Online Graduate Students' Perspective on Engagement in Active Learning in the United States

Ehi E. Aimiuwu

Abstract—As of 2017, many researchers in educational journals are still wondering if students are effectively and efficiently engaged in active learning in the online learning environment. The goal of this qualitative single case study and narrative research is to explore if students are actively engaged in their online learning. Seven online students in the United States from LinkedIn and residencies were interviewed for this study. Eleven online learning techniques from research were used as a framework. Data collection tools were used for the study that included a digital audiotape, observation sheet, interview protocol, transcription, and NVivo 12 Plus qualitative software. Data analysis process, member checking, and key themes were used to reach saturation. About 85.7% of students preferred individual grading. About 71.4% of students valued professor's interacting 2-3 times weekly, participating through posts and responses, having good internet access, and using email. Also, about 57.1% said students log in 2-3 times weekly to daily, professor's social presence helps, regular punctuality in work submission, and prefer assessments style of research, essay, and case study. About 42.9% appreciated syllabus usefulness and professor's expertise.

Keywords—Class facilitation, course management, online teaching, online education, student engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE issue of student engagement in online education is still a concern in academia to this today [1], [2]. The goal of this qualitative narrative and single case study is to explore if students are actively engaged in their online learning based on personal experience. Engaging students for active learning (Experiential) is achieved in situations where students are willing and able to transfer their learning into real-life experiences, which is very possible if students are allowed to learn in conditions that is similar to the real world or the workplace [3]. As an Assistant Professor of Information Technology, who has taught online, blended (hybrid), and classroom courses for over decade, the role of a professor towards their student are as follows: To facilitate students learning experiences; equip students with the skills and knowledge to retain and apply course content; speak publicly about any topic that have been studied; apply knowledge and understanding in the workplace; be able and willing to express their thoughts in writing efficiently; should be able to start a business with their knowledge if needed; and be able to debate as well as defend their opinions any day while being unbiased to various and current content of the matter. Some of the online teaching techniques on which student engagement is

Ehi. E. Aimiuwu, Assistant Professor, is with the Masters of Science in Information Technology Management (MSITM) program in the Business Administration department at Campbellsville University, KY. USA (e-mail: eeaimiuwu@cambellsville.edu).

based upon will be discussed further below. From research, the 11 teaching techniques recommended for online professors to keep students actively engaged in online learning will be discussed in the literature review.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the literature below, 11 teaching techniques recommended for online professors to keep students actively engaged in online learning will be discussed. The 11 teaching techniques are professor interaction; syllabus use; student login; professor's social presence; attendance & punctuality; students participation; energizing the students; tests and assessments; grading; online communication; & internet access and computer centers.

A. Professor Interaction

A professor should log into their online class many times daily to attend to the needs of students and to interact with them. Online instructors should be present and available for regular and direct dialogue with students [1]. Students tend to be very happy and content when their professors respond to their request within hours or the same day. In fact, students are very grateful in their emails to professors thanking them for responding to their request or question in a timely fashion. There was an increase in students' satisfaction and persistence in their online learning when instructor's interaction with the students was high and regular [4]. Professors are to put adequate time towards class preparation and student interaction in order to maintain their role as class facilitators and mentors for students to succeed in both academics and the workplace. Technology influences instructor's teaching experience in the amount of time for planning and teaching, as well as the instructor's view of his or her role in teaching and learning [5]. Online professors need to take quality time to learn and master the online platform and various technologies needed to interact with the students efficiently.

B. Syllabus Use

Online learning platform should be designed and implement before the term begins to include the required learning materials that should enhance student active learning and engagement [1]. The online course page and class syllabus should be consistent in terms of activities, date of activities on the calendar, and due dates. The syllabus should state professor's name and contact information; course description and objective; course requirements and grading scale; as well as a notice that anything could change due to circumstances beyond school's control with very few links, if any, to avoid any form of distraction. The online syllabus with little or no

links (low interactivity) had a better perception of the instructor than that with high interactivity [6] because students felt the instructor was dependable and knowledgeable. The syllabus should be engaging to students and answer most questions students may have in regards to weekly activities, grades, rubric for grading work, and due dates.

