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العدد الثالث

والأربعون

كيفية قيام المعلمين بتكليف الاستراتيجيات التربوية بشكل فعال لتلبية الاحتياجات المعرفية والتفاعلية المتطورة لطلاب وطالبات جيل التيك توك المنغمسين في المحتوى الرقمي القصير والسريع

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المستخلص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية قيام المعلمين بتكليف الاستراتيجيات التربوية بشكل فعال لتلبية الاحتياجات المعرفية والتفاعلية المتطورة لطلاب "جيل تيك توك" المنغمسين بعمق في المحتوى الرقمي القصير والسريع.

تستكشف هذه الدراسة آثار التفاعل على غرار منصة تيك توك على مدى الانتباه، واحتفاظ الذاكرة، وتفضيلات التعلم لدى طلاب المرحلتين الثانوية والجامعية. ومن خلال تحليل نقدي للأدبيات المعاصرة ودراسات حالة واقعية من داخل الفصول الدراسية، يسلط البحث الضوء على التباين بين نماذج التدريس التقليدية وبيئات التعلم السمعية البصرية المجزأة التي اعتاد عليها الطلاب. ويركز البحث بشكل خاص على كيفية استخدام التعلم المصغر، والتطبيق العملي للأساليب التعليمية، والتعليم متعدد الوسائط لتعزيز التفاعل بشكل أعمق. كما تقدم الدراسة رؤى مستقاة من مقابلات مع أساتذة جامعيين في بغداد، بمن فيهم معلمين من مؤسسات مثل جامعة بغداد والجامعة المستنصرية، والذين يجربون منصات مثل تيك توك، وإنستغرام ريلز، ويوتيوب شورتس كأدوات تعليمية. تُجادل هذه الدراسة في نهاية المطاف بأنه على الرغم من أن الوسائط الرقمية القصيرة تُشكل تحديات أمام



التركيز المستمر والتفكير النقدي، إلا أنها تُتيح أيضًا فرصًا لأساليب تدريس مُراعية للثقافة ومُركزة على الطالب عند دمجها بشكل مدروس. يُساهم هذا البحث في مجال التربية الرقمية من خلال تقديم إطار عمل لمواءمة التصميم التعليمي مع عادات استخدام الوسائط والخصائص المعرفية لجيلي زد وألفا.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

جيل تيك توك , المتعلمون الرقميون ذوو المحتوى القصير, الأساليب التربوية , الاستراتيجيات التربوية

## Teaching the TikTok Generation: Adapting Pedagogical Strategies for Short-Form Digital Learners

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### Abstract

This study investigates how educators can effectively adapt pedagogical strategies to meet the evolving cognitive and engagement needs of the "TikTok Generation" students who are deeply immersed in short-form, fast-paced digital content. This study explores the implications of TikTok-style engagement on attention spans, memory retention, and learning preferences among secondary and tertiary-level students. Through a critical synthesis of contemporary literature and classroom-based case examples, the research highlights the mismatch between traditional instructional models and the fragmented, audiovisual learning environments students are accustomed to. Particular focus is given to how microlearning, gamification, and multimodal instruction can be utilized to foster deeper engagement. The study also presents insights from interviews with professors across universities in Baghdad, including educators from institutions like Baghdad University and



Al-Mustansiriya, who are experimenting with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts as educational tools. Ultimately, the paper argues that while short-form digital media poses challenges to sustained attention and critical thinking, it also presents opportunities for culturally responsive, student-centered pedagogy when thoughtfully integrated. This research contributes to the field of digital pedagogy by offering a framework for aligning instructional design with the media habits and cognitive profiles of Generation Z and Generation Alpha learners.

