ONLINE FACILITATION ESSENTIALS

CILT EVENT: 13 September 2017

Tony Carr
Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching
University of Cape Town
Balance Structure and Flexibility

Heart:

Structures, such as a clear agenda, time limits, or raising hands before speaking, can create safety, focus, and a form for the group's energy to pour into. Yet to sustain the life of a group, this must be balanced with a great openness to change, dancing between the two as needed.

From the groupworks cards at http://groupworksdeck.org/
The Journey

Setting the scene: Why are we here?
What is facilitation?
Onto online facilitation
What online facilitators do
A facilitation dilemma
Some advice for when it is wanted
A few tools
What is facilitation?

"the act of engaging participants in creating, discovering and applying learning insights"

What is facilitation?

“The facilitator’s job is to support everyone to do their best thinking. To do this, the facilitator encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility”.

Kaner 1996, p32
Some resources for innovative facilitators

Introduction

When you feel included and engaged, do you do a better job? Do you think teams in which people work well together produce much better results? Have you noticed the best ideas often come from unexpected sources? Do you want to work at the top of your intelligence and give the same opportunity to others?

If YES, we have found this is the kind of organization and community that people want to be part of. AND, Liberating Structures help make it happen.

http://www.liberatingstructures.com/
Welcome to the Group Pattern Language Project

Why is it that some meetings bring life to your soul, while others leave you wishing you'd never stepped in the room? What happens at the best ones, that makes them productive, fulfilling, sometimes even magic?

The Group Works deck of 100 full-colour cards (91 patterns + 9 category cards) names what skilled facilitators and other participants do to make things work. The content is more specific than values and less specific than tips and techniques, cutting across existing methodologies with a designer's eye to capture the patterns that repeat. The deck can be used to plan sessions, reflect on and debrief them, provide guidance, and share responsibility for making the process go well. It has the potential to provide a common reference point for practitioners, and serve as a framework and learning tool for those studying the field.

http://groupworksdeck.org/
Reflection-Action Cycle

Heart:
Consider. Enact. Debrief. Experiment further. Effective processes that move groups forward often involve cycles of reflection, followed by action, leading to additional reflection, and so on. Alternating in this manner fosters engagement and integration, deepens experiential learning, and promotes adaptive problem-solving.

From the groupworks cards at http://groupworksdeck.org/
What is online facilitation?

“the process of encouraging interaction with and between students, supporting learning activities and helping make the use of technology 'easier' for the people we are working with, in order to foster greater engagement and learning”

Downing, Pittaway and Osborne, 2014
What is online facilitation?

„a balance between functions that enhance the environment and content, create openness and opportunity, and functions that protect the members from harassment. It involves the sacred rituals around freedom of individual expression while preserving something of "the common good. It is juggling, tightrope walking, often without a net”

White 2002, p5
Howard Rheingold: Art of Hosting

“like a host at a party”

“an authority”

“an exemplar”

“a cybrarian”

“the show is collaborative improvisation”

“members of a community of hosts”

Rheingold (1998)
From Gilly Salmon

http://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html
Opening and Welcome

Heart:
The beginning sets the tone. Start intentionally, in a manner that invites group members to connect with one another, enter their voice into the circle, and participate as their authentic selves. Attend to building enthusiasm, focus, and commitment for the work to come.

From the groupworks cards at http://groupworksdeck.org/
Community of Inquiry Framework

Garrison, Anderson and Archer 2010, p6
What online facilitators do

- convene
- summarise
- design
- curate
- include
- guide
- model
- discourse
- appreciate
- inform
- process
- coach
- mentor
- document
- question
- inspire
- improvise
- respond
- diagnose
- teach
- network
- invite
- nudge
- weave
- lead
- learn
- welcome
- communicate
- support
- provoke
- navigate
- signal
- mediate
- listen
• supporting online learning
• social skills
• online communication skills
• technical skills
• social networking skills

Carr, Jaffer and Smuts 2009, p4
The facilitative stance

Self-awareness
Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty
Ability to sense nuance and subtlety
Well-practiced questioning and “listening” skills
Ability to work with and across diverse cultures and styles.
Good judgment to deal with the “darker side” of online interactions

Selected from White (2010) p4
What would you do?

- A student who has been making very insightful and useful contributions to online discussions suddenly starts posting lots of messages advertising their freelance work and responds angrily when their peers object to this.

- What would you do as an online facilitator of the course?
What would you do?

- It's three days since the last face to face class on campus and you are receiving e-mails from several of your students complaining about the suspension of face to face lectures. One student said: "If I had wanted to do distance education I would have saved my parents a lot of money by going to Unisa instead." Some of the other messages use less polite language.

- What would you do as an online facilitator of the course?
The challenge of social media

"the use of social media matches a different perspective on learning focusing on co-creation, self-directed learning by participants and the importance of interaction and conversation between participants. Social media encourage networking, sharing ideas and experiences”

Hulsebosch 2011
Follow the Energy

Heart:

What does the group really want in this moment? Let your observation of cues and "vibes" guide your response and steering of topics and process. Paying attention to where the life is, you help it flower.

