:</p> <p>Q How often did you consult with your mentor?</p> <p>Nee, ek het nie. Ek het nie met hom nie.</p> <p>Jy't nooit nie?</p> <p>Nee.</p> <p>Hy het jou gekontak?</p> <p>Ja. Ja, wel ek het een keer spesifiek 'n email na hom gestuur en gesê ek is bekommerd oor hierdie ouens wat hier in die 3de week en in die 4de week met assignment 1 se goed begin, en nou vreeslik in diepte raad soek. Ek vra vir hom: wat moet ek nou byvoorbeeld met hulle maak? Moet ek hulle support en probeer deurkry, of wat? Dis net vir my moeilik. Ek het my hande vol met die groep wat by is, en hulle vra oor daai onderwerp. Om nou</p>
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<p>Next time</p> <p><i>Grinning</i></p> <p>Need to be supported</p>	<p>weer terug te dink aan daai goed en hulle is agter. Verstaan, dis nie – nou's die moral support van die groep nie meer daar wat hulle mekaar help nie, so ek moet al die hulp voorsien. Dit was net vir my onmoontlik om – en dis die ouens wat regtig niks weet nie – om van stap 1: 'n Browser is 'n ding waarmee jy die Internet oopmaak. Internet Explorer is Netsurf. Gaan na Start, Programs, Soek vir Internet Explorer en click daarop. Maak die website oop. Nou tik hierdie adres in. Dit was daai tipe van stap-vir-stap goedjies wat ek vir hulle so moes pertinent eksplisiet op skrif stel, want ek kan nie met hulle praat nie. So ek sou dit – dit sou net soveel tyd gevat het, ek het net nie kans gesien nie. En op daai stadium het ek vir Johannes ge-mail en gesê hy moet help. Wat maak ek met hierdie ouens?</p> <p>En wat het hy vir jou gesê</p> <p>Sy raad was: Dis op M-vlak. As die ou nie by is nie, is hy uit. So, dis nie noodwendig my spel nie. Ek dink ek is van nature meer akkommoderend. Ek sou probeer het om maar te probeer nice wees en te probeer gaaf wees, maar hy't so half vir my die carte blanche op daai stadium gegee om te sê jy moet maar by bly. As jy nie bybly nie, is jy nie op M-vlak nie, en dan hoort jy nie hier nie. Dan moet jy maar volgende keer die module weer doen, dan kyk ons of jy dit dan kan doen. Want dan's daar minimumvereistes, en 'n ou gaan dan dalk eers by die minimumvereistes kom, en as jy dalk dan nou daai goed onder die knie het, kan jy dalk dan nou weer probeer. Maar ja, dit was vir my soos 'n berg wat van my skouers af was. Om te weet maar ek gaan – hier's dit nou op skrif. Ek hoef nie te worry oor die wat afval nie. As hulle afval, val hulle af, dan hoort hulle nie hier nie. Ek werk met die wat by is, en dis dit.</p> <p>En dit het jou baie beter laat voel?</p> <p>Baie. En ook daai email wat ek van hom gekry het wat hy supportive was. Ek dink nie ek het besef – mens is so involved, jy besef nie hoe nodig jy het dat iemand vir jou positiewe terugvoer gee nie. Die studente doen dit nie. Hulle vra vrae en hulle moan en hulle raas en hulle is histeries, en hulle is gestres, en ek stres oor hulle stres, so ek probeer net almal se stres manage, dat jy nie tyd het om te besef: maar dit is 'n definitiewe behoefte. Maar ek het nie eers besef dis 'n behoefte voor Johannes nie die behoefte vervul het nie. En vir my gesê het maar hier's 'n tap op jou skouer. Jy's oraaait, jy's reg, jy's op die regte pad!</p> <p>Hoeveel keer het hy dit vir jou gedoen?</p> <p>Ek kan nie uit my lop uit onthou nie, maar ek vermoed dit was ten minste so twee keer wat ek emails van hom gekry het, en dit was vir my so –</p> <p>Hoe lank was hierdie kursus?</p> <p>Ses weke.</p>
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	<p>Ses weke. En waar in hierdie 6 weke het jy hierdie supportive terugvoer gekry?</p> <p>Ek dink dit was hier bydie 3de week omstrent, en toe een keer daarna later ook weer. Maar dis soos ek sê, ek het nie besef hoe nice dit was toe dit kom om te weet: aah, okay, so – want ek was gestres. Ek was gestres oor my rol, en doen ek dinge reg, en ek gaan nou maar op my gut feeling hier, en ek vertrou half op my gut feeling. Maar is my gut feeling wat nou regtig is wat moet? So dit was vir my nice om te weet. En die ouens het my hammering gegee. So, en om te weet: dis maar reg, hulle kan my maar hammering gee, want dit wat ek doen is gemotiveerd en kan gesubstansieer word.</p>
Smiling	<p>Q Hoe maklik of moeilik was dit om hierdie kursus te fasiliteer?</p> <p>A Dit was beide maklik en moeilik. Soos ek sê: by my persoonlikheid pas die online omgewing soos 'n handskoen. Ek dink dit het tog met 'n ou se persoonlikheid te doen! Ek raak vreeslik opgewonde daaroor as ek emails kry van studente af, of as ek sien daar's interaksie. Dis vir my so exciting. So dis vir my so lekker. En dis vir my baie lekker om te kan respond op goed. En dis vir my heerlik om half die struktuur uit te werk waarbinne jy aan alles moet dink. Jy kan nie net 'n assignment uitdink nie. Jy moet dink: hoe gaan die student wat dit lees, dit ervaar? Hoe gaan hy dit interpreteer, en jy moet onmiddellik vir hom scaffolding inbou op verskillende plekke. Dit was vir my 'n baie nice intellektuele ervaring. Jy weet, die hele bou van die kursus. Die aanbied ook. Dit was stresvol, maar dit was lekker. Die moeilike deel is: ja, dis anders as waaraan 'n ou gewoond is. So 'n mens moet lateraal dink! Jy moet dink: dis wat ek in die klas sou gedoen het, hoe gaan ek nou op aarde vir die ouens hierdie goed verduidelik? So jy verduidelik die goed in woorde, dan besef jy maar dis nie genoeg nie. Dan maak jy screen dumps van goed en jy laai dit op, en dan kom jy agter hierdie en hierdie is probleme. Dan gee jy vir hulle 'n opsie waar hulle byvoorbeeld hulle eie links kan opsit, of wat ookal, sodat dit maklik – ag, jy weet, net om planne te maak, om die logistiek uit te sorteer en dinge makliker te maak. Dit was aan die een kant moeilik, maar dit was lekker. So ek weet nie. Moeilik en lekker, en maklik en nie lekker nie, is dalk in hierdie geval –</p>
Chuckle and smiling	<p>So daar's goed wat lekker is, en daar's goed wat minder lekker is, maar altwee maak dit – hoe is die algemene gevoel wat jy kry oor hoe dit was vir jou om hierdie kursus te fasiliteer?</p>
Old & new paradigm	<p>O, dit was vir my heerlik. Ek het elke oomblik daarvan geniet. Selfs die stresvolle gedeeltes was vir my nice, want ek het gevoel</p>
In summary	

