



## DIRECTING FROM A DISTANCE: THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF TEACHERS AS REMOTE THEATRE DIRECTORS IN ONLINE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

The article explores the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors in online education, examining how this analogy illuminates the complex roles of educators in virtual classrooms. It highlights how teachers, like directors, creatively orchestrate lessons and manage student engagement through innovative strategies. By analysing this metaphor, the article sheds light on the adaptive methods educators use to navigate online teaching challenges and enhance the overall learning experience in digital environments. The research utilized qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations, to explore the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors. Key findings revealed that educators creatively adapt traditional methods using multimedia tools and interactive strategies to engage students in virtual settings. The study highlighted challenges such as maintaining connection and addressing technological disparities. The implications suggest that adopting innovative teaching strategies and improving technological support can significantly enhance online education effectiveness and student outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Directing, Transformative Role, Remote Theatre*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly transformed the landscape of education, with online learning emerging as a pivotal development in the 21st century (Umar, 2023). Initially, online education was seen as a supplementary tool, offering flexibility and accessibility to those who couldn't participate in traditional classroom settings due to geographical, financial, or time constraints (Umar, 2024). However, its role has expanded dramatically, especially in response to global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced educational institutions worldwide to pivot almost overnight to fully online or hybrid models of instruction.

The rise of online education is characterized by its democratization of learning,

making it possible for millions to access quality education from prestigious institutions regardless of their physical location (Dusen & C, 2000). It offers unparalleled flexibility, allowing students to learn at their own pace, manage their schedules, and often tailor their educational experiences to suit their individual needs. This shift has also encouraged the development of new educational technologies, such as learning management systems (LMS), video conferencing tools, and interactive platforms, which have become integral to modern education.

Despite its benefits, online education presents several challenges that educators, students, and institutions must navigate (Nguyen et al., 2022; Ubell, 2021). One of the most significant challenges is the lack of face-to-face interaction, which can lead to

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feelings of isolation and disengagement among students. In a traditional classroom, the physical presence of peers and instructors fosters a sense of community and immediate feedback, which is harder to replicate in a virtual environment. This lack of physical interaction can also affect communication, as non-verbal cues and the nuances of in-person dialogue are often lost in digital translation.

Another critical challenge is the disparity in access to technology (Mossberger et al., 2003; Wolfson et al., 2017). While online education is inherently dependent on digital tools and a stable internet connection, not all students have equal access to these resources. This digital divide can exacerbate existing educational inequalities, leaving behind those who are unable to afford the necessary technology or live in areas with limited internet access. Additionally, the shift to online education requires a new set of skills and self-discipline from students, who must be more autonomous in managing their learning without the structure of a physical classroom.

For educators, the transition to online teaching demands a re-evaluation of pedagogical approaches (Kilgour et al., 2019; Mishall et al., 2022). Teachers must adapt their methods to engage students who are no longer physically present, often necessitating the use of innovative techniques and multimedia resources to maintain interest and participation. The lack of real-time feedback and the challenges of assessing student understanding in a virtual space add another layer of complexity to online teaching. Moreover, educators must balance the need for flexibility with maintaining academic rigor, ensuring that

the quality of education is not compromised in the digital format. The rise of online education represents a significant shift in how learning is delivered and experienced. While it offers numerous advantages, including greater accessibility and flexibility, it also brings forth unique challenges that require careful consideration and adaptation by all stakeholders involved in the educational process.

In traditional classroom settings, the role of the teacher has often been likened to that of a director in a theatrical production (Buckner, 1992; Umar, 2021b). Just as a director orchestrates the various elements of a play to create a cohesive and engaging performance, teachers curate the learning environment to foster student engagement, understanding, and growth. This metaphor highlights the teacher's responsibility to guide, motivate, and coordinate the diverse elements of the classroom—students, curriculum, activities, and assessments—into a harmonious educational experience. The teacher, like a director, must have a clear vision of the learning objectives and the pathways to achieve them, all while remaining adaptable to the dynamic nature of the classroom.

