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Emergency online teaching during COVID-19: A case study of Australian tertiary students in teacher education and creative arts

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ABSTRACT

Emergency online teaching (EOT) due to COVID19 is different to well-planned online learning. This small-scale qualitative case study explored the impact of EOT upon undergraduate students in a regional university and a metropolitan university in Australia. Each university had some experience in online or distance learning, however, courses in this study were on-campus face-to-face courses in education and performing arts. Differentiating factors considered are location, course of study, year of study and innovations that arose during the EOT period. To assist in the interpretation of findings, this case study utilises the “emergency remote teaching environments” (ERTE) developed by Whittle, Tiwari, Yan and Williams (2020) as an interpretive lens; and the findings of this study are also compared with the findings in the Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TESQA) November 2020 report. Implications derived from the present case study for consideration in the development of future online learning include technology selected, upskilling tertiary educators and unexpected benefits to students.

Introduction

Australian universities moved to online teaching and learning in March 2020 in response to national restrictions on social interactions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teaching and learning was hastily modified from on campus to online (Martin, 2020). Some universities already offered tuition via online platforms, but many did not, so that students had to adapt to a very different style of learning with all tuition provided online. These “remote learning regimes” (Martin, 2020, p. 3) are likely to continue for some time, thus it is important for the tertiary sector to evaluate the impact and success or failure of this change of delivery mode.

Emergency online teaching (EOT) offered in response to a crisis such as COVID-19 is not the same as well-planned online learning experiences (Hodges, Moore, Locke, Trust, & Bond, 2020). While some institutions opted to cancel tuition, others opted to move tuition to some form of ‘on-line’ teaching and learning, which Hodges et al. (2020) carefully label as emergency remote teaching. In such a context, Phelan (2012) highlights the importance of learning communities and the student’s sense of “belonging” (p. 34), an aspect that immediately seems absent when learning is no longer in a physical face-to-face environment. Students’ motivation to learn is evident in their positive and negative adaptive behaviours

(Martin et al., 2013) in response to learning situations. Liem and Martin (2012) consider attributes such as planning, task management and persistence, to be adaptive or positive behaviours, in contrast to maladaptive behaviours such as disengagement and even self-handicapping.

The findings of this case study are reported using the emergent themes in the “emergency remote teaching environments” (ERTE) framework, which offers “rapidly developed, temporary instructional support in a crisis” (Whittle et al., 2020, p. 311). This framework contrasts with established pre-COVID-19 frameworks which are largely based on carefully developed “processes, planning, implementation and evaluation” (Carr-Chellman, 2016, p. xiv). The ERTE framework (2020), while focusing on school-based education, is a useful interpretive lens which assists in making sense of the experiences of undergraduate student participants in this study. The framework identifies eight themes, seven of which we utilise in this study: hidden curriculum; student engagement; loss of teacher social presence; loss of student social presence; learner agency; synchronicity; and instability of expectations (Whittle et al., 2020, p. 314). The eighth theme, parental connections, is not attended to in this paper, due to the fact that our focus is on the tertiary, rather than school, sector. These themes are captured more fully in Table 1 *EOT themes aligned to ERTE Themes*. In addition, this article draws on the findings of Foundations for Good Practice: The stu-

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Table 1
EOT themes aligned to ERTE Themes.

Current study theme	ERTE themes
Motivation to learn	Student engagement (A concern for or focus on the teachers' ability to engage students in learning) Loss of teacher social presence (Observations that teachers serve a social purpose as well as instructional, one interrupted by remote teaching) Loss of student social presence (A concern for the social/emotional needs of students as well as difficulties in creating socialized learning opportunities)
Course delivery	Learner agency (Observations that ERTEs may create more opportunity for learner agency) Hidden curriculum (A need for teaching how to interact with and within learning technologies) Synchronicity (Conversations indicating a shift from valuing synchronous learning to valuing asynchronous learning)
The future	Instability of expectations (Concerns over shifting technologies, assessment standards, learning goals and institutional factors) not referenced by ERTE. This factor has been added by EOT study: knowledge and skills confidence and resilience

dent experience of online learning in Australian higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Martin, 2020), a report developed by the Australian Governmental agency, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) which investigates the effects of the pandemic on higher education in Australia.