C. Student Login

As a former online student, students should log in to their account many times a day to do assignments, respond to posts, see who responded to their post and why, and to check the due dates of each weekly submissions. Students' frequent involvement in their online learning class increased their productivity [1]. It is always good for students to log in regularly or at least every other day to check announcements, or to even see if a past assignment whose due date was missed has been reopened for a lucky second attempt. Regular or persistent online attendance or login into online class platform is a good predictor of higher student performance [7]. It is essential for students to log into their online class frequently to do work in order to increase their chances of success.

D. Professor's Social Presence

Professor as the class facilitator or mentor for the students have the power to bring out the best in their students by showing more of themselves, their expertise, and how much they care about the students succeeding. Instructors really have power over the lives and affairs of their students and the students usually give instructors more power than is actually necessary [8]. Professors are to cherish this power towards improving the lives of their students and preparing them for the workplace in the future. Online students excelled better in contact and structured learning, but they were more motivated and interested in activities related to their needs and interests [9]. Professors are to make frequent contact with their students through emails and announcements, have a structured syllabus with clear weekly course outlines, and respond in a timely fashion to students' questions and requests to provide adequate solutions.

E. Attendance & Punctuality

When it comes to student attendance and logging into their online platform, professors need to be clear about what is expected of the students to avoid needless cultural and ethnic interpretations that could affect students missing the deadlines or having low attendance. Various students from different cultures and countries see time differently. Instructors need to be patient and understanding when it comes to various cultural and communication styles from many cultures [10]. Some students may feel that logging in too many time could be seen as overzealous or lack of experience, especially if they come from countries where their lives are monitored too closely by oppressive or restrictive governments. Other students may feel that meeting the deadline too often maybe seen as arrogant or being a perfectionist, especially from cultures where it is not always right to stand out of the crowd.

Professors need to encourage their students not to miss any due dates and have all week to submit any work on time before the due date. The syllabus should also state that all absence or lateness on activities past the due date must be backed up with a letter-headed document (e.g. doctor's note) before a make-up is given. Student attendance was positively correlated with student performance in exams and quizzes [11]. This means that professors motivating students to excel in their weekly activities and reminding them about their due date through syllabus, announcement, and emails may decrease absenteeism and lateness.

F. Student Participation

As a former online student, some professors made it a requirement through the syllabus and online course page that students were to log into the class platform to submit their work 4 days a week, which is every other day. Students are to use those four days as they please without missing the due date for the weekly submission. It may require that students be instructed to ask questions or discuss an issue openly on the discussion board weekly in order to keep them actively engaged in online learning through participation in exchange for grades [12]. One day may be for posting on the discussion board, the second day may be to respond to another student's post, the third day may be to turn in an assignment, and the fourth day to do the weekly quiz. Student attendance (participation) was positively correlated with student performance [11]. It is not all about attendance or just logging into the online class; however, it is about students having to participate and do the required work to meet the submission deadline that leads to success.

G. Energizing the Students

Professors need to use their expertise and creativity to energize students to perform and be more productive in their online learning. Online instructors who spoon-feed students by providing PowerPoint slides had no positive impact on student attendance, while it was shown to actually decrease student performance [13]. It is essential to make students to read on their own and do their own research. Students can be invited to teach the class with the information they found to other students through Skype, YouTube video, or on the discussion board. According to [1] students should be involved in live presentations as well student led-seminars. Students should be guided to bring ideas about their work experiences and share with the entire class online. Students should be able to use technology to solve real-world concerns, explore risk, debate issues, as well as think logically and critically [5]. The online platform should be an avenue where students be motivated to share whatever interest them with the class as long as it is related to the subject matter being discussed.

H. Tests & Assessments

Professors should understand that students prefer various assessment styles to show what they have learned. Technology can be used to present these various tests and assessments to know how well students are engaged in their learning. For students, exposure and access to technology can also affect and influence their preferred learning styles [5]. Students should be encouraged to indulge in self-regulated learning

where students can complete task and submit their work at their own convenience before due dates or before time expires for tests. Time regulated tests and assessment were beneficial when it comes to self-regulated learning [14]. Exams or quizzes should be set to time and students should hit submit for the exam to the graded electronically or they get a zero if the time expires.

Research paper, case study, essays, and discussions can be a form of assessment to show what students have learned after doing their research, but students must avoid plagiarism at all cost or get either a zero or a failing grade. Turnitin Report tool is an effective tool against plagiarism. Students tend to avoid plagiarism when they are aware of the consequences [15] because the Turnitin report usually say the percent of their work that was copied and posted from the internet or from various databases.

