



#LTSE2023

The case for a Comfortable Learning Environment

Co-creation learning through active participation, peer-to-peer activities, storytelling and reflection leads to improved learning and development of skills for the Future of Work

Researchers

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Context



The **Ulster University Business School (UUBS)** is the **6th largest business school in the UK**. With over 5,000 full-time students, over 3,000 part-time students, 2,000 postgraduate students and approximately 150 academic staff.

We wanted to better understand how lecturers can co-create **“comfortable learning environments”**.

Mixed methodology with a qualitative semi-structured questionnaire and focus groups.



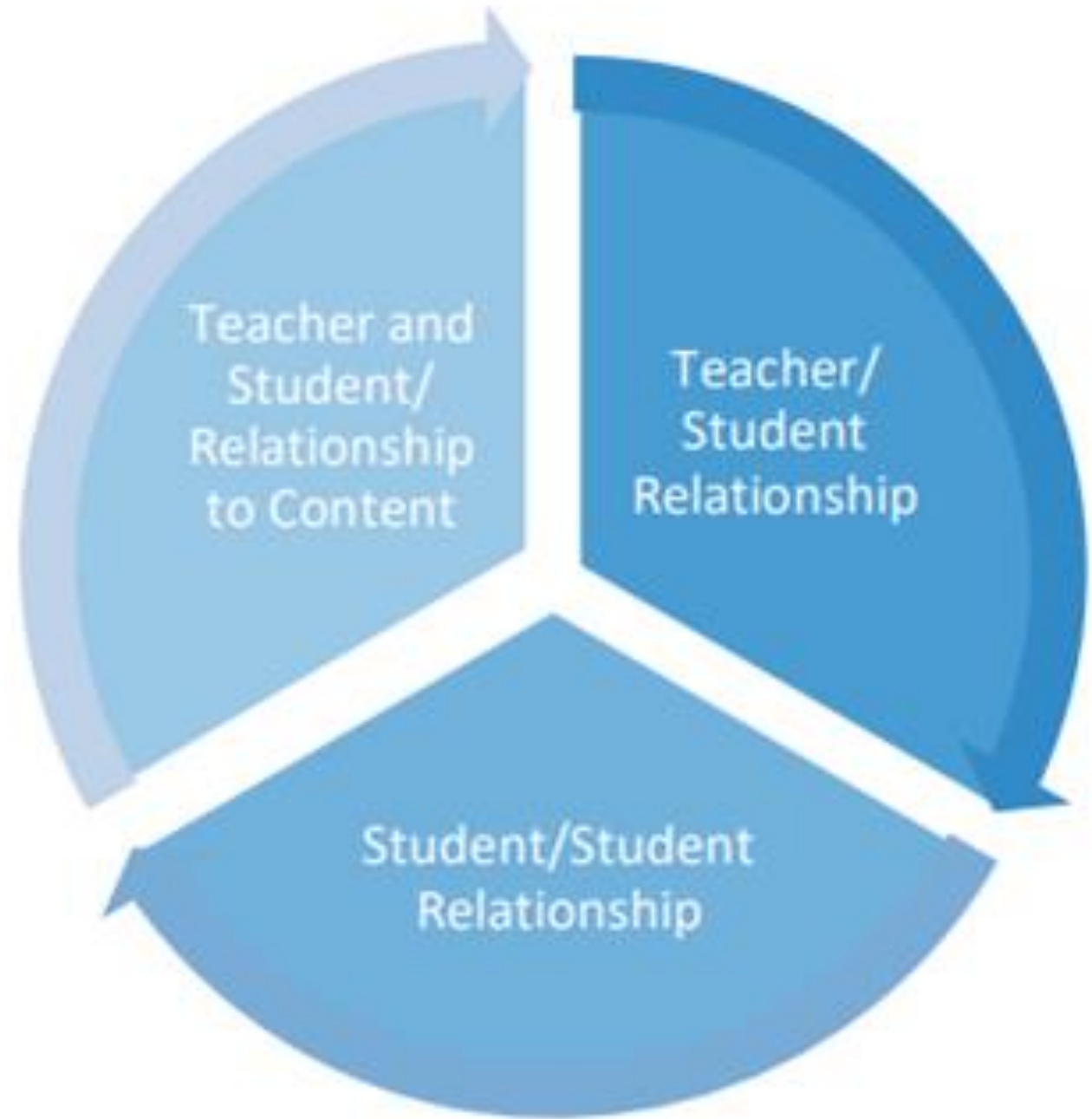
Three Research Objectives



1. Identify students (>100) across a range of post/undergraduate business modules
2. Identify the engagement methodologies used by lecturers in a sample of business modules
3. Make recommendations on creating a “comfortable learning environment” that increases student engagement

Triad of Relationships

(Schoem, 2017)



Factors that impact the level of engagement of students

	Moderately Engaged	Fully engaged
Teaching Style	16.2%	73%
In-person Teaching	13.5%	64.9%
Teaching Materials	32.4%	54.1%
Online Teaching	24.3%	35.1%

Level of impact on student learning and engagement

	Relevant	Very Relevant
Approachable lecturer	11.1%	86.1%
Lecturer's passion and energy for the subject	13.9%	86.1%
Lecturer's care for student well being	22.9%	68.6%
Guest speakers	22.2%	50.0%
Humour	32.4%	48.6%
Agile and Curious approach to learning	37.8%	45.9%



How active participation helps students to learn in a more work ready effective way

Implications for practice



1

Adequate time for students to **debrief their experiences** allowing them **to engage with reflective practice**

2

Active-learning activities decrease anonymity and can motivate students (Cooper and Robinson 2000)