<p>Exciting/enthusiasm – initiating creative and reflective thinking skills – lateral thinking</p>	<p>ek leer daaruit en ek groei as 'n online fasiliteerder. So ja, as ek terugdink aan dit, dan was dit vir my 'n baie positiewe ervaring. Dat ek baie goed baie anders sal doen omdat ek baie geleer het, is vir my goed, dis vir my nice.</p>
<p>Contribution to own personal growth</p>	<p>Q Wat sal jy anders doen? As jy nou weer hierdie presiese kursus kan aanbied? Wat sal jy dieselfde doen, en wat sal jy anders doen? Wat sal jy dieselfde doen?</p>
<p><i>Thinking with a frown</i></p>	<p>A Dieselfde is: ek sal dieselfde tipe druk op die stelsel hou. Die ouens sal – ek dink dis die meeste klagtes wat ek gekry het. Die ouens skryf vir my 'n email, en dan begin hulle met: ek is nie die tipe wat gewoonlik kla nie, maar regtig! Jy weet, en dan weet ek die ouens is moedeloos, maar as jy dan – ek het dit een week gedoen, ek het vir hulle ekstra tyd gegee vir 'n projek. Nou weet jy, dit het niks gehelp nie. Daai ekstra bietjie tyd het net vir hulle bietjie verligting gegee in terme van tyd, maar dit het nie die gehalte van die werk verbeter nie. So die druk sal ek op die stelsel hou, ek sal die kursus so vol hou as wat dit is. Wat ek wel sal anders doen, is ek sal van die begin af baie meer eksplisiete, logistieke riglyne gee. Goed soos byvoorbeeld: This is how to log in. Hier is waar jy al jou goed gaan kry. Hier is dit wat ek van jou verwag. Hier is dit wat jy van my kan verwag. Die ground rules. Ek het tog gedink ek het dit gedoen, maar ek het nie – daar's sekere goed wat ek gesien het gaps was, so ek sal die ground rules meer eksplisiet stel, en ek sal seker maak, van die begin af, dat die ouens actually weet waar die ground rules is, want daar's ouens wat eers hier teen die 3de, 4de week die ground rules eers vir die eerste keerraakgesien het. So, ek dink ek sal aan die begin baie meer scaffolding gee, en ek sal dit aan die einde – jy weet, ek sal dit wegneem. Daar moet maar ook 'n stadium wees wat die ouens voel hulle sink, sodat hulle kan agterkom maar hulle kan swem. Dis die enigste manier. Maar ek sal aan die begin, dink ek, my scaffolding heelwat meer maak, en dan – as ek sê aan die begin, is dit die eerste week of twee maksimum. En dan sal ek dit baie sterk afsyfer, en laat hulle maar die selfstandigheid inbring.</p>
<p>Maintenance issues</p>	<p>Nog iets wat jy anders sou doen? Jy't nou-nou gepraat van 'n kontrak? Dat jy die mense 'n kontrak sal laat teken met die kostes en commitment en –</p>
<p>Different planning in beginning</p>	<p>Ja, met 'n commitment in terme van tyd, en 'n commitment in terme van effort, dat hulle besef dit is 'n leerkurwe, want ouens het vir my gesê: maar ek kan nou nie meer nie. En dan dink ek: maar dan moet jy nie hier wees nie. As jy nie meer wil wees nie, dan moet jy nie meer hier wees nie. Jy moet besef dis 'n moeilike kursus, en dis 'n kursus met 'n – daar's klomp nuwe goed. Dit is</p>
<p>Signing of a contract</p>	<p></p>

