Video 1.2.2

Role and function of virtual facilitators in online courses.

In the next slides we will briefly present some models of virtual learning facilitation.

The models we'll present are:
Tutor role and competencies model;
Model of central/peripheral tutor roles;
Five-stage model;
Model of online facilitation.

Let's take a look at the facilitator's role.

The essential role of the online facilitator is promoting human interaction and communication through the modeling conveying and building of knowledge and skills.

It includes management aspects such as organization and planning and also pedagogical aspects that include facilitating and supporting the learning process by the use of teaching techniques that focus on learning facilitation.

It also involves technical aspects such as making technology transparent so trainees can focus on academic tasks and also social aspects like creating a friendly social context for successful learning.

The role of the facilitator is an important one as it can impact on the quality of learning achieved by students.

Let's briefly introduce the model of central/peripheral tutor roles.
This model distinguishes between center roles such as content facilitator, metacognition facilitator, advisor, evaluator among others and peripheral roles like manager, designer researcher, among others that the facilitator can take on.

Let's briefly introduce the five-stage model which structures both the creation of courses and the support to participants.

The five-stage model provides a framework or scaffold for a structured and paced program of activities.

It offers essential support and development to participants at each stage as they build up expertise in learning online.

Each stage requires participants to master certain technical skills (in the figure to the left of each stage) and also presupposes different skills on the part of the tutor (in the figure to the right of each stage)

The column to the right in the figure indicates the expected levels of interaction in each of them.

Stage 1: excess and motivation.
Individual access and the induction of participants into online learning are essential prerequisites for online participation.
Stage 2: online socialization.
Involves individual participants establishing their online identities and
then finding others to whom they interact.

Stage 3: information exchange.

Participants engage in mutual exchange of information up to and including stage 3 a form of cooperation occurs whereby each person supports the other participants goals.

Stage 4: knowledge construction.
Course related group discussions develop and the interaction becomes more collaborative knowledge construction then working towards a group goal also takes place.
Collaboration requires an active sharing of information and intellectual resources among the participants.

Stage five: development.
Participants look for more benefits from the system to help them achieve personal goals and reflect on the learning process.

Intrinsic motivation, technical support, appropriate online facilitation reducing facilitators intervention and increasing participants responsibilities are key elements on the way to reach higher stages of the model.

The Five Stage Model helps the facilitator to design a scaffolding experience that will take participants step by step helping them build the necessary skills to be successful online students thus increasing the participation rates and the participants degrees of satisfaction.

Let's briefly introduce the model of online facilitation competences.

The author makes a very comprehensive synthesis of the virtual facilitator's competences crossing two sets of variables: the characteristics (understanding of the online process, technical competencies, online communication, competences mastery of contents and personal characteristics) and the qualities (confident, constructive spirit, capacity to stimulate development, facilitation talent, aptitude to share knowledge and creativity).

Being therefore important to consider them as described on the next tables:

understanding the online process
technical skills
other communication skills
domain of contents
personal characteristics

For further study please consider consulting the recommended references.