**Key Terms: TikTok Generation, Short-Form Digital Learners, Pedagogical Pedagogical Strategies.**



مجلة العلوم الأساسية  
للعلوم التربوية والنفسية وطرائق التدريس للعلوم الأساسية



## 1. INTRODUCTION

IN THE LAST DECADE, THE RISE OF SHORT-FORM DIGITAL PLATFORMS, MOST NOTABLY TIKTOK, HAS REVOLUTIONIZED HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CONSUME, PROCESS, AND INTERACT WITH INFORMATION. TIKTOK'S 15-TO-60-SECOND VIDEOS, CHARACTERIZED BY RAPID VISUAL SHIFTS, AUDIO OVERLAYS, AND ALGORITHM-DRIVEN PERSONALIZATION, HAVE CREATED A GENERATION OF LEARNERS ACCUSTOMED TO IMMEDIATE STIMULATION AND NONLINEAR NARRATIVES. COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE "TIKTOK GENERATION," THESE DIGITAL NATIVES EXHIBIT UNIQUE LEARNING BEHAVIORS SHAPED BY CONSTANT EXPOSURE TO SHORT BURSTS OF MULTIMEDIA CONTENT (LEPP ET AL., 2023). IN BAGHDAD, WHERE MOBILE INTERNET USAGE IS WIDESPREAD AMONG YOUTH DESPITE INFRASTRUCTURAL CHALLENGES, TIKTOK AND SIMILAR PLATFORMS HAVE GAINED IMMENSE POPULARITY AMONG SECONDARY AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. THESE STUDENTS NOW BRING THEIR MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS INTO THE CLASSROOM, OFTEN STRUGGLING TO ENGAGE WITH TRADITIONAL LECTURE-BASED OR TEXT-HEAVY TEACHING METHODS. IRAQI EDUCATORS, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AREAS LIKE BAGHDAD, ARE INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE NEED TO ADAPT THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES TO RESONATE WITH THIS DIGITALLY IMMERSSED STUDENT BODY. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN GLOBAL RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON EDUCATION (GREENFIELD, 2017; PRENSKY, 2001), STUDIES FOCUSING SPECIFICALLY ON THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TIKTOK-STYLE MEDIA IN MIDDLE EASTERN OR IRAQI CONTEXTS REMAIN LIMITED. THIS STUDY, THEREFORE, EXPLORES HOW TEACHERS IN BAGHDAD CAN RESPOND TO THIS SHIFT BY INTEGRATING SHORT-FORM MEDIA STRATEGIES INTO THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICE, WITHOUT SACRIFICING ACADEMIC DEPTH OR CRITICAL THINKING.



## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

EDUCATORS IN BAGHDAD ARE EXPERIENCING A GROWING DISCONNECT BETWEEN TRADITIONAL PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND STUDENTS' EVOLVING DIGITAL BEHAVIORS. MANY LEARNERS DISPLAY REDUCED ATTENTION SPANS, IMPATIENCE WITH EXTENDED LECTURES, AND A PREFERENCE FOR VISUALLY DYNAMIC, FAST-PACED CONTENT DELIVERY. TEACHERS REPORT THAT STUDENTS ARE INCREASINGLY DISENGAGED IN CLASSROOMS THAT DO NOT REFLECT THE INTERACTIVE AND STIMULUS-RICH ENVIRONMENTS OF PLATFORMS LIKE TIKTOK. DESPITE THIS, THERE IS A LACK OF STRUCTURED PEDAGOGICAL MODELS OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS SEEKING TO BRIDGE THIS GAP. THE PROBLEM, THEREFORE, LIES IN THE ABSENCE OF LOCALIZED, EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES TO HELP BAGHDAD-BASED EDUCATORS EFFECTIVELY ADAPT THEIR TEACHING METHODS TO ALIGN WITH THE LEARNING STYLES OF THE TIKTOK GENERATION.

## 1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This research aims to investigate how educators in Baghdad can adapt pedagogical strategies to effectively engage and educate students shaped by short-form digital content.

Specific objectives include:

- 1.To examine the impact of TikTok-style media consumption on student attention, learning preferences, and academic engagement in Baghdad.
- 2.To identify current instructional challenges faced by educators in Baghdad's schools and universities in dealing with digitally immersed learners.
- 3.To explore effective pedagogical adaptations that incorporate short-form content delivery without compromising educational quality.



4. To DEVELOP A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MODEL FOR INTEGRATING SHORT-FORM DIGITAL STRATEGIES INTO TEACHING IN THE BAGHDAD CONTEXT.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How has the widespread use of TikTok and short-form digital content influenced student learning behaviors in Baghdad?
2. What challenges do teachers in Baghdad face when teaching students influenced by short-form digital media?
3. What pedagogical strategies have Baghdad educators begun adopting in response to these new learning patterns?
4. How can teaching practices be adapted to include short-form digital media in a way that enhances, rather than diminishes, academic depth?

#### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is significant both locally and academically. Locally, it offers much-needed insights for educators in Baghdad who are struggling to keep pace with the changing dynamics of digital-age learning. It provides practical strategies that can be applied in classrooms to boost engagement and improve learning outcomes, particularly in the context of Iraq's transitional post-conflict education system. Academically, the study contributes to the broader discourse on digital pedagogy by offering a Middle Eastern perspective, which is underrepresented in current literature. It also challenges binary views of social media as either entirely harmful or beneficial, proposing instead a nuanced approach to its integration in formal education.