Database of FAQ	<p>maar net so. Tyd, effort en kostes is die kontrak wat ek met hulle sal sluit. Wat ek dan ook sal doen, is ek sal tien-teen-een- 'n databasis van Frequently Asked Questions opbou. Beide nou gebasseer op die vorige kursus, maar ook as daar 'n vraag is wat nie daar geantwoord is nie, sal ek dit baie eksplisiet antwoord, maar ek sal dit dan stoor op 'n plek waar dit toeganklik is vir almal. En dan sal ek reëlins inbring. Dit sal deel wees van die kontrak, wat sê dat as jy vrae het, gaan kyk eers na die FAQ, soos byvoorbeeld, How do I ftp? Gaan kliek daar en kyk na die beskrywing. Werk eers daardeur. As jy dan nogsteeds sukkel, vra jou pelle. En as jy dan nogsteeds sukkel en julle kom niemand reg nie, dan vra jy my. Want dan sal dit dalk die kultuur van ons help mekaar en ons leer by mekaar bring, en dit sal daai ding van: maar ek moet maar eers self ok sukkel en probeer voordat ek net die maklike uitweg probeer, wat ek vra, en iemand vir my spoon feed. Maar ek het hierdie keer baie min spoon feeding gegee. Ek het hulle so-te-sê glad nie gehelp met die ftp nie. Ek het gesê dit wat jy moet doen teen daai tyd, en dis hoe dit moet lyk. Maar ek het nie vir hulle die stappe of die tools gegee nie. Hulle moes self gaan eksploreer en uitvind en by mekaar hoor en leer, wat met voorbedagre rade so was, maar as jy min tyd het, brand die ouens partykeer vas. So ek sal eers die ouens kans gee om dit self te doen, en as ek sien ouens brand vas, sal ek 'n ready-made pakkie gee. So ek sal dit nogsteeds nie van die begin af doen nie, maar ek sal, as ek soen ouens is nou on die edge en hier gaan senuwees nou eneenstort en huwelike nou skade ly, dan sal ek byvoorbeeld 'n meer stap-vir-stap riglyn gee. En ek sal bietjie aan die kursus ook herskeduleer. In plaas van dat 'n mens in weeksiklusse werk, dalk eerder oor twee weke opdragte gee, maar dat die inhandigingsdatums nogsteeds elke week is, maar dat die projek oor 2 weke loop. So die inhandigingsdatum vir hierdie aktiwiteit is oor 2 weke, maar jy kry volgende week nog aktiwiteite wat weer ook 2 weke is. So, die druk gaan nogsteeds op die stelsel wees, maar dis net 'n meer sinvolle tyd om regtig meer intensief te gaan. En ek sal ook byvoorbeeld – maar dit het nou niks met fasilitering te doen nie – dis maar met die huldiging van die kursus. Dis goed soos: Ek sal Yahoo Messenger van die begin af implementeer. Dit sal van die begin af ons sinchroniese medium van kommunikasie wees, want dit help so ongelooflik baie as die ouens dit eers het. En ek sal ook nie meer van Yahoo groups gebruik maak nie, want dis volgens my te omslagtig, en dis online, en dis klomp advertensies, en dis 'n klomp schlep. Ek sal veel eerder van WebCT gebruik maak, wat 'n baie nice, stabiele, skoon, veilige omgewing is. Jy gaan in, en jy doen alles daar. So ek sal dit as die hub gebruik. Ek dink dat die ouens nogals op 'n stadium ervaar het dat 'n mens rondspring van een tool na 'n ander, en</p>
Initiate processes of reflective learning for adult learning	
Implement Yahoo Messenger from beginning with WebCT – more stable and secure environment	

<p>Training and utilising the 'tools'</p>	<p>hulle weet nie meer waar is hulle nou nie, watter tool het ons nou laas gebruik vir wat nie. So ek sal graag een baie vaste, sekure omgewing, jy weet, wat almal verstaan, en wat ek dalk ook sal doen is ek sal daai eerste sessie, as mens daai inleidingsgesprek met hulle het, bietjie van opleiding inbring. Face-to-face. Kontak. Nie opleiding oor wat hulle moet doen nie, bloot opleiding in die tools, sodat hulle die tools kan gebruik. So ek sal byvoorbeeld vir hulle 'n halfuur lank – net 'n halfuur – in a lab wil hê, ensê hier's die adres. Gaan in, en stuur een email vir die ander mense wat jy kan sien. Reply op een email, sodat jy kan sien hoe reply mens. Laai 'n dokument op, dat jy kan voel hoe werk dit, en skryf die toetsie, wat somer iets sal wees soos hoe voel jy oor die kursus vat voorlê, of so iets. Net dat hulle die ervaring kry. Sodat hulle al die tools wat jy gaan gebruik in die kursus, dat ek net weet almal is daar.</p> <p>Net die basiese goed?</p> <p>Net die basiese. En dit hoef nie meer – ek vra nou 'n halfuur, maar 'n uur sal tien-teen-een genoeg wees om regtig almal gemaklik te hê in die omgewing wat 'n ou gaan gebruik. Dan is daar nie worries oor waar is die data nie, want hulle weet, hulle het in die klas gesien jy kliek daar, en daar lê die data. So ek dink dis 'n onnodige leerkurwe wat die ouens met hierdie sessie hoef deur te gegaan het. Hulle het tyd en mental energie spandeer op goed wat nie noodwendig oor e-learning gegaan het nie, maar oor trouble shooting van waar kry ek hierdie goed, en hoe kom ek daarby uit en so, wat ook 'n leer – ek voel half niks in die kursus van tydmors nie. Alles wat hulle ervaar het, maak van hulle in die toekoms beter e-learning fasiliteerders, want hulle het die goed aan hulle lyf ervaar.</p>
<p>Lesson learnt</p>	<p>Q Wat was jou motivering om nie 'n co-facilitator te gebruik nie?</p> <p>Ek het twee redes. Die een is: ek het nie geweet ek mag nie, of ek kan nie. Dis die maklike antwoord, en die eerlike antwoord is: ek werk baie beter individueel as wat ek in 'n span werk. So ek wil dit graag my manier doen.</p> <p>Dis interessant wat jy nou sê. Want omdat jy so fokus op die interaksie wat jy bewerkstellig het tussen die groeplede, en jy sê dat jy eintlik self –</p>
<p>Likes working alone Not a team player</p>	<p>Ek is nie so nie.</p> <p>– nie in 'n span werk nie.</p> <p>Weet jy, maar uit my eie studies uit het ek baie sterk, ek onthou die groepwerk was vir my as persoon, regtig 'n straf. Ek het gevoel ek het 'n bepaalde standaard wat ek wil handhaaf, en ek was geweldig gefrustreerd as ander ouens nie saamgewerk het nie, of as hulle ander idees gehad het wat ek nie mee</p>

