Review

ZOOMED IN, ZONED OUT: Academic Self-Reports on the Challenges and Benefits of Online Teaching in Higher Education

Gayathri Rajaraman *, Rudi Klein and Puspha Sinnayah

First Year College, Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC 3011, Australia; rudi.klein@vu.edu.au (R.K.); puspha.sinnayah@vu.edu.au (P.S.)
* Correspondence: gayathri.rajaraman@vu.edu.au

Abstract: Online teaching in higher education has become increasingly prevalent, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. While teaching online offers many benefits, it also presents several challenges. Sharing one's lived experiences as an educator is essential to improving one's teaching skills and enhancing the learning outcomes for the students. Here, we present our personal and lived experiences as higher education teachers in the VU Block Model® First Year College at Victoria University. In our allied health science subjects, we have identified the key challenges in online teaching, such as technology and infrastructure, student engagement and interaction, adapting learning styles, assessment integrity, digital literacy, social-isolation-related mental health, and workload. The benefits included flexibility, innovative teaching tools, personalised learning and accessibility, and the continuity of teaching and learning despite the pandemic disruption. Overcoming these challenges requires careful planning, effective pedagogy, and ongoing support for both teachers and students. The benefits of online teaching can be maximised when its limitations are acknowledged and addressed appropriately via sharing teacher's personal narratives as an effective mode of communication.

Keywords: teaching narrative; online learning; higher education

1. Introduction

Teaching is an ongoing process of growth and development for fostering continuous improvement in both educators and learners. Embracing the insights gained from personal experiences and maintaining a willingness to evolve and enhance one's approach are crucial elements for becoming an effective and impactful teaching academic. As such, documentation of teaching narratives plays a crucial role in the professional development of teaching staff within higher education [1]. These narratives are personal stories or accounts of teaching experiences that educators use to reflect on their practice, learn from their successes and challenges, and ultimately improve their teaching skills.

The use of storytelling in higher education is more prominent in courses pertaining to arts, drama, or English-literature-based subjects [2–6]; however, teaching narratives as an effective learning tool for academics' development are often undervalued in clinical/allied health science subjects, which are traditionally data-driven. The developing domain of narrative pedagogy in nursing, which is an interpretive approach to teaching and learning, evolved from the lived experiences of teachers, clinicians, and students. Indeed, narrative pedagogy has gained substantial use in educational reform [5–7], as these narratives provide an alternative tool to critically think about and reflect on the teaching of nursing knowledge and practice [7–9].

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of personal narrative writing to understand the 'emotional geography' in teaching [10] and the critical role of understanding the teacher's personal experiences in fostering their professional development [11]. The considerable influence of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the emotional and mental

well-being of educators has been extensively documented, encompassing their adjustment to online teaching [12,13], as well as the subsequent effects upon their return to face-to-face instruction [14].

In response to the mandatory social isolation due to COVID-19, teachers and students had to respond rapidly and significantly to changing their teaching and learning approach, regardless of their familiarity with online education or their technological prowess [15,16]. Indeed, the key challenges and benefits of online teaching are evident in a higher education setting [17–19]; however, there is limited evidence in the literature particularly regarding teaching narratives from educators' perspectives within the context of a time-constrained block teaching mode, as we have encountered at Victoria University's First Year College.

Herein, we present our personal and lived experiences of the challenges and benefits of teaching online, according to the time-intensive VU Block Model® at Victoria University, Australia. In 2018, Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne, Australia, introduced the VU Block Model, a distinctive approach where students focus on studying a single unit at a time within four-week blocks [20]. This educational structure involves small group classes typically limited to 35 students, omitting traditional lectures, and relying on a unit space within a Learning Management System (LMS) for support. The VU Block Model learning framework at VU emphasizes small class sizes (maximum 30 students) and frequent contact, with classes scheduled three times per week, each lasting for a duration of three hours.

