



‘Staying Apart Yet Keeping Together’: Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching During COVID-19 Across the Tasman

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Abstract

COVID-19 has had a profound effect on higher education institutions across the world. The rapid shift to blended teaching has meant changes to ways of teaching and learning. Author One (Australia) and Author Two (New Zealand) are tertiary academics in initial teacher education programmes. In this paper, they draw on narrative enquiry as a way to tell their stories of how they had to rapidly move from of face-to-face teaching to an emergency situation of online (cloud) teaching and learning. Through shared reflection, they offer a snapshot of their lived experience teaching music education, managing students and staff. In the findings, they discuss key challenges and opportunities they encountered in relation to student participation and engagement, teaching and learning, and wellbeing. Staying connected with each other across the Tasman Sea, using email and Zoom were important forms of providing mutual support that contributed positively to their sense of wellbeing as academics during this stressful time. They contend that universities need to consider the more human aspect of changes that have impacted staff and students. They question what the future will hold for initial teacher education programs post 2020. They suggest working collaboratively with schools, professional organisations, and industry when designing new programmes as the landscape of higher education changes due to the ongoing pandemic.

Keywords Blended learning · Initial teacher education · Music education · Narrative enquiry · Student engagement · Wellbeing

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Introduction

The closing of many higher education institutes (HEI) around the world was due to an outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 (World Health Organisation, 2020). This had an overwhelming and immediate impact on the infrastructure of the sector albeit at slightly different times (Crawford et al., 2020). As a consequence, HEIs have been radically affected as many had to swiftly move to online modes of delivery (Johnson et al., 2020). Students who initially enrolled as on-campus students found it difficult to move to online learning, the online delivery changed the nature of teaching for staff during the pandemic (Day et al., 2021). Innovation and creativity were needed to convert face-to-face (F2F) programmes/courses to the online learning environment in a very short period of time (Merrick, 2020; Scull et al., 2020; van der Spoel, 2020).

Author One (Dawn) and Author Two (Robyn) work in initial teacher education (ITE) programs (Bachelor of Education [Early Childhood], Bachelor of Education [primary], Graduate Diploma [early childhood and primary] and Master of Teaching [primary and secondary]). Our ongoing collaboration resulted from initially meeting at a music education conference in 2014. Dawn is based at a Metropolitan University in Melbourne and Robyn works at a Metropolitan University in Auckland. As tertiary educators, we are “key building blocks in developing effective teachers” (Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 291). Preparing our ITE students for future teaching requires a range of specialised knowledge including “knowledge of student thinking and learning, knowledge of subject matter, and increasingly, knowledge of technology” (Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p. 61). When preparing our students across our programs, we focus on subject matter (content knowledge) and classroom practice (pedagogical knowledge) (Schulman, 1986). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) combines “content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular aspects of subject matter are organized, adapted, and represented for instruction” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1021). With shifts to teaching online, we found the use of technology added flexibility to ways of delivering classes, giving way to technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) (Archambault & Barnett, 2010; Graham, 2011).

The purpose of this paper is to share some of our 2020 experiences as tertiary music educators. We add to the growing conversation regarding pedagogical challenges teaching music online, and keeping students engaged in ITE programs during the pandemic. We posed the following questions How did we teach and manage to work from home during the pandemic? Our experience in ITE programs may resonate with academics across other learning areas in HEIs. We acknowledge that online teaching can refer to programs (courses) offered ‘wholly online’ as well as programs taught online because of the ‘emergency provision’ due to COVID-19 (Hodges et al., 2020). While Dawn previously taught music students wholly online within the Master of Teaching program, in 2020 she also taught students within the Master of Teaching and Bachelor of Education (primary) ‘online’ due to the sudden move to ‘emergency remote teaching’. Robyn on the other hand taught all Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), Bachelor

of Education (primary) and Graduate Diploma (early childhood and primary) students online when she had to temporarily shift to ‘online’ teaching because of campus restrictions due to the pandemic. The term emergency remote teaching refers to a “temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances ... would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated” (Hodges et al., 2020).