The teacher-as-director metaphor also emphasizes the importance of interaction and communication (Pineau, 2004). In a classroom, much like on a stage, the teacher must ensure that each "actor" or student understands their role and contributes to the overall learning experience. This involves not only delivering content but also facilitating discussions, encouraging participation, and managing group dynamics. Teachers

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must be attuned to the individual needs of their students, just as a director considers the strengths and weaknesses of each actor. They must create an environment where students feel supported and challenged, and where the learning process is both collaborative and individualized. This approach requires a deep understanding of both the subject matter and the students themselves, allowing the teacher to guide the class effectively while leaving room for creativity and student agency.

Moreover, like directors, teachers must be skilled in the art of improvisation (Holdhus et al., 2016; Sawyer, 2011). No matter how carefully a lesson is planned, unexpected challenges can arise—students may struggle with certain concepts, class dynamics can shift, or technical difficulties can occur. In these moments, the teacher's ability to think on their feet and adjust their approach is crucial. This flexibility ensures that learning remains fluid and responsive, rather than rigid and predetermined. Teachers must constantly assess the "performance" of their students, offering feedback and making real-time adjustments to keep the class on track toward its educational goals. In essence, the teacher-as-director metaphor captures the dynamic, multifaceted nature of teaching, where the ultimate aim is to create a meaningful and impactful learning experience for all students.

In the context of online education, the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors takes on a new dimension, reflecting the unique challenges and opportunities of guiding a virtual classroom (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021). Just as a theatre director oversees

a production from behind the scenes, teachers in online environments must orchestrate the learning experience from a distance, often without the immediacy of physical presence. This shift demands a heightened level of creativity and innovation, as teachers must find ways to engage and inspire students through a screen. The virtual setting transforms traditional classroom dynamics, requiring teachers to rethink how they can direct the flow of lessons, manage interactions, and maintain a cohesive learning atmosphere without the tangible cues and direct interactions that typically inform their decisions.

The teacher as a remote theatre director must also master the use of digital tools and platforms to effectively communicate and engage with students (West, 2012). Unlike in a physical classroom, where body language and spontaneous dialogue can guide a lesson, online teachers must rely on technology to convey their messages and facilitate interactions. This can include a mix of video lectures, discussion boards, live chats, and collaborative online activities, all of which require careful planning and coordination. The challenge lies in creating a virtual space that mimics the interactivity and engagement of a live classroom, where students feel seen and heard despite the distance. The teacher must orchestrate these elements in a way that draws students into the learning process, much like a director ensures that each scene of a play captivates the audience.

Moreover, the role of a teacher as a remote theatre director involves an acute awareness of the diverse needs and experiences of students in an online

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environment (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021). Without the ability to gauge student reactions in real time, teachers must be proactive in seeking feedback and adapting their methods to suit the virtual stage. They must balance structure with flexibility, providing clear guidance while also allowing students the autonomy to navigate their learning paths. This requires a delicate blend of leadership and support, as teachers must direct the educational experience while also empowering students to take an active role in their own learning. In this sense, the metaphor underscores the transformative nature of teaching online, where the teacher must constantly innovate and adapt to ensure that the educational "performance" resonates with and impacts all students, regardless of the distance.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The role of teachers as remote theatre directors in online education represents a novel and transformative approach to teaching, blending traditional theatrical direction with digital pedagogical strategies (Trujillo, 2021). This shift has been driven largely by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated rapid adaptation to online learning environments. Several researchers have explored various facets of this phenomenon, providing a foundation for understanding its potential and limitations.

Firstly, the shift to online education has highlighted the need for innovative pedagogical approaches. Research by Bilbrough describes remote theatre as a unique hybrid between theatre and film, where educators assume the role of directors, guiding students through virtual performances (Bilbrough, 2008). This study underscores the

potential for theatrical methods to enhance engagement and creativity in online learning environments (PLOS). However, the lack of direct physical interaction poses challenges in achieving the same level of immersion and spontaneity as traditional theatre.

