Instructor’s Participation in Online Discussions

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It has been a debated issue whether the instructor should actively participate in online discussions. Some studies consider that instructor presence is an important factor to impact student engagement in online discussions. Online learning environment is unique. Students do not see the instructor physically as they do in face-to-face courses. Low levels of instructor’s participation negatively affect student motivation and involvement in online discussions. Therefore, the instructor should actively participate in student online discussions. Nevertheless, other studies present contrary conclusions that instructor’s active participation might stifle student voice and decrease student interaction with each other. With strong instructor presence, students might hesitate to freely contribute their opinions and perspectives, thus thwarting the opportunities for their academic learning through discussions. This presentation provides insights on the issue from an instructor who offers discussion-based online courses as well as those from students who participate in online discussions.