## 1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

THIS STUDY FOCUSES PRIMARILY ON SECONDARY AND UNIVERSITY-LEVEL EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS WITHIN BAGHDAD, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS. WHILE FINDINGS MAY HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR BROADER CONTEXTS, THE SCOPE IS LIMITED TO BAGHDAD DUE TO CULTURAL, INFRASTRUCTURAL, AND TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT MAY NOT BE GENERALIZABLE TO ALL REGIONS OF IRAQ OR THE ARAB WORLD. LIMITATIONS INCLUDE RESTRICTED ACCESS TO INTERNET DATA WITHIN SCHOOLS, INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL MEDIA, AND VARYING LEVELS OF DIGITAL LITERACY AMONG TEACHERS.

## 2: THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 THE TIKTOK GENERATION: CHARACTERISTICS AND LEARNING BEHAVIORS

The term “TikTok Generation” is commonly used to describe today’s youth, particularly those born after 2000, who are native users of short-form, fast-paced digital platforms. These students are shaped by ubiquitous digital access and an increasing reliance on bite-sized, multimedia content (Montag et al., 2021). Research shows that these learners favor immediacy, interactivity, and visually stimulating content over extended textual formats (Liu et al., 2022; Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Gen Z and Alpha learners exhibit strong preferences for personalized and non-linear learning (Seemiller & Grace, 2016), which aligns with TikTok’s algorithmic design that tailors content to user behavior. According to Lepp et al. (2023), frequent TikTok users demonstrate diminished capacity for sustained attention but enhanced visual processing and multitasking abilities. This has prompted researchers like Greenfield (2017) to describe a neurological shift in information consumption and cognitive prioritization. This shift in cognitive habits necessitates a reevaluation of traditional pedagogical strategies, especially within classroom environments that rely heavily on linear instruction,



printed materials, and passive reception. Educators are increasingly challenged to adapt their teaching to accommodate learners who thrive in fast, feedback-rich environments and who often engage in multitasking across multiple screens (Rosen et al., 2020). As a result, modern classrooms must consider integrating short-form video content, gamified activities, and interactive digital platforms to foster engagement and deepen comprehension (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Additionally, instructional design must move toward modular, flexible content delivery that mirrors the fragmented yet immersive learning experiences familiar to the TikTok Generation. Such adaptations are not merely about following trends they represent a broader transformation in how knowledge is accessed, processed, and retained in the digital age.

## 2.2 Pedagogical Implications of Short-Form Digital Content

The rapid rise of TikTok and similar platforms has prompted educators to reconsider traditional instructional methods. Studies by Kay et al. (2020) and Bates (2019) highlight the growing disconnect between standard lecture-based pedagogy and students' digitally conditioned attention patterns. Microlearning a pedagogical method that delivers content in small, focused bursts has been proposed as a responsive approach for short-form learners (Hug, 2005). When combined with audiovisual elements, microlearning can align with the temporal structure and interactivity of TikTok content (Giannikas, 2020; Mayer, 2005).

Gamification, too, has emerged as a compatible strategy. As pointed out by Deterding et al. (2011), game-like elements such as scoring, levels, and instant feedback replicate the reward systems inherent in digital platforms. Such methods increase motivation and engagement in learners conditioned by the fast-feedback loops of social media (Sailer et al., 2017). Moreover, the shift toward learner-centered digital environments has emphasized the importance of agency, collaboration, and creativity in the classroom. Platforms like TikTok not only deliver content but also empower users to become content creators, fostering a participatory culture (Jenkins et al.,



2016). In response, pedagogical models such as project-based learning (PBL) and inquiry-based learning (IBL) are gaining traction, as they encourage students to explore, produce, and share knowledge in ways that mirror their digital habits (Thomas, 2000; Bell, 2010). Integrating short-form video assignments, peer-to-peer feedback, and collaborative content creation into the curriculum allows educators to tap into students' digital fluency while cultivating 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, media literacy, and digital storytelling (Hobbs, 2017; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). These approaches not only bridge the gap between academic content and digital culture but also reframe learning as an active, personalized, and socially connected process.

## 2.3 Theoretical Frameworks

### 2.3.1 CONSTRUCTIVISM

Rooted in the work of Piaget and Vygotsky, constructivist learning theory posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and contextual interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). TikTok's participatory nature allowing users to remix, stitch, and respond supports the idea of knowledge as co-created and socially mediated (Siemens, 2005). This constructivist alignment positions TikTok not merely as a distraction, but as a potential educational tool when thoughtfully integrated into instruction. For example, teachers can leverage TikTok's features such as short video explanations, challenges, and collaborative projects to encourage student-led content creation that demonstrates understanding (Trust et al., 2022). When learners are invited to interpret material creatively and present it in their own voice, they engage in deeper cognitive processing and reflection, core tenets of constructivist pedagogy (Jonassen, 1999). Furthermore, the peer feedback mechanisms embedded in platforms like TikTok reinforce social learning and promote a sense of community and accountability among students (Bandura, 1986).