Moreover, the transition to online education during the pandemic has exposed gaps in existing research on remote teaching. Another published article reveals that few studies have systematically investigated teachers' experiences and strategies in online settings, particularly in contexts where cultural and social factors play a significant role (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). This gap is crucial as it suggests that much of the current understanding of online pedagogy is based on assumptions that may not hold in diverse educational environments.

The role of digital literacy in enabling teachers to effectively direct remote theatre performances is another critical area of investigation. An umbrella review by researchers in *Educational Technology Research and Development* (2023) found that teachers' digital literacy is pivotal in integrating technology into education (Falloon, 2020). The review also emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation programs in equipping educators with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape. This indicates a broader need for professional development that focuses not just on technical skills, but also on the creative application of these skills in virtual teaching scenarios.

Furthermore, the concept of directing from a distance challenges

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traditional notions of teacher-student interaction. As educators adopt the role of remote directors, they must balance the need for control with the autonomy of students in creating and interpreting content. This dynamic is explored in several studies, including those by Carrillo and Flores (Carrillo & Flores, 2020), who utilized the Community of Inquiry Framework to examine the shifting roles of teachers and students in online learning environments. These studies suggest that the effectiveness of remote theatre direction relies heavily on the teacher's ability to foster a collaborative and participatory environment, even in a virtual space.

Despite these advancements, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these approaches can be standardized or adapted across different educational contexts. The current literature tends to focus on case studies or specific instances of remote theatre direction, leaving a need for broader, more comprehensive research that can inform best practices in various settings. Additionally, there is a lack of quantitative studies that measure the impact of this teaching approach on student outcomes, further highlighting the need for continued research in this area.

In conclusion, while the concept of directing from a distance offers exciting possibilities for online education, it also presents significant challenges and research gaps. The existing literature provides a solid foundation but also underscores the need for more systematic and diverse studies to fully understand and harness the potential of this innovative teaching

method. Future research should focus on addressing these gaps, particularly in terms of cross-cultural applicability and the development of standardized pedagogical frameworks.

**3. METHODS**

In the context of this study, a qualitative approach is justified because it captures the essence of the teaching experience in online education, which is inherently dynamic and context-dependent (Umar et al., 2023). The metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors is a complex and multifaceted concept, one that is best understood through the voices of those who are directly involved. Through methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations, qualitative research enables the collection of rich, descriptive data that reveals how teachers conceptualize their roles, the strategies they employ to engage students, and the challenges they face in a virtual environment. This approach also allows for the exploration of diverse perspectives, recognizing that each teacher's experience is shaped by their unique context, such as the subject they teach, their technological proficiency, and the specific needs of their students.

The criteria for participant selection in this study are carefully designed to ensure a diverse and representative sample of online educators who can provide rich and varied insights into the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors (Umar, 2021a). Participants are selected based on their experience in teaching online across different educational levels, such as K-12, higher education, and adult learning,



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ensuring that the study captures a wide range of teaching contexts. Additionally, educators from various subject areas are included to explore how the metaphor plays out differently in disciplines ranging from the humanities to the sciences. Experience in online teaching is a key criterion, with participants required to have at least one year of experience in delivering instruction through digital platforms. This ensures that the educators have had sufficient exposure to the challenges and opportunities of online teaching, allowing them to reflect deeply on their roles and strategies. The selection also considers demographic diversity, aiming to include educators from different geographical locations and backgrounds, which adds further depth to the exploration of how cultural and contextual factors influence the metaphor of remote theatre direction in online education.