Thus, the purpose of this article is three-fold. Firstly, we investigate students' self-reporting of their own motivations to learn prior to and during the EOT period. Secondly, we review their views about the emergency online learning; and finally, we explore the students' views about their future careers. In doing so, we use the ERTE's themes as a conceptual lens and throughout, refer to the findings of the TEQSA (2020) report.

Research literature

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 wrought havoc across the globe in terms of health, national economies, employment and education. While in recent decades the use of blended and digital platforms in higher education rendered the "boundaries between conventional on-campus education and distance education" (Latchem, 2018, p. 13) indistinct, the health emergency necessitated the urgent shift of largely face-to-face/on-site models of course delivery to digital, online models in higher education, school-based education and other educational domains. This sudden shift followed a general increase in the number of enrolments in higher education engaged in what could be termed as 'distance education' in numerous countries such as an enrolment growth of 900% in Brazil in the period 2000 to 2010; and in Russia and Turkey, an increase to almost 50% in the number of students enrolled in open or distance education (Qayyum & Zawacki-Richter, 2018).

Table 5

From the outset of the 2020 pandemic, educational researchers were quick to investigate and document the impact of the pandemic in a number of areas, such as: course delivery, including the use of technology; student learning; equity and learning; and the effects on school partnerships (Burke and M., 2020; Chang & Yano, 2020; Nenad, 2020; O'Shea et al., 2016; O'Shea et al., 2020; Pikulski et al., 2020; Tinubu Ali & Herrera, 2020). In addition, the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) released three statements for schools related to the pandemic: recommendations to ensure that learning remained uninterrupted during the pandemic (UNESCO 2020b); advice with regard to the responses of schools to COVID-19 and disruption (UNESCO 2020c); and planning for equity during the school closures (UNESCO 2020a).

This abrupt interruption to daily life and education spawned a host of terms to describe the 'new' online mode of learning. Hodges et al. (2020) make careful distinctions between a number of terms that became prolific during the early period of the pandemic such as "distance learning", "distributed learning", "blended learning", "online learning" and "mobile learning" all of which have all been used in different ways throughout the health crisis, often interchangeably. In

addition, Hodges et al. (2020) draw attention to the politicisation of specific terms, as evidenced in South Africa where "blended learning" became increasingly problematic due to a lack of governmental foresight in acknowledging that "institutions would make different decisions and invest differently" with "widely varying solutions and results" from each other (2020, p. 3). Tinubu Ali and Herrera (2020) identify a distinction between distance education and online learning arguing that distance education draws upon online learning as part of a broader collection of resources. Additionally, new learning models incorporated "e-learning, mobile learning, and ubiquitous learning, appeared with highly rich and interactive content" (Bozkurt, p. 258) while Beatty (2020) identifies a myriad of models and nomenclature developed over the past decade which demonstrate the attempt to "meet the needs of large populations of both on campus and distance students" (2020, p. 15) through the implementation of Mode-Neutral, Converged Learning, Multi-Options, Flexibly Accessible Learning Environment, Blendflex, Commodal, Flexible Hybrid, gxLearning, and Remote Live Participation models.

However, the term 'emergency remote teaching' (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020) is the most appropriate term for the urgent shift to online delivery of courses during the global pandemic. Hodges et al. (2020) argue that the main characteristics and driving factor of ERT include its implementation as a temporary arrangement of instructional delivery in response to a crisis.

Modes of delivery

Another mode of delivery, traditionally known as distance education (DE), has a long history dating back to the 1860s in countries such as Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden and the United States (Saba, 2016). Although there have been numerous definitions over the decades (Bozkurt, 2019) DE can be defined as "any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner, with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium either electronic or print" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 22). Largely focusing on school-based education, distance education embraces non-traditional modes of delivery that exploit: the physical distance between teacher and learner; the learner not being required to be present in a specific place at a specific time; a different vision of achievement, not wedded to traditional stages of learning in schools; and accommodates students' extraneous activities such as part-time work (Wedmeyer, 1981, p. xxii). Holmberg (1993) asserts that the provision of empathy for the student is the key motivator of the instructor, with content delivery occupying a secondary position (pp. 336–337) while Moore and Kearsley (2011) define distance education as the "teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies, as well as special institutional organization" (p. 2). In Australia, Latchem (2018) argues the development of distance education involves three phases: external studies by correspondence (1910–1970s); two-

way communication and multimedia (1970-1980); using the internet and digital technologies for online, flexible and open learning, (1980s to present).