Acknowledge collaboration	<p>saamgestem het of so nie. Maar ek onthou in een van die kursusse moes ons juis ook op so 'n lyn staan, in die een hoek die ouens wat van collaborative learning hou, en die ander ouens nie. En ek was die enigste een wat in die hoeke by individual learning gestaan het. En die ander was almal van die helfte af meer collaboratively. So uit my persoonlike ervaring – dis nou net 'n persepsie – weet ek dat my styl anders is, maar ek moet die meerderheid akkomodeer, en die meerderheid mense leer beter wanneer hulle interaksie het met ander. So ek glo in die waarde van collaborative learning, ek hou net nie persoonlik self daarvan nie.</p> <p>Q: So dit was vir jou eintlik makliker om hierdie – alhoewel, dit klink vir my nogal 'n tappende kurses vir die fasiliteerder – was dit op 'n manier vir jou makliker om dit alleen –</p> <p>Eerder. Ek sal veel eerder regtig suffer op my eie, as wat ek minder werk het, maar ek moet worry oor wat is die ander persoon se benadering. Strook dit met wat hulle doen met dit wat ek graag wou bereik het? Help hulle nou ouens waar ek dalk sou teruggestaan het? Dis net vir my makliker om dit op my eie te gedoen het.</p>
Struggle	<p>Q Wat was jou motivering om nie 'n helpdesk funksie te hê vir hierdie kursus nie?</p> <p>Een van die goed wat ek baie pertinent oor en oor vir hulle gesê het, is op 'n meestersgraadvlak, is jy 'n selfgerigte leerder. Deel van die leer het gekom uit die sukkel uit. Dit was vir my 'n baie bepaalde invalshoek, en dis weer uit persoonlike ervaring uit. Dit kan ook nie noodwendig – ek sal maar moet gaan lees wat sê die navorsing daaroor, maar ek leer die beste as ek sukkel met iets, en ek moet planne maak om rondom my probleem te kom. En dan is daar baie insidentele leer wat plaasvind wat my as individu laat groei, terwyl, as ek 'n vraag het en ek vra vir jou en jy gee my die antwoord, dan het ek dadelik die antwoord, maar ek het niks anders geleer nie. Ek het slegs geleer dit wat ek wou. En ek moet sê die hele doel van hierdie kursus was daarop gerig om soveel as moontlik geleenthede vir insidentele leer daar te skep. Stupid voorbeeld van daai selfde game wat hulle die foto's moes neem van die diere wat oor die skerm hardloop, ek het vir hulle gesê hulle moet 'n bewys lewer van hulle score. So hulle kan nie net vir my hulle score tik nie, want dan kan hulle moes nou enige score uitdink. Hulle moes vir my bewys lewer. Nou die enigste manier hoe hulle bewys kan lewer, is om 'n screen dump te gemaak het, want jy kan nie die score download nie. So dis ook 'n leerkurwe. Jy kan leer wat kan jy van die Internet af download, en wat kan jy nie. En nou wil jy hierdie hele bladsy hê, want jy moet hom hê, maar wat, moet jy nou 'n foto van hom neem? So</p>

FAQ as helpdesk	<p>dis – ek wou hê die ouens moes self dink aan planne en dan uitkom op 'n ding, maar die enigste ding wat hulle kan doen is 'n screen dump, en 'n screen dump maak jy by front screen op jou key board. Dis goed wat baie mense, een, nie geweet het nie, en nooit sou geweet het as dit nie was vir die oefening nie. So terselfertyd, bo en behalwe die feit dat hulle nou deur die oefening iets moes leer, het blot die aktiwiteit van die oefening se terugvoer, het hulle insidentele goed geleer wat ek nie eksplisiet in die outcomes ooit sal skryf nie, maar wat baie pertinent vir my bydra tot hulle vordering as – of hulle groei – as e-leer omgewingspesialiste. So ja, ek wou nie vir hulle pertinent A-B-C alles uitspel nie, en hulle van die geleentheid om self te ontdek en te eksploreer en self foute te maak en self te leer, daai geleentheid ontnem nie. Dis hoekom ek in die volgende een definitief FAQ wat 'n tipe van 'n helpdesk sal wees, maar ek sal nie alles van die begin af daar sit , oop en bloot vir almal om te gaan kyk nie. Ek sal eers dat hulle deur 'n fase gaan wat hulle self eksploreer, en wanneer ek dan sien ouens brand vas en gaan nou heeltemal afval as hulle nie nou hulp kry nie, sal ek vir hulle die helpdesk leiding by gee.</p>
<p>Need for technical support to enhance the process Assistance with technical questions</p> <p>Support administrative role</p>	<p>Q What is your opinion about online facilitation as a team effort rather than individual effort?</p> <p>A Ja, so met enige team effort ding, dink ek as die rolle mooi uitgespel word, sal dit baie goed kan werk. Ek het nogals 'n behoefte gehad by voorbeeld aan iemand wat die tegniese vrae kan antwoord. Hoegenaamde nie omdat ek nie weet hoe nie, maar net omdat dit soveel tyd vat om die tegniese vrae te antwoord, terwyl ek eerder wil konsentreer op die leeruitkomste en die regtige e-leer omgewing goed, eerder as die, jy weet, kliek hier, kliek daar, maak dit oop, drag soontoe, maak so en so. So ek kan nogals miskien 'n student-assistent wat van daai tipe vrae, en: waar moet ek hierdie post, jy weet, daai tipe van admin tipe reëlins. So ek sou nogal gehou het van so 'n tipe iets, dat ek kon team-teach met iemand wat een persoon die administrawe deel vat, en een persoon die leerfasiteringsrol vat. Ek sal versigtig wees om die leerfasilitering te split, tensy dit in mooi gedefinieerde ek-doen-hierdie-gedeelte-en-jy-doen-daaigedeelte. Daar is verseker meriete daarin om te team teach, want die leerders kry dan perspektiewe van 2 kante af. Veral as 'n ou dan dalk half juis kontrasterede invalshoeke het. Sodat jy die leeromgewing kan verryk met die ouens dan uit verskeie hoeke kan sien, maar dit kan ook baie teenproduktief wees vir 'n ou as hy nou hierdie boodskap kry, maar daai ou kry weer daai boodskap, en die konflik wat dit ook weer sal maak.</p>

