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FROM CONTENT TRANSPOSITION TO EFFECTIVE LEARNING: PATHWAYS TO QUALITY IN ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION

DA TRANSPOSIÇÃO DE CONTEÚDOS À APRENDIZAGEM EFETIVA: CAMINHOS PARA A QUALIDADE DO ENSINO ON-LINE NO ENSINO SUPERIOR

DE LA TRANSPOSICIÓN DE CONTENIDOS AL APRENDIZAJE EFECTIVO: CAMINOS HACIA LA CALIDAD DE LA ENSEÑANZA EN LÍNEA EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

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Abstract

The expansion of online education in higher education, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the need to distinguish between structured practices and emergency approaches, and to understand which elements effectively contribute to learning quality. In this context, this narrative review critically analyzed recent literature (2014–2024), aiming to answer the following question: how can technological, pedagogical, and assessment elements be articulated to promote quality online teaching in higher education, going beyond the mere transposition of content and ensuring active and meaningful learning? To this end, the analysis was organized into three interrelated axes: (I) instructional design, which emphasizes the importance of balancing synchronous and asynchronous modalities and managing class size; (II) teacher mediation, which goes beyond content transmission and requires digital competencies for engagement, resource curation, and continuous feedback; and (III) formative assessment, which is consolidated as a driving force for regulating learning processes and developing autonomy, although it still faces practical and cultural challenges. The findings show that the quality of online teaching depends less on technology itself and more on the critical integration of instructional planning, teaching presence, and assessment practices. It is concluded that this articulation, when supported by consistent institutional policies and by valuing the teaching role, represents a promising pathway to transform current challenges into opportunities for educational innovation.

Keywords: Formative assessment; Instructional design; Online higher education; Teacher mediation; Transactional distance.

Resumo

A expansão do ensino online na educação superior, intensificada pela pandemia da COVID-19, evidenciou a necessidade de diferenciar práticas estruturadas de abordagens emergenciais e de compreender quais elementos efetivamente contribuem para a qualidade da aprendizagem. Diante desse cenário, esta revisão narrativa analisou criticamente a literatura recente (2014–2024), buscando responder à seguinte questão: como articular elementos tecnológicos, pedagógicos e avaliativos para promover um ensino online de qualidade no ensino superior, superando a mera transposição de conteúdos e garantindo aprendizagem ativa e significativa? Para isso, a análise foi organizada em três eixos inter-relacionados: (I) o design instrucional, que evidencia a importância do equilíbrio entre modalidades síncronas e assíncronas e da gestão do tamanho das turmas; (II) a mediação docente, que ultrapassa a transmissão de conteúdos e exige competências digitais para engajamento, curadoria de recursos e feedback contínuo; e (III) a avaliação formativa, que se consolida como motor da regulação das aprendizagens e do desenvolvimento da autonomia, ainda que enfrente desafios práticos e culturais. Os resultados mostram que a qualidade do ensino online depende menos da tecnologia em si e mais da integração crítica entre planejamento instrucional, presença docente e práticas avaliativas. Conclui-se que essa articulação, quando apoiada por políticas institucionais consistentes e pela valorização do papel docente, representa um caminho

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promissor para transformar os desafios atuais em oportunidades de inovação educativa.

Palavras-chave: Avaliação formativa; Design instrucional; Educação superior on-line; Distância transacional; Mediação docente.

Resumen

La expansión de la enseñanza en línea en la educación superior, intensificada por la pandemia de COVID-19, evidenció la necesidad de diferenciar las prácticas estructuradas de los abordajes emergenciales y de comprender qué elementos contribuyen efectivamente a la calidad del aprendizaje. Ante este escenario, esta revisión narrativa analizó críticamente la literatura reciente (2014–2024), buscando responder a la siguiente pregunta: ¿cómo articular los elementos tecnológicos, pedagógicos y evaluativos para promover una enseñanza en línea de calidad en la educación superior, superando la mera transposición de contenidos y garantizando un aprendizaje activo y significativo? Para ello, el análisis se organizó en tres ejes interrelacionados: (I) el diseño instruccional, que evidencia la importancia del equilibrio entre modalidades síncronas y asíncronas y de la gestión del tamaño de los grupos; (II) la mediación docente, que va más allá de la transmisión de contenidos y exige competencias digitales para el compromiso, la curaduría de recursos y la retroalimentación continua; y (III) la evaluación formativa, que se consolida como motor de la regulación de los aprendizajes y del desarrollo de la autonomía, aunque enfrente desafíos prácticos y culturales. Los resultados muestran que la calidad de la enseñanza en línea depende menos de la tecnología en sí misma y más de la integración crítica entre la planificación instruccional, la presencia docente y las prácticas evaluativas. Se concluye que dicha articulación, cuando está respaldada por políticas institucionales coherentes y por la valorización del papel docente, representa un camino prometedor para transformar los desafíos actuales en oportunidades de innovación educativa.