Impact on learning

A number of studies have tracked the impact of the 2020 pandemic on the learning of both school and higher education students. In Australia, one such study (Drane et al., 2020) investigates the impact on school children, particularly those identified as 'vulnerable'. The report identifies risks associated with school shut-downs that present problems for students learning including digital exclusion, poor technology management, an increase in psychosocial change and disengagement with education in the longer term.

Similarly, the *Educator Perspectives on the Impact of COVID-19 on Teaching and Learning in Australia and New Zealand April 2020* (Buckley Flack et al., 2020) report, saw 3500 primary and secondary teachers in government and non-government schools undertake an online survey on the impact of the pandemic on their students' learning. Amongst the findings of the survey, teachers were "divided about the efficacy of online learning" (2020, p. 3), with the majority of teachers believing that students would require additional instructional support upon their return to school. Respondents identified three major concerns impacting students' social connection: social isolation, reduced well-being, and loss of learning potential.

The shift to remote teaching also implicated a range of other issues, such as teacher/student relationships. Arguing that online delivery should strengthen "cooperation, collaboration, and re-creation of knowledge" (Sali, 2020, p. 37) in the teacher/student and student/student relationship, Sali further posits that pedagogical practice using digital technologies should enhance teacher-student connection, as remote teaching is more than instruction.

In November 2020, the Australian Governmental agency, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) released above-mentioned report into the effects of the pandemic titled *Foundations for Good Practice: The student experience of online learning in Australian higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Martin, 2020) with data from individual higher education providers (HEPs) forwarded directly to TEQSA for compilation. Reporting on the first phase of a project focusing on the online experience of higher education students during the transition phase from face-to-face course delivery to remote teaching, the report did not identify courses that already included online learning. While students conveyed their appreciation of the efforts made by higher education providers to ensure a smooth transition, a "significant percentage" (Martin, 2020, p. 1) indicated a return to on-campus face-to-face delivery as their preference. The report specified what students considered to be the successful features of the remote teaching mode: access to online materials; the availability of quick and responsive advice; and appropriate and good quality technology constituting the positive features. Also conveyed as positive features, though to a lesser extent, were greater scope for students to manage their time more effectively; improved learning outcomes; and flexibility of types or assessment online. Students found a range of issues problematic such as: concerns about IT; limited interaction with academics; online examinations; limited IT expertise from staff; and discipline specific academic concerns were problematic.

The report identifies that HEPs supported students during the pandemic with extant Learning Management Systems used in both face-to-face and remote teaching. Different forms of collaborative or meeting tools such as Zoom and Teams were also used, as well as some equivalent software for lectures, online tutorials and discussion sessions. There was a limited array of tools available during the sudden transition to online learning. However, the range of software used by HEPs is described in the report as "somewhat surprising", given the resources allocated to the development of learning management systems by the sector over the past fifteen years (p. 6). Amendments and re-calibration were required

for assessments and examinations to ensure they accurately reflected student performance. Assessment and examination schedules were also amended to accommodate interruptions to learning and the shift to remote delivery.

Rationale for this case study

In this paper, we use the term "emergency online teaching" to describe the urgent shift from face-to-face course delivery to an online blended approach, reflecting the broad and significant impact of the pandemic. This term also captures a sense of disruption experienced not only by students who took part in this research project, as we discuss later, but also higher education academics who "almost overnight, (have) been asked to become both designers and tutors, using tools which few have fluently mastered" (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, & Koole, 2020, p. 926).

Method

This project aims to understand potential impacts of online tuition for performing arts and education undergraduate students during the COVID19 emergency shutdown period in Australia. The small-scale case study includes students in a regional university and a metropolitan university to consider if location is a contributing factor. As outlined above, this study utilises the themes identified in the ERTE framework (Whittle et al., 2020) to assist in the interpretation of participant responses. The ERTE has been developed for teachers as a framework for "understanding and planning learning" in crises such as "outbreaks, wildfires, active shooter incidents" (p. 312). These themes are used in this study as an interpretive lens, to identify, categorise and attach meaning to participant responses.