2. Methodology

Self-reporting was an appropriate method because it supports the integration of professional expertise and self-reflection to guide changes and improve the quality of teaching practice [21]. The self-reporting method has a great advantage in communicating the respondents' own views directly. It gives unique access to the respondents' perceptions of themselves and their world, access that cannot be obtained by any other means. Furthermore, self-reporting methods are utilised in exceptional situations to obtain information when observational data are not readily available, such as understanding of the behaviour during unpredictable, disastrous circumstances [21]. Indeed, the unprecedented adverse impact of the global pandemic had substantial consequences on the higher education teaching and learning environment, and the need to understand the personal and professional mindsets of teaching academics is imperative to meet the demands of this changing educational landscape. The present study is a review of qualitative self-reports of teachers' experiences with learning through participating in online teaching during the COVID pandemic. Three academic teaching staff have self-reported with written transcripts and these were individually coded as a narrative block by the first author. Subsequently, common themes were derived from the three self-reported narratives.

Our unique experiences pertain to the multi-campus tertiary institution, Victoria University (VU), a pioneer education facility in the western suburbs of Melbourne, the state capital of Victoria, Australia. At a global scale, Victoria endured one of the world's longest lockdown restrictions, encompassing over 262 days during the 2020–2021 COVID pandemic period [22]. As a direct consequence of these restrictions and social isolation, it has been reported that a significant increase in clinical depression (to 44.1%) and anxiety (to 32.3%) among the adult population occurred during the lockdown implemented in the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Victoria, Australia [23]. Studies have also shown that teachers were dealing with unprecedented new measures, insecurity, and a lack of clear guidelines, which significantly increased their levels of physical and emotional stress, anxiety, and depression, and these impacts resounded at all levels of teaching, from primary school education to the tertiary higher education sector [24–26].

First year students from a range of allied health courses undertake the anatomy and physiology (A&P) units at Victoria University (VU) across multiple campuses in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, in Australia. Our teaching team narratives reflect on the units A&P 1 (HBM1001) and A&P 2 (HBM1202), which are core units during the first year of study in six bachelor courses (Nursing, Midwifery/Nursing combined

degree, Paramedicine, Health Science, Dermal Science, and Speech Pathology) offered at the western region of St Albans Campus in Victoria.

Each unit has approximately 900 students enrolled per semester. Compared with all the other universities in Victoria, Australia, the unique demographic of VU represents the highest proportion of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds and the second highest proportion of students coming from a low socioeconomic status or being the first in their family to attend university [27–29]. Indeed, the discipline and content-heavy nature of anatomy and physiology subjects were demanding for both the students (to engage with the content in a time-intensive block model) and the teachers (to cater to a culturally and linguistically diverse student cohort), even prior to the onset of the global pandemic.

With the sudden impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, these content-focused modules were rapidly converted to an online-only learning environment, without compromising the subject topics or assessment integrity. The challenges and benefits of online teaching from our experience may educate other academics in aid of their preparedness to deliver their courses online.

3. Analysis

Narrative analysis, a form of qualitative data analysis, centres on interpreting the fundamental narratives derived from the personal stories of a study group [4]. Using first-person narratives, researchers gathered data to comprehend individuals' experiences. The aim of narrative analysis is to systematise the collective experience within a group of research participants' stories, transforming individual narratives into coded and organized data. Ultimately, this process enables researchers to grasp the influence of specific events, emotions, or decisions on the individuals involved, leading to the identification of core narratives that encapsulate the human experience [30].

4. Teaching Narratives

4.1. Dr. Gayathri Rajaraman's Narrative

The COVID-19 pandemic overhauled tertiary education with the abrupt onset of lockdowns. Sudden social isolation thrust teachers into pushing boundaries in redesigning their courses, without compromising the quality and depth of the content. As we rapidly prepared to deliver units fully online with continued learning benefits for students, little did we realise the impact of the upcoming challenges that would be imposed on teachers.

As a teaching and research academic in the First Year College at Victoria University (VU), I document here a narrative of my personal and professionally lived experience of the challenges and benefits of teaching biology, anatomy, and physiology in the time-intensive block mode, online. The approach is a self-study and critical reflection on personal narrative accounts.

With just days of notice, our anatomy and physiology units catering to six health-related courses (nursing, midwifery, paramedicine, health sciences, dermal science, and speech pathology), with large cohorts of 900 students on average per semester, were rapidly transformed into an online-only remote teaching mode. This especially posed an incredible challenge in terms of the practical laboratory classes required in this unit of study (traditionally 4 h per week in science labs, delivered face to face on campus), which now had to be delivered fully online without compromising student engagement and the integrity of the skills assessment required. In collaboration with our teaching team, we developed a fully online laboratory program and integrated into our university's Learning Management System (LMS), VU Collaborate. The incredible challenges in executing this task were an immense learning experience for the teachers given the time constraints.