Define clear roles	<p>So dit was ook 'n baie intieme tipe kursus?</p> <p>Dit was. Dit was vir my lekker om te weet die ouens –</p> <p>OK, so wat jy gesê het is dat jy 'n persoonlike verhouding eintlik half met elkeen van die leerders aangeknoop het, en dit sou moeilik wees as jy nou 2 leerders, of 2 leerfasiliteerders is. Dat dit vir jou makliker sou wees as jy byvoorbeeld 'n tegniese of 'n admin tipe ou het wat kan help met daai vrae.</p> <p>Ja, jy weet, dat die rolle net mooi gedefinieer is. As daai persoon al die tegniese vrae, al die admin vrae, al die logistiek hanteer, en jy hanteer die leeruitkomste gedeeltes. Dit sal baie lekker werk. Maar as 'n ou meer as een ou is wat op dieselfde gebied konsentreer, kan daar konflik wees, en ook dan is dit nou maar so dat 'n ou bietjie van die intimiteit, dat daar bietjie van 'n afstand kom tussen jou en jou studente. Nou is dit net ek, so hulle kan net op my rely. Hulle kan net vir my vra as hulle regtig vasbrand. Of kom raad vra, of – jy weet, die ouens het party keer gesê luister, ek sukkel met hierdie en hierdie ou in die groep. Hoe kan ek of wat kan ek, of hierdie is 'n probleem. Wat stel jy voor?</p> <p>So van die vrae wat daar was, was ook oor die interaksie tussen die spanlede en wat hulle daaromtrent moet doen?</p>
Sole responsibility <i>Smiling</i>	<p>Ja, het net nogals, hulle het regtig probeer om dit op hulle eie uit te sorteer, maar as ouens op 'n punt gekom het waar hulle so gefrustreerd was, of so ongelukkig was, of so benoud was dat dit hulle eie punte en prestasie en hulle eie goed, jy weet, as dit swak gaan reflekteer op hulle, dan het hulle nogals oop kaarte gespeel, en gesê luister, ek het hierdie ding op my eie gedoen, want die ander ouens was nie daar nie. 'n Eksplisiete deel van bietjie dinamika! En dan, dit was net half vir my nog 'n bevestiging van dit wat ek anyway klaar raakgesien het. As 'n ou deel is van so 'n groep, jy sien baie duidelik wat die dinamika is, en wie deel neem, en wie nie. So ek weet byvoorbeeld hierdie ou het alleen aan hierdie goed gewerk, en as hy dit dan eksplisiet vir my sê, is dit vir my nice bevestiging van dit wat ek in elk geval geweet het.</p>
Dealing with group dynamics	<p>Agtergekom het.</p> <p>Ervaar het. Maar die ouens sou nie altyd noodwendig, dink ek, as jy nie 'n baie persoonlike half oop ingesteltheid gehad het van dat hulle na jou toe kan kom met hierdie of hierdie probleem. En as jy sê dat hulle na jou toe kan kom, dit is nie fisies nie, nè? Dit is alles oor die –</p>
NO f2f/telephone	<p>Nee, nee, nee. Ek het nie een telefoonoproep gehad van enige een van die lede nie. My enigste kommunikasie was met die fisiese kontakssessies wat ons gehad het, en die res van die goed was alles –</p>
Difficult Week 1 – not aware of Yahoo	<p>En dit was net een sessie?</p> <p>Nee, weet jy, ons het die eerste dag het ek, ag, seker 10 minute met hulle gepraat en hulle ingedeel in groepe, waarna daai eerste</p>

