



Students in Online Courses Value Engagement Strategies that Involve Learner-Instructor Interactions

What is this Research About?

Engagement strategies can be used in online courses to improve students' motivation and achievement of learning outcomes, and to create a sense of community. In this study, researchers investigated student perceptions of various engagement strategies used in online courses. The research was based on a framework where student engagement is developed through interactions in three categories: interactions between learners (learner-learner), interactions between learners and the instructor (learner-instructor), and interactions between learners and course content (learner-content).

What did the Researchers Do?

Fifty undergraduate students enrolled in a Sensory Evaluation of Foods course participated in a flipped classroom setting. In the flipped classroom setting, students had online lectures and in-class discussions directly related to the laboratory activities before the lab. During the lab time, the learning objectives guided students to complete activities which then led students to design sensory tests by themselves. The teaching assistants were encouraged to act as "guides on the side." After the course, confidential online surveys were used to assess students' perceptions of the flipped classroom.

What did the Researchers Find?

The average score for all engagement strategies was greater than three, indicating that students thought strategies from all three categories of interaction were at least somewhat important. The researchers found that strategies involving learner-instructor interactions had the highest overall average score. The strategies from each category with the highest average score were: students introduce themselves with an icebreaker discussion (learner-learner), instructor sends or posts regular announcements and reminders (learner-instructor), and students work on realistic scenarios to apply content (learner-content). Based on the demographic data, younger students and those with less experience with online courses valued regular announcements more highly.

SoTL

Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

When designing or facilitating online courses, instructors can choose engagement strategies that will foster learner-learner, learner-instructor, and learner-content interactions. In this study, students valued learner-instructor interactions and noted that they wanted instructors to be supportive and communicative. Students valued learner-instructor engagement strategies such as regular announcements and reminders, rubrics for all assignments, a forum for questions about the course, checklists, and using students' names in discussion forums. Instructors can also consider the number of online courses students have previously taken when choosing engagement strategies. In this study, students who had taken fewer online courses valued regular announcements and informal opportunities to interact with their peers.

➔ Citation

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➔ Keywords

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