3

Streamline content to allow appropriate time for student engagement (Cooper, MacGregor et al. 2000)

4

Discomfort will be **offset by the benefits of learning and reflection**

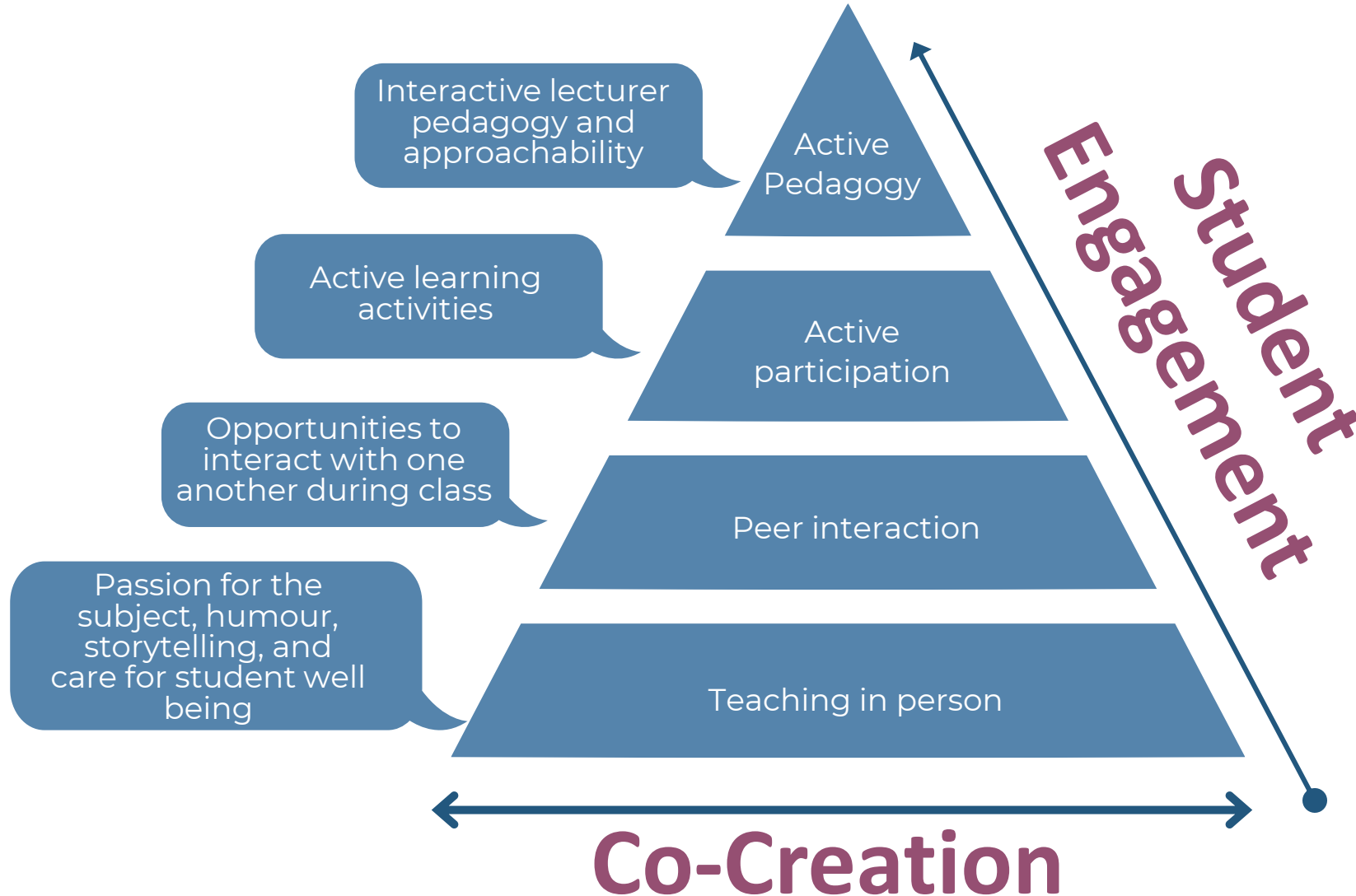
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‘Actively participate’ and welcomed an approachable and interactive lecturer pedagogy

Conclusion

- It is clear from this study and others that it is not just what the lecturer is or does, **but what students do in the classroom that determines the degree to which lectures might be considered ‘unmissable’** (Revell and Wainwright 2009)
- **Learning is not just about knowledge acquisition – it’s experiential**
- **There are four key ingredients for creating a “comfortable learning environment”** that will enhance student engagement and motivation to learn

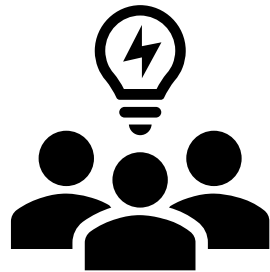
COMFORTABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



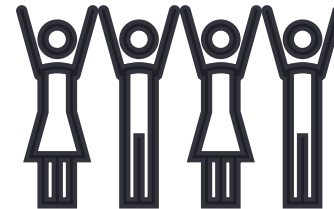
Four Actions To Enhance Teaching Practice Pedagogy



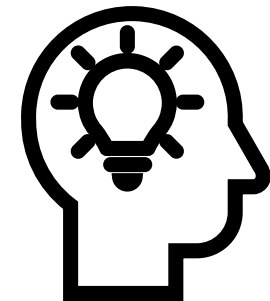
**TEACHING IN
PERSON**



**PEER
INTERACTION**



**ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION**



**ACTIVE
PEDAGOGY**

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