Data collection design

This case study involved the development and distribution of a 15-item survey designed to help us gain a better understanding of the impact of moving all tuition online for undergraduate students in performing arts and education. The survey and the small sample of students was developed in a short period of time to capture students' experiences in the moment rather than retrospectively as a means to capture a 'snapshot' of student responses to the shift to EOT. Students were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary, anonymous basis by completing the online, structured survey, accessed through each university's student email list-serve. In the ERTE study, on the other hand, involved a four-phased approach including a written survey and focus group meetings with participants across the other three phases (Whittle et al., 2020).

In the present case study, the first six items of the survey sought demographic and profiling information about the participant's geographical location, course of study, current year of study and study load. The following three items enquired about the percentage of subjects that shifted to online delivery; while the next two items focused on investigating participant motivation, using a Likert scale. The next item asked participants to specify their reaction to the shift to online learning again, by using a Likert scale. The final three questions sought short answers related to their preferences for future subject delivery; the identification of any aspects they found surprising; and finally their level of optimism for the future.

Student participants in the case study attended the universities at which the researchers are employed. Although one institution is metropolitan and the other regional, the mission statements from both institutions demonstrate an alignment of educational values and goals. Both institutions focus on developing the graduate attributes of active citizenship, critical and creative inquiry, effective communication, professional readiness. This is evidenced in the statement from one institution which targets "crucial lifelong learning and transferable generic

skills such as self-reflection, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and cross-cultural competence” (Institution 1, 2021). Similarly, the second institution targets “cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement”, “communication skills” and “application of knowledge and skills in collaboration with others” (Institution 2, 2021). Both institutions highlight the importance of applying practice and theory in learning in an array of different contexts.

Participant selection

Participant selection utilised purposeful sampling (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Criteria for selection were:

- currently enrolled undergraduate students in B.Theatre or B.Music at the regional university and B.Arts/B.Education (BABEd) at the metropolitan university, and
- voluntary willingness (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Participant recruitment was by emailed invitation sourced through the respective university enrolled student email addresses. Voluntary participants undertook the survey between August and October 2020. The regional university also offers the B.Music via distance and uses an alternative software platform for individual instrumental tuition which provides a better connection than Zoom or Teams. Students undertaking this course by distance were not included in this study. In addition, the survey questions were designed collaboratively with guidance from more senior researchers in each faculty. The survey was presented in Qualtrics and distributed electronically by email to students’ university email addresses as approved by Ethics and provided by each university.

Findings and discussion

This section commences with the present case study and the details of participants’ demographic information in terms of their degree, part- or full-time study status and location. The ERTE framework focussed on socially driven learning intending to identify successful strategies that may be applied in future ERTEs and consequently, the discussion of the findings of this case study are presented under the following themes: motivation to learn; course delivery, and the future.

The emergent themes from the ERTE framework are used to interrogate the students’ responses to questions under the first two themes of this case study. The third theme, ‘the future’, is explored in the EOT case study but was not investigated in the ERTE study due to the participants being school-aged students whose learning trajectories will continue in the following years of their school studies.

The discussion includes reference to the findings of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) national report, ‘Foundations for good practice; the students’ experience of online learning in Australian higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic’ (Martin, 2020) released in November 2020.

The TEQSA report provides a preliminary analysis of the information submitted by 118 Australian higher education providers in November 2020. The information was collated from student experience surveys for semester 1, 2020, to gain a better understanding of the students’ experience and perceptions of the emergency online teaching and learning. The purpose of the TEQSA project was to compile a thematic understanding of students’ experience of the recent shift to online learning. Themes were divided into two broad areas, what ‘worked well’ and what ‘did not work’. While the TEQSA project takes a big picture view of more than 100 tertiary institutions, the small scale EOT case study provides an analysis of the responses of individual students from two different degree programs at two different institutions in two different states of Australia.

Table 2
Participants’ course and years of study.

Course	Years of study					Total
	1	2	3	4	5 or more	
BABEd	3	5	8	3	1	20
B.Theatre	4	0	1	0	0	5
B Music	2	3	0	0	0	5
Other	2	0	1	0	0	3

Table 3
Full or part-time study.