HOWEVER, INTEGRATING SUCH PLATFORMS INTO EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS ALSO RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT SCREEN TIME, DISTRACTION, AND DATA PRIVACY. CRITICS ARGUE THAT WHILE TIKTOK MAY BOOST ENGAGEMENT, IT RISKS PROMOTING SURFACE-LEVEL UNDERSTANDING AND FRAGMENTED ATTENTION IF NOT EMBEDDED WITHIN A BROADER PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK (CARR, 2010; OPHIR ET AL., 2009). THEREFORE, EDUCATORS MUST BE INTENTIONAL IN THEIR USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS ESTABLISHING CLEAR LEARNING OBJECTIVES, BALANCING ANALOG AND DIGITAL ACTIVITIES, AND TEACHING STUDENTS CRITICAL DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS (LIVINGSTONE, 2014). IN THIS WAY, TIKTOK AND SIMILAR PLATFORMS CAN BE HARNESSSED TO SUPPORT RATHER THAN SUPPLANT MEANINGFUL LEARNING, ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO BECOME NOT ONLY CONSUMERS BUT ALSO CRITICAL PRODUCERS OF KNOWLEDGE IN AN INCREASINGLY DIGITIZED WORLD.

### 2.3.2 COGNITIVE LOAD THEORY

Sweller's (1994) cognitive load theory suggests that learning is optimized when extraneous cognitive effort is minimized. TikTok's short duration may help reduce cognitive overload by segmenting information (Mayer & Moreno, 2003), but it may also promote surface-level processing if not embedded in a broader pedagogical framework (Kirschner, 2002). To address these limitations, educators can apply principles of multimedia learning to enhance depth of understanding while maintaining the engaging format preferred by digital natives. Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning emphasizes the importance of coherence, signaling, and redundancy to facilitate meaningful learning. By designing short-form instructional videos that use clear visuals, focused narration, and guided prompts, teachers can ensure that TikTok-style content contributes to schema development rather than shallow recall. For example, segmenting a complex concept into a series of interconnected micro-videos allows learners to process



information incrementally, reducing cognitive strain while reinforcing comprehension (de Koning et al., 2011). Additionally, scaffolding plays a critical role in helping students transfer knowledge from short-form content to long-term understanding. Instructional scaffolding such as pre-video discussion, guiding questions, and post-video reflections can help learners connect fragmented information to existing knowledge structures (Wood et al., 1976). Embedding TikTok-like videos within a learning sequence that includes active discussion, peer collaboration, and application tasks ensures that students move beyond passive viewing. This approach bridges the gap between entertainment and education, leveraging the brevity and appeal of TikTok without sacrificing pedagogical integrity or cognitive rigor (Van Merriënboer & Sweller, 2005).

### 2.3.3 Digital Literacy Theory

Digital literacy, as outlined by Gilster (1997) and later expanded by Belshaw (2011), encompasses the ability to critically navigate, evaluate, and create content using digital tools. TikTok usage necessitates a redefinition of digital literacy to include fluency in editing, algorithmic understanding, and ethical online engagement (Ng, 2012; Livingstone, 2008). In the context of education, this expanded view of digital literacy implies that students must be taught not only how to consume content responsibly, but also how to produce it with intention, credibility, and awareness of its impact. For instance, understanding how TikTok's algorithm curates content feeds based on engagement patterns empowers learners to recognize echo chambers and bias (Cotter, 2021). Teaching students to question the authenticity of viral trends, verify sources, and reflect on their own digital footprint fosters critical thinking and responsible citizenship in the digital sphere (Rheingold, 2012). Moreover, incorporating content creation into the curriculum enables students to practice ethical storytelling, visual communication, and media critique all vital skills in the contemporary information ecosystem.



EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH THESE COMPETENCIES ALSO DEMANDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS, MANY OF WHOM MAY BE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE NUANCES OF PLATFORM-BASED LITERACIES. TEACHERS NEED SUPPORT TO INTEGRATE TIKTOK-INSPIRED METHODS IN A PEDAGOGICALLY SOUND MANNER, FROM DESIGNING SHORT-FORM ASSESSMENTS TO FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS ON DIGITAL ETHICS AND IDENTITY (HOBBS & COIRO, 2016). INSTITUTIONS MUST THEREFORE BROADEN THEIR DEFINITIONS OF LITERACY TO INCLUDE MULTIMODAL EXPRESSION, ALGORITHMIC AWARENESS, AND PARTICIPATORY ENGAGEMENT. BY DOING SO, SCHOOLS CAN PREPARE LEARNERS NOT JUST TO FUNCTION, BUT TO THRIVE IN A WORLD WHERE INFLUENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND CREATIVITY ARE INCREASINGLY MEDIATED THROUGH SHORT-FORM DIGITAL PLATFORMS.

