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Online Discussion Forum as a Tool for Interactive Communication: The SpeakEasy

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ABSTRACT: Welcome to The SpeakEasy, your digital hub for engaging discussions, insightful conversations, and vibrant community interactions. Designed with a passion for fostering meaningful connections and sharing knowledge, The SpeakEasy is more than just a forum it's a dynamic platform where ideas come to life and perspectives flourish.

Whether you're a seasoned enthusiast, a curious learner, or an avid debater, The SpeakEasy provides a welcoming space for individuals from all walks of life. Dive into diverse topics spanning from technology and arts to politics and wellness, and connect with like-minded individuals who share your interests and values. Our user-friendly interface ensures seamless navigation, making it easy to explore discussions, contribute your thoughts, and discover new perspectives.

Engage in respectful debates, ask questions, or simply share your experiences every interaction adds value to our growing community. Join us at The SpeakEasy and become part of a community where dialogue thrives, ideas evolve, and connections flourish. Let's embark on a journey of discovery and inspiration together.

KEYWORDS: HTML, CSS, JavaScript, ReactJS, NodeJS, ExpressJs, Mongoose, BCrypt, Dotenv, JWT, MongoDB

I. INTRODUCTION

Online discussion forum takes teaching and learning beyond a confined learning environment like the classroom, bringing flexibility and convenience to teaching and learning. Students drive the learning process in online forums, and more emphasis is placed on knowledge sharing than lesson notes. states that the popularity of using online forums as a tool for discussion cannot be undermined because of the flexibility of responding to messages and posts at preferred times and being able to view comments as often as one likes.

An online discussion forum plays an important role in tertiary education. Apart from eliminating communication barriers that exist between students and their teachers, it also provides avenue for fruitful discussions among students and their peers. stated that the use of online discussion forum has emerged as a effective tools for engaging students outside the classroom, and it allows students to post messages to the discussion threads, interact and receive feedback from other students and instructor, and foster deeper understanding towards the subject under study. An online forum creates a motivational environment for students to freely express their views and ideas with more confidence than they do in a traditional classroom. Introverted (Shy) learners can easily improve their involvement in the teaching and learning process via online discussion forum, because they can feel more comfortable to share their opinions from any location without much pressure.

With ODF, threads of discussions can be accessed by members at their convenient time, and ideas can be better shared on how to solve a given problem or provide answers to posed questions. Online interactive forum promotes active learning and student's participation in inquiry process, providing learners with the opportunity to contribute to group activities and discussions. The use of online instructional tools provides unique opportunities for the instructor to engage students in various activities and offer a new dimension for interaction – active and higher-order ODF often leads to better in-class discussions, and students have a chance to engage with each other virtually, often having their thoughts and opinions validated, and more willing to share out loud more thoughtfully in class afterwards opined that students involved in ongoing conversations in a community of practice makes the learners feel the supportive presences of participating peers, mentors and experts, and this level of comfort stimulates learning satisfaction that will further encourage students to think independently and reflect on what is said during online discuss. suggested that in order to

enhance students' learning experience via online forums, it is imperative that the instructors play a pivotal role in monitoring the online discussions, facilitating enquiries and providing feedback to students promptly. stated that teachers play an essential role in facilitating discourse among students, and that such discourse can take place through the active participation of students in online discussion forums or through collaboration with other students during the learning process.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication and participation are two crucial determinants in the quality of teaching and learning (Durairaj & Umar, 2015). One of the drivers in the increasing utilisation of the internet for teaching and learning is the way text communications enable people to interact more deeply with live information (Kent, M 2013). Online education thus widens the ways in which adaptable, suitable and collaborative instructional techniques make it possible to share ideas, make inquiries and present individual discoveries as they happen, and at the convenience of the students (Taye, 2014). One element in computer-mediated communication has been the evolution of the online discussion forum, which is a web-based application widely used to bring together people with a shared interest, making it a useful tool for facilitating communication in large student classes (Biriya & Emmah, 2014). The benefit it provides is effective consultation and collaboration between instructors and students, and among the students themselves (Biriya & Emmah, 2014; Haris, Mahmud & Wong, 2014). Online discussion forums enable asynchronous communication that supports social interaction and teamwork without confining learners to set communication times in the way that online chats do (Alzahrani, 2017). The fact that students can participate in the forum whenever it suits them is a strong drawcard for those who think of signing up for an online module (DeNoyelles, Zydney & Chen, 2014). Haris et al. (2014:98) define asynchronous online communication as "a text-based human-to-human communication via computer networks that provides a platform for the participants to interact with one another to exchange ideas, insights and personal experiences."

According to Durairaj and Umar (2015), social and cognitive development is rooted in social interactions among participants in the learning context of the online discussion forum. These interactions facilitate the movement, exchange and joint creation of knowledge, and also the sharing of experiences in instructor-learner and learner-learner relationships (Tan, 2017).

III. RELATED WORK

Learning technologies have brought positive revolutions to the educational sector. There has been a groundswell of interest on how computers and the internet can best be harnessed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education at all levels and in both formal and non-formal settings. The increasing prevalent use of internet in schools and homes has resulted in asynchronous online discussions becoming an increasingly common means to facilitate dialogue between students and instructors as well as students and students beyond the boundaries of their physical classrooms. reported that among all internet users in the U.S in 2015, 15% read or post comments in discussion forums. Learners seem to be enthusiastic in using technological platforms due to its flexibility and convenience. The use of online discussion forum has mitigated the communication barriers that often exist between teachers and students in the traditional classroom pattern. Online instructional tools can remove some of the communication impediments associated with the face-to-face lectures providing a forum to address issues through argumentative and collaborative discourse.

IV. FUTURE WORK

The future work will focus on how Online Discussion Forum can be used as an instrument to enhance Inquiry-based learning, and inquiry-based teaching. We will also look at the influence of mobile technologies on E-learning.

V. CONCLUSION

Online discussion forum presents opportunities for interactive learning, inquiry-based learning, and student knowledge acquisition and creation. The Online discussion forum presented in this study proved very effective in interactive

learning and communication among students and their teachers. However, for online discussion forum to be more impactful, there is need for increased student and teacher participation to enhance greater productivity.

Given threlativeimpact of ODF, teachers have to devote more time to attend to student queries on the platform and also do more to facilitate or coach discussions and interactions on the forum.

Student participation in the forum can be increased if teachers can increase their presence and usage of the forum for class exercises such as assignment submissions, and attendance registering. Teacher's response should be timely and proactive to activate student interest in the forum. There is also need for proper coordination of the forum to ensure that only relevant posts are allowed to avoid abuses and frivolities that can bore or discourage member participation in the forum.

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