	BABEd	B.Theatre	B.Music	Other	Total
Full time	19	5	4	2	30
Part time	1	0	1	1	3

Demographics

The participating students identified their degree and year of study. (See Table 2. Participants’ course and years of study). The Bachelor of Theatre (Theatre) and Bachelor of Music (Music) are presented at the regional university in State X. The double degree, Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (BABEd) is presented at a metropolitan university in State Y. Three students indicated ‘other’ for their courses. These students were all in State Y and were most likely considering only the Education or Arts component of the BABEd. Thirty students undertook full-time with only three indicating part-time study (See Table 3. Full or part-time study).

Motivation

Students were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement, “At the beginning of the year I was highly motivated to learn in my course.” A total of twenty-eight students agreed to some degree that they were motivated to learn (See Table 4. Motivation to learn). In a second question related to motivation, students were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement, “I continue to maintain the same level of motivation during the current COVID-19 pandemic.” Eighteen students agreed; four students neither agreed nor disagreed; and ten students disagreed, with four strongly disagreeing. This indicates a decrease in motivation to learn. Students’ comments are incorporated in the discussion of each of the four ERTE themes aligned with motivation.

Student engagement

In this EOT case study, students reported a series of negative effects with regard to their engagement with their studies and interaction with others in the move from face to face tuition to online learning. These effects included: a lack of engagement generally; insufficient peer interaction; distraction; and online workload. These aligned with the attributes of “what did not work”, identified in the TEQSA report, where the most common complaint from students was insufficient engagement with teaching staff (Martin, 2020). The student observations in the EOT case study also reflect the findings of the ERTE (Whittle et al., 2020) wherein students commented on ‘loss of teacher social presence’ indicating the teacher’s purpose was social as well as instructional.

In a more positive response, a third year Theatre student was “excited to be back on campus and undertaking the last year of my study.” In addition, a first year Theatre student reported, “At the start of the year, the lecturers were very supportive and motivated me to study. The course was exciting and fun and therefore increased my motivation.” Two students indicated they were not motivated at the start of the year. One third year BABEd student strongly disagreed stating, “At the start of the year I was struggling to affirm that the decisions I had made were the right ones... I am not convinced that my university is

Table 4
Motivation to learn.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Beginning the year	1	1	0	0	6	12	10
During EOT period	4	0	6	4	15	0	3

Table 5
Feelings about their future career.

Response	BABEd	B.Theatre	B.Music	Other	Total
Very negative	0	0	0	0	0
Negative	0	0	0	0	0
Unsure	5	3	2	1	11
Positive	10	2	1	0	13
Very positive	4	0	1	2	7

actually preparing me for the future". The other students who strongly disagreed did not make a comment.

During the COVID online period one first year Theatre student commented "During the lockdown period of the pandemic, my university still allowed me to use the facilities because I lived on Campus". However, other first year Theatre students were no longer on campus and noted being "distracted", "losing motivation", and reported they had difficulty learning in physical classes such as dance. All Theatre students were particularly missing the opportunity to collaborate with others: "Being online changes the dynamic of the course. There are distractions around you that obstruct your motivation. It is easier to get distracted and not be motivated whilst learning online." (Theatre, First year). A second year BABEd student was scathing of the online experience, "The continual changes to the situation, lack of structure, and the like have made it extremely difficult to maintain the same level of motivation and enthusiasm for my course".

Loss of teacher social presence

This emergent theme in the ERTE (2020) concluded that teachers serve a social and instructional purpose and that the social presence of the teacher online was beneficial to learning. In the EOT case study, indicative of all BABEd students, some classes were strongly founded on teacher-student and student-student interaction to improve understanding of content which, with limited or no experience and training, is impossible to achieve at the same level online. The BABEd students reported a high degree of motivation at the start of the year, "anticipation and looking forward to being on campus" and commented that the "lecturers were very supportive...motivated me to study...exciting and fun...". Some students indicated that they were tentative regarding their studies in general which appears to be less COVID-related than course/career-direction related. A first year Theatre student reported that "It became much harder to learn the dances and the workload got heavier" in the emergency online situation. A BABEd student felt that "not having a proper relationship with the tutor" was an issue of concern. However, a first year Theatre student felt that "There was a lot of one-on-one help when we were online, and now we are back in the classroom it is more generalized". Likewise, the TEQSA report (2020) identified that during the EOT period staff allocated extra time to providing online support to individual students.