To gather in-depth insights into the experiences of online educators, the study employs a combination of qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations (Kallio et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary method, allowing participants to share their personal narratives and reflections on their roles as remote theatre directors in a flexible yet focused manner. These interviews provide a balance between guided questions and open-ended responses, enabling the researcher to explore key themes while also allowing participants the freedom to express their unique perspectives. Focus groups complement these interviews by bringing together educators from diverse backgrounds to discuss their experiences

collectively, fostering dynamic interactions that can reveal commonalities and differences in their approaches to online teaching. Observations of recorded online classes add another layer of depth to the study, offering a real-time glimpse into how educators manage and direct their virtual classrooms. This multi-method approach not only enriches the data collected but also provides a more comprehensive understanding of the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors.

The data analysis process in this study is grounded in rigorous qualitative methodologies, beginning with coding and thematic analysis to systematically explore the collected data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). After transcribing the interviews, focus group discussions, and observational notes, the researcher engages in an initial coding process, identifying key phrases, concepts, and patterns that emerge from the participants' narratives. These codes are then grouped into broader themes that reflect the central aspects of the teachers' experiences as remote theatre directors. Thematic analysis allows for a deep examination of these themes, uncovering underlying meanings and relationships within the data. To ensure the rigor of the analysis, several strategies are employed, including member checking, where participants review the findings to confirm their accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Triangulation is also used, comparing data across different sources and methods to validate the consistency of the findings. Additionally, the researcher maintains a reflexive journal throughout the process, critically reflecting on their own biases

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and how they might influence the interpretation of the data, ensuring that the analysis remains objective and grounded in the participants' perspectives.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****RESULT****1) Emergent Themes**

As the data from interviews, focus groups, and observations were analysed, several key themes emerged that illuminate the complex roles of teachers as remote theatre directors in online education. One prominent theme was *the necessity for creative adaptation*, where teachers described how they had to reinvent traditional teaching methods to engage students in a virtual setting. Educators spoke of the challenge of replicating the immediacy and intimacy of in-person interactions, often relying on innovative digital tools, multimedia resources, and interactive activities to capture students' attention and sustain their engagement. This theme highlights the teachers' resourcefulness and their ability to creatively navigate the constraints of online platforms, much like a theatre director must creatively solve the limitations of a stage set.

Another significant theme was *the struggle for maintaining student connection and presence*. Many teachers expressed concern over the sense of distance and disconnection that can permeate online classrooms, affecting both student engagement and participation. They discussed strategies for fostering a sense of community, such as creating virtual breakout rooms for group work,

holding regular one-on-one check-ins, and using synchronous sessions to simulate the real-time dynamics of a physical classroom. This theme underscores the emotional labour involved in online teaching, as educators work tirelessly to bridge the physical divide and create a learning environment where students feel supported, connected, and seen. The persistence of these themes across different educational levels and subject areas reveals the universal challenges faced by online educators, as well as their dedication to overcoming these barriers to provide a meaningful educational experience.

**2) The Role of the Teachers as****Directors**

Teachers in online education often perceive their roles as akin to directing a performance, a perception that shapes their approach to managing the virtual classroom. Many educators describe themselves as orchestrators of the learning experience, where they must carefully plan and execute lessons to ensure that each element—whether it be a lecture, discussion, or activity—flows seamlessly together, much like scenes in a play. They see themselves as responsible for setting the stage, creating an environment where students can fully immerse themselves in the learning process. This involves not only delivering content but also managing the pacing, tone, and energy of the class, ensuring that students remain engaged and attentive throughout the session. Teachers liken this to a director's role in maintaining the audience's interest, where the success

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of the performance depends on how well they can guide and sustain the momentum of the narrative.

Moreover, teachers view themselves as needing to be attuned to the subtle dynamics of the virtual classroom, much like a director must be sensitive to the nuances of actors' performances. They recognize that students' engagement can be more challenging to gauge online, requiring them to be especially perceptive to the cues that indicate understanding, confusion, or disengagement. This perceptiveness allows them to make real-time adjustments, whether it's shifting the direction of a discussion, introducing a new activity to re-engage students, or providing individualized support where needed. Teachers emphasize the importance of flexibility and adaptability, seeing themselves as directors who must be ready to improvise and respond to the ever-changing needs of their "cast"—their students. This perception of their role underscores the dynamic and interactive nature of online teaching, where success is not just about delivering content, but about crafting an educational experience that resonates with and involves every student.