While some universities were somewhat prepared for the unexpected shift due to COVID-19 as they had offered blended or fully online programs prior to the pandemic, others “had a lot more ground to cover” (Crawford et al., 2020, p. 20). Teaching outside of regular lecture theatres or classrooms “is a pedagogical and instructional challenge”. It often necessitates much “thought, coordination and careful decision-making” (Ali, 2020, p. 22). Albeit meeting institutional requirements using technology to transform the landscape, it was challenging, ensuring no student is left behind (Assunção Flores, & Gago, 2020). The swift need for ‘emergency remote teaching’ meant that many music educators adapted “to a situation of social isolation [and] where some form of online learning became the only way to sustain any sort of music education practice” (Camlin & Lisboa, 2021, p. 134). In addition, attributes such as showing empathy, motivating students, being resourceful and resilient (Sheridan et al., 2021) became essential attributes in providing successful ITE programs in light of changes to remote teaching. This meant turning to others for practical, psychological, familial, peer and/or collegiate support (Camlin & Lisboa, 2021; Joseph & Lennox, 2021; Thorgersen & Mars, 2021).

In light of the sudden changes, our narrative adds to the wider body of research relating to transformations to the field of practice during 2020 and beyond regarding ITE programs, online digital experiences, and maintaining wellbeing. We each have had similar yet different experiences teaching during COVID-19 which has transformed and impacted our professional and personal lives. As female academics, we do not position our paper as a gendered experience, rather, the expectations of navigating new teaching and learning contexts during the pandemic impacts all genders and across all programs. We employ collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2013) to provide a snapshot of what we experienced ‘staying apart yet keeping together’ in relation to our students, colleagues, and with each other. We found coping and managing the sudden changes with colleagues (academics, course directors, and sessional staff), students, and professional staff (administrators, and professional experience officers) challenging and also exciting. As HEIs face a new and different future, blended learning, and preparing students for a post 2020 future fuelled with progressive thinking will be reimagined. Increasingly online education will become competitive across HEIs “meeting the various needs and interests of consumers of educational services and implementing the concept of continuing education” (Oleksienko et al., 2020, p. 61). We position ourselves as agents of change as we prepare our students for placements (practicums) and their future teaching during the pandemic.

Blended Learning

While all institutions are different in nature, scope and context, technology in HEIs continues to lead fundamental changes to the sector (Jensen, 2019). Amidst these changes, universities have offered different modes of study and delivery platforms such as F2F, online/distance education, and blended learning. Since 2005, there has been a global paradigm shift in international and national thinking, attributed in part to advances in technology (Newton, 2018). The role and purpose of traditional approaches to learning is questionable with the emergence of online learning (Boling et al., 2012; Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012). A major rethink of how we foster skills needed to address challenges of a changing world is necessary (Bolstad et al., 2012). One of the ways to accommodate changes in HEIs is to recognise the advantages of using blended-learning environments (Bonk & Graham, 2006).

Blended learning involves a combination of “co-presenting (F2F) interactions and technologically mediated interactions between students, teachers and learning resources” (Bliuc et al., 2007, p. 234). Increasingly, blended-learning is becoming a preferred way of delivering synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning (Johnson, 2006). A commonly held understanding of blended-learning environments combines F2F instruction with technology-mediated instruction. Once teaching moved online many education settings used a variety of learning platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, Blackboard, FlipGrid, Google Meet, to name a few (Ali, 2020; Reimers, et al., 2020). This may differ across educational contexts. When teaching in an online environment, synchronous learning opportunities facilitate teacher-student social interaction in a virtual classroom space (Martínez Martínez, & Tudela Sancho, 2020; Szeto & Cheng, 2016). A number of studies have demonstrated the benefits of online synchronous teaching, including enhanced learning, improved communication, and strong group cohesion (Boling et al., 2012; Chatterjee & Juvele, 2015; Croxton, 2014).

