







# The Art of Facilitation

## Jeffrey L. Jones

- 1  **The Art of Facilitation: How to Get the Outcomes You Want From Your Online Course/Discussion.**  
A Theory-Into-Practice Exercise in How Forum Facilitation Encourages Higher-Order Thinking, Develops Community, And Establishes Your Voice
- 2  **The artist's palette...**
  - What does this mean, "online facilitator?"
  - The criteria
    - Levels of Knowledge Construction: How what you ask and say extends and encourages higher level thinking.
    - Community Development: How what you ask and say identifies and reinforces community within the discussion.
    - Your voice: How rhetorical style establishes you as an individual, increasing your accessibility and that of the other course participants.
  - Throughout, we'll be using an example to illustrate, with additional examples if we have time.
  - Where these criteria apply...
- 3  **What does this mean, "online facilitator?"**
  - Any teacher/facilitator of an online or hybrid (part online, part face-to-face) course.
  - Any teacher/facilitator using an online discussion (forum, chat, etc.) with participants.
  - Any teacher/facilitator assigning an interactive blog project to participants.
  - Any teacher/facilitator using a live interactive meeting platform such as Wimba, Breeze, Elluminate, etc.
  - Any teacher/facilitator who wants to address these issues *in any other setting!*

*Participant*– adults in a PD setting, kids in a school or class setting, or anyone else for which you want to develop community and boost depth of knowledge.
- 4  **Why Levels of Knowledge?**
  - The Results are In: There is a heavy research basis for increased learning...
    - (Benjamin) Bloom's Taxonomy (our basis here)
    - Depth of Knowledge (Norman Webb and others)
    - Critical Thinking (Robert Sternberg and others)
  - Setting the Bar: Attention to critical thinking sets expectations high, and encourages participants to think, react, and reach.
- 5  **Levels of Knowledge Construction:**  
**Key Words**
  - 6) Evaluation (Judging the Outcome): "*judge, select, choose, decide, justify, debate, verify, argue, recommend, assess, discuss, rate, prioritize, determine*"
  - 5) Synthesis (Creating): "*create, invent, compose, predict, plan, construct, design, imagine, propose, devise, formulate*"
  - 4) Analysis (Taking Apart): "*analyze, distinguish, examine, compare, contrast, investigate, categorize, identify, explain, separate, advertise*"
  - 3) Application (Making Use of Knowledge): "*solve, show, use, illustrate, construct, complete, examine, classify*"
  - 2) Comprehension (Confirming/Understanding): "*explain, interpret, outline, discuss, distinguish, predict, restate, translate, compare, describe*"
  - 1) Knowledge (Information Gathering): "*tell, list, describe, relate, locate, write, find, state, name*"

Dalton, J. & Smith, D. (1986) "Extending Children's Special Abilities – Strategies for primary classrooms" pp36-7
- 6  **An Example...**
  - Facilitator Response - RE: Book talking tips
  - Helen,

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Thank you for your tried and true tips! What did you think about the booktalking tips? Which 5 did you like best? Please, brainstorm and describe the 1 tip you think you will be able to put in a lesson plan and actually be able to use in your classroom?

### 7 **Why Community?**

- Situated Learning: All learning takes places within a social context which provides motivation, peer support, and application
- Learning which builds: Peer interaction in a social/professional context enhances knowledge construction
- Learning with Legs: Community-embedded knowledge has the best chance of making into practice; true communities of practice are self-sustaining and continuous

### 8 **Community**

*...from the dictionary...*

1. A group of people living in the same locality...["*Membership*"]
2. A group of people having common interests: *the scientific community; the international business community...*
3. Similarity or identity: *a community of interests.*

*Adapted from The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*

### 9 **Community of Practice**

4. "*...mutual engagement – ...interact[ion which] displays complementary participation and provides for specialization, as an extension of practice rather than ideas or structures...*" - Peer relationship between participants, celebrating the individual skills and contributions of each participant, working from our experiences in the field.
5. "*...through the reflective process of negotiation, evidence of an indigenous joint enterprise with mutual accountability...*" - participants acknowledge the contributions of others, drawing from the working experiences of the community, where quality and value is negotiated through peer consensus.
6. "*...a shared repertoire of actions resulting from engagement.*" - All contributions (tools, ideas, and resources) are freely shared between all participants, growing from the interaction within the community.

*Adapted from Etienne Wenger: Communities of Practice (1998)*

### 10 **The Keys to "Community"...**

1. Group Membership: "*...We belong ...*"
2. Common Interests: "*...We believe...*"
3. Common Identity: "*...We are...*"
4. Mutual Engagement: "*...We talk...*"
5. Joint Enterprise/Mutual Accountability: "*...We do good work...*"
6. Shared Repertoire: "*...We know...*"

### 11 **The Example (cont'd...)**

- *[this space intentionally left blank...]*

### 12 **Why Voice?**

- Media concerns Expressing humor, sympathy, and other human expressions is different through text, and requires effort.
- Online discourse has none of the social and personal contexts built-in.
- Learning, community, and knowledge construction all depend on personal relationships between participants in a discussion.
- Attention to voice forces attention to audience, and the characteristics and needs of that audience.
- A personal voice promotes the "Guide on the side" approach to instruction (rather than the "Sage on the stage").

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### 13 **Your voice...**

Establishing yourself as an individual, while encouraging others to do the same

- Express yourself: Be personal. Reference important things in your own life. Speak in the first person, avoid passive construction and the royal "We."
- Be flexible and humble: Allow for mistakes (including your own), provide guidance rather than push direction.
- Have a sense of humor: Make fun of yourself, find the humor in events, use emoticons.
- Be specific: Recognize and reference specific ideas, events, and people; avoid general statements.
- Include everyone: Reach out to the "lurker," find something to celebrate in every contribution, reference others as you respond.

Adapted liberally from Martha Vasquez (2003): "Your online voice: How can you set the tone?" eSchoolNews (<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStory.cfm?ArticleID=4721>)

### 14 **The Example (cont'd...)**

- *[this space intentionally left blank...]*

### 15 **Where these criteria apply...**

1. The narrative of the course or assignment
2. The wording of each overarching forum question
3. Responses to each participant forum contribution
4. In personal email communications, journal entries, and feedback from "self checks," course-specific surveys, etc.
5. "Live" communications (videoconferenced, meeting space, even the classroom)

### 16 **...but influenced by...**

1. The position in the sequence of the course:
  - Usually, courses start at the bottom of Bloom, and work up
  - In contrast, community building is more important in the beginning
2. The stated learning goal of the course and unit
3. The description of each overarching discussion question
4. The developing and established personal relationship between the facilitator and participants.

### 17 **Questions?**

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