Loss of student social presence

The ERTE found that students with an engaged social online presence found the online interaction a positive experience in contrast to students who experienced a "sudden loss of classroom social engagement" due to emergency online learning (Whittle et al, p317). In the EOT case study students at both universities across all three degrees missed the student social presences (ERTE) they experienced in collaboration with their peers.. A First year Theatre student commented "I lost a bit of

motivation because I was unable to collaborate with others". A second year Theatre student also found they "didn't have as much engagement with the material without being about to have the in-class discussions and subject-exploration that would be available on campus". A Third year BABEd student claimed "there has been more individual work to be completed, that would normally be done possibly in small groups on campus, or as a whole class. However, Sali (2020), Phelan (2012) and Means, Bakia and Murphy (2014) claim online learning should include collaboration and rapport building.

Students in this study and in the TEQSA report indicated they preferred face-to-face collaboration with their peers, however a third year BABEd student felt positive about the online workshop experience through Zoom, stating, "... this way of workshoping was more effective in getting feedback from the whole class as it allowed for more perspective from different people". In this instance the communication tools used influenced and changed the activity (Cripps Clark, Jacobs, & MacCallum, 2020).

Learner agency

Whittle et al. (2020) suggest that ERTEs may create more opportunity for learner agency. We found that one first year Music student was "eager to start" and was "able to spend more time focusing specifically on music" in the EOT. Yet two other first year Music students indicated they became stressed and anxious, one clarified "when COVID struck it became extremely stressful to decide whether to continue my course". Additional complications included that one first year Music student "had to pick up full-time work so that I could financially sustain myself, which led to falling behind in units and not having time to be able to put in my full effort." By contrast another first year Music student explained, "I moved back home to a small town where it was not affected as much. This allowed me to still go out to see people and didn't spend as much time studying."

Course delivery – difference between Pre-COVID and online delivery

Students were asked if there were any differences between the pre-COVID and current emergency online COVID-course delivery. During the emergency online teaching period students felt there was "not as much down time as there was in face-to-face classes". In fact, students reported that learning via Zoom was more tiring than learning face-to-face, a factor of the COVID-19 pandemic identified by Sklar (2020).

Hidden curriculum

In the ERTE this emergent theme illustrates the need for "teaching how to interact with and within technologies" (Whittle et al, 2020, p314). In the EOT case study a first year Music student "had to spend a heap of money getting equipment to be able to do the online study" which they found "a lot harder to learn". Second year BABEd students noted "the lack of experience in online teaching and time to prepare has resulted in repetitive dull work and classes".

Educators cannot be familiar with the ever-increasing array of tools and devices now available and be able to effectively integrate these for teaching and learning (Redmond & Lock, 2019). Students commented that "losing the face-to-face connection impacts the way lectures and tutorials are delivered." One student felt that some lecturers "seem like they are just learning what the internet is." Martin (2020) explains that the TEQSA report was to scope the impact of online learning on students and was not focused on staff and their development.

The TEQSA report identified not only problems encountered but also positive aspects of the online learning experience, as identified by students (Martin, 2020). In the present EOT case study, students were asked if they made any surprising discoveries. Nine selected 'yes', eight selected 'maybe' and fifteen selected 'no'. While the 'yes' responses were low, the students' comments provide useful insight into their online learning experience. These discoveries pertain to unexpected skills development, access to resources, online feedback and support.

A first year Music student noted, "...the movement to online enabled us to explore different skills which we may not have ever used throughout the course if the pandemic didn't occur". The TEQSA report found that for some students, technology made it easier for them to learn. A third year BABEd student commented, "I learnt more about how I learn". The TEQSA report found that some students reported improved retention and appreciated the flexibility in types of assessment and associated outcomes online (Martin, 2020).

Students discovered there was far more available to them on their university's Learning Management Systems than they may have realised in the on-campus learning experience. A third year BABEd student discovered "...an abundance of resources that few tap into, with regards to online learning and education". Additionally, this student found the online learning experience equipped them to be "confident in leading lessons online as well as face-to-face through the example set by the lecturers and tutors". Regarding online resources, in the TEQSA report students identified that "staff kept a closer watch on LMS activity to review progress than in previous face-to-face teaching" (Martin, 2020, p. 8).