I undertook the task of filming all the required laboratory experiments as performed by the teaching demonstrators and edited the videos to include experimental data and results for the students' learning benefit. As students engaged with the interactive videos, they were able to successfully complete the online assessment post-laboratory worksheets upon each laboratory class being presented live online via Zoom by the lab teaching staff

using the pre-filmed videos. As such, within one week, all six laboratory classes were filmed, prepared via editing, and integrated into the VU Collaborate LMS prior to the teaching block commencing.

Cleary et al. (2003) from our university exactly reported on this phenomenon of 'Emergency Remote Teaching' (ERT) using a case study to explore the transition to online teaching in the intensive block model curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic [31]. The online survey investigated academics' experiences of factors that benefited or challenged their transition to remote teaching [31]. Indeed, in line with this study, my personal teaching experiences were greatly influenced by the changed environment.

From an online teaching perspective, the excitement of logging on to Zoom and seeing students' faces appear in the remote classroom for the first time quickly wears off, as cameras turned off veil a black screen between student and teacher. Video and audio need not be on for the student as this is not a prerequisite for attending Zoom classes. Hence, the advantage of increased student attendance online is overshadowed by the remote classroom, where the students are in their comfort zone, an ideal home environment with distractions aplenty. The teacher faces an increased challenge in actively involving students in unresponsive group discussions, as even though they may be present in the virtual setting, they appear to be mentally disengaged and unresponsive to the learning process. Online learning has been most beneficial to students who embody a trifecta of traits: high discipline, motivation, and tech-savviness. Further investigation of evidence-based research into this topic is highly warranted.

4.2. Dr. Rudi Klein's Narrative

The teaching of anatomy and physiology face to-ace in my opinion provides an unparalleled means of studying this content-specific practical subject; this, however, was not an option during the COVID-19 lockdown, combined with strict social distancing restrictions. The delivery of all subjects was rapidly transitioned to an online-only teaching mode. To overcome this hurdle, I employed technology in the form of Computer-Aided Learning (CAL) software programs, which are increasingly being used by other academics to supplement and support the teaching of anatomy [32].

Apart from teaching the anatomy and physiology units (HBM1001 and HBM1202), I am also the unit convener and teacher of the subjects 'Functional Anatomy of the Trunk' and 'Functional Anatomy of the Limbs', which focus on human topographical anatomy. The lab team and I did anticipate that there may be negative consequences for student learning upon transitioning these units to remote learning, particularly the adverse impact on student perception and the learning experience, as cadaver-based laboratory work cannot be equally and unequivocally replicated online. Indeed, our study on this showed that students strongly agreed that the online 2D learning experience had significant limitations when compared to the live use of cadavers in laboratories [33]. Despite this significant challenge, we had to deliver an engaging and successful unit online, with the aid of technological advances.

My e-learning approach consisted of developing specific tailor-made CAL resources for students to complete online, after intentionally sourcing suitable computer-based online programs previously shown to be helpful to students in developing their understanding of the anatomy discipline [32–34].

We found that even though we had suddenly moved to online zoom classes, students still maintained that they had a positive learning experience, and one that had extended their learning [26]. The feedback from staff about their online teaching experience was mainly positive and supported this contention, and the general consensus was that the promotion and enhancement of student learning can be achieved by increasing engagement, with a key factor being a clear relationship between online activities, the unit content, and assessment tasks.

My reflections on my teaching practice more specifically during this time within the block model, a setting that uses small Zoom classes and small groups of students (max. 35),

are unique. While it affords a more prominent teacher presentation style, and consequently less learning disruption, as all microphones other than mine are turned off unless told otherwise, it is a much less engaging medium to work in. Online discussions can be difficult at the best of times, or somewhat stilted, and lack the dynamic of face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, the online class lacks the personal cues normally present in real life, such as eye contact, the use of voice, punctuation, or the power of silence or pauses to provide thinking time and allow anticipation of what might come next. Also absent in the online classroom is the use of physical positioning to command further emphasis on a point or to lead and enhance a discussion.

I found that the lack of personal contact was not as conducive to promoting the building of relationships and trust between the students and myself, and thereby it is not as good in terms of creating the community of inquiry needed in the Zoom classroom. It is difficult, if not impossible, to scan the room to connect and provide more individualised attention to catch students who struggle or are falling behind.