<p>Group e-mail and website</p> <p>Following Thursday 2nd Face-to-face session to explain ground rules – stop worrying about money – you have to be online Explained the Introduction document</p> <p>Render immediate assistance – first aid</p> <p><i>Smiling</i></p>	<p>regtige radikaal moeilike eerste week plaasgevind het waarin die ouens nie op die goed was nie, nie op die regte plek gaan kyk het nie, nie tyd gehad het om die ding klaar te maak nie. Toe het ek dit goedgevind om met die tweede sessie – hulle het mos Donderdae-aande mekaar anyway ontmoet vir 'n ander deel van die kursus – het ek toe gevra of ek 'n kontaktyd in daai sessie kan hê. En in daai sessie het ek toe die ground rules gestel, wat ek gesê het: vergeet van die geld, jy gaan moet online wees. Vergeet van die en daai, commit tot hierdie, commit tot daai. Toe't ek so half dit wat ek in die dokument gesit het, eksplisiet gesê. Die goed wat hulle nie mooi verstaan het nie, het ek vir hulle verklaar en verduidelik. So half net die prentjie probeer – toe't hulle geluister. Die vorige keer was dit net: o, dis 'n kursus, en ja, ons gaan 'n game speel, en hier's ons nou in groepies, en goed het by hulle verby gegaan, terwyl met hierdie sessie het hulle nou 'n week se trauma, genuine trauma, agter die rug, en toe was hulle baie ontvanklik en oop, en toe't hulle acutally regtig geluister. Hulle was ontvanklik. So toe't jy bietjie aanpassings gemaak en dit so geakkommodeer?</p> <p>Kyk, ek moes. Dis nou maar die enigste ding. Ek sal nie in die vervolg weer nie, want ek sal dit vervang deur vooraf, in die begin, die goed baie eksplisiet te stel. Maar dit was noodhulp wat nodig was op daai stadium, anders het die ouens, jy weet, die stresvlakke was so hoog op daai stadium dat dit net nie – dit het meer ge-inhibeer eerder as bevorder. En toe heel aan die einde het ons die debriefing sessie gehad wat die ouens kon terugvoer gee en kon vertel.</p> <p>Q Die laaste vraag is watter kwaliteite moet 'n online fasiliteerder hê, in jou opinie?</p> <p>A Dis nou moeilik om dit nou half spesifiek op kwaliteite te mik, maar ek sal sê 'n mens moet akkomoderend en oop en approachable wees. Daai ding van mense moet weet hulle kan jou kontak. Wat beteken jy moet kan skerp en krities terugreageer, maar hulle moet weet dat hulle teenoor jou ook daai selfde – jy moet half 'n kultuur kan skep, en om 'n kultuur te kan skep, moet jy baie sensitief wees, so dis een van die karaktereienskappe. 'n Ou sal 'n baie sensitiewe ingesteldheid moet hê vir dinamika. En dis juis daai ding wat ek sê jy moet baie keer tussen lyne lees, eerder as die lyn self, want dit wat op die lyn staan, beteken niks nie, maar dit wat die implikasie is, is baie keer dit waarna jy moet oplet. Dan dat 'n ou se rol heetmal anders is en jy moet dit verstaan, so die – Hoe is jou rol anders?</p>
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<p>Personality qualities: Accommodating, open, approachable, ability to set limits, read story of dynamics Writing skills</p> <p>Awareness of own communication – continuous own monitoring</p> <p>Begrip for mutual understanding Technical help</p> <p>Knowledge of hardware and software</p> <p>Watch how you communicate with the group</p> <p><i>Frowning</i></p>	<p>In die sin dat jy nie op jou persoonlikheid kan staatmaak nie. Jy moet op dit wat jy skryf, so jy moet baie pertinent dink aan die manier waarop jy goed skryf, en hoe jy goed oordra, dat mense nie sarkasme lees, sonder om te besef dat jy bedoel iets nou nie sarkasties nie. Ek weet, Johannes het op 'n stadium iets geweldig sarkasties ingegooi in die groep, en die mense het dit totaal gemis dat dit sarkasties was. Hulle dog toe hy's actually nice en help hulle. 'n Ou gaan heeltyd bewus moet wees van hoe jy kommunikeer en wat die boodskap is wat jy ook oordra. Hetsy bewus of onbewus.</p> <p>So hy het ook met hulle gekommunikeer?</p> <p>Hy was baie selde daar, maar hy het met die ftp stories, omdat die server nie by my, die server het nie tegniese by my gewees sodat ek dit kon hanteer nie, was daar goed wat hy op die server moes groter maak. Hulle wou byvoorbeeld hulle shelters groter hê, want anders kon 'n mens nie die goed sien wat daarop is nie. Dan het ek vir hom email gestuur, en dan het hy nou toevallig ingekom en dan het hy gesien dat die gesprek daaroor gaan, en dan het hy kommentaar gelewer byvoorbeeld.</p> <p>So dis was net tegniese goeters?</p> <p>Tegniese goed, ja!</p> <p>Vertel my nog van die – jy't nou gesê die persoon moet oop en akkomoderend wees. En jy moet amper dieselfde kultuur skep van dat jy op dieselfde vlak as die leerder is, en dat jy maar kan oop kommunikeer, en dat jy sensitief moet wees vir die goed wat gesê word, maar nie gesê word nie. En dat jy jou rol moet verstaan, en dat jy 2 keer moet dink aan die manier waarop jy eintlik terugkommunikeer.</p> <p>Ek dink 'n ander aspek wat geweldig belangrik is, is dat jy die heeltyd jouself in die skoene van die leerder moet sit, want ek het baie keer 'n ding gestel, en aangeneem hulle rekenaarskerms lyk soos myne. En jy moet aanvaar dat as jy aan die anderkant sit, daar dinge kan wees wat anders kan lyk, hetsy oor operating systems wat verskil, of oor sagtewareprogramme wat die ouens gebruik wat jy nie gebruik nie. Konneksies. Iets wat jy onmiddellik kan sien omdat jy 'n goeie konneksie het, wat 'n ander ou weer mee sukkel. So, ek dink 'n ou moet baie bewus wees van die hardware en die sagteware wat jou studente mee sit, en baie belangrik: 'n ou moet bewus wees van die vlak waarop jou studente operate. Dit was vir my moeilik. Ek het net aanvaar almal is in die ... dit gaan oor rekenaargestunde onderwys. Ek het 'n minimum intreevlak geaanvaar, wat baie beslis nie so was nie. So dit was verseker, ek dink miskien kan 'n ou aan die begin dalk op 'n manier met 'n vraelys of iets daai tipe van informasie kry. Selfs met 'n opleidingssessie byvoorbeeld. So as jy wil hê hulle moet net leer hoe om die bulletin board te gebruik, kan jy vir julle sê, gaan skryf op die bulletin board watter</p>
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Questionnaire to obtain computer competence level Training session	rekenaarvaardighede het jy, wat voel jy gemaklik mee, en wat is nuut vir jou, watter rekenaar het jy? Het jy 'n Pentium, of sit jy nog met 'n 486, of wat ookal, sodat 'n ou net 'n bietjie beter begrip het, want as jy verstaan dat jou leerders dinge anders sien, dan maak dit van jou misverstande duideliker. Ek het partykeer by die ouens verbygepraat vir 'n goeie 3, 4 emails lank, voordat ek agtergekom het, maar die ou is nie op die regte plek nie. Hy's op WebCT in die opening page, nie in die WebCT kursus self nie. Hy's nou op 'n heeltemal verkeerde plek. Dis die dat hy nie sien wat ek sien en nie verstaan wat ek probeer verduidelik nie. Dus moet jy die heeltid in die skoene van die leerders sit, en dis hoekom dit baie belangrik vir my is dat 'n e-leerder fasiliteerder, moet altyd eers self in 'n e-leeromgewing 'n student gewees het voordat hulle hulself moet blootstel aan die fasiliteringsgedeelte, want slegs dan verstaan jy wat die impak is. Dis ook hoekom ek die hele kursus so aangebied het, dat hulle daai toets online moet skryf, want dis die eerste ding wat mense doen as hulle online gaan. Hulle sê: aah, ons kan laat die rekenaar my goed merk. Maar dan verstaan hulle nie die geweldige stres en spanning en lading en die onsekerheid wat dit by die studente ontloot nie. En dis hoekom, die feit dat hulle nou self in daai omstandighede was, gaan hulle net meer sensitief maak. Hulle gaan verstaan waaroor dit gaan. Hulle gaan antisipeer. Ag ja, en jy moet die heeltid vooruit dink. Jy moet dink: goed, jy't nou hierdie en hierdie assignments vir hulle gesit, en dan moet jy dink wat kan alles verkeerd gaan. Jy moet eksplisiet deur die oefening gaan, en sê goed, hulle kan dalk nie weet hoe om dit te doen nie. Dan moet hy 'n plan B hê. Of hulle gaan dalk nie met mekaar kontak kan maak nie, dan moet jy dit hê. Die tyd wat ek toelaat is dalk te kort. Watter plan gaan ek maak as hulle nie bymekaar uitkom in daai tyd nie? Wat ookal. So 'n ou moet die heeltid pro-aktief probleme antisipeer en klaar 'n plan B in plek hê, want anders stoomroller die goed net, en vang 'n mens dan net nie weer op nie.
Be an online student first	
Think ahead/plan	
Need to have experienced the process yourself to be able to facilitate Work through the exercises and assignments	En is dit presies wat jy gedoen het? Ja, ja, ek moes, want anders sal 'n ou, soos ek sê, 'n week klink nou baie, maar 'n week gaan net so verby. As 'n naweek verby is, is jou week verby, en dan's daar 3 dae oor voor dit weer – Is daar enige iets anders wat so 'n e-learning fasiliteerder moet – Ek dink 'n ou moet baie gestruktureerd wees. Dis die een ding wat somer nou saamhang met die vorige een. Jy moet baie deeglike beplanning doen. Jy moet baie pertinent weet waarvoor jy jou inlaat. Jy moet antisipeer hoe lank goed vat om te neem. 'n Mens moet weet byvoorbeeld dat online discussions neem langer as 'n telefoongesprek. So waar 'n telefoongesprek 10 minute gaan neem voor 'n ding uitgesorteer gaan wees, gaan online dieselfde oefening dalk 'n week vat. 'n Ou moet die