I. Grading

It may be a good idea for professors to make weekly quiz and exams to be about half of the total grade, while logins (read, give answers, and ask questions), class participation (discussion posts), and projects (leading discussion on business issues online or research paper and essay) should make up the other half. Grading should be fair and without any form of discrimination [16] based on race, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity, and age. Grading could be individual, team, rubric, points, or even percentage. Students' profile pictures as well as ethic, gender, or religious names should not influence the grade given to students at any time. Grades given to each student should solely be based on the student's quality of work compared to the work of other students in the class.

J. Online Communication

From experience, students love to communicate with their professors through email, chat, or discussion, while email, WhatsApp, Skype, and Facebook can be used to communicate with other students in their teams or to form study groups. Students use technology and social media to interact with colleagues and develop various skills needed to collaborate effectively with classmates from various distance, backgrounds, and cultures [5]. Social media does not only help students cut across distance and cultural differences, it allows teams or study groups to stay focused on the task required for their online education to be a success.

K. Internet Access & Computer Centers

Professors should encourage their students through the syllabus, email, and announcement to get familiar with the computer labs and libraries close their homes for easier internet access and connectivity in case of weather issues or they have inadequate internet access. Many students suffer from digital divide or digital gap issues [12], which can be addressed by these computer centers that have adequate internet access and many computers that may be staffed with computer assistants. Students' access to e-learning technologies and e-learning centers help to increase students' performance because they are able to properly pace their

learning to meet their personal expectation and situation [17]. According to [2] for students to be successfully engaged in online learning, they have to be comfortable with technology and the leaning platform for the class. This means that professors must be available frequently to assist students with concerns and encourage them to use computer labs for assistance with any technology issues.

L. Research Questions

There are 11 research question used in this study to explore if professors are actively keeping their students engaged in learning. The questions are:
1) How often do professors interact with you & your online class weekly?
2) How useful is the syllabus to your online learning & engagement?
3) How often do you log into your online class weekly and why?
4) How does professors' social presence contribute to your online learning and engagement?
5) How often are you punctual in submitting your work weekly online and why?
6) How often do you participate in your online class weekly and why?
7) How does professors' expertise help to energize your creativity in online learning?
8) What test or assessment styles demonstrate how you best learn and why?
9) What grading format would best help you learn in an online platform and why?
10) What communication tools helps to keep you engaged in your online learning?
11) How does access to a computer center and public library help in your online learning?

III. METHODOLOGY

Researcher used LinkedIn and email to invite 8 online professors to be expert consensus in the study, but only two agreed to review the 11 research questions. The first expert approved the research questions, but wanted to include Professors' social presence and expertise to question 4 and question 7 because it will align the study to already established literature. The expert also reworded question 4. The second expert also approved the research questions and helped to rephrase question 8 and question 9.

Researcher went on LinkedIn to search for online students and invited 25 students to connect, but only six connected. The searches used on LinkedIn to find the students were online student; online student at Walden University; Online student at Capella University; and online student at Grand Canyon University. Out of the six students that connected, only four participated in the study. Researcher then contacted 10 students by email from residencies or took online course in the past, but only five agreed to participate. Researcher ended up having a total of nine participants to interview and they were all graduate online student.

Among the nine participants that were available for the

study, the researcher interviewed only seven participants from five different online universities for 15-18 minutes within two days by phone. Saturation was achieved at the sixth participant, but decided to interview one more participant to bring the total to seven interviewed participants. Researcher used LinkedIn, email, and text to receive verification and confirmation to their digitally transcribed responses, which was sent to them by email. No more participants were needed because saturation of the study was achieved.

In this study, the data collection tools used included an interview protocol, a digital audiotape, an observation sheet, a digital transcribe, and an NVivo 12 Plus qualitative software. To guarantee credibility of the study, digital audiotape as well as observation sheet was used to record all responses from the participants as accurately as possible. To attain transferability of the study, the interview protocol had open ended questions and the participants were instructed to express themselves openly and freely to provide a rich and detailed content for adequate analysis and conclusion. To maintain dependability of the study, the methodology is explained thoroughly to show how the participants were recruited and how the study was conducted. To receive confirmability of the study, the participant verified and confirmed their digitally transcribed responses to the interview protocol by email, LinkedIn, and text messaging (member checking). The NVivo qualitative software was used for the coding and segmenting of the data for adequate analysis.