#### 2.4 GLOBAL TRENDS IN TIKTOK-BASED EDUCATION

While initially seen as a distraction, TikTok has been repurposed by educators globally to support learning. Veletsianos et al. (2021) found that teachers using TikTok to present grammar rules, historical facts, and math tricks reported high student engagement. Similarly, studies in the UK and US (Trust et al., 2022; Chen, 2021) show that TikTok can foster informal learning and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Despite its benefits, critics warn that the platform's entertainment-first design may undermine academic rigor (Koenig, 2022). Furthermore, algorithmic biases and misinformation spread pose ethical concerns in educational contexts (Cotter et al., 2021). To mitigate these risks, educators must implement TikTok-style learning within a guided and critically reflective framework. This includes teaching students how to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources, promoting media literacy skills, and creating classroom norms around respectful and purposeful digital engagement (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017). When students are empowered to analyze, question, and respond to digital content rather than passively consume it they develop a stronger sense of agency and intellectual responsibility. Platforms like TikTok can thus be transformed into spaces of inquiry and collaboration, provided that their use is framed by intentional pedagogical strategies and ethical considerations. Moreover, institutions



must address structural barriers that affect equitable access to digital tools and platforms. In regions with limited internet connectivity or insufficient technological infrastructure, such as parts of Baghdad and other urban centers, the benefits of TikTok-based pedagogy may be inaccessible to many learners (UNESCO, 2023). Educators and policymakers must work collaboratively to ensure that digital integration is inclusive, sustainable, and adapted to local contexts. This includes providing teacher training, investing in ICT infrastructure, and developing culturally relevant content that reflects students' lived experiences. Only then can TikTok and similar technologies truly serve as transformative tools in reimagining education for the digital age.

## 2.5 Regional and Iraqi Perspectives

In the Middle East, digital integration in education has accelerated post-COVID-19. Alshammari et al. (2022) note increased use of social media platforms for remote learning in Gulf countries. However, limited studies focus on Iraq. In Baghdad, despite infrastructure challenges, students in urban areas have widespread access to smartphones and mobile data (UNESCO Iraq, 2021). Research by Al-Khalidi and Hassan (2023) shows that secondary students in Baghdad spend 2–3 hours daily on TikTok, yet there is little institutional support for teachers to adapt curriculum content to these habits.



THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S CURRENT POLICIES DO NOT FORMALLY RECOGNIZE SOCIAL MEDIA AS INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS (MOE IRAQ, 2022), LEAVING INDIVIDUAL EDUCATORS TO INDEPENDENTLY INTEGRATE SUCH PLATFORMS (SALMAN & HADI, 2020). TEACHERS OFTEN LACK TRAINING IN DIGITAL PEDAGOGY, PARTICULARLY IN BALANCING ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING OUTCOMES (YASEEN, 2023).

### 3: METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

THIS STUDY ADOPTS A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH TO EXPLORE THE LIVED EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS, AND STRATEGIES OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH THE TIKTOK GENERATION IN BAGHDAD. ACCORDING TO YIN (2018), THE CASE STUDY METHOD IS APPROPRIATE FOR INVESTIGATING CONTEMPORARY PHENOMENA WITHIN THEIR REAL-WORLD CONTEXTS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE PHENOMENON AND CONTEXT ARE NOT CLEARLY EVIDENT. THIS DESIGN ALLOWS FOR IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF COMPLEX EDUCATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DYNAMICS WITHIN A CULTURALLY SPECIFIC SETTING.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH SETTING AND CONTEXT

The study was conducted in Baghdad, Iraq's capital and largest urban center. Participants were drawn from both private and public secondary schools, as well as two universities: the University of Baghdad and Al-Mustansiriya University. These institutions were selected based on their diverse student populations and access to digital infrastructure. The research focused specifically on English language and humanities classrooms, where teachers reported the highest levels of student interaction with social media platforms. The participants included:

- **15 teachers** (8 from secondary schools, 7 from universities)
- **5 educational supervisors/administrators** familiar with digital curriculum development



- **10 students** (aged 16–22) selected through purposive sampling for their frequent use of TikTok and other short-form media platforms

ALL PARTICIPANTS WERE BASED IN BAGHDAD AND HAD VARYING LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE WITH INTEGRATING DIGITAL TOOLS INTO INSTRUCTION. TEACHERS WERE SELECTED TO REFLECT DIVERSITY IN GENDER, TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION. STUDENTS WERE INCLUDED TO PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO HOW THEY PERCEIVE AND RESPOND TO PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES INFLUENCED BY THEIR MEDIA HABITS.