Palabras clave: Diseño instruccional; Educación superior en línea; Distancia transaccional; Evaluación formativa; Mediación docente.

1. Introduction

Online education in higher education has evolved from an alternative modality into a structural component of contemporary educational systems, with accelerated global adoption particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic (Abbasi et al., 2020). On the one hand, the emergency incorporation of digital technologies ensured the continuity of academic activities during this period; on the other hand, it revealed long-standing deficits in the pedagogical preparedness of institutions and instructors for virtual environments (Hodges et al., 2020; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). In this context, although platforms and technological resources were rapidly

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implemented, a critical reflection was often lacking on how to articulate them with genuinely transformative educational purposes, that is, how to transcend the logic of content transmission to foster meaningful, critical, and engaged learning (Shearer & Park, 2019).

Recent literature has generated a substantial body of studies on online teaching, though often in a fragmented manner: some focus on analyzing technological tools (Chaka, 2020; Chaparro-Peláez et al., 2020), others emphasize active methodologies (Janse van Rensburg, 2018) or assessment aspects (Volpe et al., 2021), and still others address teacher training (Dávila Morán et al., 2022; Tourón et al., 2018). However, there remains a significant gap regarding critical syntheses that organically integrate the technological and pedagogical dimensions, moving beyond an instrumental perspective and highlighting the didactic foundations necessary to design effective learning experiences. As Shearer and Park (2019) point out, the quality of distance education depends less on technology itself and more on the "educational transaction" it enables.

This perspective also highlights the need to clarify what is meant by quality in online higher education. In the present review, quality is understood as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond technological infrastructure or student satisfaction alone. Rather, it refers to the capacity of online learning environments to promote meaningful learning through the intentional integration of pedagogical planning, teacher mediation, and assessment practices. Accordingly, quality is examined through three interdependent dimensions: instructional design, which structures learning experiences and reduces transactional distance; teacher mediation, which promotes engagement, interaction, and academic support; and formative assessment, which guides learning regulation through feedback and fosters student autonomy. Together, these dimensions provide the conceptual framework adopted in this review.

In this context, part of the literature treats online education as a homogeneous entity, without sufficiently distinguishing between planned online teaching, intentionally designed based on evidence and instructional design principles and emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021).

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This lack of conceptual demarcation obscures the importance of sound pedagogical criteria and teacher mediation models capable of leveraging digital technologies beyond their superficial use.

Against this backdrop, this narrative review seeks to answer the following question:

How can technological, pedagogical, and assessment elements be articulated to promote quality online teaching in higher education, moving beyond the mere transposition of content and ensuring active and meaningful learning?

To this end, the objective is to critically analyze recent literature (2014–2024) on the subject, focusing on three interrelated axes:

1. Instructional design and principles of active learning;
2. The teacher's role as mediator and their digital competencies;
3. Formative assessment strategies and feedback.

The aim is to highlight how these elements, when articulated in an integrated way, can contribute to the consolidation of grounded and sustainable pedagogical practices, capable of transforming the challenges of online education into opportunities for educational innovation.

1.1 General objectives

To critically analyze the factors associated with quality online teaching in higher education, synthesizing evidence on instructional design, teacher mediation, and formative assessment in order to support the development of effective and pedagogically grounded online learning practices.

2. Review Methodology

Study Type and Approach

This study consists of a critical narrative literature review, designed to map, synthesize, and analyze evidence on the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of online teaching in higher education. This review design was chosen due to its suitability for exploring a complex and multifaceted topic, allowing for the incorporation of contributions from diverse sources (books, articles, chapters) and methodological perspectives, with the aim of building a comprehensive and

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contextualized understanding of the phenomenon (Rother, 2007; Vosgerau & Romanowski, 2014).