IV. RESULT

In the study, it is assumed that three or more out of seven participants and over 40% of similar responses from the participants represents saturation for each research question. Out of the 11 research questions, all of them (100%) had saturated responses, which showed that online students were actively engaged in their learning. NVivo 12 Plus qualitative software was used to code the data.

The "Word Frequency Query" of NVivo was used to explore the top key themes within the response to each question that were not words in the question and their frequency (count). The "Text Search Query" of NVivo was used to explore how many of the participants used those top key themes in their response to each questions (Query Summary) as well as the string of words connected to the key theme (Query Word Tree) to get the actual transcribed verbatim within each of the response.

Only the top key themes that had at least three counts and were provided by at least three participants were accepted as a saturated response to the questions, except for questions #2 (syllabus use) were the only top key theme was "Syllabus", which is a word in the question and could easily be used in responses. Below are the analysis of the study:

1) How often do professors interact with you and your online class weekly?

About professor interaction in Table I, 5 of 7 (71.4%) participants used "Week" and 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Send" in regards to professors interacting with students. Students felt that the professors interacted with them weekly

to every other week by sending email, reminders, links, and announcements.

TABLE I
RESPONSE FOR PROFESSOR INTERACTION

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Week	6	Once to twice a week; once a week; 2-3 times a week; every week
Send	3	Send emails every 2 weeks; links & reminders; send out announcements

2) How useful is the syllabus to your online learning and engagement?

About syllabus use in Table II, 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used the word "Syllabus". This was the only question that had a word in the question as its only saturated key theme. The participants felt that the syllabus contained the necessary information and answers for questions about the class, it helped students to stay engaged, and was invaluable to their success in the class.

TABLE II
RESPONSE TO SYLLABUS USE

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Syllabus	4	Syllabus for answers; syllabus is invaluable; very informative; to stay engaged

3) How often do you log into your online class weekly and why?

In regards to student login in Table III, 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Week", while 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Assignments" and "Daily", respectively.

TABLE III
RESPONSE TO STUDENT LOGIN

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Week	5	8 times a day all week; post discussion once a week; 2-3 times a week; 4-6 time a week
Assignments	3	Do assignment, quizzes, & discussions; See when assignments are due; work on posts, emails, & assignments.
Daily	3	Daily to follow instructions; daily to do research; daily to see what is going on

Many students log into their online class from 2-3 times a week to multiple times daily to do their assignments, quizzes, and participate in discussions. Others log on to do their posts, check their emails, and respond to other students' posts. Some students log in daily because they are encouraged to do so or because it is a grading requirement, while others log in to work on their research and to see what is going on in their online platform.

4) How does professors' social presence contribute to your online learning and engagement?

About Professors' social presence in class with the students in Table IV, 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Helps" and "Students" respectively. Many students felt that a professor's social presence was important to their online learning. This is because it helps to keep students engaged in their learning and they appreciate even basic interactions from their professors either online or at residencies. Some students felt that it helps

them to work harder and has influence on their grades.

TABLE IV
RESPONSE TO PROFESSORS' SOCIAL PRESENCE

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Helps	6	Definitely helps; helps a lot; helps to keep me informed; basic interaction helps
Students	6	Students to work harder; important for professors to know students; show more of themselves to students; helps with grading students

5) How often are you punctual in submitting your work weekly online and why?

In terms of students being punctual in submitting their work on time in Table V, 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Time". Many students claimed to the punctual about 90% to 100% of the time. The few that missed a submission due date explained that it was because of sickness, busy with work, or merely overlooked a deadline for one assignment.

TABLE V
RESPONSE TO PUNCTUALITY

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Time	6	Punctual 90%-100% of the time; submit work on time, except when I was late, busy, or overlooked a deadline.

6) How often do you participate in your online class weekly and why?

In the area of student participation in online class in Table VI, 5 of 7 (71.4%) participants used "Week" and 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Respond", while 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Posts" and "Times", respectively. Many student log into their online class 2-6 times a week to respond to colleagues, discussions, and posts while others log in to be engaged in what is going on in the online classroom.