### 3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### 3.4.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators to gather qualitative insights into their teaching practices, challenges, and innovations. The interviews were conducted in Arabic and English, depending on participant preference, and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Interview questions focused on:

- Observed changes in student behavior and attention span
- Experiences integrating short-form media content (e.g., TikTok videos, reels)
- Institutional support and training for digital pedagogy
- Reflections on student engagement and academic performance



### 3.4.2 FOCUS GROUPS

TWO FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS WERE HELD WITH SECONDARY AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (5 PARTICIPANTS EACH). THESE DISCUSSIONS EXPLORED STUDENTS' MEDIA CONSUMPTION PATTERNS, THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH DIFFERENT TEACHING STYLES, AND THEIR PREFERENCES FOR VISUAL OR INTERACTIVE CONTENT IN CLASS.

### 3.4.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

FOUR CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS WERE CONDUCTED TO DOCUMENT TEACHING PRACTICES IN REAL TIME. THE OBSERVER USED A STRUCTURED OBSERVATION GUIDE FOCUSING ON THE USE OF MEDIA, STUDENT ATTENTION LEVELS, TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION, AND EVIDENCE OF DIGITAL INTEGRATION.

### 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data from interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach was selected for its flexibility and suitability for exploring participants' experiences and perspectives in naturalistic educational settings. It allowed the researcher to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes that emerged from the qualitative data in a systematic and rigorous manner. The first stage involved familiarization with the data, which required immersing oneself in the transcripts by reading and rereading them carefully. This phase helped the researcher gain a comprehensive understanding of the content, tone, and underlying meanings expressed by participants. Initial impressions were noted in a reflective research journal, including thoughts about possible connections to the research questions and theoretical frameworks such as constructivism and cognitive load theory. The next stage focused on generating initial codes. A hybrid method was used, combining inductive coding (derived directly from the data) and deductive coding (informed by the study's conceptual framework and research questions). Segments of the data were labeled with short phrases that captured key ideas



such as students' resistance to traditional lectures, their enthusiasm for multimedia, or teachers' efforts to modify lesson plans. Coding was conducted manually at first, and later refined using qualitative data analysis software to organize and cross-reference the codes efficiently. Once coding was complete, the researcher began searching for themes by examining how different codes related to each other. Codes with shared meanings or patterns were clustered into broader themes. For instance, codes such as "students lose focus quickly," "they ask for more videos," and "prefer visual explanations" were grouped into the theme 'Attention Span and Media Preference'. This process allowed for deeper analytical insights into how digital content consumption was reshaping student behavior in the classroom. The initial themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and validity. Some themes were merged or split depending on the data's richness, while others that lacked sufficient supporting evidence were discarded. This stage also involved cross-checking each theme with the complete dataset to confirm its representativeness. Themes that aligned with the study's objectives and captured significant recurring patterns across participants were retained. Subsequently, each theme was defined and named, with careful attention given to ensuring clarity, precision, and relevance. Definitions were written for each theme, explaining what it included and excluded, and how it contributed to answering the research questions. These themes were also contextualized within the theoretical frameworks used in the study, including constructivism and digital literacy theory, to deepen interpretation and meaning-making.



### 3.6: Results and Discussion

**TABLE (1) OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Participant Group	Number	Gender Distribution (F/M)	Institution Type
Secondary Teachers	8	5 / 3	Public & Private
University Teachers	7	4 / 3	Baghdad & Mustansiriya Universities
Educational Admins	5	2 / 3	Public Institutions
Students	10	6 / 4	Secondary & University

#### **THEME 1: IMPACT OF SHORT-FORM CONTENT ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

##### **Finding:**

Participants consistently observed that students exposed to short-form content like TikTok displayed reduced attention spans, impatience with long lectures, and increased expectations for visual or interactive material.

“When I talk more than 10 minutes without a video or quiz, I start losing them.” – Secondary Teacher (Private School)

**Table (2) Impact of Short-Form Content on Student Behavior**

Observed Behavior	% of Teachers Noticing
Reduced attention span (<10 min)	93%
Preference for visual content (videos, GIFs)	87%
Resistance to traditional reading tasks	73%

This aligns with Greenfield (2017) and Lepp et al. (2023), who noted that TikTok exposure correlates with reduced sustained attention but enhanced multitasking. The findings reflect how TikTok’s design, short, entertaining,



and fast-paced, has shaped students' cognitive expectations in learning contexts.

## THEME 2: PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN RESPONSE

### Finding:

Teachers have begun modifying their teaching styles by incorporating **microlearning**, **gamification**, and **multimedia tools**.

