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Evaluation of arenas for social interactions in higher education: design of distance courses, learning outcomes and student influence

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Education is both a means to knowledge with curricula- based education and course design, as well as the social interactions between students and teachers. Thus, universities are an arena for social interaction where students meet, study together and build social networks with each and teachers. Several studies have in different ways shown that an important context to consider in distance education is the social interactions an online course provides. Social interaction includes both the interaction between peer students and between student and teacher. The purpose of this study is, thus, to investigate the influence of social interactions and how course design can support social interactions in distance learning. Participants were undergraduate students (N=8) attending either part-time distance courses in psychology or a full-time campus program. The study design consisted of three parts: 1) in the beginning of the course students answered open-ended survey questions, 2) after the course finished students participated in a semi-structured interview, and 3) answered open-ended survey questions. Data was collected between November 2023 to June 2024. The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Four themes were found: (1) successful course design, (2) active and engaged learning, (3) students'own responsibility, and (4) Conditions to achieve learning in groups. In conclusion, this study contributes with knowledge of how to design a distance learning course regarding factors such as social interactions and student-influence. Recommendations for teachers include to talk to students about frames for group-work, the importance of students'own engagement during the course and definitions of student influence.

Is the first author also the speaker?

Yes

If first author is not the speaker, please indicate speaker's name here:

Please indicate up to five keywords regarding the content of your contribution

social interaction #distance learning #instructional design #student influence #higher education

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