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4.1.   Prelude

To be "matter of fact" about the world is to blunder into fantasy---and dull fantasy at that, as the real world is strange and wonderful (Robert A. Heinlein).

4.2.   Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of the various data collection instuments, namely field notes in the form of observation sheets and roles matrix; transcripts of the focus group interview, face-to-face interview with the online facilitator and sound files from learners; content analysis of asynchronous *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* messages and synchronous *Yahoo Messenger* conversations; formal test responses from the learners and the self-administered questionnaire completed by the online facilitator. All the data are attached as Annexures. Rich and thick descriptions have been provided pertaining to the online facilitator and the virtual environment, which are represented in grey-shaded Exhibit boxes. There are grammatical errors in the data provided in the exhibits. No data cleaning processes were used because authenticity was important. The purpose of the text messages was not to check for spelling and grammar mistakes, but to encourage participation, share experiences and provide feedback. At times certain data segments will be used to illustrate more than one point, as a data segment may contain elements of several themes. To honour learner confidentiality, this [line] _____ used in an exhibit replaces a specific learner's name. Codes have been designed for the data pool. In each exhibit, a code will be provided to indicate from where the data was selected.

The following codes were used:

[FtoF] = Face-to-face interview

[FG] = Focus group interview

[WCT] = *WebCT* asynchronous communication tool

[YG] = *Yahoo Groups* asynchronous communication tool

[YM] = *Yahoo Messenger* synchronous communication tool

[FTR] = Formal test responses

[Q] = Self-administered questionnaire

[SF] = Sound file

[PR] = Peer review

In this crystallization process (Richardson, 1995), the same story has been told through data gathered from different data sources.

The Afrikaans wording used in the exhibits is retained for the purpose of those readers who understand this language. This will allow the readers of the Afrikaans text to recognise the different nuances that might have been lost in a translation, in spite of the translator endeavouring to capture these nuances.

4.3.   How did the facilitator adjust to the online environment?

In this section 40 exhibits have been selected from the raw data to illustrate what the virtual environment looked like as well as to describe the facilitator's adjustment in terms of the facilitation process.

The online facilitator, in her face-to-face interview on 20 May 2003, specifically stated that a facilitator needed to think in a different way as is revealed in Exhibit 4.1.

Exhibit 4.1 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on 'thinking differently'
for the online environment

```
A facilitator cannot adopt a classroom style of teaching in
the online environment and think that it will be successful,
because the facilitator will fail miserably!  Consider what
is written in theory and implement the suggestions, because
it does work.  The adjustment to the online environment
boils down to good planning.  You cannot just think up an
assignment.  You have to think:  how is the student reading
this, going to experience it?  How will s/he interpret it
and immediately you have to build in scaffolding at
different places.  The difficult part is:  yes, it is
different to what one is accustomed to.  So, a person has to
think laterally!  You have to think:  this is what I would
have done in class, how on earth am I going to explain this
to the guys?  So, you explain in words, but you immediately
grasp that it is not enough.  Then you make screen dumps and
upload them (to the site),
```

On 18 July 2002 the online facilitator and learners met during a face-to-face contact session. During this session, the online facilitator informed the group what *CyberSurfiver* was all about and divided the learners into various groups. Learners had to perform a kinaesthetic exercise, as is described in Exhibit 4.2, to position themselves on a continuum according to their ability to utilise the Internet.

Exhibit 4.2 [FtoF]:   A description of the kinaesthetic exercise

```
Ons het 'n fisiese oefening gedoen om hulle in die groepe in
te deel.  Ek het hulle in 'n lang ry laat staan, van heel
Internetvaardig en capable, tot totaal-en-al 'n leek wat die
Internet aanbetref het.  En daar was soos 'n skuiflyn.  Jy
moes jouself maar posisioneer waar jy pas.  En dan't ek
hulle getel:  een, twee, drie, vier, so af, een, twee, drie,
vier; en dan het ons die ses groepe gevorm – al die een's
bymekaar, en al die twee's bymekaar.  Sodat elke groep
iemand het wat 'n totale leek is, en iemand wat vaardig is,
sodat daar 'n goeie balans was.  En dan moes hulle bymekaar
gaan staan.  Gedurende die kinetiese oefening hulle het
rondbeweeg en in groepies gestaan, en daar was excitement
van . oe!, ons moet nou 'n naam uitdink, en 'n motto
[Translation:  We did a physical exercise to group the
learners.  I asked the learners to place themselves on a
continuum representing strong Internet capabilities to the
totally inexperienced.  Then I counted the learners starting
from one, two, three, four, and repeating the count – one,
two, three, four, forming six groups.  All the number 1's
together, all the number 2's together etc so that every
group contained one capable and one inexperienced person to
give a balance.  Then the groups had to stand together.
During this kinaesthetic exercise the groups moved about
quite excitedly, trying to decide on a name and a motto
```

The online facilitator then gave each learner a number from one to four, one being 'Internet literate' and four being an 'ignoramus' as far as the Internet is concerned. In the

spirit of *Survivor*, the learners were grouped into 'tribes'. At the end of the evening, the 24 tribal members (learners) were divided into four tribes, each consisting of six learners with a fair distribution of computer and web literacy.

The forming of these tribes had a dual purpose. Firstly, the online facilitator created online communities to ensure social interaction and to create a sense of community between the learners and the content, the learners and the online facilitator and the learners with each other (Dillenberg & Schneider, 1995; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Barclay, 2001; Moore, 1989). Secondly, a powerful form of interaction is group activities (Kaplan, 2002). In the Introduction to the course, the online facilitator specifically stated that '*CyberSurfiver* is all about teamwork and survival as is clearly depicted in Exhibit 4.3.

**Exhibit 4.3 [YG]:**   Extract from the *CyberSurfiver* Introduction

```
Let your team down and suffer the dire consequences …'
```

During the contact session, the online facilitator gave the learners an introductory speech, which included information on assignments, assessment criteria, the Web as a resource, the Web as a communication tool, collaboration exercises, and the first assignment, which was to create a name and slogan for each tribe. It was made clear that from that point onwards, all communication would take place online.

As was stated in Chapter 2, teaching an online course is very different from teaching a traditional course. The online facilitator made the following adjustments in the online environment in order to make the online teaching/learning experience a positive one.

4.3.1. *Introducing the online environment*

CyberSurfiver used a blend of strategies in terms of synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication (Spector & Anderson, 2000). The online facilitator deliberately pre-selected certain web-based communication tools such as *Yahoo Groups*, *WebCT* and *Yahoo Messenger* to provide the tribe members with a wide range of experiences regarding synchronous and asynchronous communication. Figures 4.1 to 4.4 provide a graphical representation of these communication tools that the online facilitator selected for this online environment. Keeping with the 24 hours a day, seven days a week availability of the Internet, this module was presented in asynchronous mode because some of the learners had access to their networked computers from home, whilst others only connected from their workplace.

4.3.2. *Yahoo Groups*

Figure 4.1:   *Yahoo Groups*
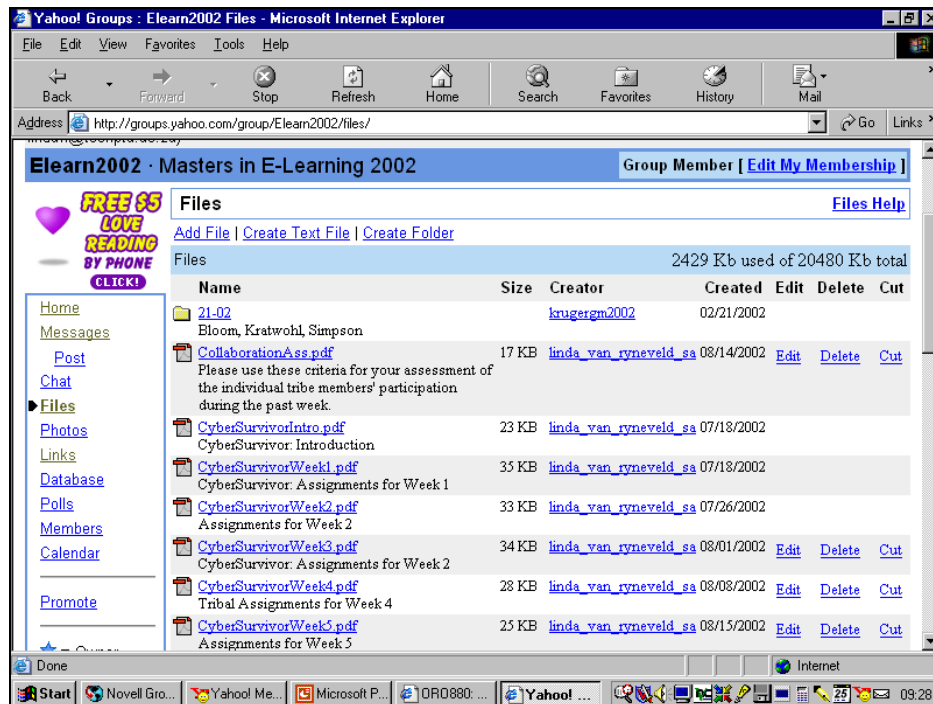
Yahoo Groups is a free asynchronous communication tool, consisting of a bulletin board, a discussion forum and e-mail messages.

The learners had to obtain a *Yahoo* ID and create a password to access this application.

Figure 4.2:   *Yahoo* ID

Yahoo Groups was the formal medium of communication and during Week 1, *Yahoo Groups* was the only communication tool available to the learners. This communication tool follows a one-to-many approach, involving the online facilitator or any learner posting a message and responses from the online facilitator and learners being posted at a later stage.

This asynchronous communication tool contained the course introduction and all assignments for the six-week period under the "Files" section. Tribal members had to

access the instructions for the weekly assignments from here. Each week marked a number of collaborative/tribal and individual assignments that the learners had to submit electronically.

On a weekly basis, the online facilitator gave clear instructions which assignments and interactive sessions had to take place on *Yahoo Groups*, as is evident in Exhibit 4.4.

Exhibit 4.4 [YG]:   Extracts from the Assignments for this week

```
Post a message to the Bulletin Board stating which tool you
intend to report on, no later than Sunday, 21 July 2002.

Post the address of your website to Yahoo Groups before
05:30 on Thursday, 25 July 2002.  Remember to give open
access to all the members in the class as they will be
evaluating your site.

Evaluate the quality of the other tribes' work and give them
a mark out of 25.  Watch your Elearn 2002 Yahoo Groups for
the e-mail containing the relevant URL.
```

During the latter part of Week 4, the online facilitator informed the learners that a different asynchronous communication tool was going to be used. In Exhibit 4.5 it is clearly indicated that the communication channel was going to change to *WebCT* and the online facilitator provided an explanation for the change.

Exhibit 4.5 [YG]:   Changing the communication channels

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Wed Aug 14, 2002 6:13 pm
Subject: Please READ! Communication Channel
Hi everyone

Just a couple of important notes for your attention.
Please read all the following e-mails carefully.

Communication Channels:
Even though we may still use ELearn 2002 Yahoo Groups for
general questions and comments, I would like to suggest that
we move our discussions to WebCT for the latter part of this
module.

This is simply because I would like you to experience the
difference in the two mediums (one a Freebie and the other
one a LMS available at a cost). I would advise you to check
both of these communication channels on a regular basis.
```

There was pedagogical value (Chickering & Gamson, 1991) in using an asynchronous communication tool because learners shared their knowledge of 'real-life issues' and obtained answers to their questions. In this environment learning was shared.

The advantage of using this asynchronous communication tool was that it allowed the team members more time to reflect on a topic at hand before sending or posting a

message. However, at times, the online facilitator needed to force the discussion as is
reflected in Exhibit 4.6.

Exhibit 4.6 [WCT]:   The online facilitator, asking for participation

```
Subject Individual Assignment 8
Message no 4  Posted by Linda  Mon Aug 12 21:14
Could I just say this (so that you can get going!):
The idea with Assignment 8 is for you to have and ACTIVE
discussion about the live InterWise session (or about
realtime synchronous audio-enabled sessions).

Please don't wait for the others to post their messages
first so you could inprove on them!  Anyway, if you allow
them to go first everything mayhave been said by the time
you get round to it.

This assignment is the equivalent of a teacher asking pupils
to gather in groups and to discuss something.  The only
difference is that you are all online and doing your taliing
out of sync.

Please also note that you are not limited to one or two
postings only!  Post your comments, then rethink them and
change your mind (if you need to), criticize what someone
else said, differ or agree with one another, whatever … Just
Do It!

One last desperate attempt from my side to get you going:

There will be a reward for the first posting related to
Assignment 8!
```

In asynchronous written conversations learners have time to read others' contributions
carefully and to think about the wording and substance of their own response (Carusi,
2001). Asynchronous conversations allowed for more substantial, better thought-out and
longer responses. This is evident in Exhibit 4.7. Carusi (2001) refers to this as a long
conversation 'turn'.

Exhibit 4.7 [WCT]:   A learner's long conversation 'turn'

```
Subject Interwise Impressions
Firstly, I must say that all things considered, I think the
sessions wnet very well, and I enjoyed it immensely.  While
this sort of technology has been available for some time
now, one does not tend to use it unless there is a need.
Having to participate in the session forced us to learn to
sue the technology and to bring it into our frames of
reference.

After logging in to InterWise to test the system for the
first time, I was amazed by the technology!  Being able to
hear the instructor's voice, have him take over my computer
to adjust some settings was actually almost better than
having the instructor lean over my shoulder!

I cam across some literature on the Internet that claims tht
Live Oline Learning surpasses even the interactivity of
traditional classromm models,  This, I thought would be why
one used a tool like Interwise!
```

Exhibit 4.7 [WCT]:   A learner's long conversation 'turn'

I felt that all three presenters were well prepared.
Clearly, this being the first time any of us had worked in
this new medium, we were unsure of what to expect. I did
feel that one failing was in the lack of interactivity. For
this reason, I deliberately chose simple subject matter. My
objective was to try and get some interactive things going.
I feel that if the instructor is just oing to read through a
PowerPoint slide show, we might as well cut a CD and mail it
to all learners … not being critical here … it was the frist
time any of us had experimented with this medium … again the
purpose of the session was process aqnd not product (I think
… Linda???)… eat your hearts out all your OBE'ers and
Constructivists!!

The mian thing the session did, was to get me thinking.
When, how and why I would advise that online learning be
used instead of other methods? What does one need to
consider before recommending online learning as the
solution? I belive that there may be some overlap between
the rest of this post and my (yet to be written) Key Factors
posting, however these are the ideas I came up with, after
some thought and some googling:

Synchronous sessions need to be used when we need
interactivity, when learning and feedback need to happen
together. I found some literature to support points made
during the session about native language. Litarature
suggests that interactive sessios are best conducted in the
native language of the participants, otherwise the activity
tends to be dominated by native language users (which was to
some extent true in our case). A real constraint mentioned
in the literature is also the difficulty of scheduling
sessions. This to was borne out in our session by the fact
that not all members could be present at the arranged time,
or could be rpesent for the entire session. Also menmtioned
(in the literature) is the fact that learner concentration
decreases (as is the case in the conventional classroom)
with time. I noticed also, that this was the case during
our session.

On the technical side, the session went well … with some
exceptions, _____ had no microphjone, _____'s volume was too
low, _____ could not speak at all, because her connection
was to slow. A few others were unable to get things set up
at all. I guess if one were doing sessions, regularly, such
technical problems could be sorted out. In South Africa,
bandwidth will be a problem for some time yet.

Communiction during the session was pretty good. It was
just about as good as speaking face-to-face, this I would
say was something that stood out for me. It was also as if,
because fo the medium, people tried to express their ideas
more consisely and even their enunciation of words seemed
more measured htan in used conversation. Someone did
mention that it was rather a pain to have to put up your
hand to wait to speak, but as was mentioned this was the
InterWise I-Class setup and the I-conference worked
differently. I guess this works rpetty much the same as in
a normal classroom!
And that's it, my summary!

A disadvantage of the asynchronous communication tool could be that too much information kept pouring in as each learner answered to the original posting. Exhibit 4.8 clearly substantiated this disadvantage.
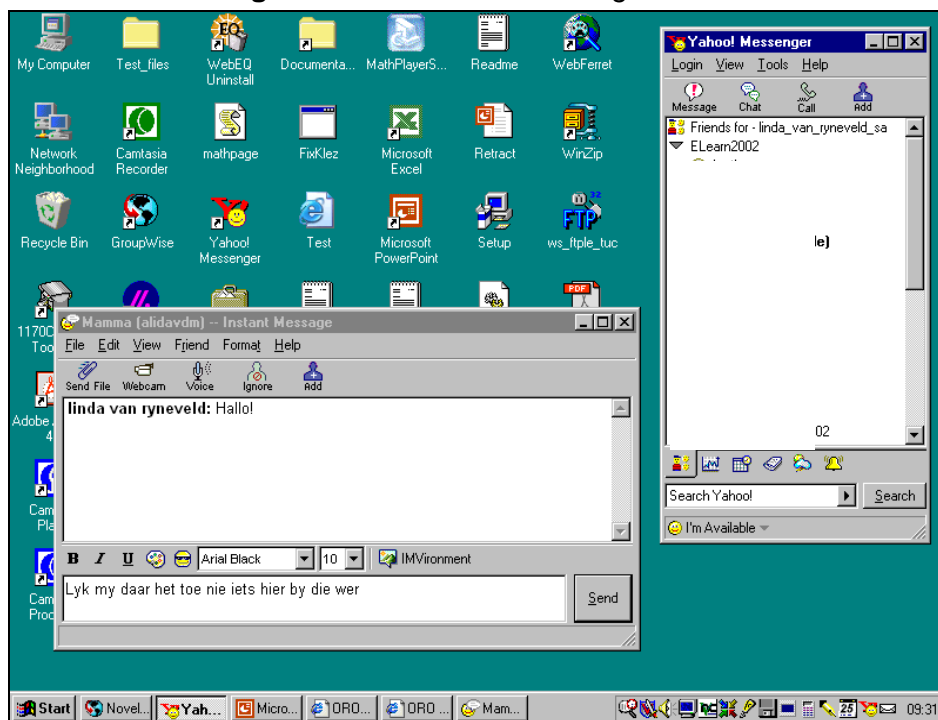
Exhibit 4.8 [SF]:   A disadvantage of asynchronous communication

```
At times I actually felt quite claustrophobic with all the
e-mails coming in and not having enough time to read through
and appreciate them all.
```

4.3.3. *Yahoo Messenger*

Figure 4.3 is a screen print of *Yahoo Messenger*, the synchronous communication tool.

Figure 4.3:   *Yahoo Messenger*

During Week 2 the learners had to download two synchronous communication tools as part of their tribal assignment. The synchronous communication tools were *Yahoo Messenger* and *NetMeeting*. After the comparative exercise was done, the learners continued using *Yahoo Messenger* as an informal communication tool between the various team members and the online facilitator.

The online facilitator indicated to the learners, as is evident in Exhibit 4.9, that this tool was not the official meeting place.

Exhibit 4.9 [YG]:   Using the official communication channels

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Wed Aug 14, 2002 6:13 pm
Subject: Please READ! Communication Channel
Hi everyone

You may still use Yahoo Messenger in the background with
your tribal mates and other friends, however this will not
be our official meeting ground.
```

There was pedagogical value (Chickering & Gamson, 1991) in using a synchronous communication tool because learners experienced real communication and interaction.

The advantage of using this synchronous communication tool was that it allowed the team members the opportunity of getting to know each other and to informally chat to each other.

In synchronous written conversations there is pressure to respond quickly, in fact, almost as quickly as in face-to-face conversations. Good chat participation may be impeded by a lack of fast and accurate typing skills. Most chat facilities have a limit as to how many characters they allow in each message; who talks when and the real time constraints make chat better for quick banter, than for discussing issues that require some depth (Carusi, 2001). A learner reflected in Exhibit 4.10 that it was important to adhere to rules during synchronous communication, although it could be frustrating at times …

Exhibit 4.10 [WCT]: A learner's reflections on synchronous
                         communication rules

```
It is important that each of the participants should know
what is expected of them.  The 'how part' was to pick up and
although it was a frustration to put your hand up the
process made sense.  Just like in a classroom certain rules
need to be obeyed.
```

Synchronous conversations often have a chaotic feel to them (Carusi, 2001). The responses do not flow as they would in a normal conversation, in particular if there are many participants. There is much more potential for synchronous conversations to be useful on a one-to-one basis, particularly in a structured conversation. The online facilitator and the team members had several one-on-one synchronous communication sessions.

4.3.4. *WebCT*

Figure 4.4 provides a screen print of *WebCT*, the second asynchronous communication tool.

Figure 4.4:   *WebCT*
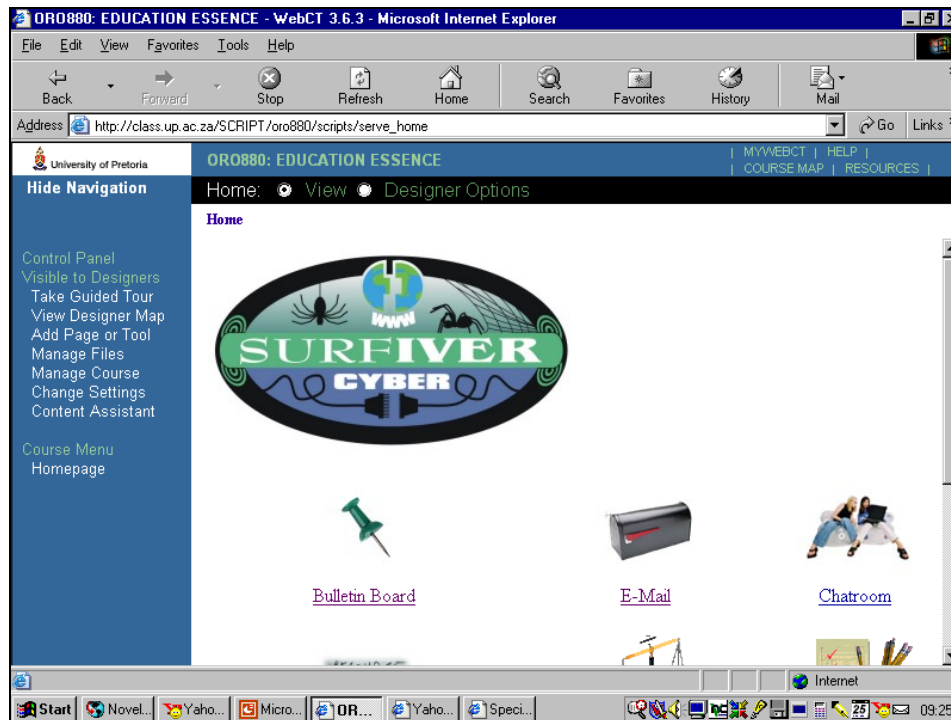
During Week 4 the learners were advised that a different **asynchronous** communication tool would now be used as was indicated in Exhibit 4.5. The online facilitator provided the learners with the web address, which each learner had to log into and create a password for himself/herself.

WebCT was the informal communication tool and served as a place of reflection, critical thinking and commenting on other team member's postings as was described in the online facilitator's posting in Exhibit 4.11.

Exhibit 4.11 [WCT]: The online facilitator's welcome message

```
Subject Welcome to WebCT!
Message no 1  Posted by Linda  Fri Jul 26 08:55
Hi there everyone
This is WebCT's bulletin board, an asynchronous
communication tool.  When you need to discuss things with
your group in privacy, you may use the bulletin board that
was specifically created for this purpose.

Note that when you compose your message you need to change
the topic at the top of the screen from Main to Tribe (X).
```

Exhibit 4.12 lists examples of the several messages that the learners had to post to this
Bulletin Board.

Exhibit 4.12 [WCT]: Extracts from assignments to be posted to *WebCT*

```
Share your impressions of the synchronous InterWise session.

If you were unable to attend the InterWise session, post
your reasons for missing this session.

Reply to at least one other 'Impressions' posting.

Comment on Key Factors to consider when planning and
presenting a synchronous session. Reply to at least one
other 'Key Factor' posting.

Set criteria for evaluating Collaborative Behaviour and
Tribal Assignment 3 - Web-based games/learning activities.

Set criteria for evaluating Tribal Assignment 4 - A
clickable Concept Map of all the elements and notions
related to teaching and learning via the Internet.
```

On 28 August 2002, the learners wrote the three-hour online test on this application.

4.3.5. *The virtual island*

The specific outcome for *CyberSurfiver* was that the learners had to apply their knowledge
about the Internet. The online facilitator created a web space for the learners as is
graphically presented in Figure 4.5. This web space served as the 'virtual' island. On a
weekly basis, the online facilitator informed the learners what needed to be posted to the
virtual island as is described in Exhibit 4.13.

Exhibit 4.13 [YG]:   Extract from an assignment to be posted to the
                          virtual island

```
The main task this week is for you to FTP your site to the
virtual classroom/island on Hagar.  The idea is for you to
get acquainted with the concept of 'ftp-ing' stuff over the
Internet.  See Johannes's Elearn2000 e-mail in this regard.
Have your personal virtual island up and running by 17:30
Wednesday, 31 July 2002.
```

Figure 4.5:   The virtual island

4.3.6. *The voting station*

The objective of *CyberSurfiver* was that members got voted off on a weekly basis, until only one final survivor remained. At the end of each week's activities, the tribes had to vote off one member of their team, based on a number of pre-set criteria. The 'outcast' then joined other evicted tribal members (learners) in a separate Tribe 5.   This particular tribe had to complete all the assignments as they were given to the tribal members still in the game, but no one from Tribe 5 was eligible to win the final prize.

Working in the online environment meant that voting had to happen online. For this exercise, a web-based voting station was created with PHP (recursive acronym for Hypertext Preprocessor), a widely used open source server-side general purpose scripting language that is especially suited for Web development and that is embedded into HTML (PHP, 2003). Figures 4.6 to 4.8 provide a graphical representation of the voting station.

Figure 4.6:   Access to the voting station
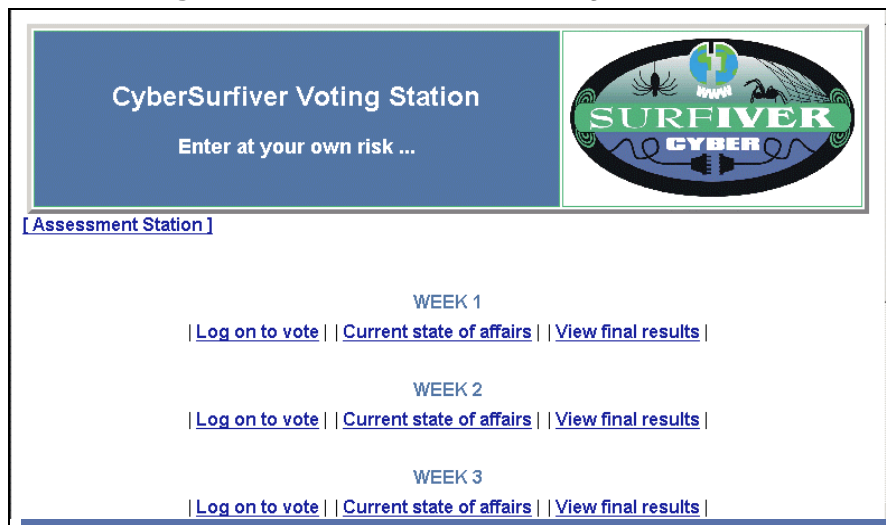
Each tribal member could only access the voting station with a username and password and cast one vote for a particular tribal member that s/he thought needed to leave the tribe. A tribal member could not vote for himself/herself.

Figure 4.7:   Voting in progress
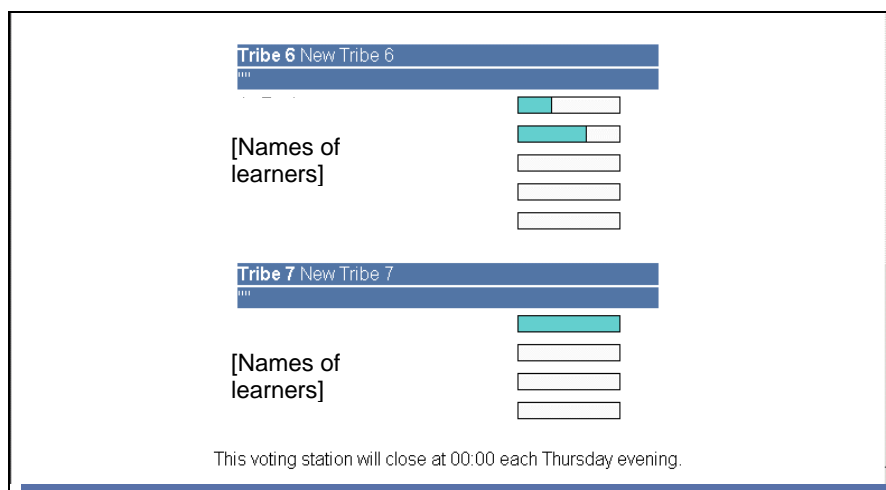
The voting station closed on a Thursday evening at midnight.

Figure 4.8: The 'outcast' is removed

The 'outcast' was automatically transferred to Tribe 5.

4.3.7. *Facilitator adjustments*

Merely providing the learners with these various pieces of online technology might just enhance their feeling of isolation and in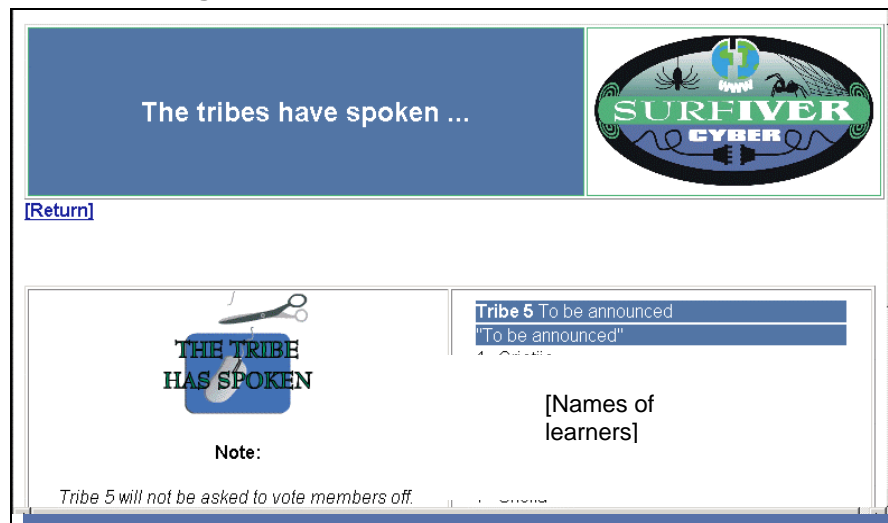competence (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). However, the important link between the learners and the online technology was the online facilitator who transformed the lonely online environment to a knowledge-rich and supportive community of practice. The fact that the four tribes had to create a name and a slogan for themselves, immediately encouraged interaction with the other group members in a fun and creative way. In Exhibit 4.14 the online facilitator confirmed the tribes and indicated the tribal names and slogans.

Exhibit 4.14 [YG]: The four *CyberSurfiver* tribes

```
Just to confirm the tribes with you guys.
Tribe 1: Uno
Slogan: Uno, we are number 1!
Players: [Six names listed]
Tribe 2: e-Learn-a-long
Slogan: To be announced (Please let me know asap)
Players: [Six names listed]
Tribe 3: e-Go
Slogan: e-Go, We Go, All Go!
Players: [Six names listed]
Tribe 4: Virtual-Eve
Slogan: Strike a woman, strike a rock
Players: [Six names listed]
Could someone in Tribe 4 please let _____ know that he is
with you? Kindly ask him to take part in this week's
programme as far as possible.

Tribe 5: To be seen ...
Good luck to you all! L
```

The online facilitator, as person, also had to make adjustments in the online environment. The traditional guidelines on facilitation took on a 'new look' when applied to the online environment. Keeping Rogers's (1969:164-166) ten Guidelines for Facilitation in mind, the online facilitator is evaluated in terms of her role in the online environment:

1. **The facilitator was largely responsible for setting the initial mood/climate of the program.** During the face-to-face contact session the facilitator introduced herself and set the scene for the course. She also posted the course introduction to *Yahoo Groups*. The introduction contextualised the online module in terms of the specific outcome, assessment criteria and content to be covered. The online facilitator emphasised the importance of self-study and exploration in terms of tribal tasks and individual tasks. The module was based on constructivist learning (Dick, 1991); thus requiring active participation and critical thinking of all learners. The online facilitator stressed the fact that there would be a mark awarded for collaborative behaviour and that interaction was imperative, starting with the creation of web pages, conducting peer evaluations to voting off a tribe member as is emphasised in Exhibit 4.15.

   Exhibit 4.15 [YG]:   Extract from *CyberSurfiver* Introduction

   ```
   Welcome to CyberSurfiver, the game where your vote counts!
   ```

2. **The facilitator helped to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals in the class as well as the more general purposes of the group.** The learners had to experience eLearning in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of the online module was to search the Internet for appropriate tools, services and applications. Collaboratively, play around and experience these tools to critically evaluate their worth in an educational setting. Presentations had to be performed in different ways.

   The online facilitator clearly indicated the tribal assignments, individual assignments, and individual assignments with tribal assistance and collaborative behaviour.

3. **The facilitator relied upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes that had meaning to him/her as the motivational force behind significant learning.** Exhibit 4.16 is an extract form the individual assignment 2, where each learner had to create his/her own web page and add answers to two questions.

> **Exhibit 4.16 [YG]:**　Your motivational force, extracted from
> 　　　　　　　　　　*CyberSurfiver* Introduction

```
What are your expectations in terms of the module?
What is your current level of comfort with the Internet?
```

In this way the online facilitator acquired information on each learner.