TABLE VI
RESPONSE TO STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Week	5	6 times a week; 2-3 times a week; once a week; participate every week
Respond	4	3 times a week to respond; to colleagues; to discussions; to posts
Posts	4	Discussion posts; respond to posts; log in to do posts; responded to my posts
Times	3	Post 6 times a week; 2-3 times a week to engage; 2-3 times a week to respond

7) How does professors' expertise help to energize your creativity in online learning?

TABLE VII
RESPONSE TO PROFESSORS' EXPERTISE

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Give	3	Give detailed materials; real life experience; ideas & encourage
Research	3	Do research better; detailed materials for research; research paper every week

When it comes to professors' towards energizing student creativity in Table VII, 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Give" and "Research" respectively. Many students felt that professors being knowledgeable in their field will help to provide them with sufficient detailed material for research and real life experiences.

8) What test or assessment styles demonstrate how you best learn and why?

For tests and assessments that shows students' learning styles better in Table VIII, 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Research", while 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Discussion". Since most of these students are in an online graduate program, they seems to prefer research and discussions as a great way to show what they know.

TABLE VIII
RESPONSE TO TESTS & ASSESSMENTS

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Research	5	Research paper & case study shows; Essay & research paper; Research paper because you look for lots of; research paper towards the end
Discussion	3	One quiz, one assignment, one discussion, & reply to classmate; discussion & research paper; discussion allows professors to know what

Many felt that research makes you explore a lot of sources and could express what you have learned towards the end of the term. Other students felt that discussion was just as good as research to learn from the professor, others students, and to exchange responses with each other.

9) What grading format would best help you learn in an online platform and why?

This was the most saturated of the questions because it had the most consensus among the students. In regards to grading format in Table 9, 6 of 7 (85.7%) participants used "Individual" and 5 of 7 (71.4%) participants used "Team". "Rubric' was used by 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants, while 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Know". Many students prefer individual grading to team grading because it shows their actual ability to professors, and they have to earn the points for themselves. Students also preferred rubric because it clearly shows students the weight of each section, what to focus their execution on for maximum points, and where they messed up if they did not follow the guidelines.

TABLE IX
RESPONSE TO GRADING FORMAT

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Individual	6	Individual & rubric; individual because you have to; individual even in groups; individual always better; individual shows professor
Team	5	Not great with team; team does not show output of ability; never had team grade; do not know where you stand with team
Rubric	4	Rubric shows me; rubric for execution; rubric is effective; rubric is good for showing points
Know	3	Know what to improve; know where you stand; know where I messed up

10) What communication tools help to keep you engaged in your online learning?

For communication tools in Table 10, 5 of 7 (71.4%) participants used "Email", while 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Use" and "Students", respectively. "Chat" and

"WhatsApp" was used by 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants, respectively. Email is definitely the most favored form of communication among the students with both professors and other students. For communicating with professors, students preferred emails and then chat, while for communicating with other students, they preferred WhatsApp, discussion forum, Skype, and Facebook forum.

TABLE X
RESPONSE TO COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Email	6	Use Skype, email, & chat; email & text messages; email & WhatsApp; email for professors
Use	6	Use Blackboard; use phone; use email for professor; use WhatsApp, Skype, & Facebook room
Students	4	Students for moral support; interacting with other students; phone & WhatsApp with students; students through Discussion forum
Chat	3	Email & chat; chat with professors; chat messages
WhatsApp	3	Phone & WhatsApp; Skype, email, & WhatsApp; WhatsApp, Skype, & Facebook room

11) How does access to a computer center and public library help in your online learning?

About access to computers or the internet in Table XI, 5 of 7 (71.4%) participants used "Internet" and "Use" respectively, while 4 of 7 (57.1%) participants used "Home" and 3 of 7 (42.9%) participants used "Good". Many students did not see the need of public libraries or local computer labs because they had adequate internet connections at home or their hand-held devices. While some admitted that the libraries were a good place to go for a backup plan in case of internet issues (lack of internet connection at home), those who used the school library or school computer labs enjoyed the access to computers to successful do their work and stay motivated to focus on their task. In general, all students believed that access to internet connection was good for online education regardless if the internet connection was at home, on hand-held device, in the library, or the in computer lab.