**3) Strategies for Engagement**

In the realm of online education, teachers employ a variety of strategies to engage students that parallel the techniques used by directors to captivate actors on stage. One key strategy is the use of interactive multimedia elements, such as videos, animations, and live polls, which serve to create a more dynamic

and engaging learning environment. Just as a director might use different lighting and sound effects to enhance a performance, teachers incorporate these digital tools to stimulate students' interest and maintain their attention. These multimedia elements help to break up the monotony of traditional lectures and provide multiple entry points for students to engage with the material. Additionally, teachers frequently employ gamification techniques, such as incorporating quizzes and competitive elements, to infuse a sense of playfulness and excitement into the learning process, akin to how a director might use creative staging to keep the audience enthralled.

Another strategy that mirrors theatrical direction is the use of structured group activities and breakout sessions. Similar to how a director might organize rehearsals and workshops to facilitate collaboration and interaction among actors, teachers create virtual group projects and discussions to foster a sense of community and collective learning. These activities encourage students to collaborate, share ideas, and learn from one another, while also allowing teachers to monitor and guide the dynamics of the group. The role of the teacher in these scenarios resembles that of a director managing a cast, where they must provide direction, support, and feedback to ensure that each participant contributes effectively to the overall learning experience. By employing these strategies, teachers strive to create an engaging and interactive virtual classroom that mirrors the energy and collaborative spirit of a live performance.



**4) Challenges and Adaptations**

Teachers in online education face a host of challenges that significantly differ from those encountered in traditional classroom settings. One major challenge is the lack of immediate, face-to-face interaction, which can lead to difficulties in gauging student engagement and understanding. Without the benefit of physical cues and spontaneous dialogue, teachers often struggle to detect when students are confused or disengaged. To address this, educators have adapted by implementing various strategies to monitor and respond to student needs. They use real-time feedback tools, such as polls and surveys, to gather instant reactions from students, and they incorporate regular check-ins and virtual office hours to provide additional support. By leveraging these digital tools, teachers aim to bridge the gap created by the absence of physical presence and ensure that they can effectively address student concerns and maintain a supportive learning environment.

Another significant challenge is managing the diverse technological proficiencies and access levels of students. Some students may have limited access to high-speed internet or may struggle with navigating the online learning platforms. In response, teachers have adapted their methods to be more inclusive and accommodating. They provide clear, step-by-step instructions for using digital tools and offer alternative formats for course materials to ensure accessibility. Teachers also create asynchronous learning options, such as recorded lectures and downloadable resources, to

accommodate students who may face connectivity issues or have varying schedules. This flexibility helps to ensure that all students can engage with the course content effectively, regardless of their technological constraints. Through these adaptations, teachers strive to create an equitable and effective online learning experience that addresses the unique challenges of the virtual classroom.

**5) Impact on Student Learning**

The teaching strategies employed by educators in online environments have had a profound impact on student engagement and learning outcomes, as revealed by their experiences and observations. The integration of interactive multimedia elements, such as videos, animations, and live polls, has been particularly effective in capturing students' attention and fostering active participation. Teachers report that these tools not only make lessons more engaging but also help to clarify complex concepts by presenting them in a visually appealing and interactive manner. The use of gamification and real-time feedback mechanisms further enhances student motivation and involvement, leading to increased participation and a more dynamic learning experience. This heightened engagement is reflected in students' improved retention of material and a more positive attitude toward the learning process, as they feel more connected and invested in their online education.