4. **The facilitator endeavoured to organise and make easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning.** The learners were fortunate in this regard, as they had various search engines available to assist them in their endeavours. However, the online facilitator designed this online course to ensure that the learners experienced the Internet and eLearning from many possible angles.

Each week the online facilitator clearly described the specific learning outcomes according to Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain (Bloom, Mesia & Krathwohl, 1964). The particular action verb was highlighted by means of a bold typeface as is highlighted in Exhibit 4.17.

> **Exhibit 4.17 [YG]:**　Learning outcomes extracted from
> 　　　　　　　　　　　Assignment for the week

```
Design a website in one of these free applications.
Post the address of your website to Yahoo Groups.
Vote on the different tribal member's level of
participation.
Select one of the free resource and/or communication tools.
Experiment with the various functionalities of the tool.
Critically evaluate the educational value of the
tool/service/product.
Write a report/review on the tool's usefulness in an
educational setting.
Upload the report to your tribal website.
Test your system's compatibility with the technical staff
prior to the session.
Arrange to meet one another online at a convenient time.
Evaluate the quality of the other tribes' work and give them
a mark out of 25.
Add the other 'Survivors' in your current tribe to your list
of friends.
```

Exhibit 4.17 [YG]:   Learning outcomes extracted from
Assignment for the week

```
Draw up a table comparing the educational value of the
functionalities.

Add this concept map to your tribal website.

Add a horizontal bar with scrolling text.

Write a paragraph about the use of special techniques such
as scrolling.

Prepare for the online test.
```

It is apparent from the examples that the learners were definitely at the centre of the learning experience – they were actively involved in gathering information and also applying it in the eLearning environment. The learners were kept involved in the learning process in terms of the following actions (Williams *et al.* 1999; Moore, 1989; Palloff & Pratt, 1999):

▪ Talking by utilising the synchronous communication tool.

▪ Writing by utilising the asynchronous communication tool and compiling reports.

▪ Watching by evaluating the other tribal sites.

▪ Thinking by reflecting on past experiences and compiling criteria to be assessed against.

▪ Doing by creating and building various components into the individual and tribal website.

In Exhibit 4.18 a learner reflected on the learner-centredness of the first week's assignments.

Exhibit 4.18 [SF]:   A learner reflecting on his learning

```
I am sure we will all agree that we have experienced true
constructivist learning the past week.  It was a big shock
for a behaviourist like me, but I must say that I can see
the positive influence of constructivist learning.  The fact
that your own knowledge is constructed with very little
guidance makes sure that you really know what you are
working with at the end.
```

If specific Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) were important in terms of reaching a learning objective, the online facilitator clearly indicated these links in the assignment for the week as is listed in Exhibit 4.19.

Exhibit 4.19 [YG]:   Extracts from important URLs

```
Download the following two applications to your computer:
http://messenger.yahoo.com/messenger/download/dinstructions.html
http://www.microsoft.com/windows/netmeeing/

FTP your site to the virtual island on Hagar.  See
Johannes's Elearn2002 e-mail in this regard.

Check out the animated gifs of previous groups for
inspiration (http://hagar.up.ac.za/rbo/1999/classroom.html.

You will be getting e-mail in this regard from Zeldie van
Vuuren from CampusWise.  Follow her instructions to the
letter.

Make use of the free 30-day trial period provided by QUIA
http://www.quia.com/web/index.html or any similar web-based
tool for this assignment.

You may want to use this site http://www.jigzone.com or
something similar.

For an example – http://mailbox.co.za/index.pwm.
```

5. **The facilitator regarded herself as a flexible resource to be utilised by the group.**
   The course took place over six weeks, with a set start date, usually on a Thursday morning and an end date, the following Wednesday evening at midnight. The online facilitator was flexible in terms of time frames, because certain learners only worked from their office computers, whilst other learners worked from home, after hours, on their personal computers. The online facilitator was also more flexible with regard to individual assignments, but tribal assignments had to be completed on the indicated time as is explained in Exhibit 4.20. This extract was taken from a message in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.20 [YG]:   Completion of Individual and Tribal assignments

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Thu Aug 8, 2002 3:57 pm

I am not strict with the deadlines for the individual
assignments as I understand that there could be reasons why
people aren't ready in time (computers packing up and other
personal reasons).
The tribal assignments though, need to be done in
collaboration with other people and need a measure of
synchronicity.  The deadlines for these are therefore
clearly indicated (usually 17:30 on a Wednesday). The moment
Voting and Peer assessment starts, these assignments should
be in place. As we work on a tight schedule we need to stick
to those times. I also need to allow people who only have
access from home to do the assessments at night and for
those who access from work to be able to still do so the
next morning.
```

The online facilitator was not in favour of giving extensions for tribal assignments. However, she did try to accommodate the learners in another way as is described in Exhibit 4.21. This scenario clearly indicated flexibility on the part of the online facilitator.

Exhibit 4.21 [WCT]: Flexibility on the side of the online facilitator

```
Subject Tribal Assignemnt:  Week 5
Message no 76  Posted by Linda Tue Aug 20 22:53
Hi everyone
I know that this week was hectic and that the work load was
heavy (as usual ;-).  However, next week has its own set of
assignments and if we extend this week's deadline, we may
run into trouble then whilst trying to fit in everything
that still needs to be done.

So, in order to accommodate those of you feeling the
pressure of time, I am willing to make the following
adjustment:

Instead of giving you the opportunity to peer-assess your
rival tribes (which in itself is a learning experience of
magnitude), I will handle the marking myself this time
round.

How is this beneficial to those asking for extention?  I
will not get round to marking these tribal assignments until
next week and as such you will still be able to add 'stuff'
to your map until then.

This is, however, not an official extention.  I would still
like the majority of you to finalise your work on the map by
tomorrow evening, as I need you to focus on the assignments
for week 6.
Hope this helps!  eGreetings L
```

The online facilitator took cognisance of asynchronous time lines when providing dead lines for the learners as is stipulated in Exhibit 4.22.

Exhibit 4.22 [YG]:   Time line considerations, extracted from
Assignments for the week

```
Post the address of your website to Yahoo Groups before
17:30 on Thursday, 25 July 2002.

To avoid duplication, you must post a message to the
bulletin board stating which tool you intend to report on,
no later than Sunday, 21 July 2002.

Add this table to your tribal website and be sure to have
the latest version of this site ready by 17:30 on Wednesday,
31 July 2002.

Have your personal virtual island up and running by 05:30
Wednesday, 31 July 2002.

Due date:  17:30, Wednesday, 7 August 2002.  Mail these
slide shows to _____ (CampusWise) by Tuesday 17:30 at the
latest so that she can upload them to the system prior to
our contact session.

Add these links to these activities to your tribal page.
```

Exhibit 4.22 [YG]:   Time line considerations, extracted from
                           Assignments for the week

```
Deadline is 17:30 Wednesday, 14 August 2002.

Post your criteria to the WebCT bulletin board by Tuesday,
13 August 2002.

On Wednesday, 28 August 2002, any time that suits you, you
need to go to WebCT and write a formal test on what you have
learnt so far in this module.  The duration of the test is
about 3 hours.  This test will be available on Wednesday as
from 00:00 till 23:59.
```

6. **In responding to expressions in the group, the facilitator accepted both the intellectual content and the emotionalised attitudes, endeavouring to give each aspect the appropriate degree of emphasis, which it had for the individual or the group.** The online facilitator created an informal and relaxed atmosphere for the learners where each learner knew that s/he could talk as freely as possible on any topic, be it the course work (intellectual content) or how they felt about group dynamics and their various concerns (emotional attitudes). The extracts in Exhibits 4.23 to 4.26 reflect the online facilitator's responses to several intellectual and emotional messages, taken from *Yahoo Groups*, *Yahoo Messenger* and *WebCT*. In each exchange the online facilitator answered the learner in a professional and caring manner, never losing her cool or showing any irritability. The online facilitator definitely took cognisance of the learners' concerns, frustrations and comments.

Exhibit 4.23 reveals the online facilitator's responses to intellectual content regarding the *Yahoo Groups* confusion; queries on individual and group assignments; a technical problem and a frustrated learner seeking assistance!

Exhibit 4.23: The online facilitator's responses to intellectual content

```
Yahoo Groups e-mail and website confusion [YG]:
>Your e-mail message on my screen does not have a frame on
>the left side, never mind a link.  Furthermore I cannot
>access E-Learn2002 from my present Yahoo ID!
Online facilitator:  I was obviously in Yahoo Groups when I
replied (late last night!) and completely forgot that most
of you would probably receive my message as an e-mail.
Apologies!  However, you need to ask Johannes to link your
ID to the course asap!
Information on assignments [YG]:
>Linda did you post us an update of the (rest) of the
>assignments??
Online facilitator:  Not yet, I will put them up tomorrow
once all the other assignments are in (the cut-off time is
12:00). I think it is fair to give all the tribes the same
amount of time.
Query on individual assignment 2 [YG]:
>What must we do with the URL of our own web site
>(Individual Assignment 2)?
Online facilitator:  You must mail the address to Elearn2002
```

Exhibit 4.23: The online facilitator's responses to intellectual content

```
so that everyone else can also go and have a look at your
masterpiece!
A technical problem regarding shelter space [YG]:
>1. Get your web site up and running on Hagar. BTW the
>"icons" for our shelters are rather small, so even though
>they have been personalised, one cannot read our names on
>them... could they be made a little bigger.
Online facilitator:  I will ask Johannes whether he wants to
make the shelters bigger.

A frustrated learner, asking for assistance [YG]:
>Linda please help me I can't find games, and tasks for
>different > tribes/groups. Frustrated.
Online facilitator:  Forget about last week's game and
assignments. All this information can however be found in
the 170+ emails that was sent last week. If you work through
them systematically you will get the answers to most of your
questions.

Queries on individual and tribal assignments [YG]:
>Vote on the collaborative participation of group members.
>On point 3 - when do we do this points 1 and 2 must be
>finished by 17:30 on Wednesday I assume.
Online facilitator:  Individually you only need to upload
your sites to Hagar, change your shelter.gif and upload the
sound file this week. This needs to be done by this week
Wednesday, 31 July 2002.
In your tribe you need to play around with Yahoo Messenger
and NetMeeting - the table consolidating your findings in
this regard should be ready by 7 Aug. 2002.
```

Exhibit 4.24 reveals the online facilitator's responses to emotional messages on
e-mail problems; concerns about the *InterWise* session that was imminent; a learner
griping about marks; a learner who will have to miss class because of work
commitments and problems with a collaborative exercise.

Exhibit 4.24: The online facilitator's responses to emotional attitudes

```
A learner experiencing e-mail problems [YG]:
>Due to a gremlin on my mail system all mail was returned to
>me unsent. It seems that e-mail is sometimes worst that
>snail mail. At least you have the Post Office to blame for
>the cheque that got lost in the mail.!The URL for the site
>of the tribe with the most members on AWOL is: tribe-e-
>go.20m.com A very g..vol
Online facilitator:  I wondered what had happened to you
over the weekend. Hope you get your email sorted out soon.
Well done for hanging in there despite difficult conditions
(both technical and tribal)!  Keep it up, girl!

A clearly distressed learner ... [YG]:
>I give up!!!  What am I doing wrong?
Online facilitator:  Nothing wrong on your side. It was only
my Yahoo Mailbox that was overflowing! I cleaned it up now
so it shouldn't happen again.

A learner's concern with InterWise [YG]:
>Just to let you know that I am familiar with InterWise from
>Israel and I am expecting many troubles because of the band
>widths.  With a good modem but at speed of 14.4 kbps what
>can you do? Not much!
Online facilitator:  Yes, you're right, InterWise is an
```

Exhibit 4.24: The online facilitator's responses to emotional attitudes

```
Israeli product! We will definately need you Wednesday then.
It always helps when some people are already familiar with
the system.  I agree that bandwidth is still a HUGE problem
in our country, but I attended an online conference once
using the system, and found it to be adequate. We'll see how
things go on Wednesday evening.
```

A learner griping about exemplary work and marks [YM]:
```
Learner (08:09:01 PM): Just making a point about why no one
has posted anything to webct yet ... everyone is waiting for
someone else ... just to be sure their post is beter .. many
are too concerned (says he) with marks than with how much
they are learning!
Linda (08:14:51 PM): You make me laugh out loud!  What is it
with students and their preoccupation with MARKS?!
Learner (08:10:52 PM): Certain students are more concerned
than others ... you decide who's who!
Linda (08:17:24 PM): Thanks for the insight though, it makes
sense
Learner (08:13:11 PM): For the games ... how did you think
this up ...its easy to do ... but bloody difficult to do
well! Does it matter if we have a composite topic e.g. the
advantages and disadvantages of E-learning and the
requirements for your organisation....
Linda (08:19:24 PM): No problem, are you doing the one topic
```

A learner having to miss class for a week [YM]:
```
Learner (08:34:23 PM): I will be away for the whole of next
week (Grade 6 tour).  We will have a problem with my
individual assignments and the tribal assignments (I'm the
webmaster).
Linda (08:34:03 PM): O dear, that's trouble
Linda (08:34:12 PM): When are you leaving?
Learner (08:35:11 PM): monday morning 5:00
Linda (08:35:20 PM): We'll make a plan with the webmaster
workload.  Do you think you'll be able to work on your
individual assignments over the weekend?
Linda (08:36:02 PM): The individual assignment for next week
involves a lot of reading.
```

A learner battling with a collaborative exercise after the tribal shuffle [YM]:
```
Learner (11:41:28 AM): Things are quiet!
Linda (11:42:16 AM): I see!  Are you guys settled in your
new  tribe?
Learner (11:44:27 AM): Good question ... no one is online
... I think were a little out of sync ... between the async
and sync comms. This is a difficult project to do
collaboratively!
Linda (11:45:13 AM): I know, I think this tribal shuffling
has caught most people offguard
Linda (11:46:55 AM): I would have wanted everyone to
brainstorm on the various elements related to elearning and
then maybe split the topics amongst themselves to go and
research
Linda (11:47:25 AM): People will probably wake up again on
Monday.
Learner (11:48:54 AM): Yep ... just getting everyone
together is a problem ... No, I think most people in our
tribe like to get things done on the weekend ... I'm hoping
we can set up a synchronous session, since this is the best
way to brainstorm and get things sorted out I think....
```

Exhibit 4.25 reveals the online facilitator's humourous responses to emotional 'tongue in cheek' comments made by the learners.

Exhibit 4.25: The online facilitator's responses to humorous emotional attitudes

How to register for Yahoo Groups [YG]:
```
>How do I get in contact with the creature????
Online facilitator:  Hopefully this will become clearer when
you get access to the pages that were uploaded to Yahoo
Groups.
```

Learners' distress with the online test [YG]:
```
>Subject: Re: *&^%$ TEST!!!
>Thought we were through with that!!!!!!
>:-0000000000h noooooooo!
>:-)
>_____, I'm lippe teen die klippe!
>You, afraid of a test?! How must the rest of us feel?
>_____  :-O
>WWWhen why hhhow is this going to happen ????
>_____
Online facilitator:  When we do things in an unconventional
manner, you guys moan! When we then do things in a more
traditional manner, you moan even more!
What AM I to do ...?!??
Don't panic(this is what YOU need to do!). The test will be
web-based. The idea is once again to provide you with the
opportunity to personally experience e-testing. This test
will form part of the assignments for Week 6, for which you
will only get instructions next week Thursday (22 Aug 2002).
```

A pun on pyjama drill [YG]:
```
>A sweating and teeth-gnashing me in pyjamas!
Online facilitator:  This module seems to give 'pajama
drills' an entirely new perspective, doesn't it? ;-)  Hang
in there.
```

Rebuttal on constructivism [YG]:
```
>Again all the panic pills and stressed e-mails is just a
>good example of how things can get wrong in a
>constructivist adult academic environment.
Online facilitator:  _____, my darling behaviourist, you
knew that I would react on your comment, right? So here
goes:  Even though most of us experienced this week as
nerve-wrecking, sleepless and stressful to say the least, I
am happy with the (steep) learning curve that I detect in
most of the tribal members even after only one week in the
online class.
```

There was a nasty incident where a learner verbally attacked the online facilitator because this particular learner received naught for assignments. Exhibit 4.26 shows the emotional outburst of the learner and the online facilitator's calming influence on the learner.

Exhibit 4.26 [YM]:   The online facilitator's reply to an emotional
                 outburst and verbal attack

```
Learner (08:24:39 PM): My puzzle is op my site by Hagar.
Almal het dit gesien en ek kry 0
[Translation:  My puzzle is on my site at Hagar.  Everyone
saw it and I get 0.]
Linda (08:37:12 PM): Moenie so moan nie
[Translation:  Don't complain so much]
Linda (08:37:34 PM): Ek het genoem in my epos dat ek bereid
is om te kyk na goed as julle net vir my die URL's stuur
[Translation:  I mentioned in my email that I am willing to
look at the stuff if you just send me the URL]
Learner (08:26:44 PM): Ek werk hard aan die graad net soos
jy aan joune. Gaan in op Hagar
[Translation:  I am working hard for this degree just as you
for yours.  Go in on Hagar]
Learner (08:30:55 PM): Nul gee as assignments wel op die
blaaie is. Wat moet ek nog doen om jou te oortuig al my
assignments is op tyd en datum nog altyd in
[Translation:  Giving naught if assignments are indeed in
place.  What else should I do to convince you that all my
assignments have always been in on time]
Linda (08:43:20 PM): Raak rustig
[Translation:  Calm down]
Learner (08:41:04 PM): Jammer, dit is my fout. Ek vra om
verskoning. Dit lê onder my tweede icon (persoonlike goed),
maar die link werk nie , ek wil nou eers kyk wat daar
aangaan. Nogmaals jammer
[Translation:  Sorry, my mistake.  I apologise.  My stuff is
under the second icon (personal stuff), but the link is not
working.  I first want to see what is the matter.  Once
again, I apologise]
Linda (08:54:28 PM): Apologies accepted!:)
Learner (09:02:31 PM): Skryf tog in jou dokorsgraad dat jy
"stupid" persone kry soos ek. Ek was 100% seker dit was daar
(lank lank gelede). Die file is om een of ander duister rede
nie op geocities nie- verstaan dit gald nie - nogmaals
jammer
[Translation:  Document this in your doctoral thesis that
you get stupid people like me.  I was 100% sure that it was
there (long, long ago).  For some strange reason, the file
is not on geocities – I really do not understand this – I
apologise, once again]
Linda (09:15:09 PM): Alles reg, dit gebeur.  Ek wou sê ek
het baie deeglik gekyk.
[Translation:  It is ok, things like this happen.  I must
say, I thought I checked it thoroughly.]
```

7. **As the classroom climate became established, the facilitator was increasingly able to become a participant learner, a member of the group, expressing her views as an individual.** The following two examples were taken from synchronous discussions on *Yahoo Messenger.*

In Exhibit 4.27, the online facilitator was voicing her opinion about the upcoming *InterWise* session that was to happen the next day.

Exhibit 4.27 [YM]:   The online facilitator's views on technology

```
Linda (08:57:05 PM): Don't worry too much, it's really all
about getting hands-on experience
Linda (08:57:32 PM): If things do go wrong (and something is
bound to!) we'll learn from that as well
```

In Exhibit 4.28, the online facilitator was chatting informally to a learner about a job change.

Exhibit 4.28 [YM]:   The online facilitator's views on a learner's change of job

```
Linda (11:42:27 PM): Are you starting the new job next
month?
Learner (11:39:19 PM): …No, I start 1st Oct... that's why
I'm finding this course so beneficial. I will be working
with an LMS (IBM learning space) and E-Learning!!
Linda (11:45:04 PM): Perfect timing then!
Linda (11:46:34 PM): You'll be able to make a reasonable
comparison between IBM's LS and WebCT when you get started
there.
Learner (11:43:33 PM): Yes I hope so... have been reading a
lot about LS from their site though and will begin working
on it before I actually start!
```

8. **The facilitator took the initiative in sharing herself with the group – feelings as well as thoughts – in ways which neither demanded nor imposed, but represented simply a personal sharing which the learner might take or leave.**
The learners really got to know the online facilitator as she was willing to share information from her past as well as how she felt about situations. The following three examples are taken from synchronous discussions on *Yahoo Messenger*.

In Exhibit 4.29, the online facilitator shared her experience of being a teacher – only for a short period!

Exhibit 4.29 [YM]:   The online facilitator on being a teacher

```
Linda (06:37:48 PM): Wat is jou plan met die MEd?
[Translation:  What are your plans with the MEd?]
Learner (06:39:31 PM): Hoop om goed genoeg te doen om 'n
werk in die veld te kry.
[Translation:  Hope to be good enough to get work in the
field.]
Linda (06:38:34 PM): Of is jy 'n gebore onderwyser?
[Translation:  Or are you a born teacher?]
Learner (06:40:17 PM): Nee, ek weet nie van gebore
onderwyser nie!  Dink dit sal lekker wees om bietjie met
groter mense te werk!
[Translation:  No, I don't know about a bore teacher!  I
think it could be pleasant to work with adults!]
Linda (06:39:28 PM): My sentiment ook
[Translation:  My sentiments exactly]
```

Exhibit 4.29 [YM]:   The online facilitator on being a teacher

```
Linda (06:39:48 PM): Ek het net vir 3 jaar uitgehou toe gee
ek op (ter wille van my eie 'sanity'!)
[Translation:  I only lasted for 3 years and then resigned
in the name of sanity!]
Learner (06:41:10 PM): Voel amper so!
[Translation:  I feel that way too]
Linda (06:40:31 PM): Hoe lank hou jy al skool?
[Translation:  How long have you been teaching?]
Learner (06:41:45 PM): 7 jaar!!
[Translation:  7 years!!]
```

In Exhibit 4.30, the online facilitator reflected on her younger days working on a kibbutz.

Exhibit 4.30 [YM]:   The online facilitator on working on a kibbutz

```
Linda (09:33:19 PM): How long have you been in the country?
Learner (09:33:59 PM): Just one year
Linda (09:34:18 PM): Are you planning to go back?
Learner (09:36:44 PM): yes my husbend conract will finish
some day (in a year or two) and by that time my second son
will be in the army and i want to be there for him
Linda (09:37:16 PM): I spent a couple of months on a kibbutz
when I was younger. It was way up North, close to Nahariya.
It was one of the best experiences I ever had.
Linda (09:38:06 PM): When I was there it was compulsary for
all army soldiers to spend time doing community work on a
kibbutz
Linda (09:38:24 PM): I enjoyed the interaction tremendously.
Learner (09:39:15 PM): oh!! do you remmber the name
Linda (09:39:50 PM): I am trying to remember now, but it
wasn't Hanita, no.
Learner (09:42:36 PM): ok we will soon find that we are
relatives, like every two Israelis that meet together...
Linda (09:43:35 PM): I checked quickly, it was Kibbutz Eilon
Linda (09:44:29 PM):  They had a fish factory, a mosaic
thingy, bananas, avocados, kiwi's and lots more
Linda (09:44:51 PM): I remember working my hands to the bone
there!
Learner (09:45:37 PM): that's right and i think that in that
kibbutz were many volunteers from South Africa.
```

In Exhibit 4.31, the online facilitator shared her thoughts on moving house – a nightmare experience!

Exhibit 4.31 [YM]:   The online facilitator on moving house

```
Linda (10:38:49 PM): Hoe gaan dit in die nuwe huis?
[Translation:  How are you finding the new house?]
Learner (10:48:16 PM): Nie te sleg nie - kan darem al my
haardroëer kry ... Dankie dat jy vra - dit klink of jy
soortgelyke omstandighede gehad het?
[Translation:  Not too bad – have retrieved by hair dryer …
Thanks for asking – it sounds as if you had similar
circumstances?]
Linda (10:42:40 PM): Ek het sowat 2 jaar gelede deur die
nagmerrie ervaring gegaan.  Bly gelukkig nou so lekker dat
ek geen begeerte het om ooit weer deur daardie drama te gaan
nie.
[Translation:  About 2 years ago I went through the
```

Exhibit 4.31 [YM]:   The online facilitator on moving house

```
nightmare experience.  Living so comfortably at present that
I have no wish to ever experience that drama again.]
```

9. **Throughout the course, the facilitator remained alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings.** Strong feelings were expressed regarding the lack of collaboration as is evident in Exhibit 4.32.

Exhibit 4.32 [YM]:   The lack of collaboration …

```
Most of our group seems to be incommunicado. Our tribe (2)
as I have it are down to 4 members
Struggling to get things for our tribal assignment!!!!  Only
_____ has given me anything!
my nuwe tribe is nog stil- …
[Translation:  my new tribe is still quiet …]
Linda (09:07:58 PM): Julle moet maar so gou moontlik probeer
kontak maak, die Tribal Assignment is nogals lywig
[Translation:  You have to try to make contact as soon as
possible, the Tribal Assignment is quite lenghty]
This has been our first real collaborative assignment .. I
think the new improved tribes have everyone working. It is
more difficult to do the tasks by Internet Collaboration!
I could do it by myself .. not that negotiation is a
problem, its just not that easy online!
The problem is not the online. it is the cats in the group.
Geting everyooone oding their job is like herding cats!
Again .. while you mentioned the importance of product, I
think there is still some process here ... as I mentioned,
the learning curve on collborative work continues to be
steep!
```

In Exhibit 4.33, the online facilitator responded in the following way:

Exhibit 4.33 [YM]:   The online facilitator's response to the lack of
collaboration

```
Linda (06:01:30 PM): It remains a challange to keep things
going in a virtual async environment
Linda (06:02:09 PM): As I said to the guys in Tribe 3 last
week, take those who are on board with you, and make the
best of it.
```

Monetary costs were a bone of contention! For the first time the learners actually realised that online learning comes at a price. The learners were perturbed about the time spent online for all their assignments, which indirectly boiled down to monetary costs in terms of paying the telephone account.

Hardware and software were not always up to standard. However, as the online facilitator reflected in her face-to-face interview, 'this course revolves around computer-based instruction. A person would imagine that learners would have the state of the art equipment. One would also assume that learners would have achieved

a minimum requirement to participate in this type of course'. Some learners had to
acquire speakers and microphones for the *InterWise* session. Exhibit 4.34 provides a
snapshot of the learners' feeling regarding the issue of costs.

Exhibit 4.34: The learners' feelings on monetary issues

```
[SF] On the negative side, maybe I can just say it is taking
up a bit of time and maybe a little bit of money, but in our
work we have to deal with this.

[YM] I enjoyed it very much, but still waiting for the phone
bill.

[YM] The other problem is the time.  1 hour became 2½hours –
that is a lot of money online lecturing, please can't we get
a better telephone company in South Africa ???????????????

[YM] Only negative:  my wife is going to kill me if she sees
this month's phone bill!

[YM] Money…Money…Money…The sound of $$$$$ is haunting me as
well!

[YM] My wife is talking about divorcing me (money for my
child's clothes used for the discussion).  You know, it is
all well and said that if you take this course and see what
you learn each day, money musn't be a problem.  What if you
have R350 to survive with until 23 August 2002 ?  That's the
facts !!
```

10. **The facilitator endeavoured to recognise and accept her own limitations as a facilitator of learning.** The online facilitator admitted that she was uncomfortable with the concept of collaborative learning as is noted in Exhibit 4.35 and had sympathy with the learners who found it difficult to work as a group.

Exhibit 4.35 [YM]:   The online facilitator on collaborative learning

```
Linda (08:57:41 PM): I am not the best team player there is
```

In her face-to-face interview, the online facilitator clearly stated that she worked better as an individual than as in a team set-up. This is reflected in Exhibit 4.36.

Exhibit 4.36 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on individual learning

```
die eerlike antwoord is:  ek werk baie beter individueel as
wat ek in 'n span werk.  So ek wil dit graag my manier doen.
[Translation:  the truth is:  I work much better as an
individual as opposed to a team set-up.  I like to do things
my way.]
```

In Exhibit 4.37 the online facilitator recalled that she found group work to be a nightmare.

Exhibit 4.37 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on the frustrations of group work

```
ek onthou die groepwerk was vir my as persoon, regtig 'n
straf.  Ek het gevoel ek het 'n bepaalde standaard wat ek
wil handhaaf, en ek was geweldig gefrustreerd as ander ouens
nie saamgewerk het nie, of as hulle ander idees gehad het
wat ek nie mee saamgestem het of so nie.
[Translation:  I recall that I found group work to be a
nightmare.  I had a certain standard that I wanted to
maintain and I was particularly frustrated if the rest of
the team did not co-operate or if they had other ideas,
which I did not agree with.
```

The online facilitator reminisced about individual work and collaborative work in Exhibit 4.38.

Exhibit 4.38 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on individual work and collaborative work

```
Maar ek onthou in een van die kursusse moes ons juis ook op
so 'n lyn staan, in die een hoek die ouens wat van
collaborative learning hou, en die ander ouens nie.  En ek
was die enigste een wat in die hoekie by individual learning
gestaan het.  En die ander was almal van die helfte af meer
collaboratively.
[Translation:  I remember a certain course where I had to
place myself on a continuum – this time around it was
individual or collaborative work.  I was the only learner
that went to the furthest side of working individually.  All
the other learners positioned themselves from the middle of
the continuum to the opposite site, which was collaborative
work.
```

Smilingly, the online facilitator admitted that she believed in the value of collaborative learning. This is revealed in Exhibit 4.39.

Exhibit 4.39 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on the value of collaborative work

```
weet ek dat my styl anders is, maar ek moet die meerderheid
akkomodeer, en die meerderheid mense leer beter wanneer
hulle interaksie het met ander.  So ek glo in die waarde van
collaborative learning, ek hou net nie persoonlik self
daarvan nie.  Ek sal veel eerder regitg suffer op my eie, as
wat ek minder werk het, maar ek moet worry oor wat is die
ander persoon se benadering
[Translation:  I admit that my learning style was different,
but I had to accommodate the majority of learners who learnt
better when they had interaction with one another.  I
confess that I believe in the value of collaborative
learning, however, on a personal level, I don't like it!  I
would rather suffer alone as to do leas work and worry about
the other team member's approach to the assignment.
```

The online facilitator also felt strongly about the unfairness regarding formal summative assessment as in reflected in Exhibit 4.40.

Exhibit 4.40: The online facilitator on the unfairness of formal summative assessment

```
[YM] Linda (09:25:28 PM): You know how I feel about formal
test situations ...

[YG] I would like to put your mind at ease and say that the
test you will write tomorrow is not the end of the world!
Once again the test assignment is all about being a learning
experience in itself. You will be on the receiving side and
will gain first hand experience of doing an online test. I
make the assumption that you will then be in a better
position to advise people about the various aspects of
online /networked learning once you have experienced all the
aspects yourself. (Challenge me on this if you disagree!)