4.3. Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah's Narrative

There was a need for an immediate shift from face-to-face to online learning with the advance of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which restrictions prevented staff and students from attending campus and exposed them to long periods of isolation, especially in Victoria, Melbourne. This environment created a void, where staff were literally isolated from their peers, losing the opportunity to share innovative teaching and learning strategies to cope with the challenges of online delivery. I am the team lead for a large teaching team of 20–25 academics, including contract and new sessional staff, many of whom were new to remote teaching and also presented with personal challenges such as having school children at home, also engaged in remote learning, and staff who lacked the space and technology to teach effectively.

In many instances, staff were scrambling to wrap their heads around the use of technology and teaching at the same time. As the lead academic, I then offered online inductions to learn about the use of Zoom technology and how we could appropriately engage our students in active learning approaches, whilst still adhering to the assessment and block model principles. This offered staff the professional learning development required to quickly adapt to their learning environment. Despite the staff's best efforts in content delivery, devising suitable strategies for coping presented a challenge for both the new staff and me, in response to their less-than-favorable institutional evaluations of teaching practice. The work of Tangalakis et al. (2022) documented an increase in negative comments on teaching style by male students towards female staff during remote teaching [35].

Providing staff with an opportunity to address inadequate teaching evaluations motivated me to initiate a strategy. In the initial stage, I organized digitally enabled Collaborative Peer Observation Learning Circles (CPO/LCs) within the First Year College (FYC). The purpose of the CPO/LCs was to promote a community of practice, providing practical support and social connection for academics, many of whom found themselves teaching for the first time in a fully online environment. This approach is underpinned by seminal research that offers influential ideas about how to encourage collegial approaches to professional learning (PL) [36]. The use of video conferencing to engage academics in CPO/LCs allowed for the exchange of teaching practices via peer observation opportunities. This approach is important as HE prepares for more hybrid approaches to learning and teaching for students and the associated PL for staff.

Staff were anxious about the use of technology in online settings and I was concerned about their general well-being. One of the more profound outcomes that staff mentioned was that their anxiety about engaging in the online setting was minimised by being able to shadow other staff and perhaps be a mentor in some cases. It gave me a unique insight in terms of receiving feedback from my peers about my teaching but also into how the design and development of online synchronous and asynchronous activities panned out in the

classroom in real time [37]. We shared our stories at the end of a four-week block and it enabled myself and my staff to be able to implement changes in the subsequent block in a timely fashion, maximising our capacity to deliver quality education to our students.

Staff were able to share their observations with each other and reflect on what they could potentially trial in active learning settings. My leadership capacity and strengths grew and evolved during this process and this enabled further development in teaching and development contexts. I also learned to be more supportive and accessible in times of personal need on the part of my staff, especially for new and early career teaching staff.

This approach may also be valuable to HE and contribute to positive change by encouraging academics to participate in a continuous cycle of improvement by creating opportunities for them to reflect and innovate on their practice. Furthermore, students' learning is boosted as academics consider the impact of their teaching on student engagement. This approach is being used by staff teaching in the First Year College at the university presently, beyond the COVID years. Further research is also underway to explore academics' experiences of participating in CPO/LCs to understand the impact of the approach on learning and teaching.

5. Results

The objective is to gather individuals' personal narratives and code them into organized data, enabling researchers to easily comprehend the impact of a specific event, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on the individuals involved. These common themes collectively reflect the shared experiences of, challenges of, and strategies employed by educators as they navigated the complexities of remote teaching during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of themes identified from teaching narratives.