TABLE XI
RESPONSE TO COMPUTER CENTER / PUBLIC LIBRARY

Key Theme	Count	Transcribed Verbatim
Internet	7	Have good internet; internet & computer at home; internet & computer center; internet instead of going; internet good for online education
Use	7	Use my laptop; use school library for research; use computer & do work; use way from home; studying in library motivates me
Home	5	Computer at home; internet at home; instead of staying at home; use away from home
Good	3	Good for online education; good for students on-campus; Good internet & computer at home

V. DISCUSSION

According to this study, about 85.7% of students prefer individual grading to show what they actually know or have learned, while 57.1% preferred rubric because it gave details of what to focus on to get maximum points. Email was the most preferred form of communication tool used by students at 71.4% to communicate with both professors and other students, chat was used by 42.9% of the students to communicate with their professors, and 42.9% of students used WhatsApp to interact amongst themselves. When it comes to computer and internet access, 71.4% of students have access to good internet connectivity at home, school, hand-held devices, computer labs, and many believe that access to internet is great for online education.

Amongst students, 57.1% of them log into their online platform 2-3 times weekly to daily; enjoy professors' social presence to encourage them to work harder for better grades; expect to be punctual at submitting work before deadlines at least 90% of the time, if not all the time; participate by responding to posts, discussions, professors, and other colleagues; and preferred assessments of research, case study, and essay, but 42.9% favored discussion forum. Only 42.9% felt that the syllabus was valuable in providing detailed answer needed to stay engaged in the class and professors' expertise was very helpful in doing better research, getting life experiences and encouragement, as well as great ideas.

VI. RESEARCH MODEL

According to this study, for students to be engaged in online learning, professors must be "Prepared", "Creative", and "Communicate" effectively with students. The research model is shown in Fig. 1.

Prepare means that professors need to have adequate expertise in the field or subject matters in order to guide students to success with detailed information and ideas. Professors should be ready to use their expertise to interact with students at least 2-3 times a week and use it as an opportunity to build a bi-relationship with students by having a social presence in the online environment to make it comfortable for students to approach them.

Creative means that professors should create a syllabus that has a weekly calendar that provides very clear detail of what will be done each week and the due dates. The syllabus must also state communication tools used by the professor and email seems to be the preferred communication tool to students. Students should also be encourages to chat with professors or use social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, and also to interact with other students. Professors are also to be creative in their assessment styles. Aside from multiple choice and fill in the blanks, it seems many students prefer research, case study, and essay as the assessment style that shows their learning the best. When it comes to creativity in grading, it seems students prefer individual grading, rubric, and discussion points to team or group grading.

Communicate means that professors should encourage all students to make sure that they have access to adequate internet connectivity in their homes, libraries, computer labs, and hand-held devices through their syllabus, emails, discussions, and announcement. Professors are to insist or make it a requirement that students log into the online platform at least 2-3 times weekly, if not daily, to do assignments or response to various posts. Students should be informed by professors to always participate weekly in discussions and responds to posts. It is very important that students must be aware of due dates in the syllabus, on the