<p>Need for structured planning</p>	<p>healtyd antisipeer wat die potensiaal vir moeilikheid is, en dit probeer ondervat.</p> <p>Jy het nou gesê jy moet weet waarvoor jy jou inlaat. Waarvoor laat jy jou in?</p> <p>Jy laat jou in vir iets wat totaal anders is as die klasomgewing. En dan is daar nou 'n klomp goed wat 'n ou kan lys. Goed soos byvoorbeeld, dat jy nie fisiese kontak het nie. Dat jy nie kan liggamstaal lees nie. Dat interpretasies van boodskappe, van text, anders ge-interpreteer word as wat dit bedoel is. Dat konflik ontstaan oor goed wat ... voordat leerders kan verder gaan en sonder konflik kan verder leer. Dat daar 'n mate van kompetisie is. EK het nou-nou weer een van die emails gelees waar die vroujie praat oor die taalkwessie van, jy weet, dat hulle sê moeilik om in 'n tweede taal, want nou, dis nou akademiese gesprekke wat die ouens hier voer, en hulle moet dit nou in 'n taal voer wat nie hulle eerste taal is nie. En ander ouens wie se tweede of derde taal dit ook is, moet nou lees en interpreteer en terugreageer. Dis 'n geweldige moeilik ding om by verby te kom. Dit is net so. O, ek toe sê sy ja, en veral as 'n mens in kompetisie is met ander studente. En toe dog ek: dis vir my geweldig interessant dat sy die woord kompetisie gebruik het, want die idee was nie om 1 student teen 'n ander af te speel nie. Die kompetisie was nie op 'n vlak van akademie nie. Dit was op die vlak van 'n speletjie en samewerking. So die kompetisie was, daar was baie meer bedoeling dat die ouens moet saamwerk en geïntegreerd bydra wat hulle kan tot 'n beter geheel, eerder as my kompetisie met 'n ander individu. So dit was net vir my interessante woordgebruik. Partykeer dat goed wat jy gladnie bedoel het nie, wel bestaan.</p>
<p>Anticipate problems</p> <p>Language barriers</p>	<p>Ja.</p>
<p>Competition for collaboration</p>	<p>Q Enige iets anders wat jy nog wil bysit? Moet ek vir jou die vrae herhaal en dan kan jy sê as jy nog kan dink aan iets?</p> <p>A Dink jy ons sal iets kan kry weer?</p> <p>Kan bysit.</p> <p>Ek praat so baie.</p> <p>Verseker. Ek het gevra hoe het jy dit beleef om 'n e-learning fasiliteerder te wees, wat het jy gedoen wat mense van gehou het, wat het hulle minder van gehou? Wat het hulle kwaad gemaak? Ek het gevra hoe't jy rapport bewerkstellig? Hoe't jy dit onderhou? Hoe't jy deurentyd leiding gegee? Watter rolle jy gespeel het? Wat was uniek? Jou unieke bydrae as fasiliteerder omdat jy uit jou eie persoonlikheid fasiliteer. Wat was tricky situasies? Hoe't jy dit hanteer? En ek het gevra of jy iemand ooit gevra het om jou te help. En toe't ek vir jou gevra oor jou mentor. Wat was sy bydrae? Ek het jou gevra oor wat hy vir jou gesê het</p>

	<p>moet jy doen. Dit wat jy hom moontlik kon vra. Wat was vir jou maklik en wat was vir jou minder maklik gewees met die fasilitering? Ek het vir jou gevra as jy dit weer kon doen, sal jy dit weer doen, en wat sal jy anders doen? Wat sal jy dieselfde doen? En jou motivering om nie 'n co-fasiliteerder te gebruik nie. En dit was basies dit. En dan't ons laastens gepraat oor helpdesk. Die rede vir nie helpdesk nie. Spanleer, om iemand te hê wat jou help, toe't jy gepraat van die tegniese of administratiewe persoon wat jou moontlik, wat moontlik 'n rol sal kan speel. En toe't ons gepraat oor die kwaliteite wat 'n online fasiliteerder moet hê. Dis 'n mondvul. Enige iets wat jy hier wil bysit? Enige iets wat jy aan kan dink?</p> <p>Ag, ek weet nie eers wat het ek als gesê nie. As daar nog goed is, as sy voel sy wil nog vir jou iets vra, dan moet sy maar doen. En as ek nou deur die goed werk weer, en ek kom weer op dit af, dan sal ek dit ook sommer vir haar aanstuur. Ek weet nie of dit dan deel is, of sy dit sal kan gebruik nie.</p> <p>Ja, nee ek dink so.</p>
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14 754 words

Annexure M: Transcript of sound files

_____ sound file

Hi, this is _____. I really enjoyed my first week on Cyber Island. I really learned a lot of stuff, new stuff, working in Dream Weaver, learned doing new things using html, making sound files, like I am doing now, ftp-ing things I really enjoyed and so I must say I really had a good experience so far and learnt a lot of stuff. On the negative side, maybe I can just say it is taking up a bit of time and maybe a little bit of money, but in our work we have to deal with this so I really enjoyed my first week.