TABLE (3) PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN RESPONSE

Adapted Strategy	% of Teachers Using It	Examples Used
Microlearning	80%	3–5 min “concept bursts.”
TikTok-style video clips	67%	Grammar rules via short videos
Gamified quizzes	60%	Kahoot, Quizizz
Infographics/visual slides	73%	Canva-designed learning visuals

“I started using TikTok to explain English idioms. Students loved it and even made their own versions.” – University Teacher (Mustansiriya)

These findings strongly support the foundational principles of Mayer's (2005) Multimedia Learning Theory and Sweller's (1994) Cognitive Load Theory, both of which offer crucial insights into how information is processed and retained by learners. Mayer argues that students learn more deeply from words and pictures combined than from words alone, a concept highly relevant to the integration of visual media such as TikTok-style videos into classroom instruction. In the observed classrooms in Baghdad, teachers who incorporated short, visually rich video segments such as animated grammar explanations or infographic-style summaries reported noticeably higher levels of student engagement, participation, and recall compared to lessons delivered through traditional lecture formats. Sweller's



theory emphasizes the importance of minimizing extraneous cognitive load mental effort that does not contribute directly to learning in order to free up working memory for processing essential material. In the context of the TikTok Generation, short-form videos and microlearning content function effectively by segmenting information into manageable cognitive units, thereby reducing overload and allowing learners to process core concepts without becoming overwhelmed. Teachers in the study frequently mentioned that breaking lessons into 2–5 minute “concept capsules” improved student focus and made it easier to revisit or reinforce key points. For instance, one university English instructor described how using 90-second video summaries for vocabulary lessons led to greater student retention and active use of new terms in follow-up discussions.

### *Theme 3: Students’ Perception of TikTok-Inspired Teaching*

#### **Finding:**

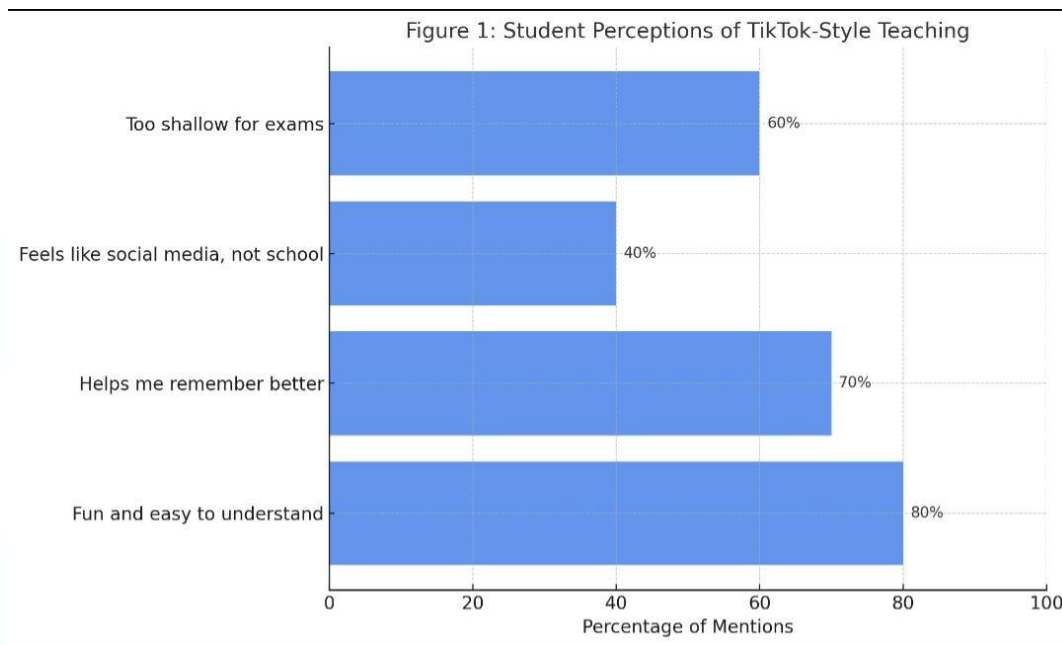
Students responded positively to teaching methods that mimic the style and tempo of short-form digital content. However, they also expressed concern over a lack of critical depth in lessons that rely too heavily on media.

*Table (4) Students’ Perception of TikTok-Inspired Teaching*

<i>Student Feedback Theme</i>	<i>% of Student Mentions</i>
“Fun and easy to understand”	80%
“Helps me remember better”	70%
“Feels like social media, not school”	40%
“Sometimes too shallow for exams”	60%



“Videos help me focus, but for exams I still need explanations and notes.” – University Student (21)



## Discussion:

The table reveals that most students responded positively to TikTok-style teaching. 80% described it as “fun and easy to understand,” while 70% said it helped them remember better. These responses support theories like Mayer’s multimedia learning and Sweller’s cognitive load theory, which emphasize the value of combining visual and verbal content in manageable segments. However, 40% of students noted that this style “feels like social media, not school,” and 60% found it “too shallow for exams.” This suggests that while short-form content boosts engagement and memory, it may lack the depth needed for academic success. Teachers should therefore



use TikTok-inspired methods as a starting point, followed by deeper learning activities that support critical thinking and exam preparation.