[YG] The fact that many of you are really worried about
writing the formal test, even though it is an open book
(browser) test, just proves to me that formal summative
testing is an evil practice that burdens students with
unnecessary levels of stress! ;-)
```

4.3.8. *Summary*

The adjustment to the online environment boiled down to good planning and lateral thinking. The online facilitator created a safe virtual environment for the learners and provided communication tools so that the learners could optimally operate in the virtual world. During the initial face-to-face contact session the online facilitator immediately formed an online community to ensure that social interaction could take place between the learners to create a sense of belonging. The online facilitator emphasised teamwork and various group activities had to be completed, which indicated a strong drive towards collaboration. The learners also had to complete various individual assignments, which indicated a strong drive towards learner-centredness. There was a strong relationship in terms of participation and interaction in 'what' was learned and 'how' it was learned. Mentally (in terms of acquiring new knowledge), physically (in terms of acquiring new skills) and emotionally (in terms of coping with time pressures and group dynamics) each learner participated and interacted in the learning process.

The online facilitator pre-selected certain communication tools for the learners that would be used in the online environment. *Yahoo Messenger* was selected as the synchronous communication tool and *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* would be the asynchronous communication tools. By talking, writing, watching, reflecting and doing activities online the learners acquired new knowledge, skills and attitudes to broaden their horizons and experience eLearning from all possible angles.

Not only did the online facilitator provide the learners with a variety of eLearning tools, she also put processes and guidelines in place to guide the learners on their learning paths. Clear learning outcomes were posted on a weekly basis. Vital URLs were included in the weekly assignments for downloading purposes. Time frames were clearly indicated, taking asynchronous time lines and working conditions into account. Regular notifications and reminders were posted to remind the group to vote, upload information and assess collaborative tasks.

Apart from the fact that the online facilitator created an online environment for the learners, she also had to make adjustments in terms of her facilitation approach.

The facilitator was responsible for setting the mood of the learning intervention. She contextualised the game metaphor and helped to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals and the groups so that the learners could experience eLearning in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. The online facilitator organised the widest possible range of resources to ensure that the learners experienced the Internet and eLearning in every possible way. Although the online facilitator was flexible in terms of time frames and individual assignments, collaborative work had to be completed on the indicated times. The online facilitator accepted both the intellectual content and emotionalised attitudes from the groups and individuals, allowing for reflection and gripe sessions. On several occasions the online facilitator could voice her own opinions and share herself with the group. This personal touch created a relaxed atmosphere where the learners felt safe to express their views on several non-content topics. After all, learning remains a social task that is built upon social interaction. The online facilitator remained alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings. In these instances the online facilitator responded to each message, provided emotional support and reflected on the particular situation, often acknowledging her own limitations in similar circumstances.

In conclusion, it is evident that the facilitator made several adjustments to accommodate the learners in the online environment. These adjustments were not exclusive to environment and process issues, but also in terms of the facilitation approach of the facilitator, indicating that the online facilitator had to have a caring persona as she operated on the side in a learner-centred virtual world.

4.4.   How did the online facilitator 'talk' to the learners and encourage dialogue with the learners?

During the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator, she specifically stated that the online facilitator could not rely on her personality or the 'grape-vine' to establish rapport with a new group of online learners. Each group is different and has an own identity. Although the facilitator could fall back on previous experiences, the facilitator starts from scratch every time a new course commenced.

Fifty-three exhibits have been selected from the raw data to show how the online facilitator **'talked' via the text messages** (my emphasis).

4.4.1. *Formulate clear messages*

According to the online facilitator, one had to think very carefully about how messages were formulated to ensure that the message was transmitted without sarcasm and in an unambiguous manner. The online facilitator had to be aware of how s/he was communicating and whether the message that was written was indeed the message that she wanted to send to the group as in made clear in Exhibit 4.41. She really laboured this point during the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.41 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on 'talking' via text messages

```
Jy moet twee keer dink aan die manier waarop jy eintlik
terugkommunikeer.
[Translation:  You have to think twice about the manner in
which you will be responding.]
Jy moet tussen die lyne leer lees – jy het nie liggaamstaal
of 'n stemtoon wat vir jou kan terugvoer gee nie.  Jy moet
net gaan op dit wat daar staan!
[Translation:  You have to learn to read between the lines –
there is no body language or tone of voice to provide you
with feedback.  You have to depend on the written word.]
```

As the online facilitator commented in the self-administered questionnaire that is revealed in Exhibit 4.42, a person needs to be aware of the power of the written word in the absence of non-verbal communication.

Exhibit 4.42 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on the power of the written word

```
As an online facilitator has to rely strongly on the written
component of communication, it is important that he/she has
the skills to communicate clearly in this manner.  I found
that often I first drafted a copy of my immediate reactions
and comments in a Word document, left if on my computer
whilst I break to have a cup of calming coffee, after which
I would return, reread, rewrite and only then send a
severely edited version of my initial reaction.  I had to
consciously be aware of the power of the written word in the
```

Exhibit 4.42 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on the power of the
                                written word

```
absence of other indicators such as body language and
intonation.
```

During Week 5 the online facilitator announced that the learners were going to write an

electronic test and this caused a bit of a stir throughout the class. A few of the learners

wanted more information on the test. On the spur of the moment, the online facilitator

replied to their questions and concerns. However, the following day she responded to the

one particular learner, explaining that she did not mean to be harsh or abrupt as is clearly

described in Exhibit 4.43. She was actually responding, tongue in cheek!

Exhibit 4.43 [YG]:   The online facilitator clarifying her intentions in a
                              previous *Yahoo Group* message

```
Date: Fri Aug 16, 2002 12:10 pm
Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] Re: *&^%$ TEST!!!
Hi
When I reread my message this morning I was surprised to see
how cold and cross it sounded, when I actually thought I was
joking lightheartedly last night.

Emoticons helps to convey emotions like sarcasm, humor and
others, but still leaves the field wide open for
misinterpretation, doesn't it?

Anyway, in this module you are allowed to moan all you want,
just as I am allowed to only hear what I want to!  ;-)
Good luck!
L
When we do things in an unconventional manner, you guys
moan! When we then do things in a more traditional manner,
you moan even more!  Just kidding as usual Linda ... just
wanted some detail ... mainly 'when' just so I could plan to
be there!
Cheers,
```

4.4.2. *Create a relaxed and supportive online environment*

The online facilitator reiterated the importance of establishing a **relaxed and supportive**

online environment. The learners had to know that they were allowed to ask questions.

The online facilitator also invited the learners to ask questions or ask for help, if

necessary, as is emphasised in Exhibit 4.44.

Exhibit 4.44 [YG]:   The online facilitator created a relaxed and
                              supportive online environment

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Wed Jul 24, 2002 12:23 am
Subject: Re: What do we need for Thurs?
_____, I am not sure whether you don't understand what is
expected of you, or whether you simply haven't read the
assignment file that was uploaded to Yahoo Groups last
Thursday?  If you did read through the assignments that was
posted under 'FILES' in your Elearn2002 Yahoo Group and you
```

Exhibit 4.44 [YG]:   The online facilitator created a relaxed and
supportive online environment

```
still experience problems, you are welcome to e-mail me
personally so that I can talk you through the assignments.
This offer stands for all the other 'Suvivors' as well.

Do you need help? Let me know if I can help. We need to get
going with assignment 8!

Please let me know in time if you battle with the clues.
Don't spend too much time on them, I would much rather
prefer you to spend your time reading the articles.
```

Hiss (2000:24) referred to components of 'teacher talk' that online facilitators should take cognisance of. For the purposes of this study, the term '**facilitator finesse**' was developed. 'Facilitator finesse' encompasses the same components of 'teacher talk', namely using an andragogical approach, incorporating humour and special language and using control talk. However, two components were added, namely Greetings and Closings and Clear Subject lines. 'Facilitator finesse' is a term that should display the skill of the online facilitator in terms of how s/he interacts with learners and tactfully handles difficult situations. This section displays examples of facilitator finesse as was evident in the study.

According to the online facilitator, following an **andragogical approach** meant that she treated the learners as adults and never 'talked down' at the learners; she also made adjustments to accommodate the adults when it was necessary; she was aware of the experts in the tribes and relied on them to share their knowledge and skills with the rest of the learners; she established an informal atmosphere where the learners could chat about their problems and ask for help and she never dominated the discussions.

The online facilitator was aware of the fact that the learners were adults and this group of people could not be treated as children as is apparent in Exhibit 4.45.

Exhibit 4.45 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator's andragogical approach

```
Onthou, ons werk met volwassenes; dit help nie jy sê maar
die reëls sê dit, en ons gaan nou by die reëls hou nie.
Waar nodig, het ons aanpassings gemaak.
[Translation:  Remember, we are working with adults; it
doesn't help to say the rules say this and we are going to
stick to them.  Where necessary, adjustments had to be
made.]
```

Being adults, the various tribe members did try to sort out differences amongst themselves as is apparent in Exhibit 4.46.

Exhibit 4.46 [YG]: The learners' andragogical approach

```
Hulle het regtig probeer om dit op hulle eie uit te sorteer.
[Translation:  They really tried to sort it out on their
own.]

Hi, Tribe -5 are you alive, ready to survive?
Let's contrive a strategy to revive ourselves
and show those voters they can also take a dive!
Let 5 stay alive and strive to survive!
```

According to the online facilitator, the tribal members were also willing to play open cards when their work suffered. This is explained in Exhibit 4.47.

Exhibit 4.47 [FtoF]: The learners played open cards with the online facilitator

```
As ouens op 'n punt gekom het waar hulle so gefrustreerd
was, of so ongelukkig was, of so benoud was dat dit hulle
punte en prestasie sou beinvloed, dan het hulle nogals oop
kaarte gespeel, en gesê luister, ek het hierdie ding op my
eie gedoen, want die ander ouens was nie daar nie

[Translation:  When guys reached a point that they were so
frustrated or so unhappy, or anxious that it would affect
their marks and performance, they really played open cards,
and then said, listen, I did this assignment on my own,
because the others were not there.]
```

The online facilitator was 'watching' and 'listening' to the group dynamics and made adjustments to the collaborative, tribal tasks when tribal members from Tribe 5 had problems getting the momentum going. Exhibit 4.48 describes the tricky situation.

Exhibit 4.48: Trouble in Tribe 5

```
[FtoF] Jy moet akkomoderend en oop en approachable wees.
[Translation:  You have to be accommodating and open and
approachable.]

[YM] Most of our group seems to be incommunicado.

[YM] My nuwe tribe is nog stil- …
[Translation:  My new tribe is still silent-]

[YM] _____ has asked to be allowed to participate with one
of the stronger groups
Learner (08:49:13 PM): So has _____.
Linda (08:55:09 PM): I have no problem if they do, the idea
is to learn as much as you can from the module.
Linda (09:05:14 PM): For the sake of the quality of their
learning experience, I think it is just 'fair' (smile) to
let them take part in a functional tribe.
```

The online facilitator then specifically informed a tribal member that she could team-up with a stronger, functional tribe as is revealed in the *Yahoo Messenger* extract in Exhibit

4.49. After all was said and done, the main reason for the course was to construct

knowledge about the educational strengths and weaknesses of the Internet.

Exhibit 4.49 [YM]:   An invitation to team up with a stronger group

```
Linda (01:11:06 AM): Daar behoort nou genoeg ouens in Tribe
5 te wees wat nog aktief wil wees, maar dit gaan maar bars
gaan om almal te mobiliseer.  As jy sien dat jy nie
voldoende reaksie by jou nuwe Tribe kry nie, is jy welkom
om saam met die ander in te spring en saam te werk.  Jy weet
hoe ek voel oor 'collaboration'.
[Translation:  There ought to be enough guys in Tribe 5 now
who still want to be active, but it will be a battle to
mobilise all of them.  If you do not get sufficient co-
operation from your new tribe, you are more than welcome to
team up with another group.  You know how I feel about
'collaboration'.]
Linda (01:12:17 AM): Ek's bly as die ouens jou wil
akkommodeer.  Dit beteken daar het reeds 'n sterk 'online
community' gevorm, en dit is natuurlik net goeie nuus.
[Translation:  I am pleased if the guys want to accommodate
you.  This means that a strong online community has already
been formed and this is great news.]
Linda (01:15:48 AM): Doen dit dan gerus (onoffisieel).  Al
kwalifiseer jy nie meer vir die groot prys nie, is daar geen
rede hoekom jy nie die meeste uit die module moet haal nie.
Maak maar net seker dat almal in die groep tevrede is met
die besluit.
[Translation:  Do it with pleasure (unofficially).  Although
you do not qualify for the big prize anymore, there is no
reason why you should not get the most from this module.
Just ensure that every one in the group is happy with the
decision.]
```

On two occasions the online facilitator thanked the 'experts' in the various tribes for

sharing their knowledge and skills with the rest of the group. The 'thank you' notes were

extracted from *Yahoo Groups* and appear in Exhibit 4.50.

Exhibit 4.50 [YG]:   'Thank you' notes to experts

```
And a great big thank you to those of you who are more
advanced, for sharing your knowledge and skills so freely
with the others. Rika, where is that crown you were talking
about? I think we have a couple of deserving candidates out
there.

Must say I am soo impressed with you guys. Your willingness
to help each other and to share your knowledge is great and
shows that we have indeed created a lively, caring online
learning community!
```

During the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator, she commented that at stages

she was thinking about whether she was doing things the right way and she admitted, she

was relying on her gut feeling as well, and that the 'guys was giving her a hammering'.

On reflection, she admitted that she could motivate why she did specific actions and

activities, but at the time her reasoning may not have been clear to all the learners.

The course was designed for a purpose and all the activities had meaning in the bigger picture. This was evident in her explanations in Exhibit 4.51, where she informed the learners about the thinking behind the tribal reshuffle and the online test. These activities did not just happen; there was a purpose for them. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.51 [YG]:   The online facilitator's motivations for the tribal reshuffle and the online test

```
Subject: Tribal Shuffle: PLEASE READ URGENTLY
I am sure that you all would agree that it has become
difficult to function in tribes where only 2 or 3 active
Surfivers remain. You are therefore randomly shuffled into
new formations for the rest of the game.

Subject: Tomorrow's test
I would like to put your mind at ease and say that the test
you will write tomorrow is not the end of the world! Once
again the test assignment is all about being a learning
experience in itself. You will be on the receiving side and
will gain first hand experience of doing an online test. I
make the assumption that you will then be in a better
position to advise people about the various aspects of
online /networked learning once you have experienced all the
aspects yourself.
```

According to the online facilitator, it was important to create an **informal and relaxed atmosphere** for the learners where each learner knew that s/he could talk as freely as possible. The learners had to feel free to challenge one another and could feel comfortable with being challenged (Brookfield, 1988:14). The learners had to 'enjoy' the learning experience and share their feelings with the rest of the tribe. For this reason, the online facilitator incorporated various activities to ensure that 'talking' took place online. There was **dialogue** in terms of speaking to each other using the *Yahoo Messenger* synchronous communication tool. Here the various tribes had to exchange thoughts and ideas on a number of collaborative tasks, for example which six web-based games or learning activities should be selected. **Conversation** happened via *Yahoo Messenger* when informal chats took place late at night between team members and the online facilitator. **Discussions** focussed on particular topics such as the learners' impressions on the *InterWise* session. **Debates** occurred when tribal marks had to be assigned for work done and **arguments** arose throughout the course to reach agreement on collaborative exercises. The learners did most of the 'talking' and the facilitator 'listened' (Bentley, 1994:10).

4.4.3. *'Listen' to the learners*

The online facilitator deliberately did not participate in all the 'talking' and explained the eLearning environment in her face-to-face interview which is described in Exhibit 4.52.

Exhibit 4.52 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator's views on eLearning

```
'n e-leer omgewing is 'n klimaat waar jy wil hê die groepe
moet mekaar ondersteun en saam werk.  Jy moet jou rol
verstaan.  Hulle moet leer om saam te werk.  As hulle nie
met mekaar praat nie en net vir Linda vra, sy antwoord,
gebruik jy die e-leer omgewing verkeerd.
[Translation:  an e-learning environment is a climate where
you want the groups to support each another and work
together.  You must understand your role (as online
facilitator).  They (the learners) must learn to work
together.  If they do not speak to each other and merely ask
Linda (the online facilitator's name)to answer all the
questions, then you are using the e-learning environment
incorrectly.]
```

The online facilitator did comment on the fact that the learners were more expressive (Siegel *et al.* 1986) and that she obtained information about her learners that she normally would not have known about. The learners' openness is noted in Exhibit 4.53.

Exhibit 4.53: The online facilitator on learner openness

```
[FtoF] Dis wat die medium so lekker maak.  Dis omdat jy half
agter 'n skerm sit, en jy voel so half anoniem, die ouens is
baie meer ekspressief as wat hulle in 'n klassituasie voor
my sou wees.  So jy's in 'n bevoordeelde situasie as jy
online fasiliteer, want jy kan hoor wat mense vir mekaar sê,
terwyl as jy in 'n klaskamer is, sal hulle nooit daai
openlike tipe gesprekke eers met mekaar gehad het nie.
[Translation:  This is what makes this medium so
fascinating.  You are sitting behind a screen and you feel a
bit anonymous and the guys are much more expressive than
they would normally be in a classroom situation in front of
me.  As an online facilitator, you have an advantage,
because you can 'hear' what the people are saying to each
other, whereas in a classroom, the learners would never even
had those openhearted chats.]

[YM] Jy weet nie hoe nie!  Ek is ma van kind met
outisme en woon in koshuis met sowat nog 45 en hulle
hou van hulle roetines!
[Translation:  You just don't know how!  I am the mother of
an autistic child and we live in a hostel with 45 other
autistic children and they like their routines!]
```

According to the online facilitator, it was important to 'listen' to all the discussions that were taking place; otherwise it would be impossible to provide guidance or support on a personal level.

Exhibit 4.54 clearly indicated that the online facilitator listened to her learners, considering the apt comments that were made to the particular learners.

Exhibit 4.54 [YM]:   The online facilitator listened to the learners

```
Linda: Well done for hanging in there despite difficult
conditions (both technical and tribal)!
Keep it up, girl!

Learner (10:22:04 PM): Thanks! Ek het dit half nodig- dink
ek is te oud vir hierdie stories!
[Translation:  Thanks.  I kind of need it – I think I am too
old for this kind of thing.]
Linda (10:11:00 PM): Ek verstaan jou frustrasie goed. Dis
darem nog net 2 weke van hierdie moordende pas, dan kan die
lewe weer normaliseer!
[Translation:  I understand your frustration.  At least
there is only 2 weeks of this killing pace left then
everything will be back to normal again!]
```

It was also important to 'listen' to the discussions to establish that the groups understood the assignments. If a group was battling, it was important to steer them in the right direction, without providing the answer. Exhibit 4.55 clearly indicated that the online facilitator listened to group discussions, considering the apt comments that were made to the particular group.

Exhibit 4.55: The online facilitator listened to the groups

```
[YM] Linda (09:19:25 PM): Miskien moet julle net weer na die
opdrag kyk.  Die idee is juis dat dit nie NET kernwoorde
moet wees nie, maar eerder volledige notas oor elkeen van
die areas wat julle besluit om af te baken
[Translation:  Perhaps you should revisit the assignment.
The idea is that it must NOT merely be keywords, but rather
extensive notes on each of the areas that you decide to
select.]
Linda (09:20:13 PM): In julle tribe is julle veronderstel om
konsensus te bereik oor die aspekte wat op so 'n 'map'
tuishoort
[Translation:  In your tribe you are supposed to reach
consensus on the aspects that belong to such a 'map'.]

[YG] _____ suggested I down load from "tucows" an
application (?)called "cut/tp", which I was unable to
locate.
Here it is: CuteFTP Download site
http://www.cuteftp.com/download/cuteftp.asp
```

The online facilitator wanted the group to 'struggle' to a certain extent. It was in this struggling and the exploration that learning happened as is explained in Exhibit 4.56. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.56 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on learners' struggling

```
Ek wou gehad het hulle moet maar op 'n manier struggle ook,
want dis hoe jy leer!  As jy eksploreer, gee iemand nie vir
jou die padkaart en sê loop hierdie roete wat klaar beplan
is nie.  Jy leer nie daaruit nie.
[Translation:  I wanted them to struggle in a way, because
this is how you learn.  If you explore, nobody gives you a
map and says walk this already planned route.  You do not
learn from that experience.]
```

If the struggling continued for a longer than expected time period, the online facilitator provided the learner or group with tips on how to do a certain task. The online facilitator made screen dumps with arrows on how to 'ftp' and loaded the screen dumps to *Yahoo Groups* under the 'Files' section. Figure 4.9 is a graphical representation of the type of files developed by the online facilitator to assist the learners with technical problems. However, the online facilitator did stress the fact that she was not going to spoon-feed the learners.

At times the online facilitator provided step-by-step action settings for the learners to check their software as is evident in Exhibit 4.57.

Exhibit 4.57 [WCT]:   The online facilitator helping the learners

```
Subject Please check your Browser Settings …
Message no 64  posted by Linda Fri Aug 16 20:35
Hi everyone
Could I ask you all to check your Internet Explorer options?
I found that if your settings aren't correct, you will not
be able to see the latest updates in the course. Please go
to Tools (in your browser) then to Internet options,
Temporary Internet Files, Settings, Every visit to the page,
ok).  If your browser is set up to AUTOMATICALLY look for
updates, you may very well have been staring at the same old
page you first saw when you accessed this course (this page
was hiding in your cache).  In the mean time, however, I
updated quite a number of courses.
```

Figure 4.9 provides an example of help given to the learners.

Figure 4.9:   Help for the learners
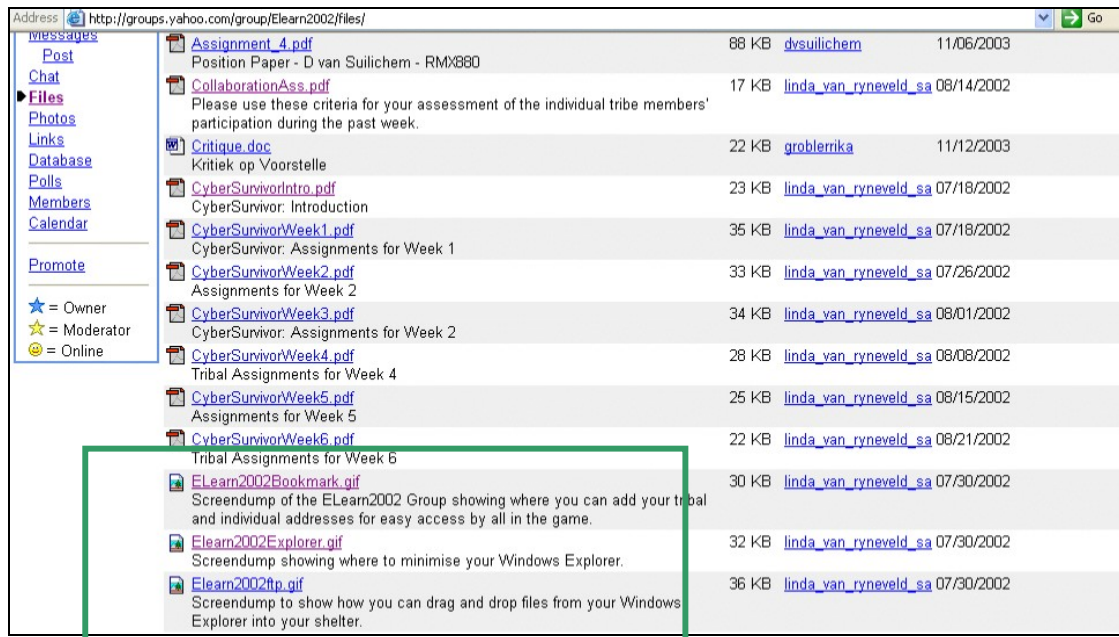
4.4.4. *Only 'speak' when spoken to*

The online facilitator only 'spoke' when a question was directed at her and then she had to guard against 'losing her cool' (Hiss, 2000:24) because she had the background as to why these particular questions were asked. The facilitator needed to stay impartial, answer the questions to the best of her ability, without becoming irritable because the same question could have been asked for the umpteenth time!

The examples below highlight the online facilitator's answers to various questions. In Exhibit 4.58, a learner wanted to know how to 'upload' a file.

Exhibit 4.58 [YG]:   Learner question – how do I upload a file?

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Sat Jul 27, 2002 11:28 pm
Subject: Re: Halfpad katswink!
Answering _____
Must I upload them separately too?
Yes, everything needs to be uploaded to the same directory,
any special files and all your gifs and jpgs.
```

Although the online facilitator's answer was short, it addressed everything that the learner needed to know.

Exhibit 4.59 and 4.60 reveal two 'classic' examples in terms of learners who wanted to know whether their assignments were received. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.59 [YG]:   Learner question – did you receive my assignment?

```
Subject: Re: Linda, did you receive my assessment results?
Not yet, _____. Did you send it to my MWeb address?
Here it is again: lindavr@m...
```

Very politely the online facilitator said that she had not yet received the results and was not abrupt in merely answering 'No!' To make it easier for the learner, the online facilitator, once again, provided the learner with the e-mail address.

Exhibit 4.60 [YG]:   The same learner question – did you receive my assignment?

```
Hi Linda
Did you get my Assessment?
Got it, thanks!
```

In this example the online facilitator could very easily have responded with a 'Yes'. However, she thanked the learner for sending the work.

Exhibit 4.61 to 4.64 dealt with the arrangements for the *InterWise* session where the learners had the opportunity to play around with a synchronous communication tool. However, the learners experienced several problems to get their test-runs completed before the actual event. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.61 [YG]:   Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 1

```
Subject: Re: Interwise SetUp arrangements
Hi Linda
I have problems with step 1.Pls check
You're right. He changed the address to sign on.
It is now:http://66.8.37.114/campuswise/
Try it.
```

In a positive and supportive way the online facilitator acknowledged that the learner was not at fault and that the technical crew changed the Internet address to sign-on to the site as is reflected in Exhibit 4.61. The online facilitator also gave the learner the new Internet address and asked her to try it out.

Exhibit 4.62 [YG]:   Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 2

```
Subject: Re: Interwise connection
Hi _____ (and all others with the same problem)

Please note you will not be able to get into the site
immediately as Interwise needs to verify that you are in the
class. I sent them a list of names last week. This is
necessary as it is a 'paid for' service and they don't want
every Tom, Dick and Harry to access their free demo
sessions.
```

In Exhibit 4.62 the online facilitator explained to the learners why they were unable to access the *InterWise* site at this stage. Learner verification was at stake and the learners just needed to be patient for a while!

Exhibit 4.63 [YG]:   Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 3

```
Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] InterWise arrangements
I have been trying all morning to set up a test with _____
this is the message
"In order to work with the Interwise Communications Center,
you need to use a browser that enables cookies. At this
time, we are unable to support browsers that are not cookie
enabled."
Hi _____
Try the following and see if that doesn't help:
In Internet Explorer, on the Tools menu, click Internet
Options.
1. Click the Privacy tab, and then click Advanced.
2. Click Override default settings, and then specify that
you want Internet Explorer to always allow to be saved on
your computer, by clicking Accept.
```

In Exhibit 4.63 the learner received a technical message from the *InterWise* crew that she clearly did not understand. The online facilitator provided the learner with steps to set up the Internet Explorer browser.

Exhibit 4.64 [YG]:   Arrangement for *InterWise* session – problem 4

```
Subject: Wake up call!
Could the rest of you please arrange with Ian to have your
connections tested asap? We only have 2 hours tomorrow
evening and will not be able to sort out technical problems
then!
```

The online facilitator was clearly worried about the rest of the learners who had not yet tested their connections for the *InterWise* session. She requested them to make arrangements as soon as possible as is expressed in Exhibit 4.64.

4.4.5. *Be visible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week*

During the focus group interview the learners commented on the online facilitator's promptness and availability and they wondered whether the online facilitator ever slept, because as soon as they asked a question, she answered it, be it early morning or late at night. She was always there! Exhibit 4.65 revealed the online facilitator's visibility.

Exhibit 4.65 [FG]:   The learners on the visibility of the online facilitator

```
I liked the promptness of her replies.

If you got her on Yahoo Messenger, which was always, she
would reply straight away, and either say to you: yes, she
can help you now, or say to you: listen, I'm busy.  Send me
an email. If you sent her an email, within a day, you got a
reply.  That to me was very positive, because I think it can
be extremely frustrating if you're in the middle of a
course, having to do stuff, and you can't get hold of your
facilitator.

I want to add that she was really available, and she
accommodated us.  I was doing the course during the day from
my office, and was not available after hours, and most of
you worked after hours, and I mean, she accommodated all of
us all the time.
I recall when I sent her an email during the day, it wasn't
a minute, and I got a reply back.
```

Figure 4.10 provides a summary of all the messages posted by the online facilitator and the learners to *Yahoo Groups* for the six-week period. The online facilitator was clearly visible for the duration of the course, but did not dominate the discussions on *Yahoo Groups*.

Figure 4.10: Visibility of the online facilitator on *Yahoo Groups*
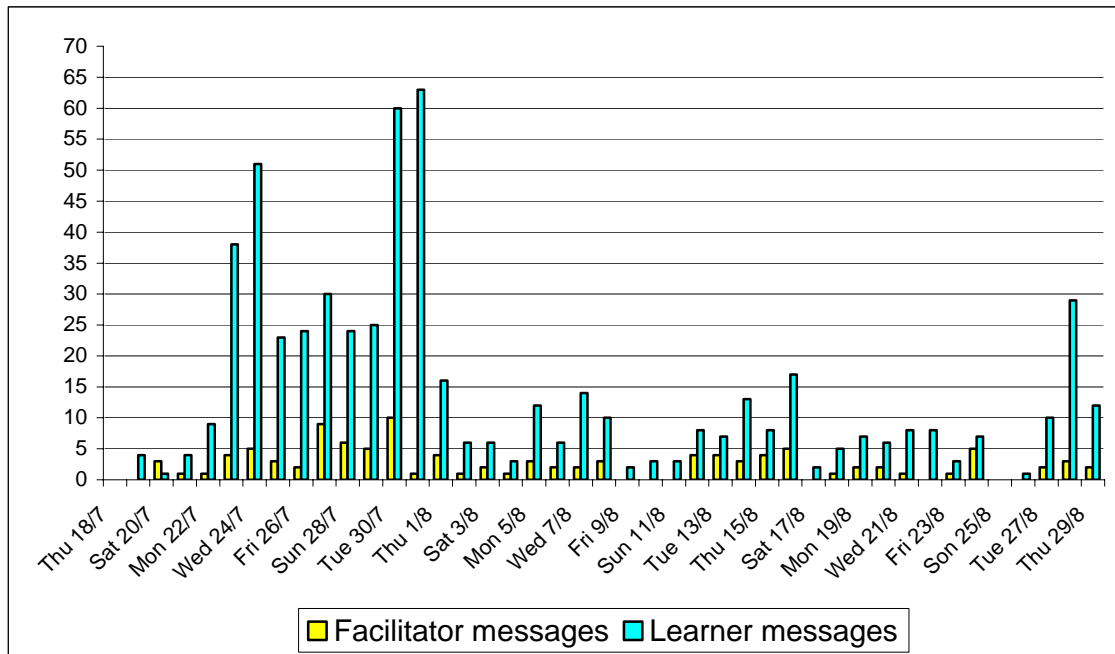
The online facilitator concurred with the remark on 'availability' and in Exhibit 4.66 she added …

Exhibit 4.66 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on her visibility

```
I think I was approachable.  Ek dink die feit dat ek daar
was.  Die feit dat ek beskikbaar was as hulle my nodig gehad
het
[Translation:  I think the fact that I was there.  The fact
that I was available when they needed me.]
```

It was evident from the *Yahoo Groups* messages that the online facilitator worked around the clock. Figure 4.11 provides a graphical representation of the time frames when the online facilitator posted messages or responded to messages on *Yahoo Groups* for the six-week period.

Figure 4.11:   Time of online facilitator postings on *Yahoo Groups*
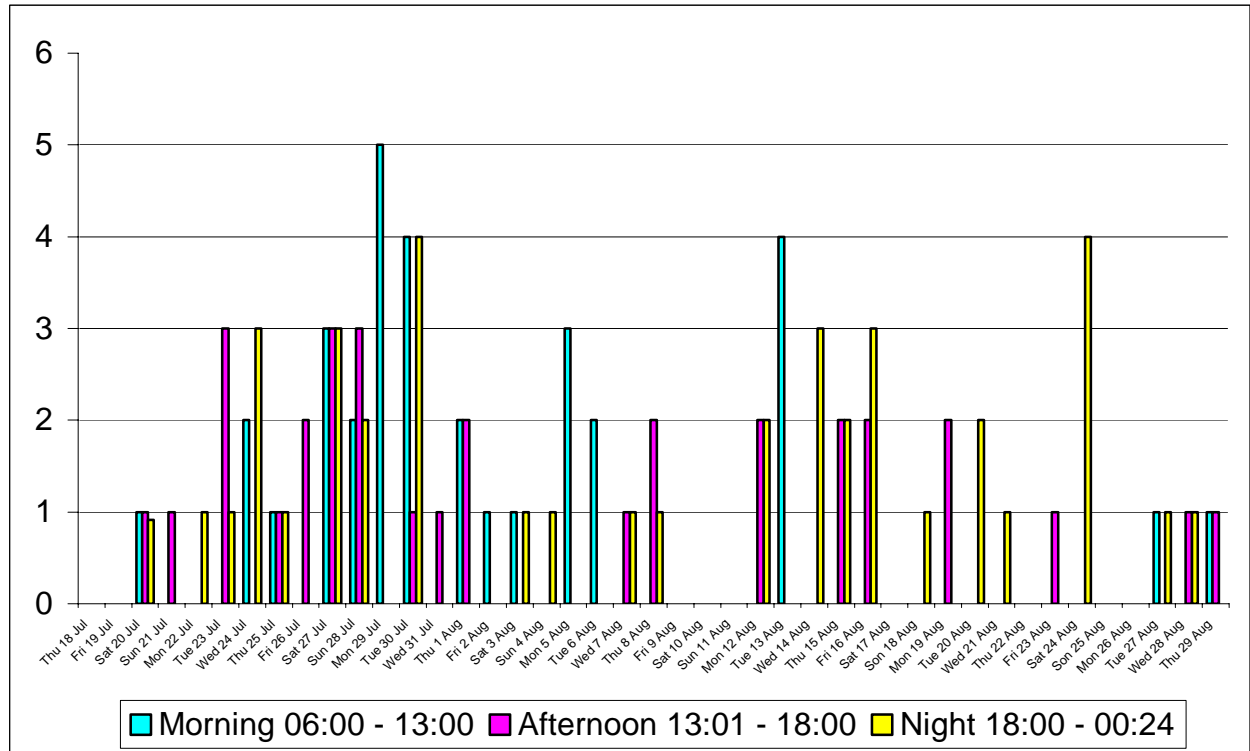
The online facilitator definitely did not dominate the discussions. This was evident from Exhibit 4.67, extracted from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.67 [FG]:   The learners on the non-interference from the online facilitator

> I think it was good that Linda didn't interfere when we had our discussions on Yahoo, she didn't take over any discussions that happened among ourselves, because learning took place between us, and it wasn't led by Linda.

4.4.6. *Use humour and special language (emoticons)*

From time to time the online facilitator used **humour** and **special language** when talking
to the learners as is revealed in the extracts in Exhibit 4.68, taken from messages in
Yahoo Groups and *WebCT*.

Exhibit 4.68: The online facilitator using humour and special language

```
[WCT] Thanks _____ for getting us up and running!
Your reward is attached for consumption (a picture of a
bottle of beer)

[WCT]There will be a reward for the first posting related to
Assignment 8!
(No _____, _____ and _____, it won't be extra marks,
sorry!  ;-)

[YG] (unless you are like me and prefer to take a hard copy
to bed or even into a foam bath at times!).
```

… and the learners reciprocated as is reflected in Exhibit 4.69. Extracts were taken from
messages in *Yahoo Groups* and *Yahoo Messenger*.

Exhibit 4.69: The learners using humour and special language

```
[YM] Now where am I supposed to find out what a LMS is?
Sounds dangerously close to PMS!!  :-)
Linda LOL!  And almost as much of a pain at times:)

[YG] >A sweating and teeth-gnashing me in pyjamas!
This module seems to give 'pajama drills' an entirely new
perspective, doesn't it? ;-)
Hang in there.
L
```

As the online facilitator reiterated in Exhibit 4.70 …

Exhibit 4.70 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on humour

```
Ouens was gestres en gespanne en as jy bietjie 'n smile kan
bring, dan relax ouens weer en sien maar dis net werk.  Dis
nie lewe en dood nie.  Ons kan maar grapies maak ook.
[Translation:  The guys were stressed and anxious and if you
brought a smile then they would relaxed again and realise
that it was only work.  This is not a matter of life or
death.  We can make the odd joke.]
```

4.4.7. *Use 'facilitator finesse'*

The online facilitator used **control talk** (Hiss, 2000:24) cleverly and did not offend the learners. During the focus group interview the learners commented on the fact that the online facilitator never lost control of the group and that she knew what she was doing. This is summarised in Exhibit 4.71.

Exhibit 4.71 [FG]:　　Learners' thoughts on the online facilitator's control of the group

```
She's clued up.  She's sympathetic.  She knew what she was
doing.
She watched things. Throughout the whole course, I felt that
she was in control.
```

Throughout the course, the online facilitator remained calm and relaxed. It is imperative that a 'caring persona' (Hiss, 2000:25) was revealed throughout the course; otherwise the mere process of facilitation would suffer. The online facilitator explained the importance of this quality in her face-to-face interview and is explained in Exhibit 4.72.

Exhibit 4.72 [FtoF]:　The online facilitator on remaining calm and relaxed

```
Ek het probeer om gemaklik en relaxed te bly.  Ek moet sê die
online onderrigervaring is vir my baie beter as 'n face-to-
face een, want in face-to-face, raak ek maklik hetig.  As
ouens my kwaad maak, sal ek dalk met aggressie terug reageer,
terwyl online, weet jy, skryf jy jou boodskap,
[Translation:  I tried to stay calm and relaxed.  I must say
that to me the online teaching experience is much better
than face-to-face teaching, because during face-to-face I
can easily get upset.  If guys make me cross, I react with
aggression, whilst online, you know that you have to write
your message.
```

The online facilitator revealed an inquisitive and caring nature, especially when 'talking' to the learners individually via *Yahoo Messenger*. Some of her opening lines are listed in Exhibit 4.73:

Exhibit 4.73 [YM]:　　The online facilitator's opening lines

```
Linda (08:52:10 PM): How are things on your side?

