

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 452

IR 021 893

AUTHOR Maulding, Wanda S.
TITLE Modification of the Nominal Group Activity for On-Line Instruction.
PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Kansas City, KS, October 2002).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Brainstorming; *Computer Mediated Communication; Computer Uses in Education; Distance Education; *Group Activities; *Group Discussion; Higher Education; *Online Courses; *Problem Solving; Teaching Methods; Web Based Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Socratic Method

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) can be adapted for use in online instruction. The four basic stages of the NGT (listing, recording, collating, and prioritizing) are described, and modifications for online delivery are detailed, including: (1) the instructor posts the Socratic question or problem to be posed; (2) students go to the site of the question and write brief responses to the problem; (3) students return to the general chat and are divided into small groups to meet in individual chat rooms to share all of their initial responses without dialogue; (4) the instructor/facilitator moves from room to room to insure students stay on task; (5) the students return to general chat, and the facilitator instructs each small group recorder to send an e-mail attachment with all of the group ideas; (6) prior to the next session, the instructor collates the lists and asks students to each choose the five ideas from the compiled list they believe to best address the problem; (7) at the next session, students are divided into small groups and share round-robin fashion their top five choices; (8) the students return to general chat to share and discuss the top three ideas from each group; and (9) the facilitator determines the top five resolutions to the initial problem. (MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 477 452

Modification of the Nominal Group Activity for On-Line Instruction

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

W.S. Maulding

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Wanda S. Maulding, Ed.D.
The University of Southern Mississippi

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Southern Regional Council on Educational
Administration in Kansas City, Kansas – October 2002

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

IR021893

Modification of the Nominal Group Activity for On-Line Instruction

Wanda S. Maulding

University of Southern Mississippi

Introduction

With the advent of on-line instruction, there has been a great deal of dialogue amongst university instructional personnel in regard to the effectiveness of this academic tool. One of the greatest concerns has been over the issue of sufficient teacher/student interaction. Some instructors believe that students miss out on much of the substance of the course due to limited dialogue between the student and the instructor. One cause for the limited dialogue or interaction is that of the variance of chat sessions (some do not require chat at all) within the realm of on-line courses.

While some institutions have stringent requirements for either scheduled chat sessions or asynchronous chat (commonly referred to as threaded discussion), others are more flexible in their approach, clearly associating present day on-line instruction to that of the correspondence courses of the past. One could hardly argue against the position that face-to-face instruction is not only more effective, but generally more efficient than the old 'read it, write it, and mail it' schemata of correspondence courses. Another point of consideration is that requirements vary within institutions as to which delivery method

is most effective or necessary for maximum student benefit. Some believe that lecture notes posted to a bulletin board are a very effective manner of delivery while others insist on a rigorous program based primarily on field studies for students, and even others create a mix of lecture, field experiences, chat sessions and threaded discussions.

The typical on-line chat session generally lasts one to one and a half-hours and consists of the instructor beginning the session in a general chat room. Typically, at some point, the instructor would divide the class into smaller groups to be sent to independent chat rooms to discuss a given topic. One common methodology utilized by on line instructors is to pose a Socratic question and act as a facilitator of classroom dialogue.

This type of session can prove to be quite driving and thought provoking. It allows all students to comment on a particular topic without concern of reprisal, which can often be experienced in the live classroom. One of the benefits of the on-line experience is that it seems to foster a 'safe' environment for the otherwise repressed student. However, this methodology used exclusively can become monotonous, not only for the facilitator, but also occasionally for the students, as well.

One alternate method for using the chat session is a modification of the nominal group technique (NGT). The nominal group technique or nominal group activity became a popular method of brainstorming in the mid-to-late 1960's. This activity should be utilized early in the semester to help encourage *all* students' interaction. The atmosphere created early on will produce confidence and enthusiasm for on-line learning throughout the duration of the course.

The Nominal Group Technique

The nominal group technique or nominal group activity is a relatively simple technique. Created in the 1960's to encourage *all* members of a group to contribute individual ideas, thus generating a sense of ownership into the process (Moon, 1999). The NGT is actually a brainstorming technique. However, in the nominal group method, individual group members work independently initially, and eventually their non-redundant ideas are pooled by a moderator (Kramer and Kuo, 1975).

