



USING THE NETWORK AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL:

A CASE-STUDY OF EDUCATION ON-LINE

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## ABSTRACT

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This is a case-study of a graduate course conducted over **IDEAnet**, a network created by the Indiana Department of Education. This study looked at the people involved in this course during the Spring 1993 semester; using the five attributes suggested by Harasim (1990), this case-study also looked at how these five attributes shaped this course. The study found that there were many levels of interaction that occurred in this course. At the lowest level, there was the participative monologue where participants would give out their thoughts without “listening” to others on-line. There were also instances of one-time dialogue, where an interaction occurred between two individuals once, and then stopped. At the highest level, there **were** instances of interactive communication where many individuals interact, discussing on a common topic. These three types of interaction were quite common on the conference space; these, however, do not promote collaborative learning. Participation is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for interaction; interaction is a necessary but not sufficient condition for collaboration. For collaboration to happen there must be a shared and immediate goal between participations. This does not occur naturally on the conference space. Other instructional activities must be incorporated into the course to allow for collaboration to occur. In this on-line course, collaborative learning occurred during one of the small group interaction. Lastly, the history of computer education and suggestions for the future of computer networking in the the researcher’s country, Malaysia, were discussed.

## CHARTER ONE

### Introduction

Technological advances in the last few years have made it possible for any one, who has access to electronic networks, to receive and send information from any computer terminal in the world. At the same time, the amount of information available on the network has increased tremendously. This increase in accessibility and availability of computer networks has had and will continue to have significant impact on a wide range of educational issues. One significant issue is how the network can be used as an educational tool, specifically how the network can be used as a medium through which an educational outcome can be realized. This study has looked at such an issue; it is a study of education on-line.

### The u d y

#### Puroose of Study

There are basically four components to any educational environment, and these are the teacher, the learner, the content, and the context (**Frick, 1991**). Normally, interaction in an educational environment occurs in a classroom, where face-to-face interaction is the main form of communication. In a network environment, interaction occurs through the computers. The main purpose of this case study is to explore the interaction between the teacher, the learner, and the content of a network environment.

The environment selected for this study was a graduate course conducted through **IDEAnet<sup>1</sup>**, a network created by the Indiana Department of

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<sup>1</sup>**IDEAnet is an acronym for Indiana Department of Education Access Network.**

The contents of  
the thesis is for  
internal user  
only

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