Source Identification and Selection Strategy

The analytical corpus was constructed through an intentional and iterative search strategy designed to identify key contributions related to quality in online higher education. Given the narrative and critical nature of this review, the objective was not to achieve exhaustive retrieval of all available studies, but rather to identify conceptually relevant literature capable of supporting a comprehensive discussion of the topic.

Scopus and ERIC were selected as the primary databases. Scopus was chosen due to its broad multidisciplinary coverage and extensive indexing of peer-reviewed international literature, whereas ERIC was included because of its specialization in educational research and teaching-related studies.

The search was conducted between February and April 2025 and prioritized publications published between 2014 and 2024. The following search strategy was used and adapted according to the requirements of each database:

("online learning" OR "e-learning") AND ("higher education") AND ("quality" OR "effectiveness")

The initial search served to identify seminal studies, recent reviews, and highly cited publications. Subsequently, a backward snowballing strategy was applied through the systematic examination of the reference lists of selected publications. This iterative process allowed the identification of additional studies considered relevant to the review objectives.

The initial search results were refined through a relevance-based screening process. Publications were considered eligible when they directly addressed quality in online higher education or provided substantial contributions regarding instructional design, teacher mediation, digital competencies, assessment practices, or online learning effectiveness. Studies focused exclusively on basic education, corporate training, or technological tools without pedagogical analysis were excluded.

Approximately 60 publications were reviewed during corpus construction.

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Following assessment of their conceptual relevance and alignment with the objectives of the review, 35 publications were retained in the final analytical corpus, including peer-reviewed articles, books, and book chapters directly related to quality in online higher education.

The snowballing process was interrupted when newly identified references no longer contributed substantially new concepts, analytical categories, or evidence to the themes already identified, which was considered an indication of theoretical saturation.

The methodological procedures adopted for corpus construction are summarized in Table 1. To enhance transparency regarding the composition of the analytical corpus, the core studies that informed the development of the review are characterized in Table 2.

Table 1. Methodological framework adopted for corpus construction

Component	Description
Databases	Scopus; ERIC
Search period	February–April 2025
Publication period prioritized	2014–2024
Search terms	("online learning" OR "e-learning") AND ("higher education") AND ("quality" OR "effectiveness")
Inclusion criteria	Peer-reviewed studies, books, and book chapters addressing instructional design, teacher mediation, digital competencies, assessment practices, or online learning effectiveness in higher education
Exclusion criteria	Technical reports, studies focused exclusively on basic education or corporate training, and publications addressing technological tools without pedagogical analysis
Complementary strategy	Backward snowballing

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Publications reviewed during corpus construction	60 publications
Publications retained in the analytical corpus	35 publications
Saturation criterion	Absence of substantially new concepts, analytical categories, or evidence in newly identified references
Review approach	Critical narrative review

Table 2. Characterization of the core studies included in the analytical corpus

Author (Year)	Evidence type	Dimension addressed	Contribution to the review
Hodges et al. (2020)	Conceptual article	Conceptual foundations	Distinguishes online learning from emergency remote teaching.
Shearer and Park (2019)	Theoretical chapter	Conceptual foundations	Provides the Transactional Distance framework.
Clark and Mayer (2016)	Research-based book	Instructional design	Evidence-based principles for online instructional design.
Moallem (2015)	Empirical study	Instructional design	Examines synchronous and asynchronous communication tools.
Rapanta et al. (2020)	Conceptual article	Teacher mediation	Highlights teacher presence and interaction in online learning.
Tourón et al. (2018)	Validation study	Digital competencies	Framework for understanding teacher digital competence.
Cavalcanti et al. (2021)	Systematic review	Formative assessment	Evidence regarding automated feedback in online learning.

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Volpe et al. (2021)	Review article	Formative assessment	Effective assessment and feedback strategies.
Janse van Rensburg (2018)	Integrative review	Integrated perspective	Effective online teaching and learning practices.

Analysis and Synthesis Procedures

The selected literature was examined through thematic content analysis inspired by the analytical principles proposed by Bardin (2011). Following an initial exploratory reading of the selected publications, recurrent concepts, challenges, and pedagogical practices related to quality in online higher education were identified and compared across studies. Subsequently, these themes were grouped according to their conceptual convergence, allowing the development of broader analytical dimensions that guided the synthesis and interpretation of the literature.