_____ sound file

On the positive side, I have learnt a lot about the online paradigm. I have learnt about the communication within the group, using an asynchronous tool like e-mail. What seemed easy at the outset proved rather difficult in reality. The only negative, and perhaps it is actually a positive, is accepting the criticism of others. I did not like peer evaluation. Everyone seemed to be applying different criteria for the evaluation of websites.

_____ sound file

I have been struggling tremendously with the technicalities, trying to understand the operation of the different programmes in which we have to work. At times I actually felt quite claustrophobic with all the e-mails coming in and not having enough time to read through and appreciate them all. However, I had a general feeling of a positive experience of all the wonderful people out there prepared to share their knowledge, including Johannes, the colleague, close to us.

_____ sound file

I am sure we will all agree that we have experienced true constructivist learning the past week. It was a big shock for a behaviourist like me, but I must say that I can see the positive influence of constructivist learning. The fact that your own knowledge is constructed with very little guidance makes sure that you really know what you are working with at the end. On the negative side I have heard from other team members that they are completely lost and I think that a little bit more guidance would be necessary to help everybody through.

_____ sound file

Treading on unfamiliar virtual territory, I was swept off my feet by the first weeks' assignments. It was hectic. Apart from my ignorance, our system went down and as time ran out, I hit panic stations. Luckily our deadline was postponed. On a positive note, however, I am on a steep learning curve and I love what we are doing!

Annexure N: Linda's answers to competencies for the Online Facilitator

University of Pretoria etd – Adendorff, D.E. (2004)

- Indicate your level of importance to each indicator in terms of Baseline, Moderate, High or Extreme with a tick (✓).
- From each competency, select the three most important indicators. You should now have a list of nine indicators.

People Competencies	Indicator	Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
	Providing direction				✓
	Empowering			✓	
	Motivating others			✓	
	Developing others			✓	
	Attracting / developing talent			✓	
	Interpersonal sensitivity				✓
	Teamwork			✓	
	Building and maintaining relationships			✓	
	Flexibility			✓	
	Stress tolerance				✓
	Tenacity				✓
	Cross cultural awareness				✓
	Integrity				✓

Stress tolerance: In CyberSurvivor practically everything that could go wrong did. Learners didn't listen properly to the instructions at the first f2f encounter we had, and this meant that the entire first week was chaotic. Learners didn't access regularly and missed deadlines due to confusion. Seeing how things can go horribly wrong, even when details had received careful planning and attention, means that an online facilitator needs to have a tolerance for stress that is almost supernatural.

Thinking Competencies	Indicator	Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
	Judgement			✓	
	Information gathering			✓	
	Problem analysis				✓
	Objective setting				✓
	Management control				✓
	Written communication skills				✓
	Technical skills and competence			✓	
	Organisational awareness			✓	
	Strategic perspective				✓
	Commercial orientation		✓		
	Cross functional awareness			✓	
	Innovation				✓
	Career / self development			✓	

Written communication skills: As an online facilitator has to rely strongly on the written component of communication, it is important that he/she has the skills to communicate clearly in this manner. I found that often I first drafted a copy of my immediate reactions and comments in a Word document, left it on my computer whilst I break to have a cup of calming coffee, after which I would return, reread, rewrite and only then send a severely edited version of my initial reaction. I had to consciously be aware of the power of the written word in the absence of other indicators such as body language and intonation.

Energy competencies	Indicator	Baseline	Moderate	High	Extreme
	Self confidence				✓
	Impact				✓
	Decisiveness				✓
	Drive				✓
	Initiative			✓	
	Persuasiveness				✓
	Oral communication skills			✓ for synch comm	
	Concern for excellence				✓
	Customer service orientation				✓
	Execution				✓

Self-confidence: It is essential to belief in yourself, as any hesitance from a facilitator is immediately spotted by learners. If they don't experience you as 'in control' and confident, it is easy to lose the positive dynamics in the entire group. I battled the first week in particular, when nothing happened as I anticipated it would, and had a hard time masking my own insecurities as a facilitator. Afterwards it seemed that most learners thought the initial chaos was part of my well-planned introduction to elearning, which of course it was, however not at all on the scale as it eventually took place!

Annexure O: Ways to combat Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD)

Hochanadel (1995) and Kroemer (1989) suggest the following tips to combat CTD.

For the back:

Ensure that the chair backrest supports the inward curvature of the operator's spine in the lumbar region. Select a chair that is equipped with five casters for mobility and safety and has a swivel seat to maximise 'swing' space and minimise stress on the back, shoulders and arms (Raghurama *et al.* 2001:9).

For the arms and wrists:

Check that the operator's arms are positioned correctly in that the arms are at the keyboard height and kept close to the body. During keyboard use, the operator's arms are at a 90-degree angle and the upper arm is almost vertical. The operator's wrists are nearly horizontal and are not bent upward or downward at a sharp angle (Raghurama *et al.* 2001:9).

For legs and feet:

Ensure that the operator's feet are flat on the floor or supported by a footrest. There should be space between the back of the operator's knees and the front edge of the chair. There should be adequate 'swing' space between the operator's legs and the underside of the desk (Raghurama *et al.* 2001:9).

For the eyes:

Place the personal computer screen 30 cm from the operator's eyes. Tilt the screen back 10 to 20 degrees (unless the angle caused additional glare). Check that the top of the monitor is no more than 25 degrees at or below eye level. There is no glare on the screen face or mirror images on the screen. There is no light shining directly in the operator's eyes. Documents are located at eye level and near the monitor (Raghurama *et al.* 2001:9).

For the back and neck:

Ensure that all equipment and tools are within minimum reach. Place the monitor directly in front of the operator. Adjust the seatback and chair to ensure that the operator does not hunch his/her head, neck or back forward or lean backward (Raghurama *et al.* 2001:10).



In general, take a one-minute break every 20 minutes or at least a five-minute break every hour. In essence, pay attention to the ergonomics of the workstation (Hochanadel, 1995; Kroemer, 1989; Westmoreland, 1993).