Synchronicity

Whittle et. al (2020) identified a shift from valuing synchronous learning to valuing asynchronous learning. Martin (2020) claimed that students discovered the resources already available through their institutions' Learning Management Systems. In this case study one third year BABEd third year student identified that the online access to pre-recorded lectures enabled the student "to go back and study directly from the lecture instead of just from notes". This student found this "great" and explained "...recordings are able to be paused to finish writing notes or rewind to re-watch difficult topics." Overall, there was very limited commentary from the students in this study that implies distinction between synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Instability of expectations

This ERTE emergent theme recognises concerns over shifting technologies, assessment standards, learning goals and institutional factors. In the EOT case study students at both universities across all three degrees commented in particular on the loss of practical components of their course. Students recognised that some face to face components of their courses did not translate into online tuition. One BABEd student commented, "we have little to no hands-on and practical elements". A Theatre student similarly stated, "The dance lessons involved more work giving less time to focus on other areas." A third year BABEd student explained that the duration of tutorials had been reduced in the EOT and recognised that "tutors, where possible, have tried to incorporate practical aspects into tutorials but it has been a lot less than it would be if I was on campus."

One first year Music student noted that music 'ensembles' were moved online, while another was concerned about assessment tasks, "A lot of the pre-COVID assessments were changed to suit the online delivery. Some assessments were slightly changed, completely changed and in some units more assessments were added completely online."

BABEd students reported that in a writing class they would usually workshop final writing tasks in groups. One third year BABEd student pointed out that "with online classes workshoping occurred as a whole class with one person presenting and the rest of the class contributing." BABEd students also reported less collaboration with peers and one fourth year BABEd student claimed that "more content being delivered

and needing completion on a device." A first year student "was disappointed not to be going back to classes on campus [in second semester] but most of the teachers and other students are making an effort to keep zoom lessons vibrant and informative."

We asked the students how they would like their subjects/units to be delivered after the COVID-19 emergency online period. The TEQSA report found that the vast majority of students did not like learning online and did not want to experience it in the future (Martin, 2020). Similarly, in the EOT case study all of the first year Theatre students wanted 100% of their course delivered face-to-face. One first year Theatre student felt that "It is easier to learn face-to-face as you don't miss anything if the computer freezes or connection problems." Another noted, "Whilst some subjects can be done online because they are textbook based, the remaining are best learnt in person."

A first year Music student found it easier and more motivating to learn face-to-face, further explaining, "online study just doesn't really work well as there are too many elements out of my control. Studying on campus is just way simpler having access to campus facilities."

Another first year Music student noted, "although online was a good experience, it's much more beneficial being able to play with others and feed off each other while playing."

Of the return to campus after emergency online period a Theatre student claimed, "Some classes are still online, and the delivery is the same as Term 1. Yet the student commented that 'the classes that have returned have changed'. Another student explained that back on campus the changes included "smaller classes and room changes".

The future

We asked the students how they felt about their future career. Thirteen students felt positive and seven felt very positive. Eleven felt unsure. When we broke this down by degree type we discovered that the BABEd students were more positive and that the Theatre and Music students were split between positive and unsure. Of the students who felt unsure, Theatre and Music students were "uncertain" about establishing a career in the arts industry, currently shut down by COVID health regulations. The BABEd students were generally more hopeful about their futures in education, but were concerned about the uncertainty in the world, reflecting upon the "current state of the country and world" causing them "great anxiety about the future". The students who felt positive about their future career identified an increase in their skills and knowledge, confidence and resilience through their studies. The students' commentary illustrated two subthemes: skills and knowledge and confidence and resilience.

Skills and knowledge

Students recognised that they acquire skills and knowledge through their tertiary studies. However, first-year students in all three degree programs were unsure of their progress. First year students in Theatre recognised that university teaches the skills required for their chosen careers, whereas first year BABEd students questioned if the online teaching and learning was "qualified enough". Third year BABEd students were worried about completing their required practicum teaching and one was concerned about passing the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) required for teacher accreditation.