This interpretative process revealed three major analytical dimensions that consistently appeared across the literature: instructional design, teacher mediation, and assessment and feedback practices. These dimensions subsequently guided the organization and synthesis of the review. In addition, cross-cutting themes such as digital competencies, student engagement, learner autonomy, and transactional distance emerged throughout the analysis, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of quality in online higher education.

Limitations

It is acknowledged that the search strategy, although structured, does not ensure the absolute exhaustiveness characteristic of a systematic review. The focus on identifying key and relevant literature through database searches combined with the snowballing method may, on the one hand, capture fundamental contributions, but on the other hand, be subject to selection bias. Furthermore, although no formal language restrictions were imposed, the search strategy favored studies available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, which may have limited the inclusion of relevant evidence published in other languages.

The qualitative nature of the thematic analysis and narrative synthesis, conducted by the primary author, is also subject to interpretative bias. In addition, no

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formal methodological quality appraisal of the included studies was performed. Consequently, the findings presented here should be interpreted as a critical and integrative synthesis of the available literature rather than as a weighted assessment based on the methodological quality of individual studies.

Finally, given the diversity of educational systems, institutional contexts, and disciplinary areas represented in the reviewed literature, the conclusions should not be interpreted as universally applicable recommendations. Instead, they are intended to provide conceptual pathways that may guide reflection and practice while requiring adaptation to specific educational contexts.

3. Results and Discussion

The quality of online education in higher education has been widely debated, especially given the growing adoption of this modality across academic institutions. In this context, several studies have sought to differentiate structured online teaching practices from emergency approaches adopted in times of crisis, highlighting the importance of planning and pedagogical adaptation.

Different scholars argue that the sudden transition to the digital environment during the COVID-19 pandemic cannot simply be classified as “online teaching.” To describe this emergency adaptation, the concept of “emergency remote teaching” emerged (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Rapanta et al., 2020). According to Hodges et al. (2020), the main difference between the two lies in planning: while online education is structured and supported by a comprehensive student support ecosystem, emergency remote teaching was an improvised solution to temporarily replace face-to-face, hybrid, or blended learning. Based on this distinction, throughout this study the term “online teaching” or “online education” is adopted.

From this conceptual differentiation, the review turns to the analysis of how online education can achieve quality in the higher education context. The reviewed literature suggests that quality in online education is influenced not by isolated factors, but by the interaction between pedagogical and technological dimensions that sustain the learning experience. To organize this discussion, the results were structured into three interrelated axes: instructional design, which reduces transactional distance and fosters active learning; teacher mediation, which

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enhances engagement and promotes meaningful interactions; and formative assessment, which drives learning regulation and the development of autonomy.

Axis 1: Instructional design and the quest for balance in transactional distance

The instructional design of an online class is one of the central pillars for learning effectiveness. The reviewed studies suggest that learning effectiveness is associated with the balance of key elements at the class level, such as the choice of modality (synchronous/asynchronous), class size management, and the application of multimedia principles for content and activity presentation. This balance can be understood through the lens of Transactional Distance Theory, which posits that learning quality is mediated by the relationship between structure, dialogue, and autonomy within a given learning context (Shearer & Park, 2019).

In this sense, although part of the literature still contrasts synchronous and asynchronous teaching (Hodges et al., 2020; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Yamagata-Lynch, 2014), the question is no longer which modality is superior, but how to strategically integrate them to maximize learning. For example, several studies have reported advantages associated with blended approaches, that strategically combine the flexibility and reflective depth of asynchronous activities with the real-time interactivity, sense of social presence, and group cohesion fostered by synchronous meetings (Moallem, 2015; Xie et al., 2018). However, defining the ideal balance is not universal; rather, it must be calibrated according to decisive contextual variables such as learner profile (e.g., adult working students tend to benefit from a greater proportion of asynchronous activities, whereas younger learners respond better to mandatory synchronous sessions—a point highlighted by Hodges et al., 2020). Likewise, the nature of learning objectives and the available technological infrastructure play a determining role in choosing this balance.

At the same time, the effectiveness of instructional decisions may also be conditioned by the heterogeneity of students' learning conditions. Access to reliable internet connections, availability of digital devices, and the flexibility of students' learning environments can influence how learners engage with synchronous and asynchronous activities. From this perspective, accessibility and digital inclusion

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become important considerations in instructional planning, since the same educational strategy may create different opportunities for participation depending on learners' contextual realities (Hodges et al., 2020; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021).