Themes	Description
1. Impact of COVID-19 on Education	All narratives emphasize the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tertiary education, requiring a swift transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to online modes. The pandemic-induced restrictions and lockdowns disrupted the normal course of education.
2. Challenges in Adapting to Online Teaching	The narratives consistently depict the challenges faced by educators in redesigning courses for online delivery. Common challenges include the need to maintain content quality, overcome technological barriers, and adapt practical components to fit an online format.
3. Utilisation of Technology in Teaching	The use of technology is a common theme in all narratives. Educators explored and employed various technological tools, such as Zoom, Computer-Aided Learning (CAL) software, and video conferencing, to facilitate remote learning and engage students.
4. Positive Learning Experiences Amid Challenges	Despite challenges, the narratives highlight the positive learning experiences for both students and staff in the online environment. The adoption of innovative teaching methods and technologies contributes to positive outcomes.
5. Importance of Community and Collaboration	The narratives stress the significance of fostering a sense of community and collaboration among educators. Initiatives such as Collaborative Peer Observation Learning Circles (CPO/LCs) are introduced to create a supportive environment for sharing experiences and strategies.
6. Reflection, Feedback, and Continuous Improvement	Reflection and feedback play a crucial role in all three narratives. Educators engage in continuous improvement by reflecting on their teaching practices, sharing observations, and implementing changes based on feedback from peers and students.
7. Concerns for Well-Being and Support	Well-being concerns among educators, including the anxiety related to technology use and personal challenges, are acknowledged. The narratives highlight efforts to support staff, such as providing online inductions and mentoring and addressing personal needs.
8. Call for Further Research and Sustainable Practices	All narratives conclude with a call for further research and exploration of sustainable practices beyond the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic. The importance of ongoing professional development and continuous improvement is emphasized.

6. Discussion

The impact of COVID-19 on education has been profound, forcing a swift transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to online modes. This shift, prompted by pandemic-induced restrictions and lockdowns, significantly disrupted the normal course of education. Adapting to remote teaching presented educators with a myriad of challenges. Maintaining the content quality, overcoming technological barriers, and adapting practical components to an online format were common hurdles faced during this transition.

Teaching narratives can be a valuable part of academics' professional development toolkit, fostering a culture of continuous improvement in teaching practices and ultimately enhancing the educational experience for students. A supportive forum for teachers to share their narratives with colleagues, with open and constructive discussions, can help us gain different perspectives and insights into their teaching approaches. The evidence in the literature shows that engaging in narrative writing and reflecting on the challenges and benefits learned from personal and professional lived experiences can indeed guide educators from both an academic and emotional standpoint [38]. Globally, higher education teaching staff experienced unprecedented changes in their teaching practice as they rapidly converted to an online-only teaching mode [39].

The themes identified from our teaching narratives herein reflect the global perspective of the challenges faced by teaching academics in the higher education sector. Eight key themes were identified from our thematic analysis as described in Table 1, being:

1. Impact of COVID-19 on Education
2. Challenges in Adapting to Online Teaching
3. Utilisation of Technology in Teaching
4. Positive Learning Experiences Amid Challenges
5. Importance of Community and Collaboration
6. Reflection, Feedback, and Continuous Improvement
7. Concerns for Well-Being and Support
8. Call for Further Research and Sustainable Practices

A recurring theme across our narratives is the extensive utilisation of technology in teaching. Educators explored various tools, including Zoom, Computer-Aided Learning (CAL) software, and video conferencing, to facilitate remote learning and engage students in the online environment. Despite the challenges, positive learning experiences emerged for both students and staff in the online setting. The adoption of innovative teaching methods and technologies played a pivotal role in achieving positive outcomes amid the difficulties encountered.

Themes 1, 2, and 7 identified in our narratives resoundingly support that, while the VU Block Model® itself has clear benefits for improving the success rates for repeating students in a blended learning face-to face delivery format [40], academic staff in this intensive block mode of teaching have presented the key challenges they faced, including increased stress levels and other psychological impacts [41], even prior to the pandemic. Moving block units to an online remote learning mode requires careful planning and organisation under ordinary circumstances [42]. However, with the sudden onset of COVID-19 and social isolation restrictions, our anatomy and physiology units were rapidly transformed as academics were thrust into maintaining successful learning outcomes for students.

Our experience demonstrates the important role technology played in enabling us to move from face-to-face to online learning, particularly within the rapid turnaround time this had in the intensive block model overlay, aligning with themes 3 and 4 identified. While there are many benefits associated with this approach, such as the convenience of studying anytime and anywhere at the convenience of the learner, it is clear that online learning comes at a cost, especially for students who are less technologically competent, have limited access to computers, have no private study space at home, and have limited or disruptive access to the internet from home.

Furthermore, many existing socioeconomic inequities in our society have been laid bare and accentuated during the era of COVID-19, adding to the list of the disadvantages of

online learning [43], as reflected by themes 5 and 6 identified. Also, we found the usual peer-to-peer social engagement, in which cues such as facial expressions promote connectivity, passion, and inspiration to help the learning process, to be significantly marginalised in the online teaching environment and that the 2D learning experience was less engaging and interesting than learning face to face [33].