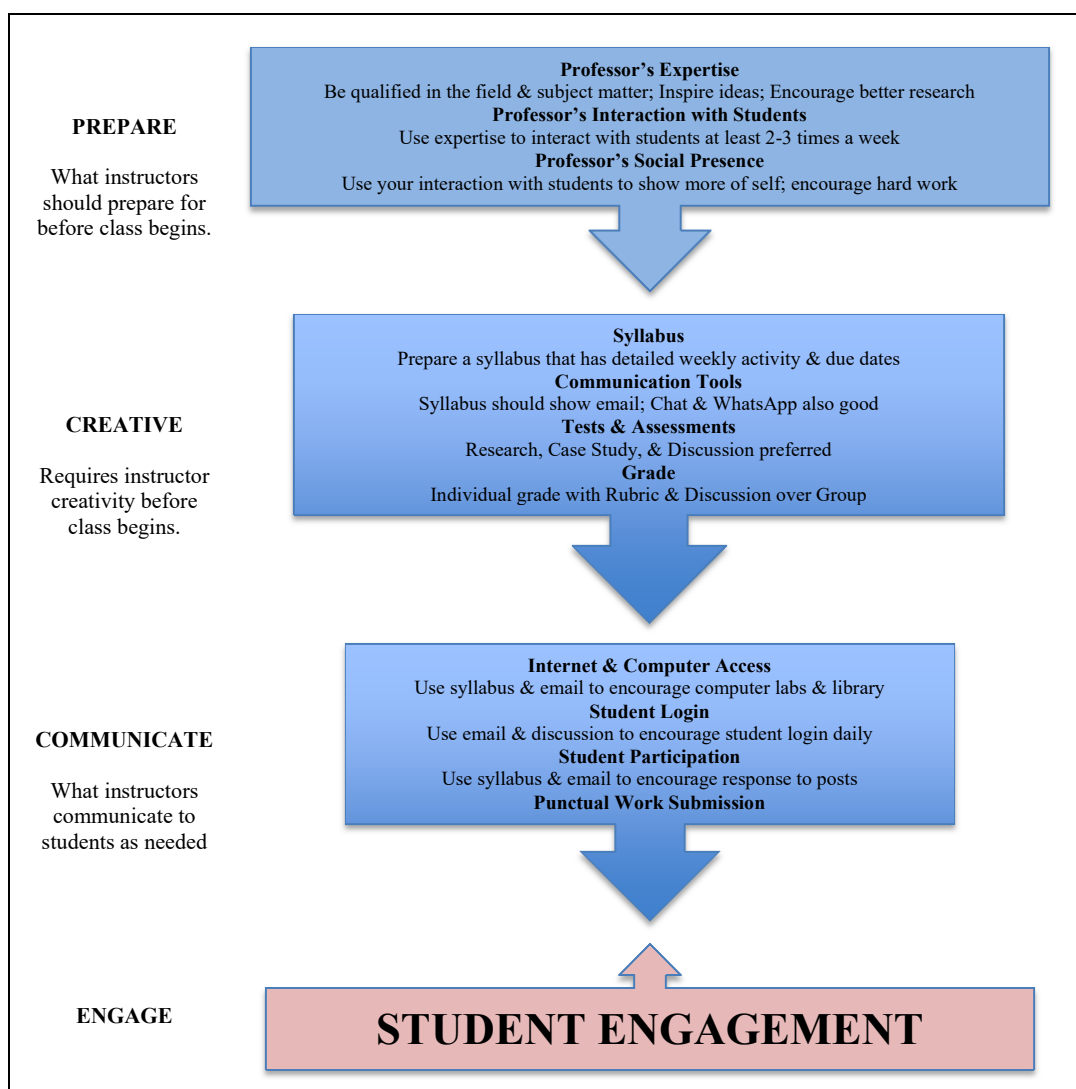class page, and various notification when possible.

Fig. 1 Research Model for Student Engagement

VII. LIMITATION

Quantitative research method could have been used, but a qualitative narrative and single case study was preferred because students' perspective on how engaged they are in their online learning was needed for this study based on personal experience in online education. A different qualitative study could have been used, such as phenomenology research (to determine a participant's experience); ethnography research (explaining situation from participants' environment), or ground theory research (developing a theory from data), but a narrative and case study was preferred in order to explore the effectiveness and efficiency of how engaged students are in their learning in online education based on personal experience in the field.

The participants could have been students from a particular online university or mainly undergraduate in online programs, but this study was based on any online student that was willing to share their educational experiences freely. Readers of this research may come to a different conclusion if they were to sample another group of online students, but these participant used in this study are credible online students who are mainly graduate students.

Larger sample or surveys could have been used, but saturation is the key in qualitative research and it was achieved in this study. Also, triangulation process could have been done in this study by reviewing the policies of the online institutions of the students, but student learning engagement was the focus.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In summary, online learning should be as beneficial and productive as classroom learning in order for active and

engaged learning to be achieved in online education. For students to be engaged in online learning, professors must be "Prepared", "Creative", and "Communicate" effectively with students.

Professors need to have adequate expertise in the field or subject matters in order to help students with detailed information and ideas. Professors should use their expertise to interact with students at least 2-3 times a week and use it to build a bi-relationship with students by having a social presence in the online environment to make it comfortable for students to learn.

Professors should create a syllabus that provides very clear details of what will be done each week and the due dates. The syllabus must also state communication tools used by the professor, such as email & chat. Students should also be encouraged to use social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, to interact with each other. Professors are also to be creative in their assessment styles. It seems many students prefer research, case study, and essay as the assessment style that shows their learning the best. When it comes to creativity in grading, it seems students prefer individual grading, rubric, and discussion points to that of team or group grading.