Linda (08:10:23 PM): How are things going?

Linda Hoe vorder jy met hierdie week se dinge?
[Translation:  How are you progressing this week?]

Linda Hi, you've been working late!

Linda (09:48:16 PM): Hoe gaan dit daar by jou?
[Translation:  How are you going on?]

Linda (11:42:16 AM): Are you guys settled in your new tribe?

Linda (08:46:33 PM): Het jy al kontak kon maak met die nuwe
ouens?
[Translation:  Have you already made contact with the new
guys?]
```

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Exhibit 4.73 [YM]:   The online facilitator's opening lines

```
Linda (08:47:17 PM): How are things going?

Linda (01:04:35 AM): Jy werk laat!?
[Translation:  You're working late!?]

Linda (07:49:55 PM): Hoe gaan dit daar?
[Translation:  How are you?]

Linda (07:54:44 PM): Is julle groep in die knyp?
[Translation:  Is the group in trouble?]

Linda (01:51:24 PM): Hi, welcome back!

Linda (09:25:42 PM): Welcome here in Messenger!
```

On 27 August 2002 the online facilitator posted the message, indicated in Exhibit 4.74, to all learners, wishing them well for the 'dreaded' online test.

Exhibit 4.74 [YM]:   The online facilitator's 'good luck' message

```
Linda (10:12:45 PM): Good luck for tomorrow!
```

4.4.8. *Be organised*

The online facilitator worked in a very systematic way. Two authors (Hobgood, 2003; Ko & Rossen, 2001) specifically indicated that the syllabus for an online course should be organised by 'weeks'. This unit of time is familiar to learners and gives learners more flexibility to complete assignments within their own workspace. Assignments should then be due at the end of the week. If readings or forum postings must be completed within the basic unit of time, then allow two to three days for learners to complete the activity (Hobgood, 2003; Ko & Rossen, 2001). This guideline was clearly adhered to by the online facilitator as is indicated in Exhibit 4.75.

Exhibit 4.75 [YG]:   The schedule for the course

```
Planning:   Week 1 (18 – 24 July 2002)
Planning:   Week 2 (25 – 31 July 2002)
Planning:   Week 3 (1 – 7 August 2002)
Planning:   Week 4 (8 – 14 August 2002)
Planning:   Week 5 (15 – 21 August 2002)
Planning:   Week 6 (22 – 28 August 2002)
```

In addition, each week should begin and end during the 'middle of the week' rather than on a Monday (Elbaum, McIntyre & Smith, 2002:25) to accommodate learners whose busy schedules require that they complete assignments over the weekend. On checking the 2002 calendar, it reflected that each 'week' started on a 'Thursday'.

On a weekly basis, the online facilitator posted the new assignments to *Yahoo Groups*. In each week's planning, she also indicated what the learners should have done to date and what would happen during 'this' specific week, as is described in Exhibit 4.76.

Exhibit 4.76 [YG]:   The week's planning

```
Individual Assignment 9:
By now your web site contains
- Some personal information,
- A photograph,
- A paragraph or two stating your expectations about the cour
- A poll,
- A sound file, and
- Links to sites that do conversions on your behalf.

This week you should add the following to your site:
A jigsaw puzzle using a picture of yourself (that way I will
be convinced that you didn't just grab any old picture that
was available on the web!)  You may wish to use this site
http://www.jigzone.com or something similar.  [25%]
```

There was a clear distinction between tribal and individual assignments as well as collaborative behaviour. Marks were allocated per assignment. This methodical way of working was clearly appreciated by the learners as is expressed in Exhibit 4.77.

Exhibit 4.77 [FG]:   Learners' comments on the course planning by
weekly intervals

```
I liked the fact that we received our assignments on
a weekly basis and that we didn't receive it all at
once at the beginning of the course.
What I liked, I can't remember how regularly she did it, but
I can recall that at times she said: by now, you should have
done this and this.  And then she'd make a list, and that
would remind me of what I haven't done yet.
```

Keeping to her nature of working in a systematic way, the online facilitator announced when she was not available in the online class as is revealed in Exhibit 4.78. This occurrence only happened once!

Exhibit 4.78 [YG]:   Online facilitator away for the long weekend

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Thu Aug 8, 2002 8:07 pm
Subject: Long weekend ...
Hi everyone
Just to let you know that I will be away for the long
weekend. 'See' you all again next week.
Enjoy
```

The learners adopted the same transparency regarding their whereabouts, as is reflected in Exhibit 4.79. These extracts were taken from a message in *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT*.

Exhibit 4.79: A learner away for a week and a learner's e-mail address change for a weekend

```
[YG] Subject Away for the week …
Thu Aug 15 11:07
Hi all
I will be away for the whole week (Grade 6 tour to
Mpumalanga!!)
Please forgive me if I bug you over next weekend for work
that I have missed.
Please keep me in your thoughts, 55 11-year olds are no
joke!!!

[WCT] Subject Change of e-mail for this weekend
Message no 69  Posted by _____ on Sat Aug 17 11:46
Hi I was informed by Mweb that on this weekend I will not
receive any mail, therefore I would like to give an
alternative mail address:  [e-mail address provided.]
Thank you
```

The learners often received reminders from the online facilitator, especially regarding the voting ritual on a Thursday evening. Exhibit 4.80 lists various reminders to the learners extracted from *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.80 [YG]:   Reminders to the learners

```
Subject: VOTING CLOSES IN LESS THAN 2 HOURS!
Please vote before 00:00 tonight as I need know who is voted
off in order to finalize the shuffle of the remaining
Surfivers.

Date: Tue Aug 20, 2002 11:12 pm
Subject: Voting and Collaborative Behaviour: Week 5
Please note that we will still proceed with our voting and
collaborative behaviour exercises tomorrow evening and
Thursday.  As usual each person will only have one vote. Use
it carefully this time round.

Date: Wed Aug 21, 2002 10:30 pm
Could everyone please remind their tribal mates to go and
vote either tonight or tomorrow up until 00:00?

Date: Tue Aug 27, 2002 10:15 pm
Subject: About the FINAL SURFIVER ...
Final votes to be casted on Wednesday before midnight.  NB!
This is your last opportunity to vote. After tomorrow
evening's vote, only 5 sturdy SURFIVERS will be left.

Date: Wed Aug 28, 2002 11:21 pm
Subject: EVERYONE: PLEASE VOTE BEFORE 18:00!
I would like to confirm that everyone is entitled to vote
for the final winner, the SOLE SURFIVER, not only the ones
who remained in the final tribes.
```

The online facilitator notoriously stuck to deadlines regarding the tribal assignments as is indicated in Exhibit 4.81.

Exhibit 4.81 [YG]:   The online facilitator on deadlines for
                             tribal assignments

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Thu Aug 8, 2002 3:57 pm

I am not strict with the deadlines for the individual
assignments as I understand that there could be reasons why
people aren't ready in time (computers packing up and other
personal reasons).

The tribal assignments though, need to be done in
collaboration with other people and need a measure of
synchronicity.  The deadlines for these are therefore
clearly indicated (usually 17:30 on a Wednesday). The moment
Voting and Peer assessment starts, these assignments should
be in place. As we work on a tight schedule we need to stick
to those times.
```

She also stuck to her promise regarding the marking of assignments as is described in Exhibit 4.82.

Exhibit 4.82 [YG]:   The online facilitator on deadlines for
                             marking assignments

```
I also still remember my promise about the Individual
Assignments. Those marks will be ready by Sunday.   I will
post your results to both ELearn2002 and WebCT.
```

In a very endearing manner and not to upset the learners, the online facilitator asked each learner individually via *Yahoo Messenger* to let her know where s/he had placed Individual Assignment 1, because the online facilitator could not retrieve the assignment that had to be marked. The online facilitator's plea for Individual Assignment 1 is described in Exhibit 4.83.

Exhibit 4.83 [YM]:   The online facilitator's plea for assignments

```
Dit mag wees dat ek dit net miskyk, maar ek sien nie jou
Individual Assignment 1 op die tribal site nie.  Kan jy asb
vir my laat weet waar ek daarna kan gaan soek – ek wil graag
vandag die merkwerk afhandel.  Dit is die werksopdrag waar
jy 'n verslag geskryf het oor die opvoedkundige waarde van
een of ander Freebie wat jy opgespoor het.

[Translation:  It may be that I am missing it, but I don't
see your Individual Assignment 1 on the tribal site.  Please
let me know where I can find it – I want to complete the
marking today.  It is the assignment where you had to write
a report on the educational value of one of the Freebies
that you found.
```

The learners had not responded to the online facilitator's message, and she posted the assessment results as is shown in Exhibit 4.84.

Exhibit 4.84 [YG]:   The online facilitator posting assessment results

```
Subject: Assessment: Individual Assignments
Hi everyone
Please note that I have posted the assessments of the
Individual Assignments to the 'Files' section of ELean2002.
You are welcome to discuss any problems with me. You will
note that I gave you 0 if I couldn't find a specific
assignment, whilst missing links also influenced your marks.
If you let met know where I can find the assignments and fix
the links soon, however, I may reconsider your marks.
```

As soon as the marks were visible, the learners started explaining what had happened to Individual Assignment 1, as is evident in Exhibit 4.85.

Exhibit 4.85 [YG]:   A learner quibbling about marks

```
Subject: Re: [Elearn2002] Assessment: Individual Assignments
Assignment 1 had to be uploaded to your tribal website at
the time. But, don't worry about it now, I will follow the
link from your e-mail.
Thanks you.
L
Hi Linda
There is a mark missing for Individual Assignment 1. I was
not sure what to do with the URL.  I reported on Nicenet's
Internet Classroom Assistant (ICA). The URL for this report
is: [URL provided.]  Where must I link this URL to??
```

Once again, in her relaxed manner, the online facilitator responded that she would follow the link from this e-mail message.

4.4.9. *Use your personal touch*

Messages sent by the online facilitator came across naturally and personally. During the focus group interview the learners commented about this kind approach of the online facilitator as is apparent in Exhibit 4.86.

Exhibit 4.86 [FG]:   The online facilitator's personal approach
to all the learners

```
She always made it sound as if she was only speaking to you.
She never gave you the idea that she was actually talking to
ten other people also.
She made it personal.
```

The online facilitator energised the learners. One learner's comments are reflected in Exhibit 4.87. This comment was extracted from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.87 [FG]:   A learner comments on the energy of the online facilitator

```
I felt her energy …- if I can imagine her in class, she
would be the kind of teacher who jumps all the time, and get
things happening
```

… and the online facilitator reciprocated in Exhibit 4.88. This extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.88 [FtoF]:   The online facilitator on her own curiosity

```
Ek het gebrand van nuuskierigheid om elke keer te kyk wat het
nou gebeur in die tyd wat ek nie online was nie.
[Translation:  I was dying with curiosity to see what was
happening while I was not online.]
```

Greetings and Closings. In *Yahoo Messenger*, the specific learner was always addressed by his/her name. When the online facilitator used *Yahoo Groups* or *WebCT*, she made a habit of greeting the whole group as is reflected in Exhibit 4.89.

Exhibit 4.89: The online facilitator on greeting the learners

```
[WCT] Hi everyone

[WCT] Hi there, again

[YG] Good going, you guys!

[YG] Wow, this is quite a nice start, _____ and Tribe e-
Learn-a-Long!

[WCT] Thanks, _____, your quick and thorough response
definitely qualify for the reward.

[YG] The following people have been voted off

[WCT]An impressive score, _____!

[YG] Let's make life easier on all of us and use the tools
we have in Yahoo Groups to their full potential.

[WCT] Well done to _____
```

The online facilitator often used the subject line to start the message and continued with the rest of the message as the salutation as is indicated in Exhibit 4.90. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups.*

Exhibit 4.90 [YG]: The online facilitator's use of the subject line

```
Testing, testing ....
One, two, three

Your names ...
for the voting exercise were entered as follows:

Well done ...
once again to those who managed to get their sites FTPed to
Hagar.
```

Another caring touch was revealed by the apt endings that the online facilitator wrote at the end of each message. Exhibit 4.91 lists various endings and the 'L' in die closing, indicates the initial of the online facilitator. These extracts were taken from messages in *Yahoo Groups.*

Exhibit 4.91 [YG]: The online facilitator's various endings to messages

```
Good luck to you all! L

Remember to check this space regularly!
Good luck. L

May the best photographer win ...
L

How are the tribal assignments coming along?
EGreetings L

Go out there and get your hands dirty ...
Good luck
Linda

Who will it be …?
EGreetings L

Any takers on this one?
eGreetings
L

Keep up the good work! L

Hope you will find this arrangement agreeable.
EGreetings L

Hang in there, week 3 will be a breeze in comparison to the
previous two, I promise.
EGreetings L

Let me know how you progress.
Good luck! L

Good luck with the preparation.
EGreetings L
```

Exhibit 4.91 [YG]:   The online facilitator's various endings to messages

```
"See" you all there!
eGreetings
L

Be fair!
Egreetings
L

Please also check that all your links are working.
Egreetings
L

Good luck with the assignments.
Egreetings
L
```

The online facilitator wrote clear subject lines to avoid any confusion regarding
assignments as is indicated in Exhibit 4.92. These extracts were taken from messages in
Yahoo Groups.

Exhibit 4.92 [YG]:   The online facilitator's use of a clear subject line

```
Week 1: Logistics and assignment notes

Week 1: Immunity

Individual assignments

Ground Rules

Re: Tribe 2 e-mail addresses

Important notice

Immunity: Week 2

NB Announcement: 7 August 2002

Votes and Peer Assessment

Tribal Assignment 2: READ PLEASE

The tribe has spoken ...

Re: [Elearn2002] Typingmaster - Best so far

IP addresses

InterWise addresses

Calling Tribe 5

Please scroll down …

Please READ! Communication Channel
```

4.4.10. *Summary*

The online facilitator ensured that the learners got a feel for the online environment by 'talking' to the learners in three different communication media. The online facilitator made it quite clear to the learners that the only way of communication would be the electronic medium as is described in Exhibit 4.93.

Exhibit 4.93 [YG]:   The online facilitator on using electronic media

```
This part of the module is all about virtual community
formation. That implies that you should transfer your normal
mode of communication (telephone/face-2-face contact) to the
virtual environment (the www).

You are therefore encouraged to e-mail one another, to
schedule tribal chat sessions where you brainstorm your
ideas for tribal assignments, to leave messages for one
another on the bulletin board and to send each other instant
messages online (the Internet alternative for SMS).

The idea is to have your conversations in cyberspace and to
refrain from taking the easy way out - by discussing them in
class on a Thursday evening.

You need to know how the Internet works, how this medium can
enhance your teaching/training process and you must be able
to use the tools, facilities and products that are available
online.
```
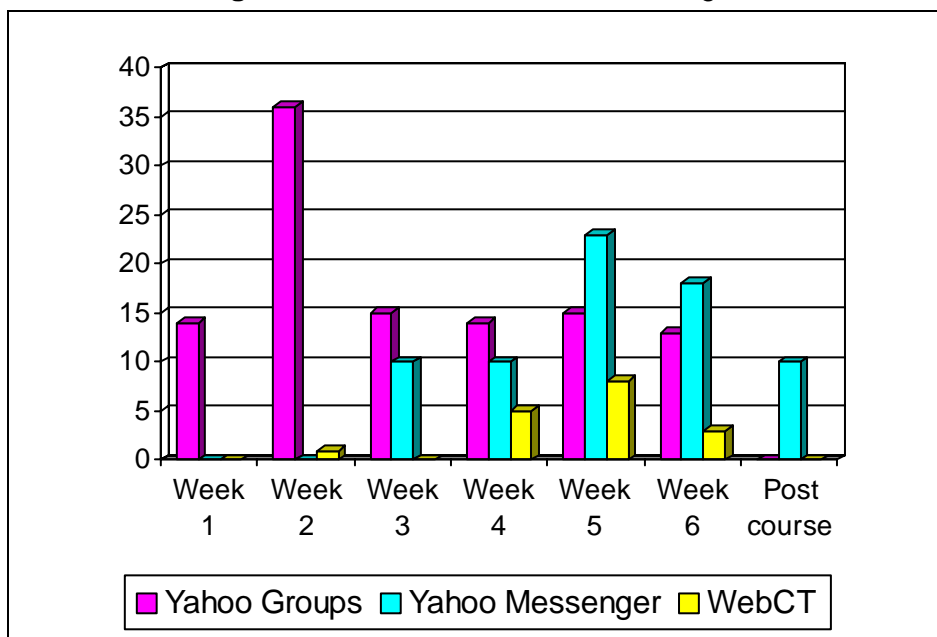
Figure 4.12 provides a summary of all the messages posted by the online facilitator during the six-week period.

Figure 4.12:   Online facilitator messages

The online facilitator was aware of the fact that 'talking' happened via text messages. At stages, the online facilitator first drafted her initial reaction to the group, took a break,

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reread her message to the group, rewrote the message and sent a severely edited version to the group. In the absence of body language and tone of voice, the online facilitator was particulary conscious of the power of the written word.

The online facilitator established a relaxed and supportive online environment and the learners knew that they could ask questions at any stage. On several occasions the online facilitator asked the group whether they needed help! By having such a caring disposition the learners played open cards with the online facilitator when times were tough and teams were dysfunctional. The learners could talk to their heart's content, knowing that the online facilitator was there for them at any time. The learners did a lot of 'talking' in the form of dialogues, conversations, discussions, debates and arguments and the online facilitator 'listened' to all the discussions in order to provide guidance and support. The online facilitator utilised the expertise in the group to answer questions and at no stage did she dominate the group discussions. The online facilitator pertinently admitted that she only 'talked' when questions were directed at her specifically. When 'talking' to the learner/s, the online facilitator provided supportive and comprehensive feedback to the question. The online facilitator never merely responded with a 'Yes' or 'Fine', but added additional information to provide the learner with all the facts at that stage to be able to continue with the rest of the assignment. The online facilitator tried to close the loop at all stages.

The online facilitator used an andragogical approach towards the learners and made adjustments to accommodate the adults, when necessary. At any stage the online facilitator could substantiate her actions and there was a purpose why all the activities had to be done in the way they were designed. If a group struggled longer than anticipated, the online facilitator provided tips on how to do certain tasks, but at no stage did she spoon-feed any learner.

The online facilitator displayed 'facilitator finesse' by incorporating humour and emoticons in her discussions and never offending the learners. She never lost control of the group and remained calm and relaxed. During her synchronous 'talks' with each learner, the online facilitator displayed an endearing nature, always establishing how the learner was. The online facilitator always greeted the learner/group by name, used clear subject lines and appropriate endings to all messages.

In conclusion, it was evident that the online facilitator 'listened' and 'talked' to all learners in a very personal way, which was indicative of the fact that she made a choice to be more 'interpersonal' on the Interpersonal-Impersonal Continuum (White & Weight, 2000).

4.5. What roles did the online facilitator play to be 'visible' in the online environment?

4.5.1. *Analysing the postings against the Blignaut and Trollip taxonomy*

The 122 postings that the online facilitator created in the asynchronous communication tools of *Yahoo Groups* and *WebCT* were analysed against the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments. The 61 synchronous postings created in *Yahoo Messenger* were also analysed against the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. In this case the complete conversation between the online facilitator and the particular learner was analysed in order to provide the context for the posting.

The various individual postings per communication tool were collated into three separate text files and uploaded into *ATLAS/ti*, a qualitative data analysis program. Figure 4.13 provides a graphical representation of the online facilitator's postings in *Yahoo Groups*.

Figure 4.13:   Online facilitator postings from *Yahoo Groups*
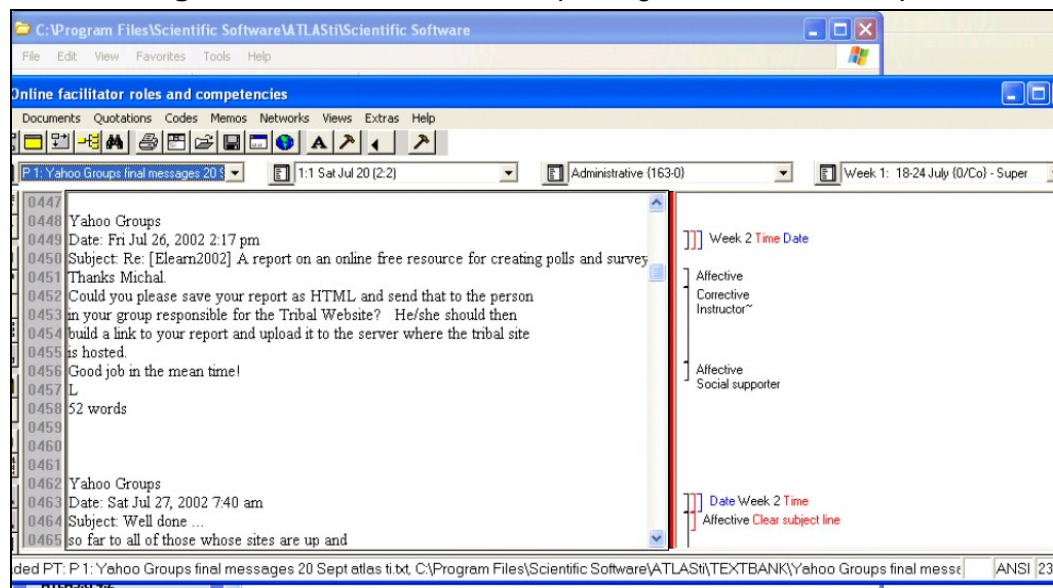
Figure 4.14 provides a graphical representation of the online facilitator's postings in
WebCT.

Figure 4.14:   Online facilitator postings from *WebCT*
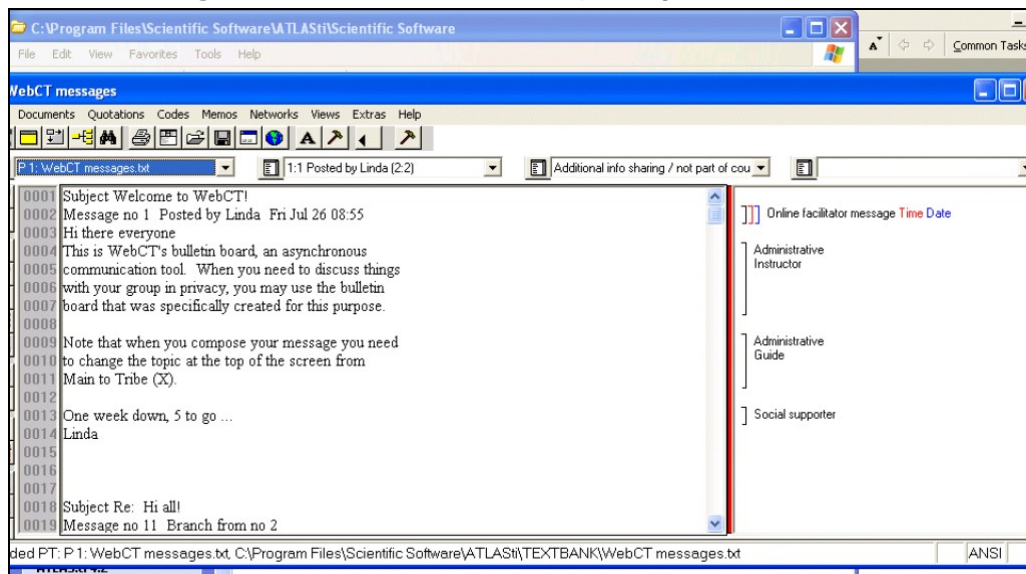
Figure 4.15 provides a graphical representation of the online facilitator's postings in *Yahoo
Messenger*.

Figure 4.15:   Online facilitator and learner conversation from *Yahoo Messenger*
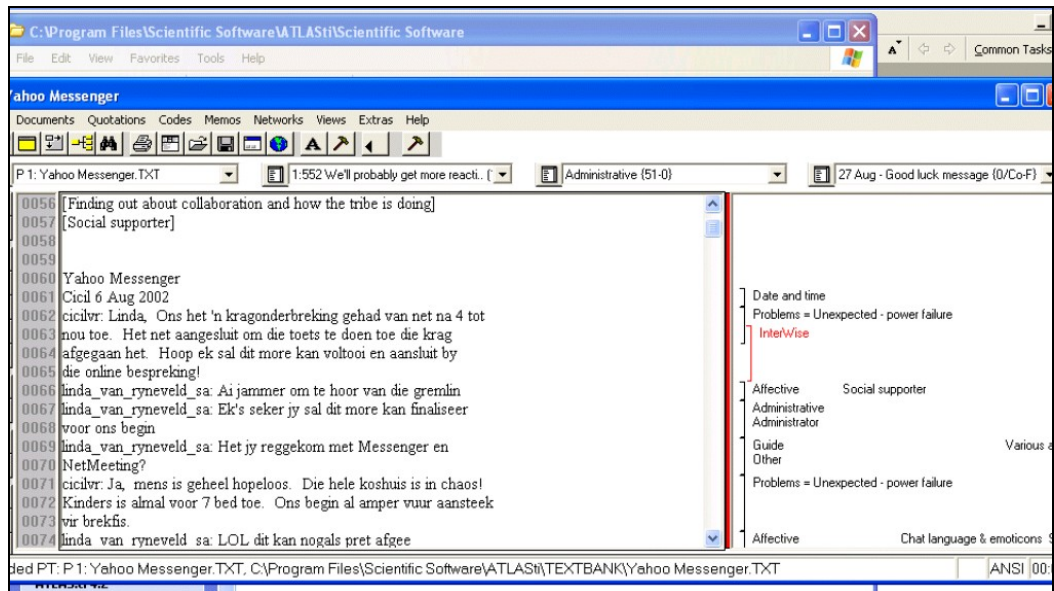
The taxonomy was user-friendly and the thematic units could be categorised with ease.
A discussion of the results from the various analyses follows. Evidence is provided per
category, indicating how the researcher interpreted the taxonomy:

Administrative (with no academic content)

Exhibit 4.94 lists messages that fall within the Administrative (with no academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.94: Administrative (with no academic content) messages

```
[YG] Just to confirm the tribes with you guys.

[YG]Could each tribe please appoint a spokesperson for the
week? Post the name of this person to the Yahoo Groups
message board. This person will then negotiate a time for
Tribal Council (which must take place before next Thursday!)
with all the players and with myself in an online chat room
of your choice.

[YG] For this purpose you will also need to have access to a
free FTP application such as CuteFTP.

[YG] Play this game as often as you want throughout the week
and upload a screen dump of your highest score into the
files section of your Yahoo Groups.

[WCT] Please remember to check your WebCT bulletin board on
a regular basis. I am not going to duplicate all my messages
in both these mediums.

[WCT] Remember that all the assignments for this week should
be ready for evaluation by 17:30 on Thursday evening.

[YG] You will also notice that I only added those students
who responded to my email asking for your student numbers,
initials and surnames.

[YG] The assignments are all listed in the .pdf file that
was uploaded to this site.

[WCT] I would still like the majority of you to finalize
your work on the map by tomorrow evening, as I need you to
focus on the assignments for week 6.

[YG][WCT] Those marks will be ready by Sunday.  I will post
your results to both Elearn2002 and WebCT.

[YG] Note that when you compose your message you need to
change the topic at the top of the screen from Main to Tribe
(X).
```

In the final analyses, the Administrative (with no academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 169 transcript segments.

- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 51 transcript segments.

- In *WebCT*, there were 29 transcript segments.

Affective (with no academic content)

Exhibit 4.95 lists messages that fall within the Affective (with no academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.95: Affective (with no academic content) messages

```
[YG] I hope that you are all well on you way with both your
individual and your tribal assignments by now

[YG] May the best photographer win …
How are the tribal assignments coming along?  eGreetings

[WCT] Great stuff!!  Good going, you guys!

[YG] You are welcome to e-mail me personally so that I can
talk you through the assignments.  This offer stands for all
the other 'Survivors' as well.

[YG] I am happy with the (steep) learning curve that I
detect in most of the tribal members.

[WCT] Thanks, _____, your quick and thorough response
definitely qualify for the reward.

[YG] Good job in the mean time!  Hang in there!

[YG] Well done …so far to all of those whose sites are up
and running!

[YG] I recognise the fact that this has been a first for
many of you and are so proud of you for getting it in such a
short space of time.

[WCT] a great big thank you to those of you who are more
advanced, for sharing your knowledge and skills so freely
with the others

[YG] (unless you are like me and prefer to take a hard copy
to bed or even into a foam bath at times!).
```

In the final analyses, the Affective (with no academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 137 transcript segments.

- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 122 transcript segments.

- In *WebCT*, there were 7 transcript segments.

Other (with no academic content):

Exhibit 4.96 lists messages that fall within the Other (with no academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.96: Other (with no academic content) messages

```
[YG] About the fairness of the synchronicity of this
particular  Competition.  Who ever said that anything in
life was fair? ;-)

[YG] That is correct. _____ decided not to continue.  I
don't know of anyone else who officially left the course.

[YG] As for the UP Discussion Board, it has nothing to do
with our course and are there for a different purpose.
```

In the final analyses, the Other (with no academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 4 transcript segments.

- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 23 transcript segments.

- In *WebCT*, there were 0 transcript segments.

Corrective (with academic content):

Exhibit 4.97 lists messages that fall within the Corrective (with academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.97: Corrective (with academic content) messages

```
[YG] If changes are made to sites after the deadline, tribes
may very well be penalized if some people already did their
assessments.

[YG] Are you sure that you are using the right address? I
can access it without problems both from home and from the
office (read: from behind the dreaded firewall).
https://vc.up.ac.za/vc.cgi?port=login_sos

[YG] Some people gave another tribe a really solid mark when
the Tribal Assignment has not even been posted to the
Tribe's web site!

[YG] Others didn't bother to vote or assess their tribal
mates in terms of their collaborative behaviour which leaves
big gaps in the value of the entire exercise.

[YG] Could I ask you all to take things seriously this week?

[YG] If we find that it works better this time round, I will
consider a re-assessment session. We will then draw up the
official assessment criteria for the prior 2 Tribal
Assignments as well, and go through the process again.

[YG] This week immunity is not awarded for a game, but for a
typing test. See my previous email in this regard.

[YG] There was not necessarily serious academic discourse
(yet).

[YG] Because their address runs over 2 lines, the browser
only recognizes the first part as an http:// … address
```

In the final analyses, the Corrective (with academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

▪   In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 20 transcript segments.

▪   In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 0 transcript segments.

▪   In *WebCT*, there were 0 transcript segments.

Informative (with academic content):

Exhibit 4.98 lists messages that fall within the Informative (with academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.98: Informative (with academic content) messages

```
[YG] It is ESSENTIAL for you guys to talk to one another
about the game and about the assignments! This part of the
module is all about virtual community formation.

[YG] _____, I am not sure whether you don't understand what
is expected of you, or whether you simply haven't read the
assignment file that was uploaded to Yahoo Groups last
Thursday?

[YG] Keep our assessment template in mind in order to be
fair.

[WCT] Assignment 1 had to be uploaded to your tribal website
at the time. But, don't worry about it now, I will follow
the link from your e-mail.

[WCT] Please also check that all your links are working.

[YG] Yes, a thread makes it easy for you to see which email
is a reply to a previous one as the thread keeps them
together.

[YG] However, there is still a second question that remains
unanswered...