There are four basic stages of the nominal group technique. They are listing, recording, collating and prioritizing (Sarvela, 1991). The activity is begun by presenting a topic for discussion. The topic is addressed through a mini-lecture given by the facilitator on the topic at hand. The lecturer/facilitator then hands out a hard copy of the question/issue to the participants for resolve. The question is read aloud to all participants with no discussion on the topic. The participants are then told they have approximately seven minutes to write every idea that comes to their mind in regard to the topic. They should write their ideas as 2-3 word phrases or bulleted statements. Early reports on the NGT indicated that the technique promoted the identification of the ideas and issues that other group activities might suppress (Chapple and Murphy, 1996).

Participants are then divided into small groups and presented with chart paper on which to record their ideas. They are instructed to give one idea at a time to a recorder, round-robin style, until all ideas in the group have been exhausted. There should be no discussion in regard to the listings and duplicate ideas should be repeated.

The next phase is the discussion and prioritization of items from the small group prior to collation of all ideas from the room. The chart paper with the recorded ideas of

the small groups should be posted so that all members of the small group can easily see the entire list of ideas generated by their group. At this point opportunity is taken for clarification of any ideas that may not be clear to members of the small group. Once all members feel confident they understand all of the bulleted statements, the members are asked to independently rank the top five remarks/statements from their group. A compilation is done for each small group resulting in a priority of the top items for each small group. The top five ideas should then be recorded on fresh chart paper for display for the upcoming large group session.

The next step is taking this small group ranking before the large group. One reporter is selected for each of the small groups. Each group takes a few minutes to discuss the small group selections and the reasoning behind those choices. After a few minutes of discussion, each small group would then be asked to briefly present it's selections and reasonings to the entire group. It will be obvious at this point that many of the ideas generated will have commonalties between the small groups. After this dialogue, participants would again be asked to look over the top ideas from the entire group and rank their priorities in regard to the initial question, based on the feedback from all of the small groups. Selections would be tallied and tabulated for a final consensus.

The result of all of this work is a list of solutions to an issue that has involved a host of resolutions. Also, and perhaps more importantly, a great many individuals that may not have participated had a typical brainstorming session taken place have been actively involved in the resolution process. This activity in full-blown implementation

could easily take several hours and has on many occasions been utilized over an entire day.

Modification of the Technique for On-Line Delivery

With a few minor modifications, the NGT can be an excellent activity early on for the on-line setting. Students should be notified in advance that they will need ancillary materials for the class session. These will include a pencil or pen and paper. Students will also be informed that this activity will be a two-session activity that will begin at the present session and will be concluded the following session.

Prior to the session, the instructor should post the Socratic question or problem to be posed in a 'lesson' area for the student's retrieval later in the class session. Along with the question, simple instructions (such as writing responses in two/three word phrases, etc.) should be listed for the student about the nominal group technique and its purpose for the session at hand. To begin the session, a Socratic question on the topic at hand (the same one as was posted earlier) should be shared with the class. After a few minutes dialogue by the facilitator with the entire group in general chat, discussion should be stopped. At this point, the question (posted earlier) should be referenced. The instructor should tell the students to go to the site of the question, read the instructions and then return to general chat in exactly seven minutes. Before they are dismissed to go to the question site, they should further be instructed that their responses to the problem/statement should be written in two/three word statements or bulleted statements. They should also be informed that it will be very difficult to think of many ideas after the initial 30-45 seconds. They are to work diligently to remain focused on the topic

question and to write as many ideas as possible regardless of how trite or seemingly irrelevant. The students should then be released to go to the site of the question (with directions) and print the question.

As students return to the general chat (after seven minutes of writing every possible resolution they can think of), they should be divided up into small groups to meet in individual chat rooms. They should be instructed, prior to going to the individual chats that they are to share *all* of their initial responses *without* dialogue until all ideas are exhausted and that a recorder should be selected for each group prior to starting. The students are further instructed to return to general chat after all ideas have been exhausted (and recorded).

