2 Extended Guide to Discussion Forum (contributing to collective knowledge)

TASK

[Instructions example]: Read <the case> and respond with at least one post (40-50 words), choosing one of the discussion strategies from the list below. You might choose to respond either to the case directly, or to what somebody else has already posted.

RATIONALE

These communicative strategies will help us as a group to build a collective understanding of <the topic / theme>. It would be surprising in such a diverse group that everyone would have the same ideas about this case, so forum discussion provides the opportunity for all of us to see and appreciate the range of perspectives that each person brings. Building a collective understanding not only helps broaden our individual knowledge but assists others to develop their understandings as well. Here is a comment that might help to illustrate this, from an online student who was part of a PhD study[i]:

> "... some of the theory type things we were covering ... I just couldn't understand it, but ... I really do need to have it clarified – I'm not getting it from the book! ... And then it happened. One girl put up something and I thought '... it's clicked!' ... just from reading what she put there it just clicked - the way she had answered the questions just made it really clear"

Based on the rationale, the discussion communicative strategies that you can use are as follows:

COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES

- **Re-stating**: this is to rephrase, clarify or refine an idea which may also reflect your perspective, for example,

    - "My definition of literacy is to be able to communicate effectively" → "I think literacy is … an evolving system of communication …"

    - (clarifying) "Can you give an example?" "What do you mean by …?

- **Extending** on ideas: this adds some more information or a new perspective to what someone else has said (or even to what you yourself have previously said), for example,

    - **adding a new perspective**: "I agree with your reaction to *xxx* and I think that the issue is not only what you said, it is also to do with *yyy* "

    - **adding more information**: "It's surprising to see the range of technology that my children have access to" (Student 1) → "My class has two iPads, three desktops, three laptops" (Student 2) → "I think using IT in the classroom is definitely the way of the future" (Student 3)

- Presenting **alternatives**: this allows a broader discussion of an idea by proposing a different perspective, for example,

    - "I agree that the trend in technology is inevitable, however many schools in my country simply do not have access to this kind of technology"

    - "I agree with what you said…but another point of view might be …"

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[i] Delahunty, Janine Louise (2014) "Constructing knowledge, identity and community in asynchronous discussion forums: socio-semiotic perspectives in online learning". Doctor of Philosophy thesis, School of Education, University of Wollongong, http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4123