[YG] Good! That's the idea, even though I realise that it
must be stressful even to guys like yourself with a solid
Internet background
```

In the final analyses, the Informative (with academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

- In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 91 transcript segments.

- In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 111 transcript segments.

- In *WebCT*, there were 4 transcript segments.

Socratic (with academic content):

Exhibit 4.99 lists messages that fall within the Socratic (with academic content) category.

Exhibit 4.99: Socratic (with academic content) messages

```
[YG] Do their comments show that they actually experimented
with these tools (I suspect that many did play around with
Yahoo Messenger, but did anyone really get to use NetMeeting
to its fullest potential)? Did they give a clear indication
of the perceived educational value of each of the
functionalities?

[YG] Did they compare the value of the two products or did
they simply list their attributes in the table? Is there
substance in their evaluation of the functionalities?

[YG] It's true, there must be a thousand of new words,
acronyms and concepts in this course. Thanks for your
explanations above.

[YG] The value of transparency is debatable, as it may also
inhibit people to give an honest assessment (due to a number
of inexplicable human nature issues). But, the opposite is
also true, I give you that much.

[YG] I wish to encourage people to comment freely on the
sites of other tribes AND individuals in the ELearn2002
group.

[YG] When I reread my message this morning I was surprised
to see how cold and cross it sounded, when I actually
thought I was joking lightheartedly last night.

[YG] The fact that many of you are really worried about
writing the formal test, even though it is an open book
(browser) test, just proves to me that formal summative
testing is an evil practice that burdens students with
unnecessary levels of stress! ;-)

[YG] I would have wanted everyone to brainstorm on the
various elements related to elearning and then maybe split
the topics amongst themselves to go and research
```

In the final analyses, the Socratic (with academic content) transcript segments were distributed as follows:

▪ In *Yahoo Groups*, there were 9 transcript segments.

▪ In *Yahoo Messenger*, there were 5 transcript segments.

▪ In *WebCT*, there were 0 transcript segments.

Figure 4.16 provides a graphical representation of the analyses of all the message units. It is important to note that the 'Other' category is low. This might be an indication that the learners really stuck to discussing the topics at hand. A possible reason for 'Corrective'

being low was because the course revolved around process and not product. Exhibit 4.100 describes one of the learner's reflections during the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.100 [FG]:   A learner's reflections on the course as process and not product

```
This may sound contradictory, but I actually had a long
discussion again over Yahoo with Linda about some of the
work that we've done, and about the quality of the web pages
I think it was at that stage. And I said to her: you know,
this is about process, and she said: yes, it is about
process, but she also wanted quality in the web page. And if
you wanted feedback, I mean, if you really want to learn
HTML, you should go to one of these colleges and write in
for a three-day course or something. That's how I feel about
it. So I felt that it was entirely about process. And I
don't think that you really need Linda to tell you that your
web page was nice, was pretty.
```

Figure 4.16:   Summary of message units according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy
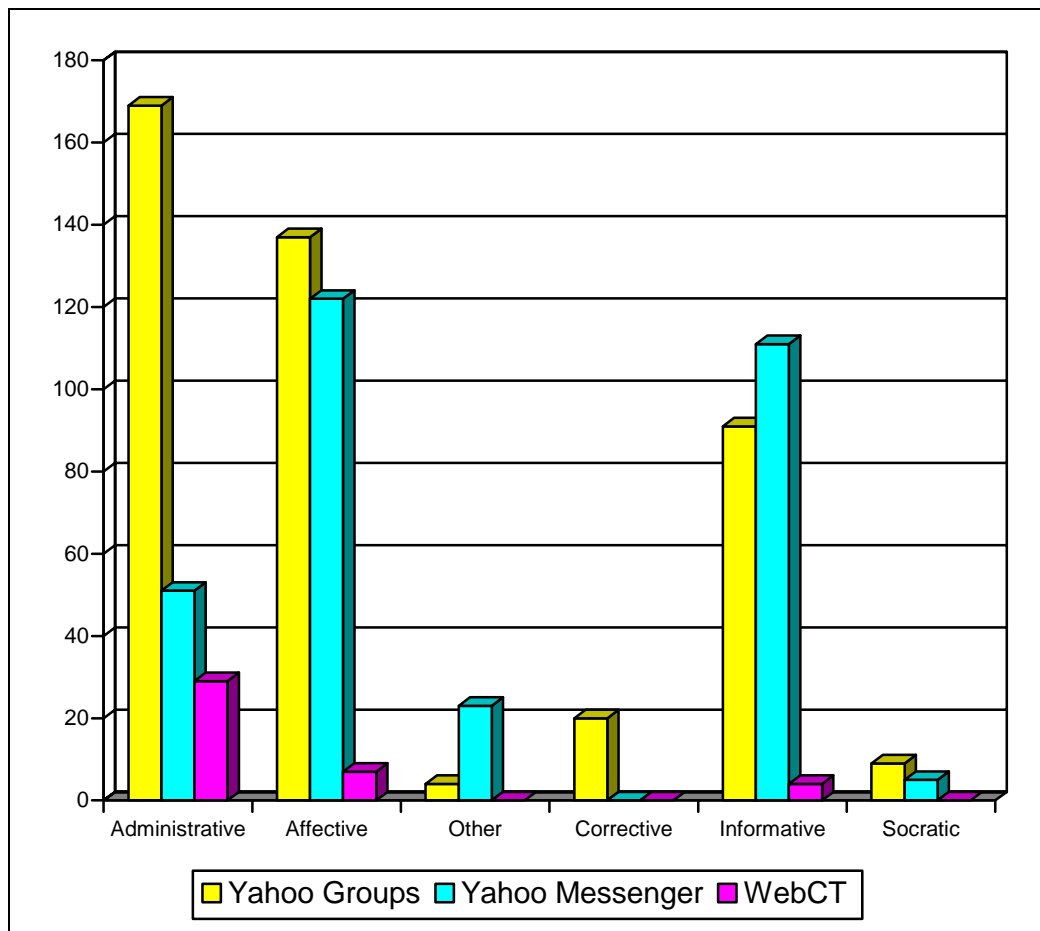
The online facilitator gave the learners a variety of assignments. These assignments often dealt with the hands-on skill of uploading content, 'ftp-ing' a page to the server and making hyperlinks. If the learners were successful in completing the various assignments, little corrective feedback was needed, indicating the low 'Corrective' score.

During the focus group interview, some of the learners commented that they would have enjoyed having more in-depth discussions on various topics as is reflected in Exhibit 4.101.

Exhibit 4.101 [FG]:   Learners' request for deeper discussions

```
What would have been nice, is if you really had some
interesting or controversial contents, which was about
online learning or something like that. And there may have
been a debate about that,

I would have liked more discussions.  Ja, deeper
discussions.  Deeper discussions. You said some more
cognitive discussions.  Ja, I agree with you. I think the…
learning that should have taken place, well maybe it did
take place in the end if you look back at it, and then it
took place in a constructive way. But also, I really felt
that at times that I missed discussing things, and to be
able to say what I've learned from this, or what I haven't
learned from it, while it was taking place, … I think that
the course equipped you very well to sit and have a
discussion with someone on online learning and what it's
about, where as if it had been a very structured
behaviourist course, here's the first guide in HTML: follow
these tutorials – it would not have had the same effect

No, I think it's on the student's side. A lot of what you
were learning depended upon yourself. How much you learn,
how deep you learn, and how driven you are yourself.
```

On the flip side, some learners replied that they did not think there was time to go into these 'deeper discussions' as is evident from Exhibit 4.102.

Exhibit 4.102 [FG]:   Learners' rebuttal on deeper discussions

```
I think if we had more time to work through the stuff, I
think we could have gone deeper into those discussions, but
there wasn't really time to go into deep-deep discussions
regarding a certain point.
```

This could possibly indicate why the 'Socratic' score was so low.

On completion of the various analyses according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy, the researcher could deduct that the online facilitator provided comprehensive administrative information, supported the learners in an affective manner and ensured that learners received comments on their postings as well as individual feedback. There was still no indication which roles made the online facilitator 'visible' to the learners. The researcher also had a concern in terms of how the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy would accommodate a conflict situation, as conflict is a pervasive part of all human relationships, including those in the electronic classroom (White & Weight, 2000).

Refer to:

- Annexure H for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Groups* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. (On CD ROM).

- Annexure I for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Messenger* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. (On CD ROM).

- Annexure J for an analysis of the message units in *WebCT* according to the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy. (On CD ROM).

4.5.2. *'Visible' facilitator roles*

The researcher conducted a second content analysis to identify the 'visible' facilitator roles. The content analysis of postings of asynchronous online courses can be analysed according to five methods, namely by participants, form, content, reference to participants and the function of the communication (Fulford & Sakaguchi, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a content analysis of postings created by the online facilitator to categorise the various 'visible' roles of the online facilitator. Content analysis can be defined as a set of research procedures that include identifying and defining a target variable, collecting examples of representative text and devising reliable and valid rules for categorising segments of the text (Anderson *et al.* 2001:10).

There are five units of analysis for research on computer conferencing (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer, 1999), namely proposition, sentence, paragraph, thematic and message units. Thematic units can be defined as a 'single thought unit or idea unit that conveys a single item of information extracted from a segment of information' (Rourke *et al.* 1999:60). Thematic units were used as the unit of analysis for this part of the study because it enabled the researcher to capture the essence of each communication and more than one code could be assigned to each posting.

'Visibility' was the crux of this investigation. The researcher used the Blignaut and Trollip (2003) taxonomy as a base line. The various categories were transformed into roles, taking into account how each category was defined and ring fenced. However, the researcher looked for indicators that would reflect 'visibility' on the part of the online facilitator. The researcher also considered what the learners and online facilitator had to say regarding the 'visibility' of the online facilitator and what the learners and online facilitator recommended could improve the 'visibility' of the online facilitator. Five roles

were identified (administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator) and five different coding schemes were designed. Thereafter, all the online facilitator postings in *Yahoo Groups*, *WebCT* and *Yahoo Messenger* were categorised against the five 'visible' roles.

4.5.3. *Role of Administrator*

The 'Administrative' category was converted to 'Administrator'. The online facilitator fulfilling the role of the administrator had to ensure timeous and smooth course operations to enhance the learners' comfort levels. The administrator's actions provide the framework for learning and reduce learner anxiety with regards to course content and procedures (Learning Peaks, 2001).

The online facilitator also saw the necessity for this role and indicated that Frequently Asked Questions could be used as a help tool. Exhibit 4.103 provides evidence for the role of the Administrator as extracted from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.103 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Administrator

```
Daar was ook 'n sterk administratiewe komponent – deurgaans
moes jy ouens herinner van goed wat gedoen moet word en dan
kontrolleer of hulle dit gedoen het.
[Translation:  There was also a strong administrative
component.  On a continual basis you had to remind the guys
of things to do and then check whether everything was done.]

Dis hoekom ek in die volgende een definitief FAQ sal gebruik
wat 'n tipe van 'n helpdesk is
[Translation:  That is why, in the next one (online course)
I will definitely use FAQ that can be utilised as a type of
help desk]
```

In Exhibit 4.104 one of learners suggested that prerequisites could be posted to the site to give the 'to be learners' an indication of what the course consisted of. The extract was taken from the focus group interview. This clearly falls within the realm of the Administrator.

Exhibit 4.104 [FG]:   Post pre-requisites for an online course

```
I think what should have been done, is to post a set of
prerequisites before you start this course. You need to be
able to do this and this and this…
```

Table 4.1 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the
Administrator. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.1:   Coding scheme for the Administrator

Indicators	Examples
Share group names	`[YG] Just to confirm the tribes with you guys`
Confirm communication protocol, communication tools and passwords	`[YG] You are encouraged to e-mail one another, to schedule tribal chat sessions, to leave messages on the bulletin board and to send each other instant messages on line`
Supply tools, URLs, links and download options	`[YG] One last web page ...to be visited as part of the Surfiver module!` http://207.89.188.135/eoti.htm
Post important dates and times	`[YG] I will collate the votes and let you know who's been voted off into the new Tribe 5 by Sunday 14:00 at the latest.`
Post reminders	`[WCT] EVERYONE: PLEASE VOTE BEFORE 18:00!`
Present information on the course and assignments	`[YG] This week's assignment is once again listed under 'Files'.`
Inform learners about 'office hours' or when the online facilitator will not be available	`[YG] Subject: Long weekend ...` `Hi everyone` `Just to let you know that I will be away for the long weekend. 'See' you all again next week.`

4.5.4. *Role of Social Supporter*

The 'Affective' and 'Other' categories were converted to 'Social Supporter' (Choden, 2002). The online facilitator fulfilling the role of the social supporter has to maintain the social and emotional rapport within the group. The social supporter needs to connect with the learners in an informal way, look after the social interaction within the group, be alert to individual emotional turmoil and introduce some fun into the learning experience, irrespective of the course content. 'Remember the 4-F motto – Be Firm, Fair, Flexible, and *Fun*!' (Hiss, 2000:26).

The learners felt that this was an important role for the online environment as is revealed in Exhibit 4.105. The extract was taken from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.105 [FG]:   A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – from a learner's perspective

```
Yes, so there must be a role like a supporter of something
like that.  I do not have the exact title, but she looked
after us.  I often spoke to her on Yahoo Messenger and she
was always supportive, not only in terms of the course work.
She wanted to know how I was doing.
```

The online facilitator concurred to the role of the social supporter as is described in Exhibit 4.106. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.106 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – from the online facilitator's perspective

```
Ook om emosionale ondersteuning te gee.  Ek het dikwels gesê
die einde is amper daar of volgende week sal ligter wees.
[Translation:  to give emotional support as well.  I often
said the end is in sight or next week will be easier.]
```

According to the online facilitator, it was also important to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere as is indicated in Exhibit 4.107. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview. This is a role that the social supporter would fulfil.

Exhibit 4.107 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Social Supporter – creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere

```
Ouens was gestres en gespanne en as jy bietjie 'n smile kan
bring, dan relax ouens weer en sien maar dis net werk.  Dis
nie lewe en dood nie.  Ons kan maar grapies maak ook.
[Translation:  The guys were stressed and anxious and if you
brought a smile then they would relaxed again and realise
that it was only work.  This is not a matter of life or
death.  We can make the odd joke.]
```

Table 4.2 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Social Supporter. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.2:   Coding scheme for the Social Supporter

Indicators	Examples
Create a friendly environment	`[YM] That's good, you'll find it encouraging to see others online as well when you work late at night`
Provide emotional support	`[YG] Hang in there`
Provide one-on-one exchanges	`[YM] Do give it a try, you can't go wrong with Yahoo Messenger, smile.`
Reveal something personal about yourself and use I-messages	`[YM] I had a lovely weekend in Messina of all places!  In the bush all weekend long, with no Internet connection within at least 50 km!`
Enhance collaboration	`[WCT] Wow, this is quite a nice start, Dave and Tribe e-Learn-a-Long!`
Give learners the opportunity to ask for help	`[YG] you are welcome to e-mail me personally so that I can talk you through the assignments.  This offer stands for all the other 'Suvivors' as well.`
Introduce humour and use emoticons	`[WCT] I'll keep that in mind (just so you know, ;))`
Reflect on happenings	`[YG] I recognize the fact that this week's voting is going to be really difficult for you guys.`
Thank learners for what they are doing	`[YG] Must say I am soo impressed with you guys. Your willingness to help each other and to share your knowledge is great and shows that we have indeed created a lively, caring online learning community!`

Use appropriate and personalised endings in all messages	`[YG] Good luck with this last stretch! Hope the test goes well tomorrow for all of you!`
	`eGreetings`
	`L`

4.5.5. *Role of Instructor*

The 'Corrective' and 'Informative' categories were converted to 'Instructor'. The online facilitator, fulfilling the role of the instructor, has to facilitate the learning process, which involves direct instruction that utilises his/her subject matter expertise. The instructor refers learners to information resources and organises activities that allow the learners to construct their own personal meaning (Anderson *et al*, 2001). Asking questions and assessing learners form part of this role. It is for this reason that individual feedback needs to be frequent, consistent, timely and diplomatic (Bischoff, 2000). Instructors play a crucial role in maintaining the viability of their online course because they keep learners motivated and focused on the instructional objectives of the course and facilitate interactive information exchanges (Mazoué, 1999:108).

The learners also experienced the online facilitator as an instructor as is described in Exhibit 4.108. The extract was taken from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.108 [FG]: A role for the online facilitator as Instructor –
from the learners' perspective

```
Can we say that she was also a SME – she knew a lot about
elearning and to make the face puzzle and all the games that
we had to play – she knows the Internet.  I don't know where
she sometimes got all her ideas.  That Morse code exercise
for example.  Perhaps she could also be seen as an
instructor/teacher.  At a stage I was very confused with the
mindmap and then she gave our group ideas what to look for.
Remember she also said that we were doing things wrong – on
the mindmap.  Then I spke to her on Yahoo Messenger and she
gave us examples of what to do.
```

Table 4.3 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Instructor. Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.3:   Coding scheme for the Instructor

Indicators	Examples
Focus on the learning process	[YG] There was not necessarily serious academic discourse (yet). Tomorrow evening we'll discuss this some more.
Provide explanations	[YG] It is ESSENTIAL for you guys to talk to one another about the game and about the assignments! This part of the module is all about virtual community formation. That implies that you should transfer your normal mode of communication (telephone/face-2-face contact) to the virtual environment (the www).
Provide individual feedback	[YG] _____, I am not sure whether you don't understand what is expected of you, or whether you simply haven't read the assignment file that was uploaded to Yahoo Groups last Thursday?
Ask questions	[WCT] Does everyone know ...what I am talking about when I use terms such as SYNCHRONOUS and ASYNCHRONOUS communication? Would anyone like to try and explain what they mean?
Give instructions	[YG] Individually you only need to upload your sites to Hagar, change your shelter.gif and upload the sound file this week.
Use your subject matter expertise	[YG] You could also log onto one of the servers and have your name listed there, but sometimes that leaves you open for unwanted interest from other 'interesting' people out there. Best way of doing this type of thing is to remain in contact using Yahoo Messenger whilst trying to connect through NetMeeting. That way if something goes wrong, at least you have a backup.

4.5.6. *Role of Guide*

The 'Socratic' category was converted to 'Guide'. The online facilitator fulfilling the role of a guide has to encourage interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge. The guide needs to make time so that the learners can reflect on experiences. The guide provides direction and advice to the individual and group in terms of the course content to encourage all learners reach their full potential.

In Exhibit 4.109, one learner commented on his sound file about a guidance role:

Exhibit 4.109 [SF]:   A role for the online facilitator as Guide –
from a learner's perspective

```
I have heard from other team members that they are
completely lost and I think that a little bit more guidance
would be necessary to help everybody through.
```

The online facilitator asked the following question during the face-to-face interview, which is captured in Exhibit 4.110.

Exhibit 4.110 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Guide –
a question by the online facilitator

```
sometimes I suggested what to do, is that a guide?
```

Table 4.4 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Guide.

Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.4:   Coding scheme for the Guide

Indicators	Examples
Inform learners that you, as online facilitator, are addressing their problem or issue	`[YG] I will follow up and ask Johannes.`
Provide helpful and additional information	`[YG] Set the time to 2 minutes.`
Encourage collaboration	`[WCT] This week it shouldn't be a problem as all the tribes still have at least 3 members`
Keep learners motivated	`[YG] I am happy with the (steep) learning curve that I detect in most of the tribal members even after only one week in the online class.`
Provide a challenge	`[YG] The first person to respond to this e-mail with the correct answers will win a (real) reward on Thursday evening.`
Work one-on-one with an individual to fulfil his/her potential	`[WCT] But, don't worry about it now, I will follow the link from your e-mail. Thanks you.`
Put learners at ease	`[YG] Nothing wrong on your side.  It was only my Yahoo Mailbox that was overflowing! I cleaned it up now so it shouldn't happen again.`

4.5.7. *Role of Mediator*

An extra role was added, which is the role of mediator (Ambrose, 2001). This role was necessary as the group experienced conflict situations. The online facilitator fulfilling the role of the mediator has to ensure fair play within the group.

Exhibit 4.111 reveals a learner's answer in her formal test response on working with other team members.

Exhibit 4.111 [FTR]: A role for the online facilitator as Mediator –
a learner's perspective on team work

```
I hated the first tribe.  The only other person that was
more or less active – only when it suited him – refused to
work on his own cost at night and during weekends with the
result that he only worked during office hours from his
office … while I tried to run a business during the day and
only worked at night – like most of the other students.
With the new tribes formed I was in seventh heaven!
```

Exhibit 4.112 reveals a learner's reflections on his sound file regarding peer evaluation.

Exhibit 4.112 [SF]:   A role for the online facilitator as Mediator –
a learner's perspective on peer evaluation

```
The only negative, and perhaps it is actually a positive, is
accepting the criticism of others.  I did not like peer
evaluation.  Everyone seemed to be applying different
criteria for the evaluation of websites.
```

In Exhibit 4.113 the online facilitator acknowledged that she played the role of a mediator. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.113 [FtoF]: A role for the online facilitator as Mediator –
the online facilitator's perspective

```
Ek moes op 'n stadium konflik ook uitsorteer, so dit was
miskien 'n konflikhanteerder.  Arbiter tipe rol.
[Translation:  At one stage I had to handle conflict, so
that could be a mediator.  Arbitrator type role.]
```

Table 4.5 provides the indicators that were used as a coding scheme for the Mediator.
Examples are provided from the actual transcript segments.

Table 4.5:   Coding scheme for the Mediator

Indicators	Examples
Ensure standards of fair play	`[YG] If changes are made to sites after the deadline, tribes may very well be penalized if some people already did their assessments.`
Intervene in difficult situations	`[YG] How are things going in Messenger and NetMeeting? Have all the tribes started playing with these tools yet? Let me know well in advance if you are not getting any joy from your tribal mates so that we can arrange for you to 'play' along with another tribe. It is important that you get hands-on experience with these tools.`
Build consensus	`[YG] If we find that it works better this time round, I will consider a re-assessment session.  We will then draw up the official assessment criteria for the prior 2 Tribal Assignments as well, and go through the process again.`
Sort out disputes	`[WCT] This time round I will not take the first correct answer (thanks to all who pointed out that it was totally unfair the previous time round;-).`

Figure 4.17 provides a graphical representation of the analyses of all the message units according to the five roles of Administrator, Social Supporter, Instructor, Guide and Mediator.

Figure 4.17:   Summary of message units according to the five online facilitator roles
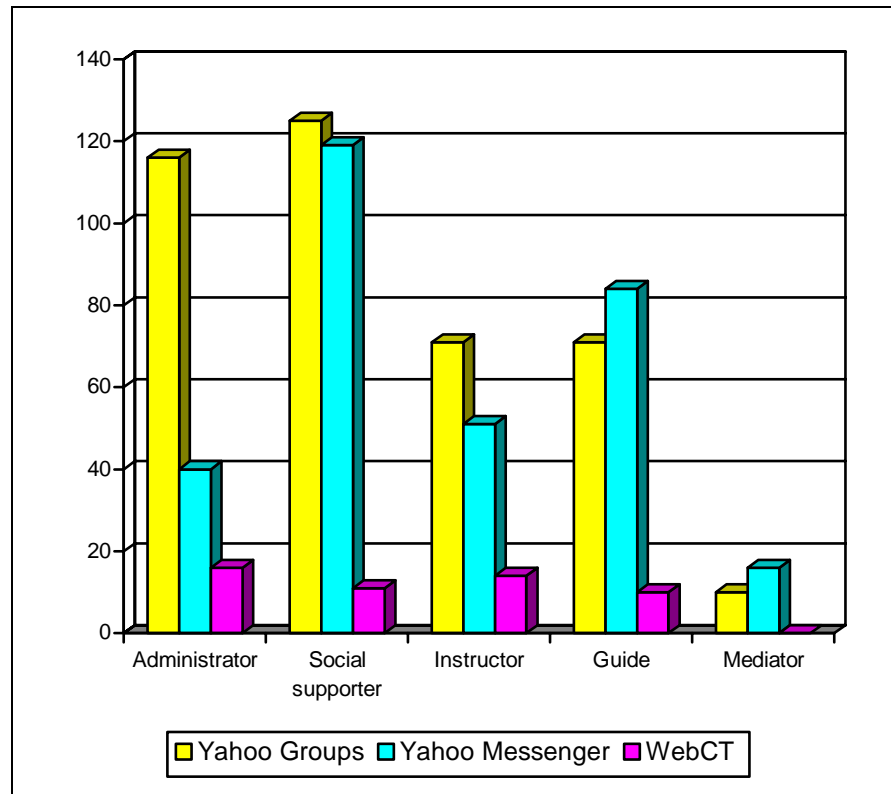
Refer to:

- Annexure H for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Groups* according to the five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).

- Annexure I for an analysis of the message units in *Yahoo Messenger* according to the five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).

- Annexure J for an analysis of the message units in *WebCT* according to the five online facilitator roles. (On CD ROM).

4.5.8. *Summary*

For visibility the online facilitator fulfilled five roles. As **administrator**, she conducted timeous course administration. This was evident from the following indicators: share group names; confirm communication protocols, communication tools and passwords;

supply tools, URLs, links and download options; post important dates and time; post reminders; present information on the course and assignments and inform learners when the online facilitator will not be available. As **social supporter**, she maintained social and emotional support. This was evident from the following indicators: create a friendly environment; provide emotional support; provide one-on-one exchanges; reveal something personal about yourself and use I-messages; enhance collaboration; give learners the opportunity to ask for help; introduce humour and use emoticons; reflect on happenings; thank learners for what they are doing and use appropriate and personalised endings in all messages. As **instructor**, she facilitated the learning process. This was evident from the following indicators: focus on the learning process; provide explanations; provide individual feedback; ask questions; give instructions and use your subject matter expertise. Just because learners are not physically present does not mean that an instructor can forget about their learners (Mazoué, 1999). As **guide**, she encouraged interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge. This was evident from the following indicators: inform learners that you are addressing their problem or issue; provide helpful and additional information; encourage collaboration; keep learners motivated; provide a challenge; work one-on-one with an individual to fulfil his/her potential and put learners at ease. Clued-up guides do not risk losing their learners by abandoning them in cyberspace (Mazoué, 1999). As **mediator**, she ensured fair play. This was evident from the following indicators: ensure standards of fair play; intervene in difficult situations; build consensus and sort out disputes. If problems occurred, the online facilitator intervened to resolve the problems. Fulfilling these five roles would provide for online facilitator visibility.

4.6. What challenges did the online facilitator face?

Fifty-six exhibits have been selected from the raw data to show that the online facilitator had to manage various challenges during *CyberSurfiver*.

In the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator she explicitly stated that good planning was imperative for an online course and that the facilitator had to consider time implications for assignments as is stated in Exhibit 4.114. She concluded that an online facilitator had to anticipate the potential for trouble and plan accordingly.

> **Exhibit 4.114 [FtoF]:** The online facilitator on anticipating the potential for trouble

```
Ek dink 'n ou moet baie gestruktureerd wees.  Jy moet baie
deeglike beplanning doen.  Jy moet baie pertinent weet
waarvoor jy jou inlaat.  Jy moet antisipeer hoe lank goed
vat om te doen.  'n Mens moet weet byvoorbeeld dat online
discussions neem langer as 'n telefoongesprek.  So waar 'n
telefoongesprek 10 minute gaan neem voor 'n ding
uitgesorteer gaan wees, gaan online dieselfde oefening dalk
'n week vat.  'n Ou moet die heeltyd antisipeer wat die
potensiaal vir moeilikihied is, en dit probeer ondervat.
[Translation:  You have to be well structured.  You have to
plan thoroughly.  You have to know what you are letting
yourself in for.  You have to anticipate the time
implications for various activities.  You must realise, for
example, that online discussions take longer than telephone
calls.  Where a telephone discussion may take 10 minutes, to
sort out the same problem online may take a week.  One
constantly has to anticipate the potential for trouble and
plan accordingly.]
```

On reflecting on this course, the online facilitator had her fair share of problems, dilemmas, conflict and confusion as is revealed in Exhibit 4.115. This abstract was taken from the self-administered questionnaire that the online facilitator completed during August 2003.

> **Exhibit 4.115 [Q]:** The online facilitator reflected on the challenges of *CyberSurfiver*

```
In CyberSurfiver practically everything that could go wrong
did.  Learners didn't listen properly to the instructions at
the first f2f encounter we had, and this meant that the
entire first week was chaotic.  Learners didn't access
regularly and missed deadlines due to confusion.  Seeing how
things can go horribly wrong, even when details had received
careful planning and attention, means that an online
facilitator needs to have a tolerance for stress that is
almost supernatural.

I battled the first week in particular, when nothing
happened as I anticipated it would, and had a hard time
masking my own insecurities as a facilitator.
```

4.6.1. *Mayhem during Week 1*

There was mayhem during Week 1 of the course. During the first weekend the online facilitator, eager to assist and guide the learners on *Yahoo Groups*, realised that something had to be wrong because very little interaction took place. Exhibit 4.116 gives a detailed account of the anguish of the online facilitator during the first weekend of the course. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.116 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's anguish during Week 1

```
Die heel eerste naweek  … was ek die heeltyd online, en ek
het gewag vir daai response wat moet kom, en ek was geweldig
bekommerd toe ek sien niks gebeur nie, want ek weet mos nou
hulle het net die week, so as hulle 'n naweek laat verbygaan
is daar net drie dae, en dan is die week klaar.  Die kursus
het van Donderdag tot Donderdag geloop.  En dit het my groot
laat skrik.  En die Maandag toe die ouens so begin praat,
het ek onmiddellik gereageer, en onmiddellik probeer
terugvoer gee.  Dan het ek onmiddellik ge-e-mail en gesê:
Wat is dit!  As jy nie die opdrag het, hier moet jy dit kry.
As jy dit nie verstaan nie, dit is wat jy moet doen.
[Translation:  I was online throughout the whole of the
first weekend and waited for responses which did not
materialise, and I was extremely worried when I realised
that nothing was happening, knowing that they had only a
week, so if a weekend passed, there are only three days left
to complete the assignment.  The course ran from Thursday to
Thursday.  This gave me a big fright.  On the Monday when
the guys started responding I immediately reacted and
responded with feedback.  I would immediately e-mail, saying
what is the matter.  If you haven't got the assignment, this
is where to get it.  If you do not understand, this is what
you must do.]
```

The online facilitator soon realised what the mistake was as is reflected in the *Yahoo Groups* message in Exhibit 4.117.

Exhibit 4.117 [YG]:   The *Yahoo Groups* mistake

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Tue Jul 23, 2002 5:13 pm
Subject:   Re: [Elearn2002] Great stuff!!
Answering _____
Your e-mail message on my screen does not have a frame on
the left side, never mind a link.  Furthermore I cannot
access E-Learn2002 from my present Yahoo ID!
I was obviously in Yahoo Groups when I replied (late last
night!) and completely forgot that most of you would
probably receive my message as an e-mail. Apologies!
However, you need to ask _____ to link your ID to the course
asap!  All your assignments for this part of the module will
be posted there.
```

During the face-to-face interview session with the online facilitator, she was reflecting on the mayhem of Week 1 and tried to pinpoint where the confusion had crept in, because she really thought that she had planned this course well – the *CyberSurfiver* Introduction

and Planning for Week 1 were uploaded to the 'Files' section on *Yahoo Groups*. Exhibit 4.118 provides evidence for the confusion of Week 1, taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.118 [FtoF]: The origin of the confusion of Week 1

```
Op die heel eerste aand het ons mos die kontaksessie gehad
wat Johannes so half vir my die geleentheid gegee het om net
vinnig te sê waaroor dit gaan, en om hulle in groepe in te
deel, en om die bal net aan die rol te sit.  En op daai
eerste aand toe hulle nou in hulle groepe ingedeel is, toe
sê ek vir hulle:  OK, as groep moet julle nou na die web toe
gaan.  Onder daai hofie lê nou julle eerste week se
assignment.  En dit het die ouens nie gehoor nie.  So daai
hele eerste naweek se stilte en stilswye en histerie toe
hulle nou actually agterkom wat hulle alles moet doen, was
onnodig gewees.
[Translation:  On the first evening we had the face-to-face
contact session where Johannes gave me the opportunity to
quickly reveal what the course was about and to group the
learners so that the course could commence.  On this
occasion, after the groups were formed, I told the learners,
you now have to go to the web and under a certain heading
you will find the first week's assignment.  And this
instruction the guys did not hear.  So the first weekend's
silences and hysterics when they discovered what actually
had to be done, was quite unnecessary.]
```

The online facilitator acknowledged that she made two mistakes with regards to the mayhem of Week 1. In Exhibit 4.119 the online facilitator suggested solutions that she could have used to avoid the learner confusion during the face-to-face contact session on 18 July 2002. This extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.119 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's solutions to the learner confusion during the face-to-face contact session

```
So my fout was twee-erlei: ek kon of een, vir hulle al die
opdragte gegee het voordat ons die oefeninge gedoen het,
sodat ek nog hulle onverdeelde aandag gehad het, of
alternatiewelik, moes ek vir hulle weer 'n e-mail
onmiddellik daai aand uitgestuur het.
[Translation:  I made two mistakes.  Firstly, I could have
given them all the assignments before doing the group
exercise so that I had their undivided attention, or
alternatively, I should have sent e-mail again that
evening.]
```

In Exhibit 4.120 the online facilitator admitted that she did not know *Yahoo Groups*. She further explained what the *Yahoo Groups* dilemma was and that she was not the only ignorant person who was unaware that in *Yahoo Groups* a setting existed to receive messages as e-mails. Some of the learners were unaware that a website was linked to the e-mail message. However, she took it for granted that the learners knew how to use this tool because all the learners and instructors who participate in the Master's degree in

Computer Assisted Education use *Yahoo Groups* as their asynchronous communication channel. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.120 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's ignorance with *Yahoo Groups*

```
Maar die groot verwarring het by my ingekom.  Yahoo Groups
het 'n web presence, maar hy't ook 'n opsie wat jy as
individu kan kies om te sê dat as ouens met mekaar
kommunikeer in Yahoo se web presence, dat dit as 'n e-mail
na jou toe gestuur word.  Die ouens wat die email gekry het,
het nooit na die website gaan kyk nie.  En ek, dom wat ek
is, wat van die kant af inkom, ek gebruik nie Yahoo – ek
gebruik WebCT as 'n reël met my goed.  Dis Johannes se
kursusspasie.  So ek verstaan nie hierdie dilemma nie.  Ek
kom as 'n guest lecturer in en gebruik nou maar sy tools.
Ek gaan in, sien hier's 'n bulletin board, skryf my
boodskappe daar, post my goed onder file, so ek neem aan
almal is in daai omgewing.  En dit was eers later, hier by
die tweede helfte van die week, hier by die Maandag of die
Dinsdag rond, wat ek toe agterkom, maar die ouens is nie op
die web nie.  Die ouens kry hulle boodskappe per e-pos, en
dit was 'n groot probleem, want ek het ge-antisipeer dat as
ek sê dit is in jou website, gaan hulle presies weet waar.
Maar hulle weet nie, baie van hulle het nie eers geweet dat
daar 'n web site is wat aan daai email gekoppel is nie.
[Translation:  I caused the confusion.  Yahoo Groups has a
web presence, but it also has an option that an individual
can set to receive e-mails.  The guys receiving the e-mail
never went to the web site.  And in my ignorance I had never
used Yahoo and I am only accustomed to WebCT.  Yahoo Groups
is Johannes' course space and I was not aware of the Yahoo
setup.  I was a guest lecturer and used his tools.  On
entering the site, I saw a bulletin board and wrote my
message there, posted my files and took it for granted that
everyone knew this environment.  It was only later, during
the second half of the week, around Monday or Tuesday that I
discovered that the guys were not on the web.  The guys
received their messages as e-mail messages, which caused a
great problem.  As I anticipated, if I said go to the
website, they would know where to go.  But the guys were not
aware of this fact that there was a website linked to the e-
mail message.]
```

In order to remedy the first week's mayhem, the online facilitator decided to arrange another face-to-face contact session with the learners on the following Thursday evening, 25 July 2002.