The instructor/facilitator should during this time, move from room to room to insure students stay on task, only sharing ideas that have been generated without dialogue. The instructor is also available to answer questions and to ensure the process is moving at an adequate pace.

When the students return to general chat, the facilitator instructs the recorder for each session to send an e-mail attachment with all of the group ideas. The instructor then continues class without reference to specific lists that were generated earlier in the session. The instructor/facilitator comments that the idea list will be posted prior to the next chat with instructions and should be accessed by class members prior to the next session. The instructor then should continue the regular class chat session in whatever manner is customary for the remainder of the session.

Prior to the next chat session, the instructor should collate the lists (taking care to remove repetitive items). Above the list, in an instruction section, the facilitator should

make notice in regard to the host of ideas that were initially generated by the entire group. Further elaboration should be made concerning the fact that having completed the assignment in the traditional method (brainstorming), only a dozen or so ideas, at best, would have been generated. Students are then instructed to choose from the compiled list the five ideas they believe to best address the problem at hand and to bring that list to the next chat session.

At the following chat session, students are again divided into small groups and instructed to select a recorder who will also serve as reporter for the group. The person that served as recorder in the previous week is not allowed to serve again. The students will be given seven minutes in small group chat (longer if deemed necessary by the facilitator) to share round-robin fashion their top five choices. As items are duplicated the recorder so marks. After all selections have been shared, the room recorder will share with the group the top three selections of the small groups. Generally speaking, several of the items will be chosen by more than one group member. In the case of ties, the recorder submits ties, as well. Brief discussion is made by the group as to why the particular selections were good ones, then the group will return to general chat to share ideas with the entire class.

The facilitator will begin the return chat by giving a few brief instructions. Among those instructions would be that momentarily the recorders will share the consensus of their respective groups. All students will be instructed to pencil the top three ideas of all of the small groups. They will further be told that at the end of this segment, they will take this smaller list (of approximately 12-15 ideas) and be asked to select their

final top three ideas. After this instruction and an opportunity for students to ask questions, group recorders will be instructed to begin sharing their top choices.

When all choices have been posted, a short session will follow allowing for clarity of all the ideas that were posted. Students may ask questions in regard to ideas they are uncertain about or may wish to explain items posted by their group. When all dialogue about the postings has ceased, students will then be asked to look over their lists and choose their top three choices. Once again, round robin style (directed by the facilitator), all students will share their choices. The facilitator will write down all of the choices, marking all duplicates. At the end, the facilitator will share the top five resolutions to the initial problem with the group. This step could be eliminated (if class time is short) by having individual students e-mail the instructor their three top choices at a later time, the facilitator could assemble a final list of resolutions and post on a 'lesson' site. Finally the facilitator will remind the students of the increased number of possible solutions that were initially presented and how much more individual input was generated through this process.

References

Chapple, M. and Murphy, R. (June 1996). The nominal group technique:

extending the evaluation of students' teaching and learning experiences,

Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, volume 21, issue 2, p.

147.

Kramer, M. and Kuo, C. (May 1997). The impact of brainstorming techniques on

subsequent group processes, *Small Group Research*, volume 28, issue 2,

p. 218.

Moon, R. (May 1999). Finding diamonds in the trenches with the nominal group

process, *Family Practice Management*, volume 6, issue 5, p.49.

Sarvela, P. (Spring 1991). SUIC wellness center needs assessment and strategic

planning methods, *Wellness Perspectives*, volume 7, issue 3, p. 13.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>Modification of the Nominal Group Activity for On-Line Instruction</i>	
Author(s): <i>Wanda S. Maulding</i>	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date: <i>2002</i>

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 1

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

Level 2A

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

Level 2B

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: <i>Wanda S. Maulding</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>Dr. Wanda Maulding, Division Chair</i>
Organization/Address: <i>University of Southern MS 730 East Beach Blvd Long Beach MS 39560</i>	Telephone: <i>(228) 8654551</i>
	FAX:
	E-Mail Address: <i>wanda.maulding@usm.edu</i>
	Date: <i>10/20/02</i>

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: <http://ericfacility.org>

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2001)