For many students, and staff alike, the human interaction between them in socio-cultural contexts are essential to higher education (Berge, 1999). Teacher-student and student-student interactions are prerequisites to effective teaching and learning experiences, course satisfaction, and career opportunities (Johnson, 2006). Although the inclusion of technology in the classroom has altered and improved teaching and learning for many educators (Graham, 2011; Su et al., 2017), they still have to focus on PCK and TPCK (Archambault & Barnett, 2010; Schulman, 1986).

Music Pedagogical Approaches

Whilst the traditional approaches to linking theory to practice in teacher education have been well researched (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Korthagen, 2016; Morrison & Pitfield, 2006), music educators have “varying beliefs, attitudes and opinions on using the online environment for learning music” (Johnson, 2017, p. 452). Within ITE programmes, music is a practical hands-on way of teaching and learning (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Conway, 2012; Roulston et al., 2007). Therefore, linking theory to practice in the online environment is challenging

particularly for ITE generalist primary students (Joseph & Heading, 2010). Teaching music requires multiple models of online learning platforms. There are few studies “published on how music can be taught online in higher education” (Horspool & Yang, 2010, p. 16). Furthermore, online pedagogy in music is not fully well-known (Bowman, 2014; Johnson, 2017).

Preparing teachers for future classrooms is more than focussing on PCK (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). Preparing ITE students considers the competencies teachers need to effectively teach in twenty-first century classrooms (Schleicher, 2012). In addition, ITE students (generalist and specialist) draw on common pedagogical approaches used in music teaching such as Orff-Schulwerk, Kodály and Dalcroze. Though there are many other approaches to teaching music such as Musical Futures, Suzuki, Yamaha etc., these key approaches form a foundation to exploring classroom practice. The Orff-Schulwerk approach to music education embraces music, speech and movement, and playing on tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments (Shamrock, 1997). Orff emphasises moving from simple to complex and from experience to concept (Aitchison, 2010). The Dalcroze approach introduces musical concepts through movement (eurythmics) (Landis & Carder, 1990). Physical awareness, movement, listening, solfege, and improvisation are essential components in developing musicianship in this approach (Mead, 1996). Dalcroze uses a combination of pair-work, group-work and individual work to foster communication and social skills (Greenhead & Habron, 2015). In the Kodály approach the emphasis is on singing, rather than use of instruments. Hand signs and rhythmic syllables are used to teach rhythm and pitch (Choksy, 2001). Adapting these approaches is necessary when teaching in the online environment using Zoom or Canvas for example, they take additional time to plan, prepare, and present.

Wellbeing

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore wellbeing in-depth, COVID-19 has significantly impacted on student and staff wellbeing. There are two viewpoints about wellbeing, firstly hedonic (subjective experiences that contribute to life satisfaction and happiness), and secondly eudaimonic (positive psychological functioning, good relationships and self-realization) (Dolan et al., 2008; Perkins & Williamon, 2014). Both perspectives should be considered when undertaking studies regarding wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001). According to research, wellbeing can be improved by connecting with others, getting involved through embodied experiences, being aesthetically mindful and contributing to community (Ayed & Thompson, 2011; Wright & Pascoe, 2015). In the broadest sense wellbeing focuses on wellness, and on meaningful engagement in life that fosters “either episodic happiness or happiness in the personal” (Raibley, 2012, p. 1110).