#### THEME 4: CHALLENGES FACED BY EDUCATORS

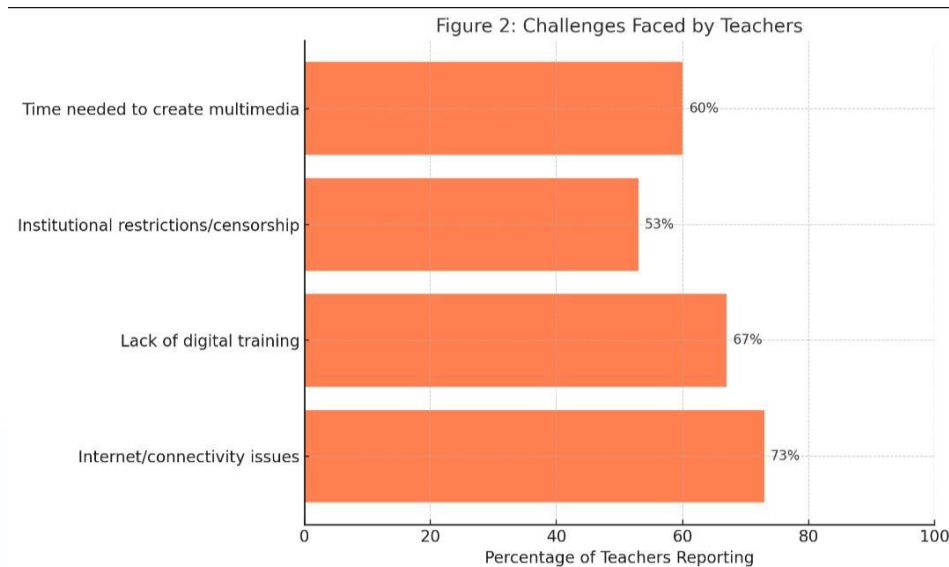
##### Finding:

Educators reported several obstacles to implementing short-form pedagogical strategies:

- Lack of professional training in digital pedagogy
- Limited internet infrastructure in public schools
- Institutional resistance to using TikTok or similar platforms

*Table (5) Challenges Faced by Educators*

<i>Challenge</i>	<i>% of Teachers Reporting</i>
Internet/connectivity issues	73%
Lack of digital training	67%
Institutional restrictions/censorship	53%
Time needed to create multimedia	60%



A table highlights key barriers teachers in Baghdad face when adopting TikTok-style or short-form digital teaching strategies. The most reported issue, cited by 73% of teachers, was internet and connectivity problems a major obstacle, especially in public schools with limited infrastructure. This directly affects the feasibility of integrating video content and digital platforms into daily lessons. 67% of teachers reported a lack of digital training, showing that while there is interest in using new methods, many educators lack the technical skills or confidence to do so effectively. Similarly, 60% identified the time required to create multimedia content as a significant burden, especially for those juggling full teaching loads with limited institutional support. Finally, 53% mentioned institutional restrictions or censorship, reflecting how some schools or administrators may be resistant to using platforms like TikTok due to concerns about distraction or appropriateness. Overall, while there is a clear push toward innovation, these structural and institutional challenges hinder the full integration of modern pedagogical tools.



## Conclusion

This study set out to explore how educators in Baghdad are responding to the unique learning behaviors of students shaped by the pervasive use of short-form digital content especially through platforms like TikTok. Through qualitative interviews, classroom observations, and student focus groups, the research highlighted the complex pedagogical challenges and emerging strategies involved in teaching the "TikTok Generation" within Iraq's socio-cultural and technological context. Key findings revealed that students frequently exposed to short-form content demonstrated decreased attention spans and a clear preference for fast-paced, visually engaging instruction. Teachers reported that traditional lecture methods often failed to hold student attention, prompting a shift toward microlearning, gamification, and the use of audiovisual materials. These strategies were found to be effective in increasing student motivation and participation, aligning well with theories of constructivism, cognitive load, and digital literacy. However, while these adaptations enhanced engagement, both educators and students expressed concern over the potential loss of academic depth and critical thinking. The study also identified significant obstacles to effective digital pedagogy in Baghdad, including inconsistent internet access, lack of teacher training in media integration, and institutional skepticism regarding social media use in formal education. Despite these challenges, the research underscores the potential for transformative teaching practices when educators thoughtfully integrate TikTok-style techniques into lesson design. Rather than resisting the digital realities of today's learners, Baghdad's educators are beginning to embrace a more culturally responsive and student-centered approach that respects both the media habits and academic needs of their students.



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