Generally, the third year BABEd students remained positive about their skills and knowledge acquisition during the EOT period. A fourth year BABEd student felt "equipped and ready to take on the classroom". A fifth-year part time BABEd student felt that "online learning has not impacted my career negatively in any way".

Confidence and resilience

Student responses indicated a clear divide between those studying education and those studying performing arts. BABEd students were hopeful for their future careers. Theatre and Music students referred to the impact of COVID-19 on the arts industry and lack of surety that

the industry would revive, providing no further commentary. By contrast, third year BABEd students referred to feeling “confident” and “resilient”. One suggested they had become “headstrong in hard times”. Another was “feeling positive as education is always going to provide jobs! We’ve seen how essential teachers are through this year!”.

Some of these third-year BABEd students were “keen” and “excited” to commence teaching. They felt that “things are getting better” and they were “hopeful that things will be the same as pre COVID-19 soon.” In addition to looking forward to teaching, some of the students revealed altruistic motivations, “having the opportunity to become a teacher is still very motivating” (fourth-year BABEd) and “teaching young people is one of the most important jobs in our society” (third-year BABEd). O’Flaherty and McCormack (2019) reported that goodwill and intention to improve another’s well-being are traits of teachers which Pierce (2006) claimed attract people to service in the public interest.

Implications

Reflecting upon the students’ commentary in this small-scale study, three particular implications are identified and should be given further consideration in the future development of online learning for tertiary students in the arts and humanities.

Firstly, as more education is presented online, planning and facilitating effective teaching learning through technological platforms is challenging (Redmond & Lock, 2019)(Redmond & Lock, 2019). The introduction of technologies into the learning process has considerable impact for pedagogical approaches and content-area learning (Harris & Hofer, 2017). The selection and use of technology must be considered and intentional (Lock & Redmond, 2021). The need to shift pedagogically when delivery modes are adjusted, as well as increasing collaborative experiences in online delivery would enhance networking or social engagement.

Secondly, as more education moves online, there are specific online implications for collaboration among students. In this study both performing arts (Theatre and Music) and Education (BABEd) students felt that collaboration is a key component of their field of study. Yet as tertiary providers move to present courses online in the continuing pandemic and to then continue to utilise this platform in the future, tertiary educators will need to develop skills in the application and use of technological platforms which enable student collaboration.

Thirdly, there are specific benefits for students undertaking online learning. Factors such as a reduction in travel time enable asynchronous learning. This case study has demonstrated that when students manage their own learning schedule they realise the breadth and depth of the resources already available through their institutions’ Learning Management Systems. In addition, students realised they could revisit recorded lectures and content, and work at their own pace. Consequently, students can reconsider how they learn and develop knowledge, skills and aptitudes through online tertiary tuition in the era of a global pandemic.

Limitations and future research

This small-scale research project embodies the limitations evident in all qualitative research. For example, a more extensive and diverse sample of participants would enable the development of more generalisable conclusions. The sample of participants used in this study are from two distinct cohorts of undergraduate higher education students, from whom specific biases may eventuate in the data due to their view on education and the arts. In addition, the beliefs, values and philosophies of the coders may impact on the analysis and coding of data in qualitative research. As such, we acknowledge the limitations; however, we have provided rich descriptions of the research project’s participants, the context and methods, which may enable other projects within similar contexts to utilise or modify the identified implications. With regard to future research directions, the impact of the 2020 pandemic on the

learning of higher education students and the approaches adopted by higher education teachers are both worthy of consideration in future research projects.

Conclusion

Connection with peers was important to students in both the TEQSA and EOT studies. Motivation for students waned in the online period and students found online learning more time consuming and requiring more effort. Yet, students in the EOT discovered more of university’s online resources than they would have during an on-campus learning period; they gained a broader range of perspectives from their peers in Zoom sessions than in face-to-face tutorials, and they felt that they received more one-to-one assistance from educators in the EOT period.

The TEQSA report flags that providers look to existing remote education programs offered by some providers for developing effective online teaching and learning. Yet, tertiary providers must consider the requirements of individual fields of study to ensure best practice delivery of tuition.

In contrast to the findings of the TEQSA report, the majority of students in the emergency online teaching survey felt positive or very positive about their futures.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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Supplementary materials

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