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Beyond The Teams Lecture: Interactive Strategies for Student Engagement in Live Online Higher Education

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of live online teaching in higher education has increased long-standing concerns around student engagement, specifically in synchronous environments where passive, lecture-centric pedagogies often persist. While platforms such as Microsoft Teams have ensured continuity and access, they have also shown limitations in traditional teaching methods when transferred directly to online classes. This paper presents a systematic literature review exploring interactive teaching strategies that enhance student engagement in live online higher education contexts. The review synthesises findings from thirty recent empirical and conceptual studies, examining behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Interactive strategies identified in the literature include real-time polling, breakout room activities, collaborative digital tools, scenario-based learning, simulations, and structured questioning. Through thematic analysis, the review highlights that intentional pedagogical design, rather than technological affordances alone, is central to fostering active participation and meaningful learning online. Key themes emerging from the analysis show that interactive strategies are most effective when aligned with clear learning outcomes, supported by lecturer facilitation skills, and embedded within a coherent instructional design. Persistent challenges identified in the literature include lecturer preparedness, digital fatigue, uneven student participation, and the need for institutional professional development. This review contributes to higher education teaching practice by consolidating evidence-based strategies that can be practically implemented in live online classes. It also identifies gaps in the literature, particularly the limited use of action-based and discipline-specific studies and outlines directions for future empirical research.

Keywords: Cognitive Engagement; Digital Pedagogy; Instructional Design; Learning Facilitation; Synchronous Learning Environment