

Presentation: Oral

Theme: **Student Engagement, Agency, and Success**

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Abstract

Title: Co-creation in empty classrooms? Student attendance, engagement and the humanising pedagogy debate

Humanising pedagogy has gained prominence in higher education as an approach that centres dignity, care, dialogue, inclusion, and the recognition of students as active participants in the learning process. For sustainable pedagogy, co-creation is increasingly becoming a pedagogical strategy that fosters collaborative knowledge production, shared responsibility, and meaningful partnerships between students and lecturers. It positions students as co-creators rather than passive recipients of knowledge, thereby enhancing engagement, a sense of belonging, and student success. The effectiveness of co-creation presupposes regular student attendance and active participation in learning activities. Despite substantial institutional efforts to advance student-centred and humanising pedagogies, many lecturers continue to experience low class attendance, leading to limited student engagement. Significant time and effort are invested in curriculum design, interactive teaching methods, student support initiatives, and the creation of inclusive learning environments. Yet, classrooms are often characterised by absenteeism, raising critical questions about the extent to which students are willing and able to engage as partners in the learning process. We used a systematic literature review (SLR) to answer the predetermined research question of whether co-creation is possible in empty classrooms. Thirty (30) primary studies were surveyed. The paper also considers the implications of absenteeism for academic performance, pass rates, retention, and overall student success. We argue that humanisation should be understood as a reciprocal process requiring commitment from both lecturers and students. While lecturers have a responsibility to create enabling and supportive learning environments, students must also actively participate in the co-construction of their educational experiences. The paper recommends (1) institution-wide strategies to address the causes of absenteeism and (2) institutionalisation of co-creation as a pedagogical responsibility.

Keywords: *Humanising pedagogy; co-creation; student engagement; student attendance; student success; Higher Education.*