Regarding class size, the reviewed literature generally associates smaller groups, ideally below 30–35 students, with higher levels of interaction, engagement, and instructional personalization (Benton et al., 2015; Taft, Perkowski & Martin, 2011). In larger classes, communication tends to become unidirectional, resembling traditional lecture-based teaching and limiting opportunities for active learning (Parks-Stamm, Zafonte & Palenque, 2017). However, this consensus encounters a practical large-scale dilemma: the unavoidable tension between desirable pedagogical quality and the economic and operational feasibility for institutions, particularly in contexts of higher education massification. This contradiction demands that the discussion move beyond the pedagogical ideal and incorporate the pursuit of hybrid class management models and the strategic use of tools to support large-scale personalization.

Finally, the organization and presentation of content guided by multimedia design principles constitutes a complementary element that can mitigate challenges posed by the two previous variables. The application of established principles, such as content segmentation and the harmonious integration of multimedia (Clark & Mayer, 2016), contributes to clarity and learning effectiveness, reinforcing the balance between structure, dialogue, and autonomy.

In summary, this axis shows that the pursuit of quality in online education does not depend on identifying a single ideal model, but on the conscious and contextual orchestration of the three pillars of instructional design. Each pedagogical proposal must seek the optimal balance between structure, dialogue, and autonomy, actively reducing transactional distance through intentional choices that address the specificities of each session.

Axis 2: Teacher mediation beyond transmission—challenges and competencies in the digital era

The second analytical axis highlights a critical transformation in the teacher's role: the shift from a content transmission model to one based on facilitation and

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active mediation of learning (Hsu & Hsieh, 2014; Sheringham et al., 2016). This transition, however, is not merely instrumental. It represents a profound reconceptualization of pedagogical practice, which faces structural obstacles and demands new competencies.

Literature consistently emphasizes that the teacher as facilitator is central to promoting engagement and meaningful learning (Hsu & Hsieh, 2014). This role materializes through actions such as providing constant and personalized feedback (Matlakala et al., 2013), fostering meaningful peer interactions, and carefully curating resources that stimulate student autonomy (Furnes, Kvaal & Høye, 2018). In this context, teaching presence—understood as the ability to be felt in the virtual environment and to establish authentic connections—constitutes essential socio-emotional support against isolation and transactional distance, functioning as a cohesive element of the learning experience (Shearer & Park, 2019).

To sustain this role and enhance their presence in digital environments, teachers rely on a set of technological tools that can be mobilized strategically. These digital teaching tools are as diverse as the pedagogical contexts in which they may be applied (Hernandez-de-Menendez & Morales-Menendez, 2019; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). They range from learning management systems (LMS), such as Moodle and Blackboard, which centralize content and offer interactive resources, to videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet, which expand synchronous interaction with functionalities like breakout rooms, polls, and recordings for review (Chaka, 2020).

However, the review reveals a concerning gap between expectation and practice. Studies such as Ateya et al. (2015), and Chaka (2020) indicate that teacher training often remains limited to basic technical competencies (e.g., operating platforms), neglecting more complex pedagogical dimensions of digital mediation, which in turn restricts the effective use of available support tools.

Lack of technical support, still-incipient institutional initiatives to foster training, and, in some cases, educators' reluctance to update their digital skills, further exacerbate these difficulties (Ateya et al., 2015). This weakness also contributes to information overload in virtual environments, as uncritical tool use and the excessive

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availability of poorly curated materials can generate disorientation, frustration, and even course abandonment, particularly when there is no clear teacher guidance or adequate pedagogical filtering strategies (Ateya et al., 2015).

However, this limitation extends beyond individual technical proficiency. Although personal initiative and continuous professional development remain important, the ability to exercise effective online mediation depends on broader institutional conditions, including access to technical support, opportunities for ongoing training, time allocated for course design and feedback, and organizational cultures that value digital teaching practices. Consequently, qualified teacher mediation emerges not only from individual competence, but also from the institutional ecosystems that sustain it.

Given this scenario, more than simply training teachers to use tools, it becomes urgent to rethink institutionally the training and support offered. Strategies must prioritize the development of critical and intentional mediation (Cateriano-Chavez et al., 2021; Tourón et al., 2018), preparing teachers not only to use technologies but also to evaluate, select, and adapt them reflexively to their specific contexts. Thus, the success of online teaching depends less on the technology available and more on the teacher's capacity to exercise qualified mediation that fosters community, criticality, and autonomy (Chaparro-Peláez et al., 2020; Means, Bakia & Murphy, 2014).

