

E-tivities: Research, Benefits, and Framework

Research

Background

Professor Gilly Salmon's concept of E-tivities originates from research into online learning and interaction, emphasizing structured, engaging activities to enhance learner participation and engagement. E-tivities, or online learning activities, are designed to foster interactivity and build knowledge through collaboration and active involvement. They are a 'golden egg' since the first action research was 2000 -2003 but they have since been tested and developed in thousands of applications.

Theoretical Basis

Grounded in constructivist and social learning theories, E-tivities aim to create a collaborative learning environment. They emphasize peer-to-peer interaction, facilitator guidance, and task-based learning, which are key to developing knowledge and skills in online and blended settings.

Evidence and Studies

Studies demonstrate that structured, scaffolded E-tivities significantly boost online participation, enhance knowledge retention, and foster a sense of community among learners—critical elements for successful online education.

Benefits

- Enhanced Engagement and Interaction: E-tivities encourage active participation, keeping students motivated and engaged with course content.
- Social and Collaborative Learning: Through group activities and discussions, E-tivities build a sense of community and promote social learning in online environments.
- Scalability and Flexibility: Adaptable across various online platforms, E-tivities provide cost-effective, scalable learning opportunities. Synchronous or location-based meetings can also be incorporated.
- Active Learning: E-tivities promote critical thinking and problem-solving as students actively contribute to tasks, rather than passively consuming content.

Framework

Structure of E-tivities

E-tivities follow a clear, concise structure, often completed asynchronously, with these key components:

1. Title: Clear, engaging, and relevant.
2. Purpose: A specific learning goal or objective.
3. Spark: A thought-provoking prompt to initiate interest, point out relevance, spark

discussion (not a teaching session or lengthy video).

4. Individual Contribution: Learners respond to the spark individually.
5. Interaction: Peer engagement with clear goals, outcomes, timelines, and deliverables, such as reflections or tasks demonstrating learning.
6. Moderator Support: Guidance and feedback from an e-moderator to enhance learning.
7. Timing: Defined start and end dates estimated effort required, and deadline reminders.

Five-Stage Alignment

E-tivities align seamlessly with Salmon's 5-Stage Model, increasing in complexity and interaction as learners advance through the stages. They are an essential part of Carpe Diem Learning Design, but they are also easy to pilot on a small scale.

Use and Practice

Planning E-tivities

Educators should design E-tivities with clear, measurable outcomes that align with course objectives. Activities should engage students in active learning and promote participation.

Role of the Facilitator/Moderator

Facilitators provide guidance, moderate discussions, and offer feedback. As learners gain autonomy, the facilitator's role evolves from active involvement to supportive oversight and feedback.

Activity Design

Effective E-tivities are:

- Simple, accessible, and interactive.
- Focused on fostering community and ensuring participation.
- Asynchronous, accommodates diverse learner schedules flexibility and accessibility. But many educators now include an online or on location feedback or teaching session.

Assessment and Feedback

Incorporate both formative and summative assessments, along with constructive feedback, to keep learners motivated and on track.

References

Primary Texts

Salmon, G. (2013). *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge: London and New York.

Supporting Research

Salmon, G. (2011). *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online* (3rd ed.). Routledge. This text provides broader strategies for online facilitation and further insights into implementing E-tivities.