Teaching during COVID-19 (F2F or online) can be stressful for staff (Gautam & Sharma, 2020) and students. The change impacts on our sense of wellbeing. Working from home during COVID-19 means maintaining a work-life balance to reduce stress. Therefore, connecting with others is essential to build morale which may positively impact on one’s sense of wellbeing (Ayed & Thompson, 2011). The notion of

music making and sharing offers social connections and improves overall wellbeing (Clift, et al., 2010; Hays, 2005; Joseph et al., 2018; Lamont et al., 2018). It is recognised that group music-making contributes to engagement and wellbeing (Creech et al., 2014). Sustaining a healthy lifestyle, having a sense of purpose in life, experiencing feelings of happiness, satisfaction and achievement and maintaining positive relationships all contribute to wellbeing (MacDonald et al., 2013; Mansfield et al., 2020).

Methodology

Design

The nature of the research design draws on autoethnography, a qualitative research methodology that is self-reflexive in order to reflect and better understand our practice during COVID-19 (Bulman & Schutz, 2004; Crawford, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ellis, 2004; Schön, 1983). While autoethnography is largely employed in sociological research (Pitard, 2017), it is increasing been used in music education research (Barleet, 2009; de Bruin, 2016; de Vries, 2010; Gouzouasis, 2014; Kruse., 2016). Rather than employing ‘thick descriptions’ (O’Dea, 2018) in the traditional sense, we recollect “events, or series of experiences” (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 402) to represent what Ellis (2004, p. 116) regards as “essences’ and ‘meanings’ rather than portraying and representing precise ‘facts’”. Autoethnography “brings the readers into the scene—particularly into thoughts, emotions, and actions in order to become actively involved within the narrative” (O’Dea, 2018, p. 2315). Thus inviting “the reader into the workings of the social context studied thereby enhancing the readers own understanding and knowledge of the culture studied (connecting the personal to the cultural)” (Pitard, 2017, p. 17).

Working across the Tasman as tertiary music educators and practitioners (Jasper, 2005), meant our collaborative autoethnographic voices support a narrative format (Chang et al., 2013; Hernández et al., 2010). Our narrative helps us understand the broader social context in which we live and work (Chase, 2008; Thomas, 2012). We explore who we are becoming in our changing environment from a narrative view of experience (Caine et al., 2013).

We acknowledge that “stories involving human lives are never finished products, they are constantly ‘in the making’ and, therefore, incomplete and incompletable” (Craig, 2009, p. 112). We draw on Lyons’ and LaBoskey’s (2002) exemplars where our narrative tells a story that is socially contextualised and focuses on interpretation (O’Dea, 2018). By employing narrative inquiry (Chang, 2016), we tell our story as “both phenomenon and method” where phenomenon is the “story” and inquiry is the “narrative” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). In this way, we share our experience and critically reflect on our teaching (Bruce et al., 2016). Our voices are “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling... as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Hence, we explore who we are becoming in our changing environment from a narrative view of experience (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577).

Data Tool and Analysis

We draw on our notes (observation, fortnightly Zoom meetings, and anecdotal feedback from students and staff) to inform our reflections. In qualitative research we establish reliability of our descriptions and trustworthiness by sharing our reflections and incidents with trusted colleagues who gave feedback on our narrative (Goings, 2015; Selvitopu, 2020). By reading and re-reading our narratives we “critically and personally interact[ed]with the text and consider[ed] similarities and differences between their [our] experiences and those reported in the study” (Kruse, 2016, p. 5). In coding our reflections (Knoblauch, 2005; Saldaña, 2021) three themes emerged: student participation and engagement, teaching and learning, and wellbeing which we discuss in our findings. Our narrative highlights our lived experience in relation to similarities and differences we encountered. We reflect on what we know, believe, and value (Horton-Deutsch & Sherwood, 2017), “ultimately the reader [who] provides validation for autoethnographic research” (Kruse, 2016, p. 5). Our voices may be seen as a means of gaining an in-depth understanding of the situation we found ourselves during lockdown (Merriam, 1998).