In Exhibit 4.121 the online facilitator admitted that she had to provide 'first aid' to this very confused group in order to put them on track again. All of a sudden the group was receptive to the same information that was revealed during the first contact session. In conclusion, the online facilitator confessed that this type of treatment would not happen again, because she would, in future, be much more explicit in her instructions to the learners. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.121 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's 'first aid' to a confused group of learners

```
En in daai sessie het ek toe die ground rules gestel, wat ek
gesê het:  vergeet van die geld, jy gaan moet online wees.
Vergeet van die en daai, commit tot hierdie, commit tot
daai.  Toe't ek so half dit wat ek in die inleidingsdokument
gesit het, eksplisiet gesê.  Die goed wat hulle nie mooi
verstaan het nie, het ek vir hulle verklaar en verduidelik –
toe't hulle geluister.  Die vorige keer was dit net: o, dis
'n kursus, ons gaan 'n game speel, en hier's ons nou in
groepies, en goed het by hulle verby gegaan, terwyl met
hierdie sessie het hulle nou 'n week se trauma, genuide
trauma, agter die rug, en toe was hulle baie ontvanklik en
oop, en toe't hulle acutally regtig geluister.  Hulle was
ontvanklik.  Ek moes die leerders akkommodeer.  Dis nou maar
die enigste ding.  Ek sal nie in die vervolg weer doen nie,
want ek sal dit vervang deur vooraf, in die begin, die goed
baie eksplisiet te stel.  Maar dit was noodhulp wat nodig
was op daai stadium, die stresvlakke was so hoog.
[Translation:  In the second face-to-face session I spelt
out the ground rules and I told the group to forget about
the money, you have to be online.  Forget about irrelevant
stuff and commit to the necessary.  I sort of covered the
introductory document explicitly.  Those issues that they
did not understand, I now again clarified and they listened.
With the first face-to-face session they thought oh, this is
a course, we are going to play a game, we are going to be
put into groups, and important information just went by
them.  Now, after a first week of trauma, genuine trauma,
they were receptive and open and actually listened.  I had
to accommodate the learners.  But this won't happen again.
In future, I will start off right, by being very explicit in
all my instructions.  I had to provide first aid because the
stress levels were so high.]
```

4.6.2. *Computer literacy*

The online facilitator commented that she had thought that the learners would have had a certain level of computer competence when they enrolled for this course. Unfortunately, this was not the case. This was an important learning curve for the online facilitator – do not take things for granted, especially when it concerns computer proficiency. The online facilitator admitted that it was important, although difficult, to place herself in the learner's place.

In Exhibit 4.122 the online facilitator suggested ideas how to establish learners' computer skills, in future, by making use of a questionnaire or organising a training session. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.122 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's views on establishing learners' computer skill level

```
Ek dink 'n ander aspek wat geweldig belangrik is, is dat jy
die heeltyd jouself in die skoene van die leerder moet sit,
want ek het baie keer 'n ding gestel, en aangeneem hulle
rekenaarskerms lyk soos myne.  'n Ou moet bewus wees van die
vlak waarop jou studente operate.  Dit was vir my moeilik.
Ek het net aanvaar almal is  …dit gaan oor rekenaargesteunde
onderwys.  Ek het 'n minimum intreevlak aanvaar, wat baie
beslis nie so was nie.  So dit was verseker, ek dink miskien
kan 'n ou aan die begin dalk op 'n manier met 'n vraelys of
iets daai tipe van informasie kry.  Selfs met 'n
opleidingsessie byvoorbeeld.  So as jy wil hê hulle moet net
leer hoe om die bulletin board te gebruik, kan jy vir julle
sê, gaan skryf op die bulletin board watter
rekenaarvaardighede het jy, wat voel jy gemaklik mee, en wat
is nuut vir jou, watter rekenaar het jy?  Het jy 'n Pentium,
of sit jy nog met 'n 486, of wat ookal, sodat 'n ou net 'n
bietjie beter begrip het, want as jy verstaan dat jou
leerders dinge anders sien, dan maak dit van jou
misverstande duideliker
[Translation:  I found that it was important to put yourself
in the learner's place, because I often took for granted
that their screens were the same as mine.  You have to be
aware of the level at which the students are operating.  I
found that difficult.  I just took it for granted that
everybody was on the same level … this is about computer-
based education.  I anticipated a minimum entry level, but
this was definitely not the case.  Perhaps in future, one
could establish this through a questionnaire, even with a
training session.  So if you want to teach them how to use a
bulletin board, you can tell them to enter their respective
computer skills, level of ease, what is new to them and type
of computer they own?  Do you own a Pentium or do you still
have a 486 or whatever… to enable the facilitator to
understand their computer levels and to eliminate
misunderstandings.]
```

Apart from the fact that the learners were placed under tight deadlines, the learners experienced problems working with various eLearning tools. This is evident in Exhibit 4.123, extracted from the focus group interview.

Exhibit 4.123 [FG]:   A worried learner, not knowing how to use eLearning tools

```
I still feel Linda should be aware the next time about the
time constraints that are placed on the learners for
achieving so much without really being provided with the
necessary tools and to use them to do what you should do by
the end of each week.
```

One learner, in the formal test response, commented on the technical capabilities of the learners in general and questioned the fairness of the module. The learner's thoughts are stated in Exhibit 4.124.

Exhibit 4.124 [FTR]: A learner questions the fairness of the module

```
I think there was a distinct element of exclusivity in the
module.  Only the ones with highly developed computer skills
could ever feel comfortable with the course expectations.  I
do not think the expectations of what students are supposed
to master, was spelled out clear enough.  Too many students
could not cope technically – were they supposed to be
allowed to enrol for it if they did not have sufficient
skills?  Did anyone do them a favour?
```

In order to alleviate the problems with eLearning tools, the online facilitator indicated that she would adjust the course to incorporate a training session during the first face-to-face contact session. In Exhibit 4.125 the online facilitator suggested various exercises that the learners could complete in a computer laboratory to give the learners the opportunity to experience the eLearning environment before starting with the actual course assignments. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.125 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on giving the learners the
opportunity to experiment with eLearning tools

```
En wat ek dalk ook sal doen is ek sal daai eerste sessie, as
mens die inleidingsgesprek met hulle het, bietjie opleiding
inbring.  Face-to-face.  Kontak.  Nie opleiding oor wat
hulle moet doen nie, bloot opleiding in die tools, sodat
hulle die tools kan gebruik.  Ek sal vir hulle 'n halfuur
lank – net 'n halfuur – in a lab wil hê, en sê hier's die
adres.  Gaan in, en stuur een email vir die ander mense wat
jy kan sien.  Reply op een email, sodat jy kan sien hoe
reply mens.  Laai 'n dokument op, dat jy kan voel hoe werk
dit, en skryf die toetsie, wat sommer iets sal wees soos hoe
voel jy oor die kursus vat voorlê.  Net dat hulle die
ervaring kry.  Net die basiese goed?  En dit hoef nie meer –
ek vra nou 'n halfuur, maar 'n uur sal tien-teen-een genoeg
wees om regtig almal gemaklik te hê in die omgewing wat 'n
ou gaan gebruik.
[Translation:  What I would probably also do is to use the
first introductory session for a bit of training.  Face-to-
face.  Contact.  Not training about what they have to do,
simply training in the use of the tools so that they can use
them.  I would want them in a lab for half an hour – only
half an hour – and say here is the address, go in and send
an e-mail to the other people present, reply to one e-mail
so that you can see how it is done, load a document so that
you can feel how it works and write the test which will
simple ask them about their feelings on the course ahead,
just so that they can get the experience.  Just the basics.
I say half an hour, but I will probably need an hour to get
everybody comfortable in the online environment.]
```

In hindsight, the online facilitator agreed that this group of learners wasted time and mental energy on trouble-shooting and not necessarily on eLearning. This is evident in Exhibit 4.126, extracted from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.126 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on spending time on trouble-shooting

```
So ek dink dis 'n onnodige leerkurwe wat die ouens met
hierdie sessie hoef deur te gegaan het.  Hulle het tyd en
mental energie spandeer op goed wat nie noodwendig oor e-
learning gegaan het nie, maar oor trouble shooting - van
waar kry ek hierdie goed, en hoe kom ek daarby uit, wat ook
leer is
[Translation:  Thus, I think that it was an unnecessary
learning curve that these guys had to go through in this
course.  They spent time and mental energy on matters not
necessarily related to elearning, but concerning trouble
shooting about where do I find this and how do I do that,
which is learning.]
```

The online facilitator concluded that she did not think that anything in the course was a waste of time, as is expressed in Exhibit 4.127, because the learners were involved in hands-on experience. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.127 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the *CyberSurfiver* experience

```
Ek voel niks in die kursus was tydmors nie.  Alles wat hulle
ervaar het, maak van hulle in die toekoms beter e-learning
fasiliteerders, want hulle het die goed aan hulle lyf
ervaar.
[Translation:  At the same time, I do not think anything in
this course was a waste of time.  Everything they went
through in this course will contribute to making better
facilitators of them because of hands-on experience.]
```

4.6.3. *Conflict*

There was a great deal of conflict in *CyberSurfiver*. During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she found the conflict very difficult and very personal, because this was her course. The online facilitator did not know whether the conflict was directed at her personally, or to her facilitation approach or the course *per se* as is described in Exhibit 4.128.

Exhibit 4.128 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on conflict

```
Ek dink die konflik was vir my nogal swaar.  Wel, ek weet
daar was konflik – ek weet nie of dit met my as persoon was
nie, maar met my benadering as fasiliteerder, of met die
kursus nie – wat ek baie persoonlik ervaar het, omdat dit my
kursus is, maar ook die konflik wat hulle tussen mekaar
gehad het, was vir my moeilik, en dan ook die ouens wat 'n
totaal ander benadering oor e-leer het as wat ek het.  Ouens
die heeltyd gemoan oor geld.  Ek … wou deur die dak spring
daaroor, dis een module wat eksplisiet oor e-leer gaan – jy
moet online wees om die ervaring te kan kry.  En online
beteken nou maar een maal geld, so, as 'n ou nie kan nie,
```

Exhibit 4.128 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on conflict

```
moet 'n ou maar ry universiteit toe, en daar gaan, gratis,
maar die effort is op jou.  Die onus rus op jou.  As jy
hierdie kursus doen, dan is dit waarin hierdie rigting is,
dan moet jy dit maar doen.
[Translation:  I found the conflict very difficult.  I know
there was conflict.  I do not know whether it was personal,
or my approach to facilitation or the course itself.  I
experienced it as very personal because it was my course.
The conflict between the learners was also difficult and of
course the guys who had a completely different approach to
elearning.  Guys constantly moaned about money, which caused
me to hit the ceiling.  This was one module that explicitly
covered elearning for which you had to have the online
experience.  Online means money.  If a guy cannot make it
s/he has to travel to the university where s/he can work
without cost, but the effort is his/hers.  The onus rests
with the learner.  If you are doing this course, this is
what is required and is what you have to do.]
```

The learners constantly complained about the cost factor, as was previously stated in Exhibit 4.34. The online facilitator responded effectively to the monetary issue, by providing the learners with an alternative solution as is described in Exhibit 4.128. The learners could drive to the university and work in the computer laboratory. In this way, the individual would not be accountable for the Internet account.

During the face-to-face interview with the online facilitator, she emphasised that she would introduce a learner's contract in a next course. One expects that this would probably curb all the unnecessary complaining from the learners' side. In Exhibit 4.129 the online facilitator stated what the learner's contract should consist of.

Exhibit 4.129 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on a learner's contract

```
Dis ook een iets wat ek anders sal doen as ek 'n volgende
kursus doen.  Ek sal baie eksplisiet 'n kontrak laat teken
aan die begin van die kursus.  Ek sal vir hulle sê daar is 3
goed wat jy onderneem, en as jy nie daai 3 goed onderneem
nie, dan mag jy nie die kursus loop nie.  En die eerste een
is dat die ouens besef dat daar gaan tyd en effort ingaan.
Die tweede ding is dat dit nie gaan maklik kom nie.  Dit
gaan effort wees.  Daar gaan goed wees wat gaan moeilik
wees, en dis 'n stywe leerkurwe, en dis baie nuwe goed wat
hulle gaan moet leer.  En die derde is dat hulle baie
pertinent bewus gemaak word van die kostes wat daaraan
verbonde is.
[Translation:  This is something I would change in a next
course.  I will have a signed learner's contract at the
beginning of the course.  I will inform the learners of
three undertakings on their part and if these undertakings
are not met, they can't enrol for the course.  Firstly, they
must realise that this is going to take time and effort.
Secondly, it is not going to be easy.  It will take effort.
There are difficult things and it will be a steep learning
curve with many new things to be conquered.  Thirdly, they
must be made aware of the costs involved.]
```

The game metaphor with the indirect competition element caused conflict amongst the learners. The online facilitator, in Exhibit 4.130, summarised the group's feelings about the game metaphor. These extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.130 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the game metaphor

```
Wat party ouens baie van gehou het, het ander ouens
pertinent gehaat.  Die speletjie idee was presies dit.
[Translation:  what some guys loved, the other hated.  This
was the case with the game idea.]
Baie van hulle het die kompetisiefaktor baie geniet, party
het dit gehaat.
[Translation:  Many enjoyed the competition factor; other
hated it.]
```

The online facilitator, during the face-to-face interview, reflected on her intention for using the competition element. The online facilitator's thoughts are reflected in Exhibit 4.131.

Exhibit 4.131 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the competition element

```
die idee was nie om een student teen 'n ander af te speel
nie.  Die kompetisie was nie op 'n vlak van akademie nie.
Dit was op die vlak van 'n speletjie en samewerking.  Die
bedoeling was dat die ouens moet saamwerk en geintegteerd
bydra tot 'n groep in geheel, eerder as met kompetisie met
'n ander individu.
[Translation:  it was not my idea to have one student
compete against another.  The competition was not on
academic level.  It was on the level of a game and co-
operation.  The objective was that the guys should co-
operate in an integrated group rather than compete with
another individual.]
```

The learners, in their formal test responses, revealed their thoughts on the game metaphor. An array of opinions were put forward, *inter alia* disliking voting people off, feeling like a castaway, slowing down the learning process, nice getting rid of people, causing stress, feeling demotivated and rejected and testing of social skills. Exhibit 4.132 provides a summary of the learners' thoughts.

Exhibit 4.132 [FTR]: The learners on the game metaphor

```
I did not like voting people off who did their share of the
work!

Yes, I could really identify with the metaphor, as I felt
like a castaway on a remote island most of the time.  I was,
however determined to make the most of the learning
opportunity, (some people pay a lot of money to spend time
on a remote tropical island in the middle of nowhere).
There came bottles with messages floating by every now and
again, just enough to keep going.  I felt quite abandoned,
as everybody else were competing for better and cleverer
stuff in their shelters and for the prize, I were still
learning to swim, which was my own doing for getting on
unprepared and halfway through.

As an avoider of conflict and a denier of competition, I
think it slowed down my learning.  It made me tense, which,
```

Exhibit 4.132 [FTR]: The learners on the game metaphor

```
together with the asynchronosity of the communication with
the rest of my group and sometimes deliberate unavailability
of contact with certain members, made me do more on my own –
even if my contributions weren't submitted by them.

Nice getting rid of people who did nothing!

… it was as though this a separate dynamic to the rest
of the process.  At times it was distracting.

… the stress it caused in my life is definitely a BIG
negative!

VERY GOOD GAME, if taken positively as a game not as a tool
to outcase those who are incapable YET.

Not everyone participated and at number 99 you had to do all
the work.  Cost me about R2000.

Metaphor or not, I have never learned so much in so little
time and been so severely challenged in my life before.  The
game was actually the sweetener to six weeks of real time
torture.  This is, however the most relevant course and has
left me with a new vision and a wish for time to explore the
possibilities and nitty gritty of online learning more.
Some aspects like the underlying administrative aspects are
still a bit of a mystery to me.  I came into it with no
previous knowledge or experience and walk away limping, but
informed.

The whole process affected my learning process as I was
voted out and put in a tribe that did not function and the
same time felt demotivated and rejected by my group.  Since
then I did not gain much whereas other members were learning
and gaining more experiences.  Maybe the Survivor metaphor
was introduced too early in the module.

I am not fond of playing games.  It makes me feel insecure
and not in control and I do not like the feeling.  To me it
was everything but a game – it was a lot of hard work and
asked for many a lonely night in front of my computer.
Unfortunately to me time is money – not in the sense of the
few rand paid on a telephone bill but to the projects that I
did not work on as hard as I was supposed to.

It was clear that not only the content mattered, and gaining
in knowledge and computer skills, but also social skills
were being tested and developed through the metaphor of a
game in which survival of the fittest would be proven.
Participants were frustrated, praised, and taken apart, some
even fell apart all by themselves and had to lrearn to cope
with all of this.

I personally didn't like this metaphor, it has to do
probably with the T.V. show that I don't like.  At the
beginning it made me nervous,
```

One learner, during the focus group interview, expressed strong feelings on the game metaphor and indicated that the course changed from being learner-centred to task-centred, just to be able to 'survive'! The learner's viewpoint is captured in Exhibit 4.133.

Exhibit 4.133 [FG]:   A learner's view, seeing the course as task-centred

```
Because once you dropped off, I think the chances that you
could finish the module, was slim.  I think in that sense it
stopped being learner centred.  It was really focussed
around the survivor thing, the focus was task-orientated,
and not learner-orientated
```

4.6.4. *Learner-group problems*

It was evident that some of the learners missed out on the collaborative, group formation that the game was supposed to offer. Some of the learners could not co-operate, others would not co-operate and then there were those that never became involved. The online facilitator commented on this aspect in Exhibit 4.134 and attempted to give reasons for the dysfunctional groups. These extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.134 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on dysfunctional groups

```
Party het baie gehou van die feit dat hulle in groepe kon
saamwerk en dat hulle baie geleer het by die ander mense.
Party groepe was weer disfunksioneel, en dan het hulle dit
weer gehaat en dit het gelei tot groot frustrasie.
[Translation:  Some enjoyed working in groups and learning
from each other.  Other groups were dysfunctional and they
hated it and that led to frustration.]

Daar was in heelwat van die groepe van die begin af ouens
wat glad nie met mekaar kon saamwerk nie, en ouens wat weer
glad nie wou saamwerk nie.  En dan is daar ander ouens wat
weer net glad nie betrokke was nie, en wat geweldige
frustrasie by die ouens veroorsaak het.
[Translation:  From the very beginning there were learners
in the groups who could not co-operate and guys who would
not co-operate.  There were also guys who wanted to work,
but were constantly at loggerheads with others, thus working
against each other all the time.  There were also guys who
never became involved and caused tremendous frustration for
the others.]

Ek dink persoonlikhede was deel daarvan, maar ook maar een
ou het net in die dag gewerk, en die ander ou het net in die
aand gewerk.  So ek moes op 'n manier daai tipe van konflik
hanteer, en ouens het baie keer agter die skerms by my kom
moan en sê:  maar hierdie een doen nie haar deel nie.  Kan
hulle nie asseblief in 'n ander groep wees nie, of hulle wil
nou uitgevote wees.
[Translation:  There were different reasons for the
conflict, one being personalities but also one guy working
during the day and another working only in the evenings.
Somehow I had to manage the conflict and guys were
constantly moaning that others were not doing their part.
They actually wanted to go to different groups or wanted to
be voted off.]
```

The learners, in their formal test responses, commented on the problems within the groups. Problems ranged from failing to submit tribal assignments on time, failing to incorporate team member contributions, ignoring team members, working too slowly to being overloaded with work. Exhibit 4.135 provides a summary of the learners' thoughts on the dysfunctional groups.

Exhibit 4.135 [FTR]: The learners on dysfunctional groups

```
People did not submit their tribal assignments on time.  I
just left their stuff out of the tribal website.

At first all my tribal members were dead.  I refused to meet
in person – it got me voted off.

I was quite put off after I had spent considerable time
preparing information to be added to the concept map and was
told that an existing map would be used, as there was no
time to do otherwise.

The fact that Dave and I worked well together contributed to
my learning – especially on the technical side of things!
This made up for the fact that the other members of our
tribe did not contribute to our learning – they are the ones
that missed out.

Whenever I tried to participate according to my level of
understanding the task, I would be ignored … instead of
receiving constructive and positive guidance.  I was
labelled an 'online entertainer' – this was discouraging and
demotivating.

Tribal members who did not 'play the game' caused some
irritation as they affected the progress of the group
negatively, but it was not too bad.  Other members who just
went ahead and did things without involving the other
members or giving them a chance to participate was also a
small stone in my shoe.  Spending time to give others a hand
up, instead of just voting them off would have been more
ethical.  (Interesting to note that in the real game the
strong ones fell first and here the weaker ones got trodden
on!)

Just irritated with tribe members not available during off-
peak hours and over weekends and tribe members not taking
part.

I did not experience any direct confrontation but there was
an explosion wanting to set off.  I was frustrated with the
situation I was put in and felt that it was unfair.  The
workload was just too much for me to carry and I had to make
a decision to do everything half or to do only half.  This
was a decision that within my personal make-up caused a lot
of frustration to the point that I wanted to withdraw.
Members from other teams were very supportive and that kept
me going.

I experienced a conflict where I couldn't bring to the group
summaries that I have made because I do the work slowly.
```

Some tribal members experienced the tribal shuffle very positively, but it also caused hysterics, according to the online facilitator. In Exhibit 4.136 the downside of the tribal shuffle was re-iterated. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.136 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on the downside of the tribal shuffle

```
Dit het by party ouens histerie veroorsaak, want hulle het
nou net lekker 'n comfort zone gehad, en hulle het nou
lekker saamgewerk.
[Translation:  This caused hysterics because some people
were in a comfort zone and working well together.]
```

Some learners experienced the tribal shuffle as very disturbing as was revealed in Exhibit 4.137. The extracts were taken from the formal test responses.

Exhibit 4.137 [FTR]: The learners on the downside of the tribal shuffle

```
I felt more confused as it become NOBODY's task to build a
new website and have it up and running.

Disorientating.

Not very happy, 5 of the top people were in a group and the
other group was not very good and I and another person had
to do all the work

It was necessary to reshuffle, but challenging as the work
got more difficult and challenging and some time was needed
to settle into a new tribe.

Badly, collaboration wasn't on the same level as in the
initial tribe.

It didn't influence much because I was already in a big
tribe that had not acquired much direction and the shuffling
did not affect the tribe except adding more members.
```

During the focus group interview the learners were reflecting on the dilemma of Tribe 5 and empathised with these team members. The focus group participants thought that the online facilitator could have managed this group differently and made suggestions of what could have been done to ensure that these members were not neglected.

An ethical question was raised about evicting a learner from the course that had been paid for. An extract from the focus group interview is revealed in Exhibit 4.138.

Exhibit 4.138 [FG]:   The learners on the evicted members of Tribe 5

```
Tribe 5.  What happened to those students?  They just
disappeared.  It was wrong.  The fact that up front
everybody knew that those who were evicted would be landing
in this specific tribe, and nobody asked the question:  but
what will happen with these students? And I mean it was a
growing tribe in terms of numbers, and nothing happened
there.  So that was a problem.

I think she (online facilitator) should have seen that if
people dropped off, and they go and they all stay in one
tribe, she (online facilitator) should have built in
something to either give them a different type of assignment
to do then, but also to enable them to finish the course
then.

The groups were evenly divided to begin with.  So we should
have been kept in those groups.  Maybe vote off the person,
but the person can come back on again by doing certain
things.  I was thinking about the ethical side of that.  If
a student pays for a full course …

I think here again this whole course is structured somewhere
along the lines of an MBA or that kind of course where
you're actually at certain times put under pressure, and
having just started work in this field now as it were, you
are either gonna sink or swim. So it's perhaps not entirely
a hundred per cent correct to say this, but perhaps that's
some of the things you have to learn on the course as well,
it's the sink or swim part.  She (online facilitator) could
have looked after the people that fell out during the first
phase of the game.  Then they should give a bridging course
for the people who can't do it.
```

4.6.5. *Learners lagging behind*

The online facilitator, in her face-to-face interview, also commented on the fact that she was extremely worried about the learners who were lagging behind. During Week 3 and Week 4 learners were asking for help on assignment one and the online facilitator did not know how to cope with this situation. This dilemma compelled the online facilitator to ask for help and she sent e-mail to the course co-ordinator, Johannes, asking for assistance and guidance.

Exhibit 4.139 provides a snapshot of the online facilitator's frustration and despair, taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.139 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's frustration and despair with learners who are lagging behind

```
Ek het een keer spesifiek 'n email na hom gestuur en gesê ek
is bekommerd oor hierdie ouens wat hier in die 3de week en
in die 4de week met assignment 1 se goed begin, en nou
vreeslik in diepte raad soek.  Ek vra vir hom:  wat moet ek
nou byvoorbeeld met hulle maak?  Moet ek hulle support en
probeer deurkry, of wat?  Dis net vir my moeilik.  Ek het my
hande vol met die groep wat by is, en hulle vra oor daai
onderwerp.  Om nou weer terug te dink aan goed en hulle is
agter.  Verstaan, dis nie – nou's die moral support van die
groep nie meer daar waar hulle mekaar help nie, so ek moet
al die hulp voorsien.  Dit was net vir my onmoontlik om stap
vir stap alles te verduidelik; want ek kan nie met hulle
praat nie.
[Translation:  I once sent a specific e-mail to Johannes,
saying how worried I was about guys who, in the third and
fourth week, were enquiring about assignment 1 and needed
intense help.  I asked him (Johannes) what I should do?
Should I support them and try to pull them through, or what?
It was very difficult for me.  I was fully occupied with the
on track group and their questions on the current work.  It
is very difficult to think back to the group lagging behind.
At this stage there was no moral support in terms of group
co-operation and they were solely dependent on my help.  It
was exceedingly difficult to explain everything step-by-step
because I could not speak to them, (which meant that
everything needed to be written).]
```

Johannes, the course co-ordinator, responded to the online facilitator and indicated that she only had to worry about those learners that were on track. The online facilitator, during the face-to-face interview, admitted that this was not necessarily her viewpoint, as is evident in Exhibit 4.140.

Exhibit 4.140 [FtoF]: The course coordinator's thoughts on learners lagging behind

```
As die ou nie by is nie, is hy uit, volgens Johannes.  So,
dis nie noodwendig my spel nie.  Ek dink ek is van nature
meer akkommoderend.  Ek sou probeer het om maar te probeer
nice wees en te probeer gaaf wees, maar hy't so half vir my
die carte blanche op daai stadium gegee om te sê jy moet
maar by bly.  Ek hoef nie te worry oor die wat afval nie.
Ek werk met die wat by is, en dis dit.
[Translation:  Johannes felt that if the learners could not
keep up, they were out, which was not necessarily my feeling
as I am more accommodating by nature.  I would have tried to
be nice about things, but Johannes gave me carte blanche at
that stage to say you must keep up.  I do not need to worry
about those who cannot cope.  I work with those who are on
track and that's that!]
```

Thus, learners lagging behind might have experienced the course as negative. During the
face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she gave abrupt answers to those
learners who were not on track and told them to move on as is evident in Exhibit 4.141.

Exhibit 4.141 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on being abrupt with learners
lagging behind

```
Die ouens wat vir my vrae gevra het na die deadline van 'n
assignment en sê hulle is ook nou by, het 'n kortaf antwoord
by my gekry.  Vergeet daarvan en gaan aan met hierdie goed,
…hulle sou miskien weer 'n negatiewe ervaring daarvan gehad
het.
[Translation:  Guys who questioned me about the first
assignment after the deadline of that assignment, saying
that they have now caught up, got an abrupt answer from me.
Forget about it and carry on from here … they would perhaps
have considered it a negative experience.]
```

Exhibit 4.142 is an extract from a message posted to *Yahoo Groups* where the online
facilitator informed a learner about the appropriate assignment for the week.

Exhibit 4.142 [YG]:   The online facilitator informing a learner
to get on track

```
Forget about last week's game and assignments.  All this
information can however be found in the 170+ emails that was
sent last week. If you work through them systematically you
will get the answers to most of your questions.

This week's assignments are once again listed under 'Files'
in your ELearn Yahoo Group.  You have to go to the web-based
version of the group to find this link
(http://groups.yahoo.com).

This week immunity is not awarded for a game, but for a
typing test. See my previous email in this regard.
Good luck!
L
```

The online facilitator responded effectively to the dysfunctional teams because she
created a relaxed atmosphere where the learners could communicate with her on any
subject. The online facilitator was accommodating and approachable and she provided
'the shoulder to cry on'. The online facilitator always responded in a caring and
understanding manner as is evident in Exhibit 4.143. The extracts were taken from the
face-to-face interview and *Yahoo Messenger*.

Exhibit 4.143: The online facilitator's caring manner with dysfunctional
team members

```
[FtoF] Jy moet akkomoderend en oop en approachable wees.
[Translation:  You have to be accommodating and open and
approachable.]

[YM] Linda (06:01:30 PM): It remains a challange to keep
things going in a virtual async environment
Linda (06:02:09 PM): As I said … take those who are on board
```

Exhibit 4.143: The online facilitator's caring manner with dysfunctional
team members

```
with you, and make the best of it.

[YM] Linda (09:05:14 PM): For the sake of the quality of
their learning experience, I think it is just 'fair' (smile)
to let them take part in a functional tribe.

[YM] Linda (01:11:06 AM):  As jy sien dat jy nie voldoende
reaksie by jou nuwe Tribe kry nie, is jy welkom om saam met
die ander in te spring en saam te werk.  Jy weet hoe ek voel
oor 'collaboration'.
[Translation:  If you do not get sufficient co-operation
from your new tribe, you are more than welcome to team up
with another group.  You know how I feel about
'collaboration'.]

[YM] Linda (01:15:48 AM):  Al kwalifiseer jy nie meer vir
die groot prys nie, is daar geen rede hoekom jy nie die
meeste uit die module moet haal nie.
[Translation:  Although you do not qualify for the big prize
anymore, there is no reason why you should not get the most
from this module.]
```

It is important to note that the online facilitator informed the learners that eviction did not imply dropping off the course. The purpose of Tribe 5 was that all the evictees would gather in this tribe and still perform all assignments. However, these tribal members would not be eligible to win the grand prize.

There was conflict within the group because the online facilitator pressurised the learners to meet certain deadlines. In the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she really made the groups work. According to the online facilitator, if too much time is permitted for assignments, the quality of work does not necessarily improve. According to the online facilitator, pressurising the group brought forth phenomenal work! In Exhibit 4.144 the online facilitator reflected on her way of work and why the learners could have been upset with her.

