

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF
INQUIRY FOR EFL PROFESSIONALS IN AN
ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE DISCUSSION
BOARD

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With the capability of new Internet technology, use of online course management systems like Blackboard can facilitate the creation of international communities of professionals through computer-mediated communication (CMC). This study investigated what made an effective online learning environment for over 60 English teaching professionals from 29 different countries in North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia using the community of inquiry model by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) as its framework for analysis. In the community of inquiry model, successful online learning experiences take place at the intersection of teaching, social, and cognitive presence. The study used teaching presence indicators developed by Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001), the researcher's modified version of

social presence indicators by Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer (2001), and the practical inquiry model that operationalized cognitive presence by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2001). This qualitative study utilized a concurrent nested approach to compare two implementations of the same online teacher training course in 2004 and 2005. The comparison of teaching, social, and cognitive presence between one class in fall 2004 and two classes in fall 2005 focused on the use of three specific instructional strategies: word limits per message, starter-wrapper roles (Hara, Bonk, and Angeli, 2000), and instructor modeling.

Analysis revealed that using these instructional strategies to change teaching presence caused some increase in social and cognitive presence in one of the fall 2005 classes, but not in the other. Exceptions related to group cohesion through shared language, culture, and religion and obstacles to Internet access are discussed as possible explanations. In addition, this study examines the role of cultural inclusivity for building an effective community of inquiry among international professionals. Furthermore, it questions the importance of reaching higher phases of the practical inquiry model (Garrison et al., 2001) to build an effective community of inquiry among teachers for whom social bonds may be of greater importance. The results of this study support and extend Garrison et al.'s (2000) community of inquiry model through its application to an international online learning environment that brought together geographically distributed English teaching professionals.