Findings and Discussion

Setting the Scene

Dawn has taught F2F and off-campus students since 2001. While she has expertise and experience regarding online teaching, during the time of pandemic she had to suddenly mentor and manage sessional staff (casual/part-time staff) who had never taught in this environment. Her off-campus teaching over the years has been in relation to smaller cohorts undertaking music units (subject) in undergraduate and postgraduate programs with approximately 40 students. Whereas in 2020 within the Bachelor of Education (primary) program, she was Unit Chair of a first-year core arts education unit that had over 500 students.

Robyn delivered F2F music education programs since 1989. Her first experience with online teaching was during the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. During 2020, the swift change to online teaching meant she taught approximately 200 students in the Bachelor of Education (primary), about 40 students in the Bachelor of Education (early childhood) and 180 students undertaking the Graduate Diploma. All of these students were also new to online learning in their program of study.

Dawn has managed sessional staff, Chaired arts education and music units, in semester one (March–June) and semester two (July–October), 2020. Since March 18th she has worked from home due to her campus closing and has taught fully online since then. Management, digital learning teams, and the library services offered staff support to move on-campus units to online delivery (Johnson et al., 2020). Whilst the support received was helpful, she spent many hours modifying teaching materials (hands-on music activities), assessment tasks, and rubrics for the sudden move in week three of semester one 2020. Dawn’s main challenge in 2020 was supporting and mentoring sessional staff and students who were not accustomed

to online teaching and learning. Other stressors included dealing with an increased number of queries and assignment extensions in addition to managing student mental health issues, preparing units, materials, and organising staff for semester two. The ongoing teaching from semester one into semester two gave her time to rethink some of the content and assessment tasks. She learnt from semester one's experience what worked or did not work well. Dawn used Cloud Deakin, Kultura, discussion spaces, and Zoom as her primary platforms to teach music. She used email, Zoom, and telephone as her secondary platform to communicate with students and staff. Robyn used Canvas and Zoom when teaching, she also used email, and telephone to communicate with students and colleagues.

While Robyn has taught wholly online since the initial lockdown period, her subject teaching units were originally set up for F2F delivery. Although considerable support was offered at her university, the transition to online learning was extremely challenging. Since 1989, she was accustomed to seeing her students on-campus. The culture shock of online music teaching was simply not the same. She found the interactive nature of the F2F units not easily transferrable to the online learning context as she had not experienced this type of teaching before COVID-19 struck. Robyn had to rethink the content, methods of delivery, and assessment tasks within a short space of time before everything went live (online) to her students. As the only lecturer delivering both early childhood and primary music education units she felt disconnected and isolated, not knowing what to expect from the new found teaching and learning environment. She went 'off-shore' across the Tasman for collegial support to a trusted colleague (Dawn) with whom she has built a long professional relationship (Goings, 2015; Selvitopu, 2020). Feeling a sense of belonging in this time of isolation was essential for both authors. Together they formed a smaller community of music practitioners belonging to a wider body of music practitioners and professional organisations (Wenger, 1998). Through regular interactions they talked as equals as music educators as they socially connected to improve their practice and professional learning (Anderson & Henry, 2020; Wenger et al., 2011).

In this section we share some of our challenges and opportunities experienced during COVID-19 focusing on: student participation and engagement, teaching and learning, and wellbeing.

Student Participation and Engagement

Teaching through blended learning (on-campus and online) has presented a range of challenges and opportunities for us and also for our students. Using Zoom, we discussed just how anxious we were about whether students will attend our virtual classrooms and were concerned about their engagement without turning their cameras off. Teaching online is met with privacy concerns as students switch off their cameras making it hard to foster "paralinguistic communication" when teaching whole classes (Moorhouse, 2020, p. 610). We were also concerned about how to make our sessions interactive and interesting and still model best classroom practice without having the music equipment we would generally use in our F2F teaching. We were mindful that all students did not have equitable access to internet

connectivity. Some students had varying levels of competency when working online including interacting with peers and tutors, some lacked ‘netiquette’ (Scull et al., 2020). Some of our students were from low socio-economic backgrounds and had limited access to adequate devices thus “putting them at a potential disadvantage relative to peers from more affluent backgrounds” (Means & Neisler, 2020, p. 3). Scull et al., (2020, p. 6) argue that “simply because students have grown up with increasingly ubiquitous and advanced digital technologies does not mean that they naturally know how to study in online spaces”.