Exhibit 4.144 [FtoF]: The online facilitator reflecting on her way of work

```
Ek het hulle hard laat werk.  Ek het hulle genuine gedruk.
Ek gee dit absoluut toe!  My uitgangspunt was nog altyd – en
dis 'n vreeslike verkeerde uitgangspunt om te hê, maar dis
'n persoonlike benadering, en ek voel dat hoe meer jy het om
te doen, hoe meer kry jy gedoen.  En ek voel dat as jy vir
ouens te veel tyd gee, dan dra dit nie by tot die kwalitiet
nie.  Dis nie asof hulle dieper in goed grou omdat hulle
meer tyd het nie.  Hulle doen nogsteeds die oppervlakkige
goed, maar hulle het net meer tyd om dit oppervlakkig te
doen.  Terwyl, as jy vir hulle baie stres gee, en die lading
swaar maak, dan oorpresteer party ouens party keer, en dis
fenomenaal wat daar uitkom.   …ek dink hulle was baie
dikwels ontsteld oor die feit dat wat ek van hulle gevra
het, het hulle online tyd gekos, wat tyd is, maar ook
kostes.  Die feit dat hulle weg van hulle families was, en
hulle het net 'n week tyd gehad om sekere goed in te doen.
```

Exhibit 4.144 [FtoF]: The online facilitator reflecting on her way of work

```
Ek het die druk op hulle gehou – daar was nie so 'n ding
soos ek het hierdie naweek 'n ding met my kind aan, maar ek
sal volgende naweek inhaal, nie.  Daar was nie 'n volgende
naweek nie.  Ek dink baie van hulle het geaffronteerd gevoel
daaroor.
[Translation:  I made them work hard.  I genuinely
pressurised them.  I admit that!  My viewpoint is – it is
considered very wrong – but it is my personal feeling that
the more you have to do, the more you get done.  I feel that
if you allow too much time it does not contribute to the
quality of the product.  It is not as though they delve
deeper just because they have more time.  They still have
more time to do it superficially.  Whilst, if you really
pressurise them and the load is heavy, some over achieve and
it is phenomenal what the outcome sometimes is.   I think
they were sometimes upset by the fact that what I expected
from them cost them online time, which is time but also
costs.  The fact was that they were withdrawn from their
families and still had only a week to complete their tasks.
I kept the pressure on them – there was no such thing as a
date with a child causing work to be caught up in the next
week.  There was no next week.  I think many of them felt
affronted because of this attitude.]
```

The online facilitator maintained that, in future, she would keep the same amount of pressure on the course. In the face-to-face interview she admitted that she could have provided more scaffolding at the beginning of the course but the learners need to feel pressure in order to know that they can swim. The online facilitator's thoughts are revealed in Exhibit 4.145.

Exhibit 4.145 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on keeping pressure
on the course

```
Ek dink ek sal aan die begin baie meer scaffolding gee, en
ek sal dit aan die einde wegneem.  Daar moet maar ook 'n
stadium wees wat die ouens voel hulle sink, sodat hulle kan
agterkom maar hulle kan swem.  Dis die enigste manier.
[Translation:  I think I will give much more scaffolding in
the beginning, which can be removed at the end.  There must
be a stage when the guys feel they are sinking so that they
can discover that they can swim.  It's the only way.]
```

Surprisingly enough, one of the learners also commented on the 'sink or swim' analogy in his formal test response, and explained why it was necessary to be put under pressure. The learner's thoughts are revealed in Exhibit 4.146.

Exhibit 4.146 [FTR]: A learner on pressure in the course

```
I think here again this whole course is structured somewhere
along the lines of an MBA or that kind of course where
you're actually at certain times put under pressure, and
having just started work in this field now as it were, you
are either gonna sink or swim. So it's perhaps not entirely
a hundred per cent correct to say this, but perhaps that's
some of the things you have to learn on the course as well,
it's the sink or swim part.
```

The online facilitator, during the face-to-face interview, commented that the learners might have been upset because they did not receive clearer guidelines. This is evident in Exhibit 4.147.

Exhibit 4.147 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on clearer guidelines

```
Buiten die kostes, buiten die tyd, miskien was hulle kwaad
oor ek nie vir hulle meer duidelike riglyne gegee het nie.
Meer handjie-vat riglyne.  Jy weet, stap-vir-stap-tipe goed
gegee het nie.  Ek het hierdie keer baie min spoonfeeding
gegee.
[Translation:  Apart form the costs and apart from the time,
perhaps they were upset because I did not give them clearer
guidelines.  Perhaps I needed to hold their hands more, and
guide them step-by-step.  This time I did very little
spoonfeeding.]
```

One learner, in her formal test response, specifically stated that the ground rules were never purposefully discussed as is revealed in Exhibit 4.148.

Exhibit 4.148 [FTR]: A learner on clearer guidelines

```
Guidelines were never purposefully discussed.  However, I
believe that there may have been an underlying common
understanding of what is acceptable
```

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator reflected that she did post guidelines for the current course, but evidently it was not good enough. The online facilitator's reflective thoughts are revealed in Exhibit 4.149.

Exhibit 4.149 [FtoF]: The online facilitator, reflecting on the current
guidelines for the course

```
Ek het tog gedink ek het dit gedoen, maar ek het nie –
daar's sekere goed waar ek gesien het is gaps, so ek sal die
ground rules meer eksplisiet stel, en ek sal seker maak, van
die begin af, dat die ouens actually weet waar die ground
rules is, want daar's ouens wat eers hier teen die 3de, 4de
week die ground rules vir die eerste keer raakgesien het.
[Translation:  I thought I had done all this, but I did not
– there are certain things where I left gaps, so I will make
the ground rules more explicit and I will ensure that the
guys actually know where the ground rules are because there
were guys who only discovered the ground rules in the 3rd
and 4th week.
```

Exhibit 4.150 serves as evidence that the online facilitator did, in fact, post 'Ground Rules' for the learners on *Yahoo Groups*.

Exhibit 4.150 [YG]:   The ground rules for the current course

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Wed Jul 24, 2002 12:55 am
Subject: Ground Rules
It seems that we need to lie down a couple of ground
rules (Please feel free to add to these):
1. You need to check your Elearn2002 Yahoo Groups
web site on a regular basis for new additions.
This means that you have to visit the site
AT THE VERY LEAST once every two days.

2. The Elearn2002 Group will be the hub for all our
mainstream communication. You MUST therefore,
have access to the web-based version of the group,
even if you continue to receive your messages
via e-mail.

3. All new assignments will be clearly labelled
(per week) and posted to the `File' section in
the Elearn2002 Group. It is YOUR responsibility
to go and find them there. The following week's
assignments will normally be posted on a Thursday
evening.

4. You need to discuss your plan of action in terms
of the tribal assignments with your fellow
`Survivors' as soon as possible after the new
assignments are posted. This is important as each
week will be packed with activities which you will
not be able to complete to an acceptable standard
if you leave it until the last minute.

Please feel free to contact me personally should
you have ANY difficulties. I can normally be reached
at lindavr@t... or lindavr@m...
```

In order to assist learners in a pressurised course, the online facilitator suggested that she would provide explicit logistical guidelines in future and ensure that the learners knew where the guidelines were placed. Exhibit 4.151 provides the online facilitator's ideas for improved guidelines for a future course.

Exhibit 4.151 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on improved guidelines
for a future course

```
TTTTTTTTWat ek wel sal anders doen, is ek sal van die begin
af baie meer eksplisiete, logistieke riglyne gee.  Soos
byvoorbeeld:  This is how to log in.  Hier is waar jy al jou
goed gaan kry.  Hier is dit wat ek van jou verwag.  Hier is
dit wat jy van my kan verwag.  Die ground rules.
[Translation:  What I will change is that right from the
beginning I will give more explicit logistical guidelines,
for example:  This is how to log in.  This is where you will
get your assignments.  This is what I expect from you and
this is what you can expect from me.  The ground rules.]
```

Another solution would be to introduce a database of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). The FAQ would form part of the learner contract, where learners would be encouraged to find the answers in the database or ask a friend, instead of merely asking the online facilitator.

Exhibit 4.152 suggested FAQ as another solution to assist pressurised learners. The extract was taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.152 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on utilising FAQ

```
Ek sal tien-teen-een- 'n databasis van Frequently Asked
Questions opbou.  Dit sal deel wees van die kontrak, wat sê
dat as jy vrae het, gaan kyk eers na die FAQ, soos
byvoorbeeld, How do I ftp?  Gaan kliek daar en kyk na die
beskrywing.  Werk eers daardeur.  As jy dan nogsteeds
sukkel, vra jou pelle.  En as jy dan nogsteeds sukkel en
julle kom nie reg nie, dan vra jy my.  Want dan sal dit dalk
die kultuur van ons help mekaar en ons leer by mekaar
uitbring.
[Translation:  I will probably create a database of
Frequently Asked Questions.  This will form part of the
learner's contract, instructing them to first view FAQ,
should they have any problems, such as How to ftp?  If they
still have problems, they should ask their friends and if
they still have not found the answer, then they can ask me,
the online facilitator.  This might just bring out the
culture of helping each other and learning together.]
```

4.6.6. *Learners not 'reading' properly*

The online facilitator found that misunderstandings occurred because the learners did not read the lengthy e-mail messages, as is evident in Exhibit 4.153. The online facilitator indicated that she wrote five to six long e-mails, providing details on various topics and guidelines. However, the learners only responded to the first two e-mail messages. This caused immense frustration for the online facilitator. As she clearly explained, a person thought that an issue was clarified from an online facilitator's perspective. However, because the learners did not read the lengthy message, they would ask a question that had already been answered in a guideline and were awaiting feedback from the online facilitator.

The lesson learned was not to combine different topics in one e-mail message. The extracts were taken from the face-to-face interview.

Exhibit 4.153 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on learners that do not read lengthy e-mail messages

```
Misverstande wat kom oor mense nie gelees het nie.  Ek het
regtig moeite gedoen om die goed eksplisiet uit te spel
omdat ek geweet het dis die enigste medium.  Wel, ek dink
nie ek het dit noodwendig reggedoen in hierdie kursus nie.
Ek sal dit met 'n volgende kursus regmaak.
[Translation:  Misunderstanding arose because people do not
read.  I really went to trouble to give explicit
instructions, knowing that this was the only medium.
Perhaps I did not do it correctly in this course.  I will
rectify it in the next course.]

Ek het lang e-mail geskryf, waarin ek sê:  die volgende goed
moet ons aan aandag gee.  En dan het ek nou gelys:  log aan
elke tweede dag, commit om in jou groep met die ouens kontak
te maak so gou as moontlik na die nuwe assignments gestel is
want ouens moet saamwerk.  Verskeie riglyne.  Ek het alles
gesê so tussen 5 of 6  e-posse.  Dan't ek pertinent opgemerk
dat die ouens miskien op die eerste 2 gereageer het, en nie
op die res nie.  It was just like that.  So hulle lees nie
[Translations:  I wrote long e-mail messages, giving details
of what had to receive attention.  I listed several things
for example:  logon every second day, commit yourself to the
group to establish contact as soon as possible after
receiving a new assignment because groups have to work
together.  Variuos guidelines were stipulated.  All this
information was revealed in about 5 – 6 e-mails.  I noticed
that the guys responded to the first two e-mail messages,
but not the rest.  It was just like that.  So they do not
read]

So ek gaan nie weer goed kombineer nie, want dan het ouens
dit net eenvoudig nie gelees nie, en dan's ek gefrustreerd,
want ek het dan gedink:  maar ek het dit dan gekommunikeer.
Wat's julle storie?  En hulle dink weer:  maar ons het haar
gevra, nou maar hoekom reageer sy nie?  Dis maar die medium.
Jy moet die medium verstaan as jy 'n online instructor is –
soos ek sê:  dis nou 'n les wat ek geleer het, wat ek op 'n
volgende keer hopelik sal fix.
[Translation:  I will not combine various topics again,
because they are not read and that is frustrating, because I
think I have communicated.  What's the matter with you?  And
they think but we asked her and why does she not respond?
It has to do with the medium.  You have to understand the
medium if you want to be an online instructor – as I say,
this is a lesson that I have learnt which will be fixed next
round]
```

To rectify this problem, the online facilitator, in her face-to-face interview, indicated that she would write many more short e-mails and stick to one topic per e-mail message. This would imply that, on receipt of each e-mail message, the learner would have to click on each e-mail message to read it, and in that way, the learner would get the gist of each e-mail message.

The shorter e-mail message solution is indicated in Exhibit 4.154.

Exhibit 4.154 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on using shorter
e-mail messages

```
Jy moenie meer as een onderwerp per e-pos hanteer nie.  Jy
moet eerder 3 e-posse hê, want dan moet jy op elkeen kliek.
Jy sien dis nog 'n nuwe email, jy lees en al lees jy net die
eerste paragraaf, het hy die jist van dit.  En dan moet die
volgende mail die volgende belangrike punt vat.  So dis een
les wat ek definitief geleer het, ek sal my emails baie
korter maak, en meer gekonsentreerd.  Een onderwerp per e-
pos.
[Translation:  I feel that you must not handle more than one
subject per e-mail.  It is better to have 3 e-mails because
the person has to click on each e-mail to open it and read
it.  At least then the person has the gist of the e-mail.
The one lesson that I learnt is that my e-mail messages will
be much shorter and focus on one subject.  One subject per
e-mail.]
```

4.6.7. *Learners uncomfortable with online assessment*

The online facilitator was clued up with online assessment, but the learners found this component of the course very troublesome, which caused major conflict between the online facilitator and the learners. As soon as the learners were aware of the online test, stress levels peaked! This is evident from the message form *Yahoo Groups*, displayed in Exhibit 4.155.

Exhibit 4.155 [YG]:   The learners' anxiety for the online test

```
Yahoo Groups
Date: Fri Aug 16, 2002 1:45 am
Subject: Re: *&^%$ TEST!!!

Thought we were through with that!!!!!!
:-0000000000h noooooooo!
:-)
_____, I'm lippe teen die klippe!
You, afraid of a test?! How must the rest of us feel?
_____  :-O
WWWhen why hhhow is this going to happen ????
_____
```

As the online facilitator explained in the face-to-face interview, it was not about testing *per se*. The learners had to experience the stress and frustration of an online test.

The online facilitator's motivation for the online test is explained in Exhibit 4.156.

Exhibit 4.156 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on online testing

```
dis dieselfde rede hoekom ek hulle die online toets laat
skryf het.  Dit was hoegenaamd nie om punte te kry nie, ek
bedoel ek toets nie op so 'n manier nie – Dit was meer om
vir hulle die ervaring te gee van 'n online toets.  As 'n
leerder, wat is die stres wat jy deurgaan, hierdie
tydsbeperking, hierdie monkey puzzle vrae, hierdie
invulvrae, my tikvermoê.
[Translation:  it is for this same reason that I gave them
the online test.  It was not at all to gain marks, I do not
test that way – It was simply to give them the experience of
an online test.  As a learner they needed to experience the
stress involved, the time limit, monkey puzzle questions,
fill-in questions and their typing ability.]
```

The online facilitator clashed with one learner in terms of assessment. The learner, in his formal test response, indicated his unhappiness with the assessment of the module because he felt that the online facilitator was more interested in gathering data for her studies. The learner's opinion is stipulated in Exhibit 4.157.

Exhibit 4.157 [FTR]: A learner on the online facilitator as researcher

```
Not happy with the assessment.  This mark on this module
means a lot to me (working for 80% for all my modules).  I
got the idea that for the facilitator it was more important
what you contributed to her Doctoral thesis and for that you
got marks.
```

The online facilitator was clearly upset by this accusation. In the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator commented about this incident as is evident in Exhibit 4.158.

Exhibit 4.158 [FtoF]: A online facilitator's rebuttal to the
research accusation

```
Ek weet _____ het op en af gespring en gedink als wat ek
doen, doen ek vir my swottings.  En dit het my vreeslik
geaffronteer, want my uitgangspunt was hoegenaamd nie om
data te kry vir 'n studie nie.  So ek voel half dit was
klein bietjie onregverdig, maar hy was definitief kwaad
daaroor.
[Translation:  I know _____ performed and considered that
everything was being done simply for my swottings.  And that
upset me because this was not my intension.  I feel that
this was a bit unfair but he was definitely upset about
this.]
```

4.6.8. *Marks for individual assignments*

Marks for individual assignment were another bone of contention and caused immense conflict. The learners were upset because the online facilitator awarded a zero for certain assignments. Once again, the learners did not read the course assignment in detail, because the online facilitator gave pertinent instructions what to do with each assignment. The online facilitator was leniet with regards to individual assignments and informed the

learners that a mark will only be zero until such time that the online facilitator received the assignment before the end of the course.

This conflict situation clearly upset the online facilitator, as is evident in Exhibit 4.159.

Exhibit 4.159 [FtoF]: Conflict with individual assignments

```
Hulle was kwaad oor, toe hulle hulle punte kry, die eerste
rondte, om te sien maar daar's sekere assignments wat hulle
glo hull't gepos op die regte plekke, en op die regte plekke
gesit het, waar dan nie 'n punt voor was nie.  Ek het baie
eksplesiet vir hulle gesê dat ek lenient en gaaf en 'kind'
is, sodat as daar iets is wat ek nie kon kry nie, die punt
is nie nul nie, die punt is nul tot tyd-en-wyl ek die werk
sien, en as ek dit sien voor die einde van die kursus, gee
ek vir hulle hulle regmatige punt daarvoor.  So, in die
eerste plek was ek upset dat hulle nou so 'n bohaai maak as
hulle weet hulle gaan anyway hulle punte kry.  In die tweede
plek het ek met elkeen van die assignments, het ek
regtigwaar baie pertinent gesê presies wat dit is wat hulle
moet doen, presies hoe dit opgeskryf moet word, en presies
waar dit gepost moet word.
[Translation:  They were upset on receiving their marks on
the first round and finding that they had been given no
marks because they thought they had posted their assignments
in the right places.  I had been explicit in explaining to
them that I would be lenient and sweet and kind when
awarding marks.  The mark would not be a 0, it would simply
be a 0 until such time that I see the work before the end of
the course, when I would give them their valid mark.  So,
firstly, I was upset with them for performing when they knew
that they were anyway going to get their marks.  Secondly,
with each assignment I really gave clear and pertinent
instructions of what to do, exactly how it had to be
compiled and exactly where it had to be posted.]
```

4.6.9. *Institutional support for the online facilitator*

Although the online facilitator was solely responsible for this *CyberSurfiver* course, she did have the backing of the institution and had technical support. If something happened to the server, she could telephone the course co-ordinator for assistance. She also made use of a technical person to build the secure voting station.

The online facilitator found it comforting to know that the course co-ordinator, Johannes, was around, as is depicted in Exhibit 4.160.

Exhibit 4.160 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on support from colleagues

```
Toe Johannes op 'n stadium sien die ouens skryf vir my
vreeslike lelike e-mails, het hy vir my baie nice supportive
e-mails gestuur, wat sê:  hulle leer alles wat hy wil hê
hulle moet leer.  Hy dink dis baie nice wat ons doen.  En so
dit het vir my ongelooflik baie beteken.
[Translation:  When Johannes noticed that I was receiving
unflattering e-mail, he sent me very supportive e-mails,
saying they (the learners) are learning exactly what he
wants them to learn; he thought what we were doing was
```

Exhibit 4.160 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on support from colleagues

```
great.  This meant a great deal to me.]
```

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator revealed that, as an online facilitator, there was a definite need for supportive feedback. The online facilitator constantly had to manage stress and calm nervous, as is explained in Exhibit 4.161.

Exhibit 4.161 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on supportive feedback

```
'n Mens is so involved, jy besef nie hoe nodig jy dit het
dat iemand vir jou positiewe terugvoer gee nie.  Die
studente doen dit nie.  Hulle vra vrae en hulle moan en
hulle raas en hulle is histeries, en hulle is gestres, en ek
stres oor hulle stres, so ek probeer net almal se stres
manage, dat jy nie tyd het om te besef:  maar dit is 'n
definitiewe behoefte.  Maar ek het nie eers besef dis 'n
behoefte voor Johannes nie die behoefte vervul het nie.  En
vir my gesê het maar hier's 'n tap op jou skouer.  Jy's
oraait, jy's op die regte pad!
[Translation:  The facilitator is so involved and one does
not realise how necessary supportive feedback can be.  The
students do not give it to you.  They ask questions and moan
and become hysterical and are stressed and I stress because
they are stressed and I simply try to manage everybody's
stess and one does not realise that you have a definite need
for supportive feedback.  I did not realise the need until
Johannes, patting me on my shoulder, fulfilled this need by
saying 'you are ok, you are on the right road!']
```

4.6.10. *Using the team-teach approach*

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator commented that team teaching could work well if the roles were properly defined. The online facilitator admitted that she had a need for a technical/administrative assistant, not because she was incapable of fulfilling this role, but because the technical enquiries took a long time to answer. If these roles could be split, it would imply that the online facilitator, as instructor, could concentrate on the learning outcomes. She further commented that there is merit in team teaching as the learners acquire a perspective form two sides, especially if there are contrasting viewpoints. However, contrasting opinions could cause conflict and become counter productive if the learners receive differing messages. Exhibit 4.162 revealed the online facilitator's thoughts on team teaching with a definite indication to split the role of the online facilitator into an administrative role and an instructor role.

Exhibit 4.162 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on team teaching

```
Soos met enige team effort ding, dink ek as die rolle mooi
uitgespel word, sal dit baie goed kan werk.  Ek het nogals
'n behoefte gehad aan iemand wat die tegniese vrae kan
antwoord.  Hoegenaamde nie omdat ek nie weet hoe nie, maar
net omdat dit soveel tyd vat om die tegniese vrae te
antwoord, terwyl ek eerder wil konsentreer op die
leeruitkomste en die regtige e-leer omgewing goed.
[Translation:  As with any team effort project, I feel that
```

Exhibit 4.162 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on team teaching

```
if the roles are properly defined, it should work well.  I
had a need for somebody who could take care of the technical
enquiries.  Not because I am not knowledgeable, but because
it takes such a long time to answer these questions, and I
would prefer to concentrate on the learning outcomes and the
elearning environment matters.]

So ek sou nogal daarvan gehou het as ek kon team-teach met
iemand wat een persoon die adminimstratiewe deel vat, en een
persoon die leerfasiteringsrol/instrukteur vat.  Ek sal
versigtig wees om die leerfasilitering te split, tensy dit
in mooi gedefinieerde ek-doen-hierdie-gedeelte-en-jy-doen-
daai-gedeelte.  Daar is verseker meriete daarin om te team
teach, want die leerders kry dan perspektiewe van 2 kante
af.  Veral as 'n ou dan dalk kontrasterede invalshoeke het.
Sodat jy die leeromgewing kan verryk met die ouens dan uit
verskeie hoeke kan sien, maar dit kan ook baie
teenproduktief wees vir 'n ou as hy nou hierdie boodskap
kry, maar daai ou kry weer 'n ander boodskap, en die konflik
wat dit ook weer sal maak.  'n Administratiewe persoon wat
tegniese vrae, al die admin vrae, al die logistiek hanteer,
en jy hanteer die leergedeeltes.  Dit sal baie lekker werk.
[Translation:  I would have liked to have worked in a team
where one person looks after the administrative component
and the other takes care of the learning
facilitating/instructor role.  I would be careful about
splitting the facilitating role, unless you know exactly who
is doing what.  There are certain merits in team teaching as
the learners acquire a perspective from two sides,
especially if one has contrasting viewpoints.  Contrasting
opinions are apt to cause conflict and can be counter
productive if people receive differing messages.  An ideal
situation would be where an administrative person takes care
of the technical and administrative enquiries as well as the
logistics and the facilitator concentrates on the learning
portions.  That would work very well.]
```

4.6.11. *Providing constructive feedback*

Some of the learners felt that they did not get constructive feedback. This issue were
raised during the focus group interview. As is revealed in Exhibit 4.163, the learners
wanted to know whether they were on the right track.

Exhibit 4.163 [FG]:   The learners on receiving constructive feedback

```
We talked about her (online facilitator) reaction to all
kinds of small situations, but we didn't give feedback for
the things that we have done. In a class situation, we do
get feedback from our teachers.  Do we need feedback here?
Once the course ended, or her part of the course ended, that
was it.  You didn't get any feedback.

The first I saw anything of that course again was at the end
of the year when I got my final mark from the university.  I
would have liked a bit of feedback.  I like feedback.  We're
doing this course to get a good mark to be able to get a
good job one-day once we've got this.  She did it to do
research.  So I think that she should have seen our side as
well.
```

Exhibit 4.163 [FG]:   The learners on receiving constructive feedback

```
That we need to know, for me to get a good mark at the end
of this module, I need to know whether I'm on the right
track or not.  She was there if you wanted to ask her
something, but once you did a task and you put it on the
web, you never got feedback to say: right, you did it right,
or it was sort of okay, or you did it wrong.

Remember, it wasn't about the work.  It was about the
process: experiencing an online course.

but I think the feedback was – and maybe it's just because I
argued so much – but I had enough feedback.
```

This problem touched on the 'process and product' debate that was raised in Exhibit 4.100. If learners successfully completed assignments, little feedback was needed. This same answer was provided to the particular learner again and one learner specifically stated that he received sufficient feedback.

4.6.12. *Abrupt ending to the course*

The same group of learners were also unhappy about the abrupt ending to the course. Exhibit 4.164 revealed some of the learners' feelings on the abrupt ending to the course.

Exhibit 4.164 [FG]:   The learners on the abrupt ending to the course

```
The moment the course ended, it was like Linda ended.  She
was not there anymore. I wanted to do things afterwards.  I
can remember that I was looking for Linda.  Eventually I
picked up the phone and called the Technikon to find out
where's Linda, and they said that she was in a conference,
or she was on leave.  That I experienced in a negative
sense.  Oh, it was when we had to do our articles.  Yeah,
you're right.  I needed to get in touch with her.  I wished
to communicate with Linda, but she wasn't available.

But you see the articles were Johannes's part.  Together,
they're responsible for that module.  So Linda could have
said: okay, this is where I end.  Any questions regarding
the article go to Johannes.  You expected her to still be
available.
```

Some of the learners were frustrated because they could not get hold of the online facilitator because she was attending an eLearning conference in Cape Town. These particular learners never communicated via *Yahoo Messenger*. As is clearly evident in Exhibit 4.165, the online facilitator informed the learners that she was going to attend the WWW conference and she also announced her return. In fact, the online facilitator was speaking to the learners until 24 September 2002. The extracts were taken from *Yahoo Messenger*.

Exhibit 4.165 [YM]:   The online facilitator speaking to the learners
                             after the course ended

```
31 Aug 2002
```

Exhibit 4.165 [YM]:   The online facilitator speaking to the learners
after the course ended

```
Linda (05:43:33 PM): Ek is ook van Woensdag af uitstedig
(Kaap toe vir 'n WWW konferensie!)
[Translation:  I will be out of town as from Wednesday
(going to the Cape for the WWW conference!)

8 Sep 2002
Linda (02:46:24 PM): Hi everyone
Linda (02:47:14 PM): Just a short message to let you know
that I am back in town after a wonderful couple of days in
Cape Town at the Stellenbosch, 4th WWW conference.
Linda (02:50:31 PM): I know that some of you are keen to get
some response with regards to your articles.  Please be
patient though if you can?  I will try to get round to them
asap!

Yahoo Messenger
Learner 24 Sep 2002
Learner (05:26:29 PM): Hi Linda
```

4.6.13. *Language problems*

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator expressed her concern for learners who did not speak English as a first language. The learners had a difficult time participating in academic discourse. The online facilitator did not have a solution to this problem. The online facilitator's concern on a second or third language is described in Exhibit 4.166.

Exhibit 4.166 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's concern on a second or
third language

```
Dis moeilik om in 'n tweede taal, akademiese gesprekke te
voer, en hulle moet dit nou in 'n taal voer wat nie hulle
eerste taal is nie.  En ander ouens wie se tweede of derde
taal dit ook is, moet nou lees en interpreteer en
terugreageer.  Dis 'n geweldige moeilik ding om by verby te
kom.
[Translation:  It is always difficult to carry out academic
discussions in a second language and they are now required
to do just that in a language which is not their mother
tongue.  Other learners are even required to respond and
interpret in what may be their third language.  This is
really a big obstacle.]
```

4.6.14. *Changes to the existing course*

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator admitted that she had learnt many lessons and there were certain changes that she would like to make to the current course. The first change that she would make is to allow for more in-depth studying of various subjects. Her thoughts are captured in Exhibit 4.167.

Exhibit 4.167 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on changing the course to
reach more depth per topic

```
Ek dink daar's baie goed wat ek op 'n ander manier sou
```

Exhibit 4.167 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on changing the course to
reach more depth per topic

```
struktureer sodat 'n ou meer in diepte met van die goed kon
gaan.  Daar was leemtes wat ek gedink het 'n ou graag sou
wou aanspreek.  Goed soos, om byvoorbeeld meer tyd te
spandeer aan byvoorbeeld 'n spesifieke week se assignment,
sodat die ouens bietje meer diepte kon kry in die onderwerp,
eerder as net 'n breë oppervlakkige 'vat nou, en hier's die
volgende ingeedatum'
[Translation:  I think there are various things that I would
structure in a different way so that more depth could be
achieved.  There were deficiencies that I would like to have
addressed, for example to have spend more time on a specific
assignment of the week so that the guys could achieve a
greater depth in the subject rather than a superficial 'take
it and here is the next due date']
```

During the face-to-face interview, the online facilitator gave a clear indication that she would adjust the online environment. She would implement *Yahoo Messenger*, the synchronous communication tool, from the start. She would not use *Yahoo Groups* again and rather opt for *WebCT*, which is a clean, stable and secure environment. Implementing one synchronous and one asynchronous communication tool from the start would also mean that the learners would not have to hop around between tools.

The online facilitator's ideas are reflected in Exhibit 4.168.

Exhibit 4.168 [FtoF]: The online facilitator on changing the
online environment

```
Ek sal Yahoo Messenger van die begin af implementeer.  Dit
sal van die begin af ons sinchroniese medium van
kommunikasie wees, want dit help so ongelooflik baie as die
ouens dit eers het.  En ek sal ook nie meer van Yahoo groups
gebruik maak nie, want dis te omslagtig, daar is te veel
advertensies, en dis 'n klomp schlep.  Ek sal veel eerder
van WebCT gebruik maak, wat 'n baie nice, stabiele, skoon,
veilige omgewing is.  So ek sal dit as die hub gebruik.  Ek
dink dat die ouens nogals op 'n stadium ervaar het dat 'n
mens rondspring van een tool na 'n ander, en hulle weet nie
meer waar is hulle nou nie, watter tool het ons nou laas
gebruik vir wat nie.  So ek sal graag een baie vaste, sekure
omgewing gebruik wat almal verstaan,
[Translation:  I will implement Yahoo Messenger right from
the start.  This will be the synchronous medium of
communication because it is unbelievably beneficial.  I will
also not make use of Yahoo Groups, because it is too
cumbersome with too many advertisements and schlep.  I would
rather make use of WebCT, which is a nice stable and clean
and safe environment – I will use this as the hub.  I think
the guys found themselves lost with the chopping and
changing from one tool to another.  I will use one stable
and secure environment that everyone understands.]
```

4.6.15. *Summary*

The challenges that this online facilitator had to face were not that different from what had been experienced by other facilitators as was mentioned in Chapter 2.

The mayhem of Week 1 could slot in with Challenge 6: Learners need support apart from the course work support provided by the online facilitator. This particular online facilitator clearly indicated suggestions how to resolve this matter. A questionnaire could be compiled to measure learners' computer proficiency. The online facilitator suggested a short training session in a computer laboratory as a possible solution to introduce potential learners to various eLearning tools.

The online facilitator was partly responsible for the confusion of Week 1 in that she did not know how *Yahoo Groups* operated. This problem could link to Challenge 5. Although the online facilitator knew how to design a course, she should have tested this asynchronous communication system before loading the files to the site.

The online facilitator had to cope with various conflict situations. These conflict situations fall into the ambit of Challenge 9. Learners complained that a lot of time and money were spent on this course. The online facilitator responded effectively to this problem. An alternative was provided for the learners in that they could work in the computer laboratory at the university. In future, this problem could be solved with the signing of a learner contract at the beginning of the course. In this contract the learners would be informed of three undertakings in terms of time, effort and money. The online facilitator would also compile explicit logistical guidelines so that the learners would know what to do, what was expected from them and what they could expect from the online facilitator. A database of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) would also serve as support for the learners. The online facilitator realised that many more shorter e-mail messages should be written to the learners. If too much information is provided in e-mails, the learners simply did not read the message. The online facilitator designed the rule of 'one topic, one e-mail'.

The online facilitator effectively managed the conflict within the groups and dysfunctional teams. The online facilitator was accommodating and approachable and made adjustments to assist individual team members. The online facilitator provided continuous social and emotional support to the distressed learners.

In this course, it was the learners that had a problem with assessment. The online facilitator effectively managed this conflict situation by explaining to the learners why it was important to experience the stress of an online test. The rule for awarding marks for individual assignments was that a learner would obtain zero until such time that the online facilitator received the assignment before the course ended. Then the learner would receive his/her fair mark.

Although the online facilitator was solely responsible for this course, she did feel that it was important to have the backing from the institution. This feeling could link to Challenge 5. The supportive e-mail messages that she received really helped her through difficult times. She commented that she was in favour of team teaching and specifically indicated that the role of the online facilitator could be split into an administrative role and an instructor role.

Some learners felt that the online facilitator did not provide constructive feedback. This issue relates to Challenge 8. The particular learner wanted to know whether she was on track or not. As the rest of the group pointed out to her, the course was not about the 'product', but about the 'process'. If assignments were successfully completed, there was no need for feedback.

During a peer review session on 24 February 2004, I asked the online facilitator to describe a typical day in her life as *CyberSurfiver* online facilitator. Exhibit 4.169 gives some insight into a day in the life of this online facilitator.

Exhibit 4.169 [PR]:   A day in the life of the *CyberSurfiver*
online facilitator

```
Typically a weekday would start with normal household
activities, breakfast, packing lunchboxes, getting 2 boys
into a presentable state, etc.  Arriving at work, I would
immediately check my emails to see whether there was any
activity since I logged off the previous evening.  I got
into the habit of responding immediately.  However, there
were times that I refrained from responding, as I wanted to
see how/if the group would react.  At times I responded
immediately, but went to have a cup of coffee before I came
back, reread and reworded the response (often then a toned
down version of my first immediate reaction) and only then
send the item.