Axis 3: Assessment of learning—from measurement to regulation and autonomy

In online teaching, assessment assumes a strategic role that goes beyond simple measurement of results. It becomes a central instrument for regulating learning processes and fostering student autonomy (Volpe et al., 2021). The reviewed literature generally supports models that prioritize formative assessment over exclusively summative practices, placing feedback at the core of assessment effectiveness (Cavalcanti et al., 2021).

In this regard, diversified tools such as digital portfolios, graded forums, group projects, and problem-solving strategies stand out. These resources allow students

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to demonstrate competencies more authentically and reflectively, bringing assessment closer to real-world practice scenarios (Clark & Mayer, 2016; Means, Bakia & Murphy, 2014). At the same time, automated feedback systems—such as self-correcting quizzes and interactive exercises—are advancing. While they do not replace human mediation, these systems provide immediate responses for self-regulation and free teachers to dedicate time to more complex and personalized interventions (Cavalcanti et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the implementation of these practices faces significant obstacles. The workload associated with formative assessment such as detailed portfolio grading or continuous forum moderation, emerges as one of the main barriers, particularly in large classes without proportional adjustments in workload (Janse van Rensburg, 2018). Added to this is a persistent tension between innovative discourse and institutional culture, which often privileges summative models for being perceived as more objective, agile, and scalable.

However, the implementation of formative assessment also depends on conditions that extend beyond the assessment tools themselves. Large class sizes, limited time for individualized feedback, unequal levels of student participation, and institutional pressures for efficiency may restrict the adoption of more dialogical assessment practices. In this sense, the educational value of formative assessment lies not only in its conceptual advantages, but also in the practical conditions that enable meaningful interaction between teachers and learners.

Overcoming these challenges requires more than simply adopting new tools. It demands institutional redesign that recognizes the time needed for quality assessment practices and fosters a formative culture, in which mistakes are valued as a constitutive part of learning rather than as terminal failures. Within this paradigm, assessment ceases to represent an endpoint and becomes a continuous process of dialogue that accompanies and sustains students' formative journeys.

Integrated Analysis

In summary, the integrated analysis of the three axes shows that the quality of online education does not depend on isolated factors but on the balanced

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articulation between instructional design that reduces transactional distance, critical teacher mediation, and formative assessment focused on regulation and autonomy.

This process requires intentional planning capable of aligning digital tools with clear pedagogical objectives and specific institutional contexts. From this perspective, the ability to test, adapt, and select resources based on sound pedagogical criteria constitutes one of the great advantages of planned online teaching compared to emergency remote teaching, in which there was little room for adjustments due to the urgency of migrating to the virtual environment (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). Thus, the contemporary challenge is not merely to incorporate technologies but to consolidate an educational culture that values the reflective and critical use of these resources to promote engagement, community, and meaningful learning.