Many of the factors that limit engagement and participation was beyond our control, so while we cannot take responsibility, we did show empathy, understanding and patience as a tenet of care (Koonce & Lewis, 2020). For example, when students requested extra time to meet on Zoom with us or requested assignment extensions, leniency was given. Often we found family members or pets ‘appeared’ in the Zoom class, which was interesting/entertaining, at times embarrassing, interrupting the flow of the lesson. Dawn and her sessional staff regularly communicated about how best to engage students so that they did not ‘log off’ or leave the lesson during workshop. In F2F classes she found students rarely walked out of class whereas in the online environment they often switched off their cameras. Thus they may not have been present or visible for the duration of the music workshop, this was something she felt she could not control. Engagement and participation are also reliant on effective relationships on all levels. Building academic engagement relates to effective learning (Ramsden, 2003). Both authors tried to socially engage their students by setting up music ‘break out groups’ to support their learning, their sense of belonging, and connection with peers and with us. (Thomas, 2012). The breakout sessions gave students the chance to contribute to discussions and to undertake practical work. For example, across the Tasman Dawn’s students created rhythmic patterns to accompany songs, they created soundscapes by using body percussion (clap, stamp, click), sounds from home (buckets or table tops as drums, spoon against a grater, rice or beans in a container as a shaker) or electronic sounds (computer or mobile phones). We found trialling patterns and singing in small breakout groups was a supportive and positive way to build student confidence. When students switched off their cameras we found it difficult to ‘notice, recognise and respond’ to them ‘in the moment’. We found F2F teaching advantageous in that we saw student faces all the time and got a sense of whether or not our students understood what was taking place in relation to PCK. Teaching in the online-learning environment meant that students “may not learn at the same pace as students in physical teaching and learning settings” (Scull et al., 2020, p. 9). This was something we had to be more aware of which we took for granted when we taught F2F.

Teaching and Learning

As music educators, we both have an eclectic and student centred approach to teaching, drawing on Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze (Choksy, 2001; Landis & Carder, 1990). We modelled ways of using these approaches and provided appropriate resources to support our students learning. In the case of Dawn, for her secondary music

specialist student she designed assessment tasks where students played on their instrument (trumpet, guitar, drums etc.), this gave them the chance to perform and to reflect on how they would teach their instrument ‘online’. During the COVID-19 lockdown period we each faced similar challenges in maintaining the integrity of our teaching units that were designed to be interactive, based on our philosophical beliefs about the importance of experiential, embodied learning through group music making (Conway, 2012). We found group singing and playing experiences were compromised in relation to time lags, synchronised performances were not as viable (Joseph et al., 2020). When working from home, we had a lack of resources such as music instruments that would normally be used in F2F teaching contexts. We tended to include YouTube clips to demonstrate what ‘could’ happen in classroom setting as a substitute for live music making.

At our respective universities we each have designated music rooms with an elaborate range of melodic and non-melodic instruments. Working from home meant that students were unable to explore the classroom instruments when creating sound scape compositions. Nevertheless, our students had opportunities to explore non-conventional sounds (for example using a blow-dryer, food mixer, plastic packets, newspapers, egg beater, etc.) in their homes to create compositions. This encouraged students to think ‘outside the box’ about using sounds which can readily be found in and around their homes. Combined with technology, our students created individual and group compositions as class activities and as assessment tasks. The idea of working on-line in the breakout rooms built students confidence to ‘give it a go’.