From the groupworks cards at http://groupworksdeck.org/
Some recent research

https://www.flickr.com/photos/darkdragonvegas/7121612119/
Facilitators as co-learners

"The facilitators played a vital role in establishing a sense of community by creating, extending and modelling opportunities for conversation and exchange, showing interest and care through supporting learners as well as each other."

Nerantzi, Middleton and Beckingham 2014
Guidelines Towards Facilitation

teaching staff needed training to become familiar with constructivist and observational approaches and the use of social media which could enable them to facilitate student engagement

Mbati and Minnaar 2015
the students generally preferred instructor facilitation to guide their learning and because of the instructor's authority "to keep the discussion on track". However, peer facilitation was preferred when the participants wanted more ownership of the discussion or more experience of facilitation.

Kew 2015
Affective feedforward in online tutoring

"it was centred on affective needs, was frank and trusting, and was one within which feedforward was given, received and acted upon."

Chen, Chou and Cowan 2014, p705
Statements from online facilitators

Jolanda Morkel
CPUT
studio

Esther Gacicio
KICD
connection

Gerrit Wissing
Wits
voice, control
A professional development network

e/merge africa
Holding Space

Heart:
Be fully present, aware of what's happening in the whole gathering right now—physically, energetically, emotionally, and intellectually. Open and hold the psychological and spiritual space to provide a steady centre and container. Calmly maintain trust, safety, and focus.

From the groupworks cards at http://groupworksdeck.org/
Conclusion

Online facilitation has had a long run which isn't over yet ....

Connecting students to each other, to educators and to learning

Becoming crucial to the effectiveness of mainstream university educators
Facilitating Online Course in 2017

The final run of Facilitating Online in 2017 will be from 2 October – 24 November. Applications close on 13 September.

About the course

Facilitating Online provides a solid foundation for facilitating online events and courses. It is registered as a short course at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Facilitating Online was developed by the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) at UCT and is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York as part of its support for the e/merge Africa network. It is convened by Tony Carr and Nicola Pallitt and co-facilitated by facilitators from across Africa.

Recommendations by participants

“I learned many facilitation skills that I am now able to apply with my own students. I would recommend the course highly to anyone embarking on the online teaching and learning journey.”

Dr Judith McKenzie, Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Cape Town.
Teaching Resources

During the course of our work at CILT, we produce resources to facilitate and support teaching and learning at UCT. While these are not specifically produced for formal publication, they are often useful to others. They are shared in various formats in the following areas: Teaching & Learning Strategies; Engagement & Participation; Multimodal Ways of Teaching & Learning; Assessment; Enabling Teaching; Being an Online Scholar or Student; and The Curriculum.

Online and Blended Teaching

Teaching in online and blended environments: An overview guide for UCT lecturers

Questions for tech access

Student's guide to using online learning tools
3. PLAN INTERACTION

3.1 Check concepts
- Lessons: Ask a question tool on Vula
  - e.g. MCQ or short question. Can provide correct/model answer. Allows for grading.
- Polls on Vula
  - Allows students to see others' response. Responses are anonymous.
- Test & Quizzes on Vula
  - Can take more time to setup, but allows for online assessment.

3.2 Elicit questions
- Lessons: Comment tool on Vula
  - Students can comment below Lessons content.
- Q&A tool on Vula
  - Students can ask questions & anyone can respond. Anonymous option.
- Forums on Vula
  - Allows for grading, to encourage participation.
- Chatroom on Vula (or Whatsapp)
  - Organise session at set time for Q&A. Use different rooms for large classes.

3.3 Enable student content
- Lessons: Student Content tool on Vula
  - For individuals or groups content. Allows for grading, peer review & self-grade.
- Blogs on Vula
  - e.g. used as weekly self-reflection. Class can add comments.
- Wiki or shared Google Doc
  - Google docs allows for collaborative editing. Track changes (edits) of logged-in users.

NB: All students will need stable internet may need to guide students into understanding of what they need to do to complete their tasks.
Beyond Vula
Some advice for when it is wanted
Content is essential

Content isn’t enough
Know your students
Set your objectives
Set up the course network
Choose the right spaces and tools
Support students to achieve access
Test while the stakes are low
Frame your invitation
Show who you are
Stay connected
Show some empathy
Include student voices and perspectives
Hold the space
Ask generative questions
Be a coach
Make yourself available
Know your limits
Support peer learning
Set a heartbeat of regular updates for the course community
Keep the doors open
You are not alone
Your feedback

- What are your takeaways?
- Insights?
- Reflections?
- Questions?
- Anything that you want to do?
References and Bibliography


Group Pattern Language Project (n.d.) group works: *A Pattern Language for Bringing Life to Meetings and Other Gatherings.* Retrieved from http://groupworksdeck.org/


References and Bibliography


Contact details

Tony Carr
Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching
University of Cape Town

tony.carr@uct.ac.za
http://www.cilt.uct.ac.za
http://emergeafrica.net
@tony_emerge
@emergeafrica