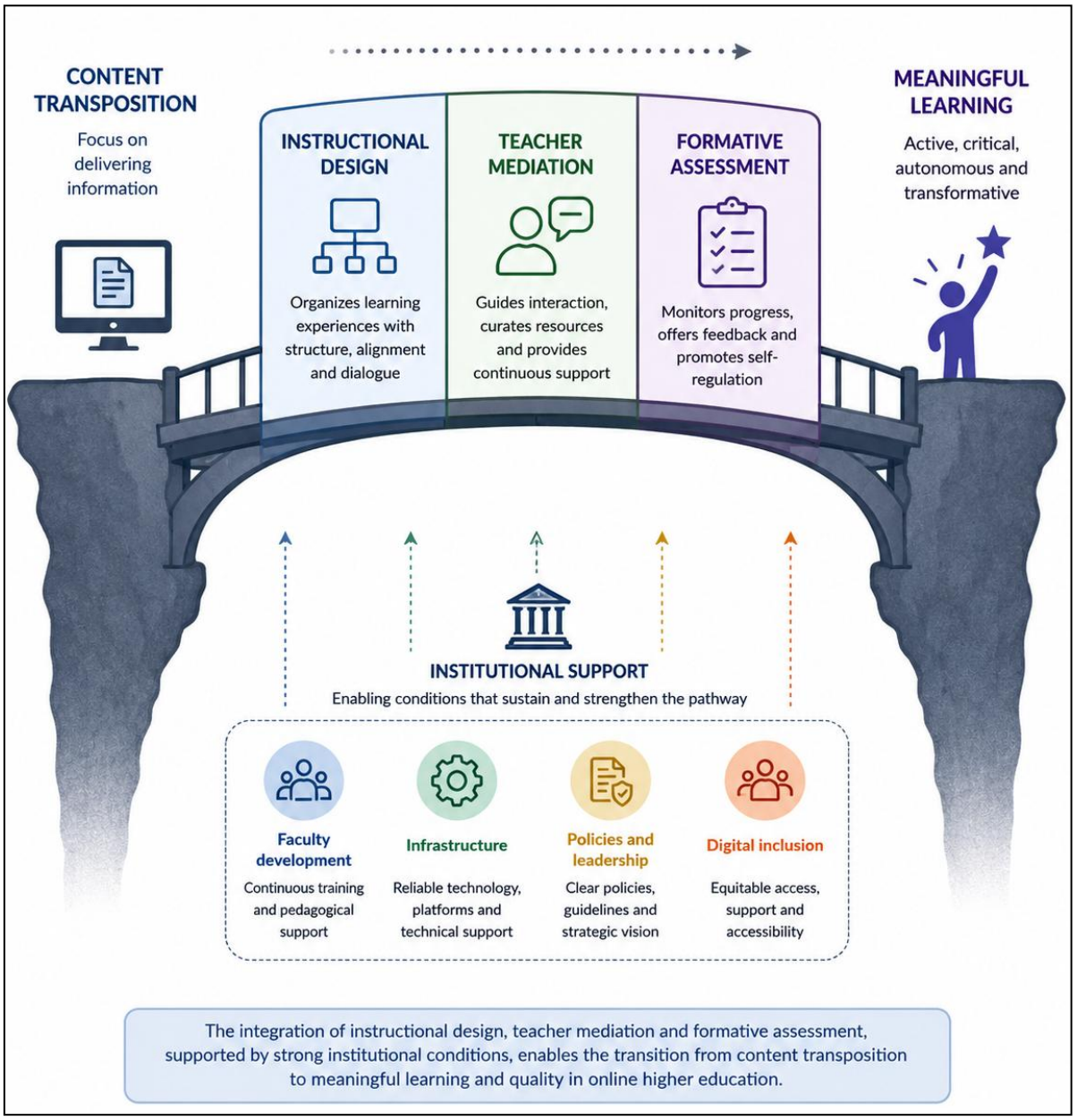
Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, Figure 1 presents a conceptual pathway illustrating how instructional design, teacher mediation, and formative assessment operate as interconnected dimensions that support the transition from content transposition to meaningful learning. The model also highlights the enabling role of institutional support, including faculty development, infrastructure, leadership, and digital inclusion, in sustaining the implementation of these pedagogical dimensions.

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Figure 1. Pathways to quality Online higher education: from content transposition to effective learning.



4. Final Considerations

The reflections developed throughout this review allow us to answer the guiding question: the promotion of quality online teaching in higher education is not achieved through the mere adoption of technologies, but through the intentional articulation of three interdependent dimensions-instructional design that reduces

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transactional distance, teacher mediation that fosters engagement, and formative assessment that regulates and sustains learning. When these elements are conceived in an integrated manner, online teaching ceases to be a simple transposition of content and becomes an active and meaningful experience.

This potential, however, is not realized automatically. The incorporation of high-quality virtual classes requires robust institutional participation, faculty preparation, and time dedicated to planning. It remains an incipient process in many universities, yet it is necessary, as it enables the breaking down of geographical barriers, the expansion of access opportunities, and the enrichment of training.

Another aspect worth highlighting is that planned online teaching offers the advantage of allowing the testing, adaptation, and careful selection of technological resources based on clear pedagogical criteria—unlike emergency remote teaching. This flexibility reinforces the need for universities and faculty to assume a leading role in building digital practices that are at once critical, reflective, and transformative.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that this review is narrative in nature, and its contribution lies in organizing central dimensions for the current debate on quality in online education, pointing to pathways toward more consistent practices. Future research may explore in greater depth how different institutional models and cultural contexts influence the integration of instructional design, teacher mediation, and formative assessment.

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