The duration of workshops was an important consideration when planning online sessions. Robyn’s generalist classes were timetabled for two hours whereas Dawn’s classes were timetabled for three-hours (generalists and specialist). For her secondary specialist class, she at times broke the monotony by inviting guest speakers (academics and teachers) nationally and internationally on topics she covered. Students remarked they enjoyed the experience and recognised the possibilities of inviting members of the community, or a musician, or an artist to teach about multicultural or indigenous music for example. One of the guests in Dawn’s workshop included Robyn. She shared about teaching music to children with special needs. Our collaboration during lockdown meant we were able to orchestrate this type of teaching and learning opportunity for students to engage with an academic from another international university in real time. We will continue to explore this exchange of pedagogy and practice across the Tasman as it proved worthy for students and staff alike.

Wellbeing

Tertiary music educators generally work in isolation within ITE programs. Therefore, Dawn and Robyn connecting with each other and colleagues through numerous Zoom meetings across the university was essential for their wellbeing. In addition, by sharing about their teaching at staff forums, teaching meetings, and at conferences they felt part of a ‘bigger’ community of practitioners during 2020. In this way, feelings of isolation was minimised, and their sense of connection to others increased (Hart et al., 2011; Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012). Furthermore, Zoom

meetings positively contributed to feeling valued by being actively involved in forums and conversation equally made them feel socially connected (Dolan et al., 2008; Wright & Pascoe, 2015). By connecting with each other during COVID-19, strengthened their professional and personal relations as they conversed about managing burnout and stress (Kolomitro et al., 2020). Sharing jokes and recipes, saying a prayer, having many laughs, and reading out motivational sayings fuelled and motivated them with regard to work matters, and day-to-day living. They recognised the importance of maintaining professional conversations with like-minded people (Joseph et al., 2021). They found ‘keeping in touch’ alleviated the reality of what the world was experiencing. Staying connected during their respective lockdowns meant being courageous and supportive to each other, their family, students, and colleagues.

In a similar way, their students said they connected with family and friends using social media. In discussion with students, the ITE students expressed feelings of isolation and disconnect but felt supported by teaching staff, and appreciated the effort staff made to help keep them connected. For both staff and students, many factors contributed to health and wellbeing such as family commitments, loss of employment, risk of COVID infection, accessibility to resources, feelings of isolation, and lack of expertise in working online (Scull et al., 2020). Whilst it was not possible to get to know every student across the many units taught, Dawn and Robyn responded to each that sought advice or assistance regarding unit and personal matters. Students were also directed to the university’s student support services and structures in relation to health and wellbeing matters. Dawn has smaller numbers in her secondary music specialist classes, therefore, she offered her students three Saturday ‘catch up times’ in semester one which they requested again for semester two. Meeting out of class time (hangouts), conversing about day to day matters, sharing jokes and laughs positively contributed to Dawn and her students’ sense of wellbeing. Similarly, Robyn offered her generalist students extra ‘catch up’ sessions via Zoom. These episodic moments of socializing generated feelings of happiness for students and also for Dawn and Robyn (Raibley, 2012).

Implications for Teacher Education

The rapid speed of transitional change to online delivery due to COVID-19 lockdowns meant resources developed could be considered makeshift, and not a true reflection of expertise and experience in the field (Pather, et al., 2020). Preparing classes for the online delivery requires a broad range of skills, including IT skills that are not necessarily directly related to music education. Hence, music educators need to undertake professional learning to ‘upskill’ proving time-consuming and costly. In saying this, COVID-19 propelled all educators to engage and embrace the digital platform during this exceptional time. Music educators extended their pedagogical approaches and repertoire by learning from others as well as inviting external experts to the online class (Joseph et al., 2020; Maher, 2020). In doing so, the integrity of the subject area is preserved, and the discipline retained within programs, securing employment of teachers.