As my workplace provides 24/7 access to the Internet, I was
immediately notified when new messages came in.  That made
it easy to respond quite quickly to individual emails, and
made the workload lighter (it felt like that as the bulk
was spread throughout the day).

Between 17:00 and 20:00 I preferred to spend time with my
kids, typically attending extramural 'bulletjierugby' with
them, checking homework, having dinner and taking care of
the bath-to-bed routines.  After the kids were asleep I
would log onto my home computer (I am on the R 7 deal and
would thus remain online until I logged off later to go to
bed).  I would then once again respond to comments on the
emails, and would also log onto Yahoo Messenger.  I often
had lengthy discussions (some over work, and some 'sommer
net' to connect with individual students) with individual
students.  Some time I would initiate these synchronous
discussions, and other times the learners approach me.

As I had to keep up my daily work responsibilities, and also
the preparation for the next week's Surfiver activities, I
```

Exhibit 4.169 [PR]: A day in the life of the *CyberSurfiver*
online facilitator

```
did that in between and thus use to go to bed very late at
night.
```

The online facilitator admitted that she thoroughly enjoyed facilitating this course. She learnt a lot and would do many things differently. The online facilitator's final thoughts are reflected in Exhibit 4.170.

Exhibit 4.170 [FtoF]: The online facilitator's final thoughts on
CyberSurfiver

```
O, dit was vir my heerlik.  Ek het elke oomblik daarvan
geniet.  Selfs die stresvolle gedeeltes was vir my nice,
want ek het gevoel ek leer daaruit en ek groei as 'n online
fasiliteerder.  So ja, as ek terugdink aan dit, dan was dit
vir my 'n baie positiewe ervaring.  Dat ek baie goed baie
anders sal doen omdat ek baie geleer het, is vir my goed.
[Translation:  Oh, it was wonderful.  I enjoyed every moment
of it.  I even enjoyed the stressful parts because I felt I
was learning and growing as an online facilitator.  On
looking back, it was a very positive experience.  I learnt a
lot and will do many things very differently, and that is
good for me.]
```

The aforementioned information provided a description of the online environment, changes that the facilitator had to make in the online environment, the five roles that the online facilitator played in the online environment as well as the challenges that the online facilitator had to face. It was imperative to analyse the abovementioned topics and to provide clear descriptions of the various situations in order to be able to select the applicable people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for the online facilitator.

By scrutinising the online facilitator in the online environment, the researcher could obtain a 'detailed picture' of an online course. Observing the online facilitator, selecting and analysing the virtual artefacts and interviewing the online facilitator and learners provided a better insight into the required competencies for the role of the online facilitator. In the next section the *Work Profiling System* session will be discussed in detail. In this section the people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies for this role of the online facilitator will be discussed.

4.7.   What people competencies, thinking competencies and energy competencies were identified for the online environment?

4.7.1. *WPS session*

One week prior to the *Work Profiling System* session the researcher distributed the *CyberSurfiver* field notes, content analysis printouts, formal test responses and transcriptions of both the focus group session and face-to-face interview to the three verifiers as mentioned in Chapter 3. The verifiers had to study the documentation to acquaint themselves with the happenings of *CyberSurfiver* to have an understanding of the roles and activities of the online facilitator and the challenges of the job.

The *Work Profiling System* session took place on 19 October 2003, from 11:00 to 15:30. Profiling a job meant collecting job data using the *WPS* Job Analysis Questionnaires (JAQs). The researcher, a subject matter expert and two verifiers provided ratings using the structured Service questionnaire and the profile generated by the *WPS* directly reflected the information provided by the abovementioned individuals, obtained from the data from the *CyberSurfiver* case study. The two verifiers fulfilled a dual role because they also observed the *WPS* process. The *Work Profiling System* session was conducted as a joint team effort. The four members received a standard *WPS* questionnaire booklet. Each group member was asked to respond to each item out loud, while members of the group either agreed or disagreed. If necessary, a discussion followed to seek consensus. In this way no specific group member dominated the process.

The *Work Profiling System* session began where the researcher, subject matter expert, two observers and the *WPS* facilitator identified and agreed upon the work objectives for the job of an online facilitator. According to SHL (1998) objectives have to be specific and measurable. Measurable indicates that there will be proof of evidence what the job incumbent has done to fulfil the objectives, be it in terms of a paper trial, observing the job incumbent and interviewing peers.

For the purpose of the study, the online facilitator fulfilled five roles and the objective of each role is indicated below:

- Role of Administrator: To conduct timeous administration.

- Role of Social supporter: To maintain social and emotional rapport.

- Role of Instructor: To facilitate the learning process.

- Role of Guide: To encourage interactivity to foster the building of new knowledge.

- ▪ Role of Mediator: To ensure fair play.

The world of work is defined as a series of profiles that display the relevance of specific tasks and behaviours to work outcomes, the context in which these tasks are performed and the competencies or human attributes needed for workers to perform the most relevant work activities (SHL, 1998:27). Tasks and behaviours refer to the content of the work. These are the essential activities workers perform to meet the objectives of their jobs. The focus is on the work itself, not on the characteristics of the worker and is referred to as work-orientated information.

The structure of *WPS* questionnaires is indicated in Figure 4.18. Information is divided into a three-level hierarchy, with Activity sections at the highest level, task categories at the middle level and task statements at the lowest level. The number in the parentheses refers to the total activity sections, task categories and task statements per questionnaire (SHL, 1998:28).

Figure 4.18:   Structure of *WPS* questionnaires
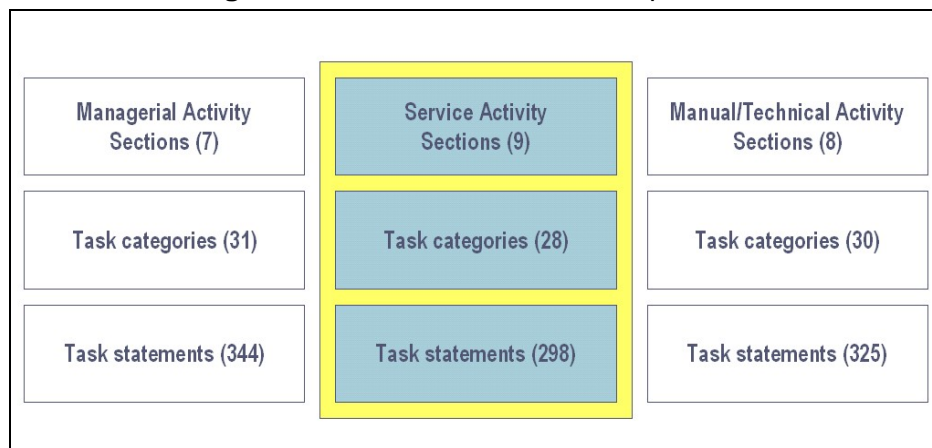
Currently, there are three versions of *WPS* questionnaires, each designed for a particular type of employment (SHL, 1998:44). The 'Type 101 Managerial questionnaire' is appropriate for most jobs with managerial responsibilities. This questionnaire emphasises managing tasks and human resources. The 'Type 102 Service questionnaire' is appropriate for jobs in the service industry. This questionnaire emphasises using information, solving problems, communication and administrative functions and assisting people. The 'Type 103 Manual/Technical questionnaire' is appropriate for jobs such as production worker, machine operator and engineer. The questionnaire emphasises following plans, working with equipment and performing physical activities. The 'Type 102 Service questionnaire' was selected for this study as is highlighted in Figure 4.18, because the online facilitator was rendering a service to the learners in that she assisted them throughout the course. The online facilitator, with the learners, used information in

several ways to explore the Internet and eLearning capabilities. Several problems were solved in the virtual community using the three communication tools. The online facilitator had to perform numerous administrative tasks and she also assisted the learners in their quest for knowledge and skills.

The job of the online facilitator is new to many organisations. It was important to indicate this to the *WPS* facilitator. Given the pace of today's technological innovations, the rate of change in work activities is greater than ever before and there is likely to be occasions when a job analysis is to be conducted on a job that does not currently exist. Subject matter experts for future jobs should be people who are involved in the design of the new job and these may include designers of new technology, trainers who provide the know-how that workers will need to perform the new job and others who understand what activities and contextual demands the new job involves (SHL, 1998:51). Generally speaking, to ensure a thorough job analysis somewhere between three to fifteen people (SHL, 1998:47) should complete a *WPS* questionnaire. Three people is obviously quite a small group and should only be used when a job is very structured, does not change much over time, when it is extremely difficult or costly to identify subject matter experts or when a job is relatively new (SHL, 1998:48). The reasons for using only four members are *inter alia* that the role of the facilitator is new to many organisations, but the researcher had sufficient evidence about a particular online facilitator to warrant the profiling of this job. The rest of the team members also received all the documentation related to the case study and had a good understanding what activities and contextual demands the job involves.

The second step was for the team members to review the deck of work activities and select the 8 – 12 work activity cards that best describe the activities leading to successful job performance. For Service jobs, work activity cards are organised into nine major work functions as is reflected below (SHL, 1998:29):

- Managing tasks.

- Managing people.

- Receiving information.

- Thinking creatively.

- Working with information.

- Communicating.

- Administering.

- Serving.

- Physical activities.

Each task category is printed on a section card with a brief description of the types of tasks and behaviours involved. Team members read each of the cards and decided whether the task category was a key part of the job. Two piles of cards were then created – a 'part-of-the-job' pile and a 'not-part-of-the-job' pile. According to the *WPS* facilitator, if more than 12 cards are selected, it is possible that the respondents have not differentiated those task categories that are of primary importance from those that are of secondary importance. The objective of the card sort is to limit the size of the overall questionnaire from approximately 300 items to 100 items. This saves not only administrative time, but ensures that only the most relevant activities are identified as 'key' to job success (SHL, 1998:75).

For the purposes of this study, seven cards were selected, namely:

- B1: Supervising / Directing.

- B3: Motivating.

- E1: Assessing / Evaluating.

- E2: Analysing / Diagnosing.

- E8: Learning / Researching.

- F1: Influencing / Advising.

- F3: Informing / Discussing / Interviewing.

The next step in the process required that the team members work from a questionnaire booklet and the *WPS* analysis form. The inside-cover of the booklet folded out to reveal the rating scales that would be used to rate the task statements contained in the questionnaires. Each task category is made up of a list of task statements. For each task statement chosen as part of the job, the team members were asked to decide if any time is spent performing the task or behaviour as described in the statement. If not, the item was skipped and no response provided. If time was spent performing the task or

behaviour, then the team members indicated the amount of time spent using the rating scale, as is indicated in Table 4.6.

The percentage scale for rating time spent was selected to force precision of the ratings, therefore making it able to identify infrequently performed tasks (SHL, 1998:28). Task overlap was expected, which meant that the percentage ratings of time spent did not need to add up to 100% since it was assumed that the task statements were interrelated to some degree.

Table 4.6:   *WPS* task statement rating scale: Time spent

Scale position and description	Average week index
a Up to 5% of annual time spent	Up to 2 hours
b 6 to 10% of annual time spent	2.1 to 4 hours
c 11 to 20% of annual time spent	4.1 to 8 hours
d 21 to 50% of annual time spent	8.1 to 20 hours
e 51% or more of annual time spent	20.1 hours or more

Next, the task or behaviour was rated for its importance in achieving the job objectives. Again, a rating scale was provided as is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7:   *WPS* task statement rating scale: Importance to job objectives

Scale position and description	Effect of poor performance
7 Essential to total job objectives	Completely prevent total objectives from being met
6 Very important to total job objectives	Substantially hinder total objectives from being met
5 Important to the job objectives	Substantially hinder part of the objectives from being met
4 Moderate importance to objectives	Moderately hinder part of the objectives from being met
3 Little importance to job objectives	Small impact on part of the objectives
2 Very little importance to objectives	Very small impact on part of the objectives
1 No importance to the job objectives	No impact at all on the objectives

It is important to note that a task statement had to be rated both for time spent and importance, or be completely skipped. On reaching concensus, the appropriate answer was indicated on the machine-readable form, which was completed in pencil.

Once the task statement in all of the chosen task categories were rated for time spent and importance, the team members were required to rank order the task categories from 1 to 8 according to their importance to the job objectives (1 indicating the highest ranking, 8 the

lowest). The purpose of the ranking exercise was to differentiate the most from the least essential activities (SHL, 1998:78).

The final step was to complete the work context section (SHL, 1998:30). Work context refered to the background requirements required by the job, the responsibilities and accountabilities, the demands of the job in terms of dealing with change, travel, danger conditions or the physical environment. Work context information is often useful for describing work conditions to job candidates, as candidates often make employment decisions based to some degree on the contextual demands of the job. For example, some candidates may not want to travel or others may dislike standing for long hours (SHL, 1998:30). Important work context information for this job would be extended hours of work. An online facilitator also needs to be online during the evenings and over weekends.

The *WPS* facilitator then checked and validated the completed questionnaires to ensure that each item had been appropriately coded, to check for incomplete information, to check for inconsistencies and to check the ranking order. It was easier to make appropriate corrections whilst the team members were still present rather than obtain the information at a later stage. The *WPS* facilitator concluded the session and thanked the team members for their participation. The *WPS* facilitator then collected all the booklets, pencils and machine-readable answers forms. The following day the *WPS* facilitator would enter the responses from the group into the *WPS* database so that reports could be generated.

On 29 October 2003 the *WPS* facilitator contacted the researcher to inform her that the online facilitator reports were ready for collection. On collecting the reports, the *WPS* facilitator spent about one hour explaining the reports to the researcher. The *WPS* facilitator indicated that it would be difficult to find an online facilitator that possessed all the competencies as indicated in the report!

4.7.2. *WPS report information*

Essential activities are defined as task statements with ratings equal to or greater than 60 on a 100 point scale of task criticality. Criticality ratings take into account the importance of the task in meeting job objectives and the time spent performing the task. The following essential work activities were selected:

E2: Analysing / Diagnosing:

- Diagnosing problems in physical process or machinery.

- Diagnosing problems in non-physical system/procedure.

- Analysing written information.

- Identifying patterns or trends within data.

- Breaking down a procedure into logical steps.

F3: Informing / Discussing / Interviewing:

- Providing written information about a problem/issue.

- Challenging instructions or orders.

- Making constructive written criticism.

- Discussing issues for clarification or explanation.

- Answering critical questions about activities.

- Interviewing informally to establish facts.

B3: Motivating:

- Encouraging co-operation between team members.

- Creating a good team spirit.

- Sustaining interest of others in projects or continuing tasks.

- Gaining willing co-operation.

- Getting an individual to carry out an unappealing task.

- Emphasising the importance of reaching a work objective.

- Providing reassurance for those suffering anxiety.

- Putting people at ease in stressful situations.

- Stimulating interest in activities.

- Encouraging slow learners.

- Understanding the personal needs or motives of others.

- Encouraging a faster rate of work.

- Appealing to people to increase their motivation.

E8: Learning / Researching:

- Undertaking informal training or coaching (self/others).

- Rehearsing a role.

- Learning new systems, methods or processes.

E1: Assessing / Evaluating:

- Evaluating the written work of others.

- Evaluating information for purposes of recommendation.

- Critically examining information for accuracy/quality.

- Evaluating content of written material for style.

- Making a logical evaluation of new ideas.

- Identifying points of danger.

F1: Influencing / Advising:

- Setting out arguments for/against a course of action.

- Summarising salient points in debate or disagreement.

- Defending a position against critical attack.

- Negotiating on points of dispute.

B1: Supervising / Directing:

- Supervising to ensure compliance with laws/regulations.

- Supervising people at a distance.

- Administering formal tests to people.

- Issuing directions in an emergency or unexpected situation.

- Directing others to repeat a task not satisfactorily done.

- Controlling the behaviour of individuals.

Keeping the essential work activities in mind, the following information was revealed with regards to **interpersonal contact**. Note the usage of the word 'interpersonal'. It is evident, as was indicated in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, that the online facilitator must make a conscious decision to be more interpersonal and want to interact with people. The key below serves as a guide to interpret Figures 4.19 and 4.20.

Key:
1: None
2: Occasional (1-9% of time)
3: Moderate (10-20% of time)
4. Frequent (21%+ of time)

Figure 4.19 shows the nature and frequency of interpersonal contact required by the job.

Figure 4.19:   Contact with whom?
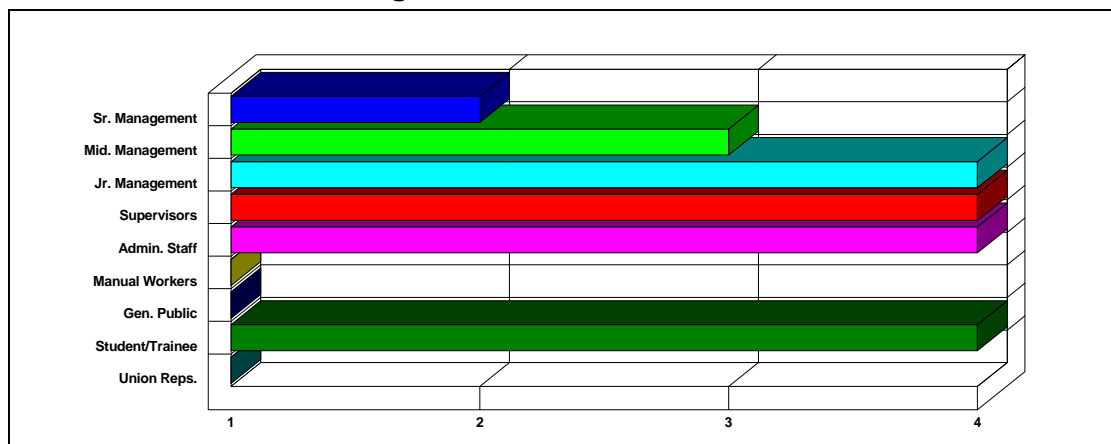
Manual workers work outdoors in the open where there is no online connectivity. Under normal circumstances, an online facilitator would not interact with the general public. The online facilitator forms part of a learning environment within an organisation or institution. A contact centre representative would rather work with the general public. The online facilitator will also not have contact with union representatives. Middle and senior management and supervisors would have contact with union representatives in a working environment. In essence, the online facilitator can interact with all level of workers in an organisation or institution.

Figure 4.20 shows the type and frequency of interpersonal contact required by the job. Physical serving, formal speaking and representing somebody do not fall in the ambit of

this job. It is important to note that 'informing' and 'assessing' happen frequently, which epitomises the role of the instructor.

Figure 4.20:   Type of contact
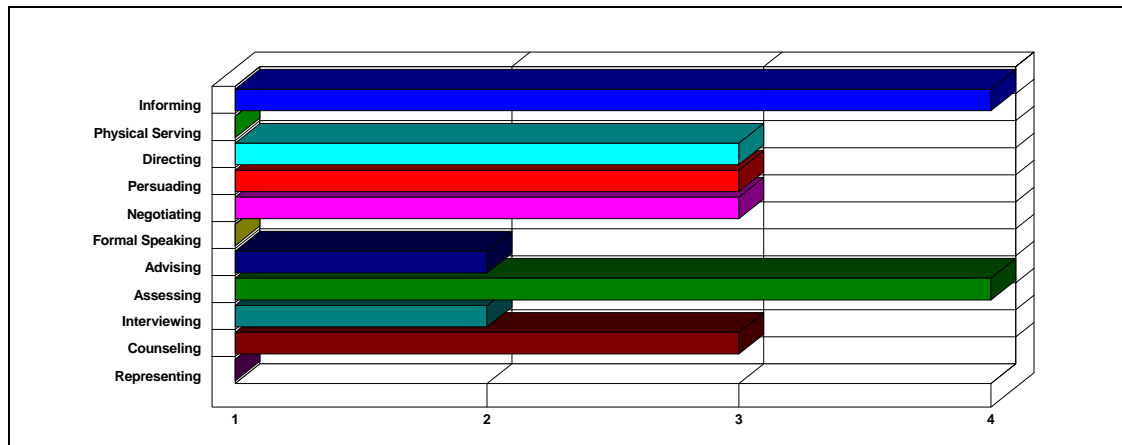
Depending on the course content, the online facilitator could 'direct' learners in the role of instructor or guide. 'Persuading' and 'negotiating' could fall in the realm of the guide. The instructor would do 'advising' and 'interviewing'. The social supporter would do 'counselling'.

Apart from looking after the learning component, the online facilitator will have the following additional responsibilities. The online facilitator has functional impact in an organisation because s/he carries out non-routine operations, which, in the relation to the organisation's objectives, are a large part. The online facilitator's breadth of job knowledge will have to be substantial. This job also has its demands of change because the job frequently has new situations to deal with.

The online facilitator will have specific accountabilities as is shown in Figure 4.21. The key below serves as a guide to interpret Figure 4.21.

Key:
1: None
2: Low
3: Moderate
4. High

The online facilitator will be accountable for equipment infrastructure in terms of what equipment works the best for optimal usability. Public relations are important because the online facilitator represents the new way of work in an organisation. With eLearning and technology, workers are forced into different work methods and the online facilitator will have to be a change agent for the virtual classroom in the organisation. The online facilitator needs to be innovative and make adjustments in the online environment.

Figure 4.21:   Accountabilities for the job
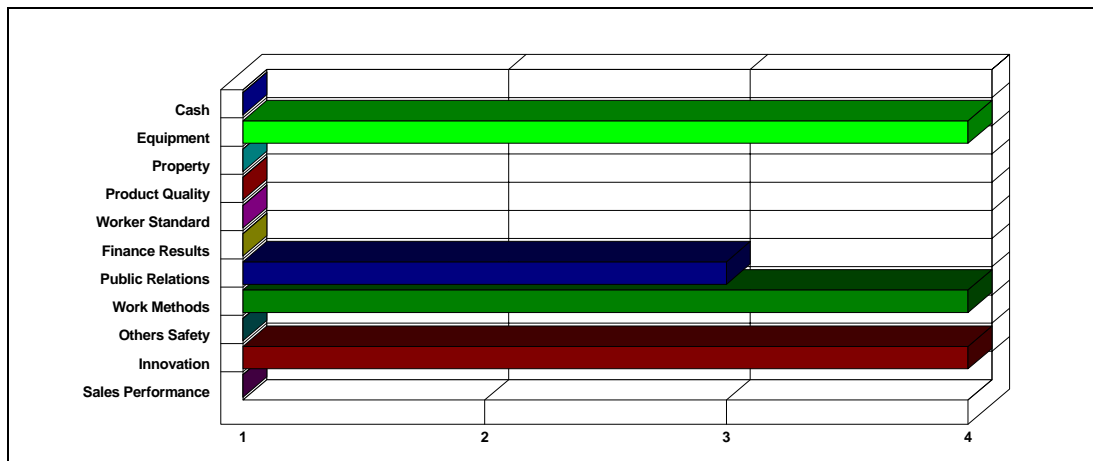
The online facilitator's working hours will be a mix of day and night working as is indicated by the 'sun and moon' icon.

In the working environment, the online facilitator needs to consider the impact on posture as is indicated in Figure 4.22. The job demands a substantial amount of sitting and it is necessary to identify Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD) or Repetitive Stress Injury (RSI) risk factors in the office settings (Raghurama, Garud, Wiesenfeld & Gupta, 2001).

Figure 4.22:   Posture – percent time spent …
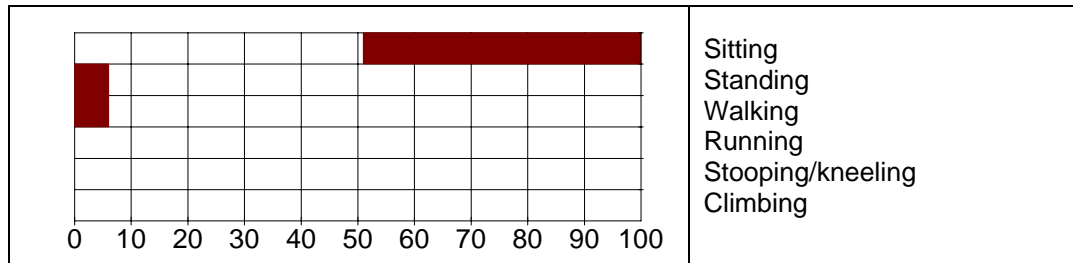
The rise of computer usage and flat, light-touch keyboards that allow high speed typing have resulted in an epidemic of injuries of the hands, arms and shoulders. The thousands of repeated keystrokes and long periods of clutching and dragging a mouse slowly accumulate damage to the body (Westmoreland, 1993). CTD affect a person's back, arms and wrists, legs and feet and shoulders and neck. Many methods of preventing CTD exist, most of which are extrememly simple and require very little time. The online facilitator needs to be aware of these risks.

Refer to Annexure O for ways to combat CTD.

The *WPS* report profile identifies the most job relevant competencies based upon an analysis of the tasks, activities and work context that comprise this job. This report profile shows each competency organised by factor. The importance level of each competency for this job is shown in the bar graphs in Tables 4.8, 4.10 and 4.12 according to the scale definitions indicated below (SHL, 1998):

Baseline: Basic level of competency expected in all jobs, not unique to this job or directly linked to job objectives.

Moderate: Slightly more important for this job – relatively more important for meeting at least some job objectives.

High: More important for this job – relatively more important for meeting **most** job objectives.

Extreme: Much more important for this job – essential for meeting **nearly all** job objectives.

The *WPS* facilitator indicated that it would be difficult to find an online facilitator that possessed all the competencies indicated in Tables 4.8, 4.10 and 4.12. When examining the competencies, it is important to concentrate on the 'high' and 'extreme' scales, because these are the competencies that would be used most of the time to meet the job objectives for the five roles of the online facilitator.

The people competencies for the online facilitator are represented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8:   The online facilitator profile – people competencies

People Competencies				
Importance Level	**Baseline**	**Moderate**	**High**	**Extreme**
Leadership				
Providing direction		■		
Empowering		■		
Motivating others				■
Developing others			■	
Attracting and developing talent		■		
Interpersonal				
Interpersonal sensitivity				■
Teamwork			■	
Building and maintaining relationships			■	
Flexibility		■		
Stress tolerance		■		
Tenacity		■		
Cross cultural awareness	■			
Integrity	■			

The scale definitions for people competencies, as generated on the actual report, are explained in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9:   Scale definitions for people competencies (SHL, 1998)

People Competencies	
Leadership	
Providing direction	Provides team with a clear sense of direction; takes charge, organises resources and steers others' towards successful task accomplishment.
Empowering	Delegates responsibilities to appropriate subordinates; gives others latitude to exercise their own initiative, and invests them with the power and authority to accomplish tasks effectively.
Motivating others	Enthuses others and facilitates successful goal accomplishment by promoting a clear sense of purpose, inspiring a positive attitude to work, and arousing a strong desire to succeed among team members.
Developing others	Actively seeks to improve others' skills and talents by providing constructive feedback, coaching, training opportunities, and assignments which challenge their abilities and encourage development.
Attracting and developing talent	Attracts and recruits high calibre individuals; puts time and effort into developing high fliers.
Interpersonal	
Interpersonal sensitivity	Shows consideration, concern and respect for other people's feelings; demonstrates interest in others opinions; is tolerant of differing needs and viewpoints.
Teamwork	Co-operates and works well with others in the pursuit of team goals; shares information; supports others.
Building and maintaining relationships	Able to establish and maintain relationships with people at all levels; puts others at ease; promotes harmony and consensus through diplomatic handling of disagreements and potential conflict.
Flexibility	Adaptable; receptive to new ideas; willing and able to adjust to changing demands and circumstances.
Stress tolerance	Remains calm, objective and in control in stressful situations; maintains a stable performance under pressure; accepts criticism without becoming over defensive.
Tenacity	Resilient and persevering; continues to strive for a goal (as long as it is realistically attainable) even in the face of adversity; copes with disappointments and setbacks.
Cross cultural awareness	Able to communicate with, relate to and see issues from the perspective of people of other cultures.
Integrity	Maintains high ethical standards both personally and professionally; shows integrity and fairness in dealings with others; is reliable and trustworthy.

The thinking competencies for the online facilitator are represented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10:   The online facilitator profile – thinking competencies

Thinking Competencies				
Importance Level	**Baseline**	**Moderate**	**High**	**Extreme**
Analytical				
Judgment				■
Information gathering			■	
Problem analysis				■
Objective setting	■			
Management control		■		
Written communication skills			■	
Technical skills and competence			■	
Business Awareness				
Organisational awareness		■		
Strategic perspective		■		
Commercial orientation		■		
Cross functional awareness		■		
Innovation		■		
Career and self development		■		

The scale definitions for thinking competencies, as generated on the actual report, are explained in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11:   Scale definitions for thinking competencies (SHL, 1998)

Thinking Competencies	
Analytical	
Judgment	Makes rational, realistic and sound decisions based on consideration of all the facts and alternatives available.
Information gathering	Seeks all possible relevant information for problem solving and decision making; consults widely, probes the facts, analyses issues from different perspectives.
Problem analysis	Breaks problem into constituent parts and differentiates key elements from the irrelevant or trivial; makes accurate use of logic, and draws sound inferences from information available.
Objective setting	Produces detailed project plans in which objectives are clearly defined and action steps for achieving them are clearly specified.
Management control	Establishes clear priorities; schedules activities to ensure optimum use of time and resources; monitors performance against objectives.
Written communication skills	Produces written communications that are clear, fluent, concise, and readily understood by intended recipient(s).
Technical skills and competence	Demonstrates detailed knowledge and expertise in relation to the job; readily absorbs new technical information and keeps up to date in specialist areas.
Business awareness	
Organisational awareness	Attuned to internal 'politics' and alert to changing dynamics with the organisation; forges links with other departments and establishes useful supportive networks.
Strategic perspective	Takes a long term view, thinks on a broad canvas, and entertains wide ranging possibilities in developing a vision for the future of the organisation.
Commercial orientation	Knowledgeable about financial and commercial matters; focuses on costs, profits, markets, new business opportunities and activities which will bring the largest return.
Cross functional awareness	Has knowledge and experience of a range of different functions; takes account of all the different functions in developing strategy and plans.
Innovation	Comes up with new and imaginative ideas; identifies fresh approaches; breaks away from tradition.
Career and self development	Takes responsibility for own development; actively pursues learning and career development opportunities; seeks out and acts upon feedback on own performance.

The energy competencies for the online facilitator are represented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: The online facilitator profile – energy competencies

Energy Competencies				
Importance Level	**Baseline**	**Moderate**	**High**	**Extreme**
Dynamism				
Self-confidence			■	
Impact		■		
Decisiveness		■		
Drive	■			
Initiative		■		
Persuasiveness				■
Oral communication skills				■
Operational				
Concern for excellence		■		
Customer service orientation	■			
Execution		■		

The scale definitions for energy competencies, as generated on the actual report, are explained in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13:   Scale definitions for energy competencies (SHL, 1998)

Energy Competencies	
Dynamism	
Self-confidence	Independent and self reliant; conveys a realistic confidence in own ability to select appropriate courses of action and in likely success of own initiatives; able to stand ground in face of opposition.
Impact	Makes an immediate positive impression on others; has "presence"; comes across with force and credibility.
Decisiveness	Willing to make firm and speedy decisions and commit to definite courses of action - on the basis of limited information if necessary.
Drive	Enthusiastic and committed; demonstrates capacity for sustained effort and hard work over long time periods.
Initiative	Proactive and self starting; seizes opportunities and acts upon them; originates action and actively influences events.
Persuasiveness	Able to influence attitudes and opinions of others and gain agreement to proposals, plans and ideas; skilful at negotiating.
Oral communication skills	Communicates orally in a manner that is clear, fluent, and to the point, and which holds the audience's attention, both in group and one-to-one situations.
Operational	
Concern for excellence	Committed to the achievement and maintenance of quality; sets high standards of performance for self and others.
Customer service orientation	Concerned to provide a prompt, efficient and personalized service to clients; goes out of way to ensure that individual customer needs are met.
Execution	Drives projects along, gets results, ensures that key objectives are met.

In conclusion, a comprehensive overview was provided of the *Work Profiling System* session. The objectives of the five roles of the online facilitator, namely administrator, social supporter, instructor, guide and mediator, formed the basis from where applicable competencies were selected according to time spent performing a certain task or behaviour and rating the task or behaviour for importance in achieving the job objectives. Information from the *WPS* person specific report indicated that the online facilitator could interact with all level of workers in an organisation or institution, from Senior Management to students/trainees. The type of contact that the online facilitator would have with people would be in the form of informing, directing, persuading, negotiating, advising, assessing, interviewing and counselling.

The online facilitator has functional impact in an organisation because s/he carries out non-routine operations. This person's breadth of job knowledge will have to be substantial and s/he will have to be able to manage change, because the job often has new situations to deal with. Working hours will be a mix of day and night working. The job demands a substantial amount of sitting, emphasising the necessity to pay attention to the ergonomics of the workstation to minimise the risk of Cumulative Trauma Disorder.

Competencies are plotted on a bar graph according to a scale, representing 'baseline', 'moderate', 'high' and 'extreme' positions. The 'high' and 'extreme' competencies form the core competencies for the job because these are the competencies that would be used most often to meet the job objectives.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' people competencies are *inter alia*: motivating others; developing others; interpersonal sensitivity; teamwork; building and maintaining relationships.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' thinking competencies are *inter alia*: judgment; information gathering; problem analysis; written communication skills; technical skills and competence.

The identified 'high' and 'extreme' energy competencies are *inter alia*: self-confidence; persuasiveness and oral communication skills.