The distinct cohort of our students at Victoria University, being socio-economically disadvantaged and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, posed extra demands, in addition to the COVID pandemic, on academic and teaching staff in terms of bridging the gap for students with timely technology-based interventions. For teachers, the peer learning circles enabled staff to critically reflect, adapt, and improve very quickly, as our units are delivered every 4 weeks in the block model.

Fostering a sense of community and collaboration among educators was deemed crucial. Initiatives like Collaborative Peer Observation Learning Circles (CPO/LCs) were introduced to create a supportive environment for sharing experiences and strategies. Our experiences presented herein, specifically with themes 5 and 7 described in Table 1, are substantiated by the findings reported by Barker et al. (2021), who established that a lack of connection and online teaching challenges were the most difficult aspects of teaching during the pandemic, whereas support from coworkers and administrators were the most helpful [21]. Globally, a greater prevalence of anxiety symptoms amongst teachers was reported than in other professions. Specifically, teachers imposed with online teaching demands reported significantly higher levels of stress compared with those teaching in person [13,14,24–26].

Reflection, feedback, and continuous improvement were identified as pivotal elements in the narratives. Educators engaged in ongoing improvement by reflecting on their teaching practices, sharing observations, and implementing changes based on feedback from peers and students. Well-being concerns among educators, including the anxiety related to technology use and personal challenges, were acknowledged. The narratives highlighted efforts to support staff, such as providing online inductions, mentoring, and addressing personal needs.

Most recently, Cleary et al. (2023) have highlighted an institutional response to better enable teaching staff to cope and meet the demands of emergency remote teaching, as learned from our rapid transition during COVID [31]. Their thematic analysis of the data revealed a symbiotic relationship between the block model curriculum, professional learning, and academics' sense of agency as they experienced their transition. The critical lessons learnt from Victoria University, which are relevant to other higher education institutions, include increasing the diversity of effective online assessment types and fostering student and staff wellbeing by facilitating learning spaces where students and staff can connect with peers and other academics. Specifically, academics need connection with their peers and safe spaces in which to reflect on the changing circumstances [31]. In particular, it was identified that staff need to build their confidence in using new online learning technologies [31], a major challenge that was also encountered by our anatomy and physiology teaching team, as reported in our teaching narrative herein. Additionally, it was identified in an institutional case study [31] that staff's professional development, to foster an emergency-informed, safe learning environment, will effectively reduce isolation, relieve stress, and enhance a better remote learning classroom for both the student and the teacher.

In contrast to the university-wide institutional response above, the unique presentation of our teaching team narrative approach herein focuses on our specific content-heavy units in the science discipline, to inform and educate the reader on the challenges and successes from our personal lived teaching experiences of the transition to remote learning during COVID-19 and online teaching according to the time-intensive VU Block Model®. As identified in theme 8, the narratives collectively conclude with a call for further research and exploration of sustainable practices beyond the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic. Emphasis is placed on the importance of ongoing professional development

and continuous improvement in the ever-evolving landscape of online teaching in higher education.

7. Conclusions

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted higher education, prompting institutions to adapt to new challenges and opportunities in teaching, learning, and administration. Many of these changes will likely continue to shape the landscape of higher education in the years to come. Teaching narratives are an essential forum to share ongoing experiences, challenges, and benefits as the higher education sector is shaped for a new era of tertiary learning. The emotional and mental toll that is imposed on teaching academics cannot be ignored in such a major transformation. Indeed, open dialogue, sharing of knowledge and skills, along with a forum to discuss the experiences of individuals will help with professional and personal development, to better equip teachers to cope with meeting these demands.

We also highlight here in our teaching team narratives that technological advances, particularly educational technology, are not a panacea for every problem in the classroom, especially at a time when social distancing measures isolated students from family and friends in their personal setting and from teaching academics in the professional learning environment. Now, when the return-to-normal, face-to-face, on-campus transition occurs, it will be more important than ever to provide a sense of community in our teaching. It is imperative to embrace a higher awareness of the benefits of both cognitive and social engagement in the classroom, and thereby a place of belonging, to achieve successful outcomes for both the student and the teacher, through collaboration, interaction, and engagement.

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