Professors should encourage all students to make sure that they have access to adequate internet connectivity in their homes, libraries, computer labs, and hand-held devices through their syllabus, emails, discussions, and announcement. Professors are to encourage that students log into the online platform at least 2-3 times weekly, if not daily, to do assignments or response to various posts. Students should be informed by professors to always participate weekly in discussions and responds to posts. It is very important that students must be aware of due dates in the syllabus, on the class page, and various notification when possible because lateness is not acceptable to be successful in both academia and the workplace.

REFERENCES

[1] Dimeo, J. 2017. "Take my advice," *Inside HigherEd*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com
[2] Perry, E. J. 2017. "Engaging students in online courses: adding experiential to asynchrony," *Faculty Focus*. Retrieved from https://www.facultyfocus.com
[3] Svinicki, M., and McKeachie, W. J. 2011. "Experiential Learning: Case-Based, Problem-Based, and Reality-Based," *in Svinicki & McKeachie, McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 13th edition, pp. 202-212.
[4] Croxton, R. A. 2014. "The role of interactivity in student satisfaction and persistence in online Learning," *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (10:*2), pp. 314.
[5] Zhu, E. & Kaplan, M. 2011. "Technology and Teaching," *in Svinicki & McKeachie, McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 13th edition, pp. 235- 266.
[6] Grigorovici, D., Nam, S., & Russill, C. 2003. "The effects of online syllabus interactivity on students' perception of the course and instructor," *The Internet and higher education* (6:1), pp. 41-52.
[7] Stewart, M., Stott, T., & Nuttall, A. M. 2011. "Student engagement patterns over the duration of level 1and level 3 geography modules: Influences on student attendance, performance and use of online resources," *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* (35:01), pp. 47-65.
[8] Svinicki, M., and McKeachie, W. J. 2011. "The Ethics of Teaching and the Teaching of Ethics," *in Svinicki & McKeachie, McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, CA: Wadsworth, ABIS 2013 Refereed Proceedings www.abis-fbd.org 55 Cengage Learning, 13th edition, pp. 315- 329.
[9] Chyung, S. Y. 2007. "Invisible motivation of online adult learners during contract learning," *The Journal of Educators Online*.
[10] Svinicki, M., and McKeachie, W. J. 2011. "Teaching Culturally Diverse Students," *In Svinicki & McKeachie, McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 13th edition, pp. 151-170.
[11] Westerman, J. W., Perez-Batres, L. A., Coffey, B. S., & Pouder, R. W. 2011. "The relationship between undergraduate attendance and performance revisited: Alignment of student and instructor goals," *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education (9*:1), pp. 49-67.
[12] Aimiuwu, E., Bapna, S., & Ahmed, A. 2013. "Effective use of technology to improve diverse student interaction in online courses for workplace success," *Association of Business Information Systems Conference Proceedings*, pp. 37-61.
[13] Worthington, D. L., & Levasseur, D. G. (2015). To provide or not to provide course PowerPoint slides? The impact of instructor-provided slides upon student attendance and performance. *Computers & Education*, (*85*), pp. 14-22.
[14] You, J. W. 2016. "Identifying significant indicators using LMS data to predict course achievement in online learning," *The Internet and Higher Education*, (*29*), pp. 23-30.
[15] Curtis, G. J., Gouldthorp, B., Thomas, E. F., O'Brien, G. M., & Correia, H. M. 2013. "Online academic-integrity mastery training may improve students' awareness of, and attitudes toward, plagiarism, "*Psychology Learning & Teaching*, (12:3), pp. 282-289.
[16] Aimiuwu, E. 2012. "A case of bias in teaching, grading, and plagiarism," *Americas Conference on Information Systems Proceedings*, Paper 4, pp. 1-6.
[17] Ruiz, J. G., Mintzer, M. J., & Leipzig, R. M. 2006. "The impact of e-learning in medical Education," *Academic medicine* (81:3), pp. 207-212.

Dr. Ehi. E. Aimiuwu is an Assistant Professor in the Master of Science in Information Technology Management (MSITM) program in the Business Administration department at Campbellsville University, Campbellsville, KY. USA. His areas of interest include social media, e-Commerce, online education, big data, business intelligence, and Web analytics. Some of his research has been published in the International Journal of Business Intelligence Research, Journal of International Business Education, Journal of Information Systems Applied Research, Information Systems Education Journal, and Americas Conference on Information Systems.