Teaching F2F means the teacher notices, recognises, and responds to learners' reactions, enabling the capture of spontaneous 'teachable moments' that arise through interaction and application. This embodied experience cannot be directly transferred to online delivery. Therefore, repurposing existing material due to limited time available for transition to remote/online delivery should not be considered a compromise as 'something better' (Pather, et al, 2020). In teacher education programmes, because time is limited, music educators need to be very selective in what they present. Hence we feel it is important to "provide prompts and scaffolds to assist student learning" (Maher, 2020, p. 94). Therefore, using breakout rooms as a pedagogical practice can foster social interactions in small groups. (Maher, 2020). This helps to break down anxiety and lack of confidence in a field that is often perceived to be about the 'have and have-nots'.

Moving forward, educators need to build on what we have learned from our COVID-19 lockdown experience. We must be proactive in sharing resources, extending pedagogical repertoire and approaches, and pursuing opportunities to upskill in the field of IT. In addition, providing authentic learning opportunities is essential (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Offering resources such as pre-recorded videos and PowerPoints for online teaching means educators will need to avoid complacency, adopting a 'tick-box' approach. As universities increasingly move to blended and online approaches, safeguarding the integrity of music education within ITE programs is a concern and so is job security. All of which has significantly impacted staff and students sense of wellbeing.

Conclusion

In this study the authors set out to answer the question 'how did we teach and manage to work from home during the pandemic'?. They provided a snapshot of their experiences as music educators across the Tasman Sea during the Covid-19 pandemic. They discussed student participation and engagement, teaching and learning, and wellbeing experiences which may be similar to those in other subject areas around the globe. As this paper includes two voices within initial teacher education programs across two universities, generalisations about other academics, institutions, and programs cannot be made. The lockdown period has made them think about how they managed their workloads in addition to student and management expectations. They have been inspired to explore the use of various technologies in music teaching as they continue to work in 'silos.'

While challenges have been immense, it is hoped that HEIs consider new dimensions in relation to modes of delivery, pedagogical thinking, and accessibility for all students. Pressing on through uncertain times ahead means that universities need to take into account the more human aspect of change that has impacted academics and students. They recommend HEIs (each faculty) create guidelines and support material for students to manage and take responsibility for their own learning online. In this way, students may feel a stronger sense of belonging, and may become actively involved in virtual classrooms. Most recently Dawn and Robyn experienced 'snap lockdowns' in February 2021 and in June. Bearing this in mind, they recommend

HEIs create a culture of trust where students value and appreciate the program of study, and feel supported by academic and administrative staff. When preparing for assignments, trialling workshop material on school placements, applying for work placements, and for jobs. In this way students will feel empowered, valued, and confident as they move forward during uncertain times.

They recommend promoting a community of learners by building student-to-student and student-to-staff connections so that students will thrive in their studies and not intermit. In addition, they noticed the value of placing students in small groups or pairing up students to support each other, this may be a game changer for those students wanting to withdraw from the unit or the program. As tertiary educators, they call on academics to talk about wellbeing in their classes as the pandemic continues to disrupt our day-to-day lives. In addition, they encourage students to undertake self-directed learning and intentionally engage with the resources provided and recommended for the unit. They also recommend tertiary music educators working collaboratively with music professional organisations to design useful resources for generalist and specialist music teachers which can become an open university resource across HEIs, schools, and professional organisations.

During this unprecedented time, the authors supported each other through Zoom by having ongoing conversations about professional and personal matters, they spiritually uplifted each other through prayer, and conversation as they worked from home during lockdown. They remain hopeful to return to their teaching spaces where they will be able to sing, move, and play on instruments with students in ‘real time.’ At the time of submitting this paper in June 2021, a blended approach of partial work from campus and from home continues to be the way forward depending on health and safety guidelines set by State Governments. As the world came to a standstill due to the pandemic, at the same time it also fashioned a ‘new normal’ for educators to refine, realign, and reconnect virtually. ‘Staying apart yet keeping together’ will strengthen the road ahead as they like many other academics navigate a post-2020 teaching and learning environment, as they continue to work with students, colleagues and the wider community locally and internationally.

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