In addition, the adaptation of teaching methods to accommodate diverse technological access and proficiency levels has led to notable

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improvements in learning outcomes. By offering alternative formats for course materials and providing asynchronous learning options, teachers have made it possible for students with varying schedules and technical limitations to fully engage with the content. This flexibility has been crucial in maintaining a high level of student participation and performance, as it allows learners to access resources and complete assignments at their own pace. Teachers have observed that these adaptations help to reduce barriers to learning and ensure that all students, regardless of their technological circumstances, have the opportunity to succeed. As a result, the perceived effects of these strategies include not only increased student engagement but also enhanced overall learning outcomes, demonstrating the effectiveness of tailored approaches in the online education landscape.

**DISCUSSIONS****1) Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of this study illuminate the evolving role of teachers in online education, particularly through the metaphor of directing a performance. The research questions aimed to explore how teachers adapt their methods and perceive their roles in a virtual classroom, and the results offer a compelling narrative that aligns with existing literature on online teaching and learning. Teachers' perceptions of their roles as remote theatre directors underscore the necessity for creative adaptation, as they employ various interactive and multimedia tools to engage students and maintain the flow of the virtual classroom.

This finding supports the literature which highlights the importance of innovation in online pedagogy, where traditional teaching methods are often insufficient in capturing and sustaining student interest in a digital environment. The use of multimedia and gamification as engagement strategies reflects a broader shift toward more dynamic, student-centered approaches that enhance interactivity and participation, consistent with research emphasizing the role of technology in facilitating effective online education.

In relation to the challenges faced by online educators, the study's findings resonate with issues documented in previous research. Teachers reported difficulties in maintaining a sense of connection and assessing student engagement without the benefit of physical presence. These challenges are well-documented in the literature, which points to the inherent limitations of online learning environments in replicating the immediacy and interactive nature of traditional classrooms. The study's findings highlight how teachers adapt by leveraging real-time feedback tools and incorporating asynchronous learning options to mitigate these issues. This adaptation aligns with the literature's recommendations for flexible and inclusive teaching practices that address the diverse needs of students and overcome the barriers created by digital platforms. The proactive measures taken by teachers reflect a growing understanding of how to navigate these challenges effectively, as supported by prior research.

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The impact of these adapted teaching strategies on student engagement and learning outcomes further reinforces the study's alignment with existing literature. Teachers observed improved student participation and retention of material, which corresponds with research that shows how interactive and flexible teaching methods can lead to better educational outcomes. The integration of multimedia elements and gamification not only enhances engagement but also facilitates a more personalized learning experience, as students can interact with content in varied and meaningful ways. This finding supports the literature that emphasizes the effectiveness of innovative pedagogical strategies in maintaining student interest and promoting deeper learning in online environments. The positive correlation between these strategies and student performance underscores the value of adapting teaching methods to fit the online context, contributing to a more robust understanding of effective online education practices.

Overall, the interpretation of the findings in relation to the research questions and existing literature reveals a coherent picture of how teachers are navigating the complexities of online education. The study highlights the transformative nature of teaching roles in virtual settings and provides practical insights into how educators can effectively adapt their methods to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By aligning with and contributing to the existing body of research, the study offers valuable

implications for improving online teaching practices and supporting educators in their evolving roles. The findings underscore the need for ongoing innovation and flexibility in online education, affirming that thoughtful adaptations and creative strategies are essential for achieving success in the digital learning landscape.

**2) Implications for Practice**

The practical implications of the study's findings offer valuable guidance for online educators and educational institutions seeking to enhance the effectiveness of virtual learning environments. For online educators, the insights underscore the importance of embracing innovative teaching strategies to maintain student engagement and foster a dynamic learning experience. Teachers are encouraged to leverage multimedia tools, interactive elements, and gamification techniques to create a more engaging and immersive online classroom. These strategies not only capture students' attention but also make complex content more accessible and enjoyable. By adopting these methods, educators can better meet the diverse needs of their students and enhance their overall learning experience, thus bridging the gap created by the absence of physical presence in online education.

