

Engaging Online Students: Threaded Discussions (TDs) - Hit or Miss?

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HISTORY

1998 LMS* & VLE* →
Higher Ed

*Learning Management Systems & *Virtual Learning Environments

- Target:
Masters & Adult Learners
- Problem:
Lack of Engagement
- Solution:

Asynchronous TDs

Student/Instructor Interaction
Engagement & Metacognition
Replaces Class Discussion

Student Participation
Sense of Community
Student Satisfaction
Student Retention

2005 Online Ed → UG Ed

- Problem:
TDs Effectiveness ↓

UGs Complain:

Lack Dynamic Interactions
Lack Non-verbal Clues →
Misunderstandings &
Misinterpretations
No Sense of Community
Just Series of Messages

Instructors Complain:

Does NOT map to Class
Discussion
Too Much Time Spent
For Poor Results

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

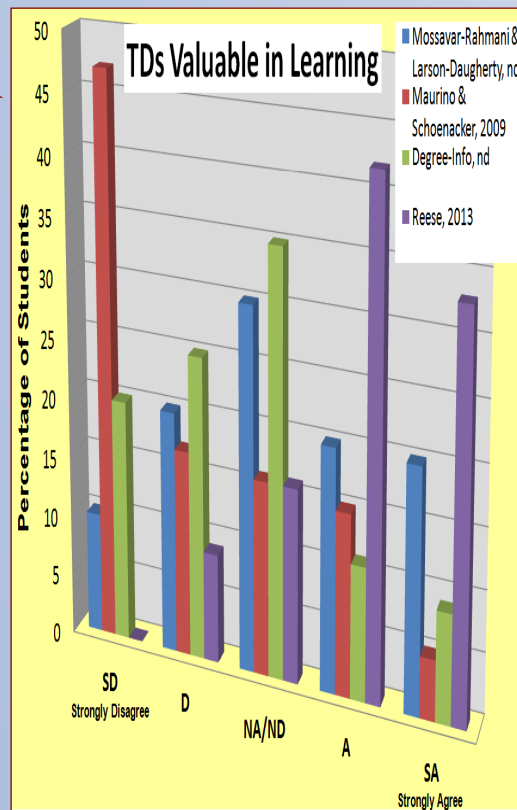
Research Agrees:

- When TDs “work” they fulfill earlier promises
- Effectiveness becoming more rare



COMPARISON:

4 Student Surveys:
Mixed Results



Differences in Survey Results

? Traditional College & University
vs. “Online Universities” ?

(Univ. of Phoenix; National Univ.)

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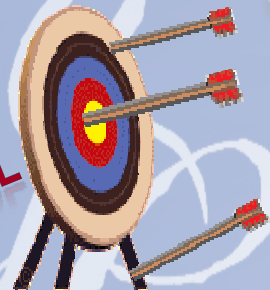
BEST PRACTICES

- Structure the activity
 - Provide clear guidelines for posting
 - Set Netiquette Guidelines
- Make the activity interesting
- Require participation
 - Assess/Grade/Evaluate posts
 - Peer grading
- Form Learning Teams/Groups
 - Keep them small (5-7)
- Don't settle for just opinions
 - Create an area for informal discussions.
- Require a hand-in assignment (deliverable).
- **BE INVOLVED**

NEW TECHNOLOGY

- Wikis
- Blogs
- Webinars

ANECDOTAL



All eventually have
same challenges:
ENGAGEMENT