Educational institutions also have a critical role to play in supporting online educators through the implementation of robust technological infrastructure and professional development programs. Institutions should invest in high-quality digital tools and platforms

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that facilitate interactive and flexible learning experiences. Providing teachers with access to cutting-edge technologies and training on their effective use can significantly improve the quality of online instruction. Additionally, institutions should offer continuous professional development opportunities that focus on innovative teaching strategies and the latest trends in online education. This support helps educators stay current with best practices and equips them with the skills needed to adapt to the evolving demands of online teaching.

Another practical implication concerns the need for institutions to address the diverse technological needs and access levels of students. The study highlights the importance of providing alternative formats for course materials and offering asynchronous learning options to accommodate students with varying schedules and technological constraints. Institutions should ensure that their online learning platforms are accessible and user-friendly, and they should consider implementing support systems, such as technical assistance and digital literacy resources, to help students navigate online education successfully. By addressing these issues, institutions can help reduce barriers to learning and create a more equitable educational environment for all students.

Finally, the study's findings suggest a need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of online teaching practices. Both educators and institutions should regularly assess the effectiveness of their teaching

strategies and the impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. This involves gathering feedback from students, analyzing performance data, and staying informed about emerging trends in online education. By maintaining a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to student needs, educators and institutions can ensure that they are providing high-quality online education that meets the evolving demands of the digital age. The practical implications of this study offer a roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness of online teaching and learning, ultimately contributing to a more successful and engaging virtual education experience.

**3) Theoretical Contributions**

This study makes a significant contribution to the broader understanding of the role of metaphors in education by demonstrating how the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors can enhance our comprehension of online teaching dynamics. By exploring this metaphor, the study provides a unique lens through which the complex role of online educators can be examined. The metaphor not only captures the multifaceted nature of teaching in a virtual environment but also highlights the creative and adaptive strategies that educators employ to manage their virtual classrooms. This contribution enriches the existing literature on educational metaphors by illustrating how such imagery can offer deep insights into the pedagogical challenges and innovations associated with online learning.

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Furthermore, the study underscores the value of metaphors in bridging the conceptual gap between traditional and digital teaching methods. By likening online educators to theatre directors, the research provides a framework for understanding how teachers orchestrate the various elements of their virtual classrooms to create a cohesive learning experience. This metaphor helps to clarify the role of educators in an online setting, where direct interactions are limited, and creative adaptation becomes essential. It enhances our understanding of how metaphors can be used to describe and analyse the evolving roles and strategies of educators in different contexts, thereby broadening the application of metaphorical thinking in educational theory and practice.

Additionally, the study highlights how metaphors can be employed to convey the emotional and psychological dimensions of teaching. The comparison of teachers to theatre directors emphasizes the performative aspects of teaching, including the need for engagement, presence, and adaptability. This perspective offers valuable insights into the emotional labour involved in online education, as teachers strive to connect with students and maintain a sense of community despite the physical distance. By incorporating these dimensions into the analysis, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of metaphors on the portrayal of educational roles and the experiences of educators.

Lastly, the study's findings encourage further exploration of

metaphors in educational research and practice. The successful application of the theatre director metaphor suggests that other metaphors could also provide meaningful insights into different aspects of education. By expanding the use of metaphors to describe various educational phenomena, researchers and practitioners can gain a richer and more diverse understanding of teaching and learning. This contribution to the field encourages the development of new metaphorical frameworks that can illuminate other aspects of education, fostering a deeper appreciation for the power of metaphor in shaping educational theory and practice.

**4) Limitations**

While this study provides valuable insights into the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors in online education, it is important to acknowledge its limitations and identify areas for future research. One notable limitation is the potential bias introduced by the study's reliance on self-reported data from teachers. Although interviews and focus groups offer rich qualitative insights, they are inherently subjective and may not fully capture the diversity of experiences across different educational contexts. The perspectives shared by participants reflect their individual viewpoints and may not represent the broader spectrum of teaching experiences in online environments. Future research could address this limitation by incorporating a wider range of data sources, such as student feedback or observational data, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the



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impact of teaching strategies on both educators and learners.

Another limitation is the study's focus on educators from specific educational levels and subject areas, which may not fully encompass the variety of online teaching contexts. While the inclusion of diverse educational levels and subjects offers valuable insights, it may still overlook the experiences of educators in less represented or non-traditional settings. Future research could expand the scope to include a broader range of educational environments, including vocational training, adult education, and informal learning settings. This would provide a more holistic view of how the metaphor of directing a performance applies across different types of online education and how various contexts influence the implementation of teaching strategies.

Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design captures a snapshot of teachers' experiences at a specific point in time. This approach may not account for the evolving nature of online education and the ongoing developments in technology and pedagogy. As online education continues to evolve, it is important to conduct longitudinal studies that track changes over time and assess how emerging trends and innovations influence teachers' roles and strategies. Future research could explore how new technologies and pedagogical approaches reshape the metaphor of directing a performance and affect the practices and perceptions of online educators in the long term.

Lastly, the study's focus on the metaphor of teachers as theatre directors offers valuable insights but also suggests the potential for exploring other metaphors that may provide different perspectives on online teaching. Future research could investigate alternative metaphors to understand various aspects of online education, such as the role of facilitators, navigators, or mentors. By examining different metaphorical frameworks, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the diverse ways in which teaching roles and strategies are conceptualized and enacted in the digital age. This exploration of alternative metaphors could enrich the broader discourse on online education and contribute to the development of more nuanced and effective teaching practices.

**5. CONCLUSION**

The study's main findings underscore the metaphor of teachers as remote theatre directors, offering a compelling perspective on the dynamic role of educators in online education. Teachers perceive themselves as orchestrators of the virtual classroom, creatively adapting traditional methods and employing multimedia tools to engage students and maintain an interactive learning environment. This metaphor highlights the challenges educators face, such as managing student engagement and addressing technological disparities, and reveals how their adaptive strategies—such as using real-time feedback and providing asynchronous learning options—significantly enhance student participation and learning outcomes. The significance of these findings lies in their contribution to understanding how

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metaphors can illuminate the evolving roles and strategies of online educators, offering practical insights for improving online teaching practices and supporting both educators and students in navigating the complexities of virtual education.

Reflecting on the metaphor of teachers as theatre directors, its relevance to modern online education becomes strikingly apparent. This metaphor effectively captures the essence of the educator's role in the digital age, where teaching extends beyond traditional instruction to encompass elements of performance and direction. Just as a theatre director orchestrates every aspect of a performance to engage and captivate an audience, online educators meticulously design and deliver their lessons to foster interaction and sustain student engagement in a virtual setting. This metaphor highlights the creative and adaptive approaches required to manage the unique challenges of online teaching, such as maintaining a sense of connection and adapting to diverse technological needs. It underscores the performative aspects of teaching, where educators must skilfully balance content delivery with engagement strategies, much like a director balances narrative and staging. As online education continues to evolve, this metaphor remains a powerful tool for understanding and enhancing the multifaceted role of educators in creating impactful and immersive learning experiences.

Future research in online education should focus on exploring additional metaphors and frameworks to further understand the diverse roles of educators in digital learning environments. Investigating other metaphorical perspectives, such as teachers as navigators or facilitators,

could provide new insights into how educators support and guide students through the complexities of online education. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine how evolving technologies and pedagogical strategies impact teaching practices and student outcomes over time. For practice, institutions should prioritize the development of robust technological infrastructures and ongoing professional development programs that equip educators with the tools and skills needed to adapt to an ever-changing digital landscape. Research should also address the varied technological needs and access levels of students to ensure an equitable online learning experience. By expanding research efforts and refining practices based on these insights, the field of online education can continue to enhance its effectiveness and address the evolving needs of both educators and learners.

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