

**Reflection on remote teaching of business master's programme during COVID-19  
lockdown: Implications for post-COVID-19 times.**

**Abstract**

Following the Government of New Zealand's robust response to COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Auckland also displayed a similar level of willingness in transitioning from classroom teaching to remote teaching while seeking to ensure the continuation of quality education. The panel members of this submission are teachers of a business master's programme. In a short period, we prepared and delivered the course for the whole term through remote teaching. In this panel discussion, we would like to share our experiences in four areas: preparation, delivery, achievements and challenges. Reflecting on this experience, we seek to offer implications for business education.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, online teaching, business education

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**Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected every country and sector in the world, including higher education. Displaying remarkable agility and foresight, the Government of New Zealand shut down the borders and internal movement much before the rest of the world acted on those lines. The higher education sector too responded a similar level of willingness to shift teaching to online platforms and continue quality education remotely. The members of the panel, as teachers of the business master's programme at the University of Auckland, went through this unique experience teaching a range of courses. Hence, the purpose of the panel is to present our experiential learning gained through reflective practice, both during and after delivering the courses. We have identified four major areas for this purpose: preparation, delivery, achievements and challenges. We believe that the panel discussion would lead to insights online teaching and identification of effective teaching practices in business education. The outcomes of this panel presentation will have implications for both practitioners and researchers in business education. It is pertinent to point out that we take a teachers' perspective in the panel presentation.

**Theoretical underpinnings of online teaching**

Among several theories of teaching, Shulman (1986) model proposed the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) model, which highlighted the importance of not only knowledge but also how teachers convey it to the learners. The content and pedagogy are to be a bundle of understanding that combines relevant topics and learners of varying abilities to increase the effectiveness of instruction and learning. The teacher plays an important role, but the emphasis is on the learners' characteristics and contextual situation for learning outcomes. As the role of ICT in education sector increased, Mishra and Koehler (2006) and Koehler,

Mishra, & Cain (2013) included the facet of technology to propose a new model called technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK).

The criticality of teachers and contextual factors in higher education can never be underestimated (Kember & Kwan, 2000; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008). In this context, Artino (2009) proposed a model that recognised the context in the form of socio-cultural influences, instructional resources and task characteristics. Further, massive open online courses (MOOCs) became popular, Whitaker, New, & Ireland (2016) have examined them and identified three groups of factors: (i) institutional (internal and external) environment, (ii) student learning styles and faculty teaching mode, and (iii) technology tools and course design. The studies point out the complicated relationship between teaching pedagogies, availability of technology and the contextual factors that include university and community. Specifically, Jensen, Price and Roxa (2019) identify four areas of contextual factors: teachers' working situation, student-teacher interaction, student characteristics and affordances of the environment; clearly, the last area has become extremely relevant in the current context of COVID-19 and needs further investigation.

Quite a few studies have examined how universities have responded to COVID-19 situation (Adedoyin, & Soykan, 2020; Bao, 2020; Bryson & Andres, 2020; Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guardia, & Koole, 2020). Bao (2020) examined the case of Peking University, which is one of the first to be affected and moved its course delivery to online mode. The study reveals that the shifting of classes online was disruptive; most faculty members did not have adequate online teaching experience or support. Based on their experience, the author proposed five high-impact principles for online education: (i) high relevance between online instructional design and student learning, (ii) effective delivery of information, (iii) adequate support provided by faculty, (iv) high-quality participation to improve the breadth and depth of student's learning, and (v) contingency plans to deal with unexpected incidents of online

platforms. Rapanta et al. (2020) investigation of teachers' experience of teaching during COVID-19 shutdown period reveal that many teachers lack expertise and the PCK model (Shulman, 1995) can help non-expert university teachers to navigate in these challenging times. They further highlight the importance of an appropriate design of learning activities while keeping in mind the three types of teacher's presence while teaching – social, cognitive and facilitatory. These authors underscore the importance of training teachers in effective pedagogical methods. Finally, Brammer and Clark (2020) specifically focus on the impact of COVID-19 on management education and how it affects different stakeholders of business schools. Using their reflection, the authors point out the possibilities of new governance practices, pedagogical innovations and staff adaptability as a guide for the future of business education. Investigating the COVID-19's impact on management education also provides us with an opportunity for pedagogical research to improve the effectiveness of higher education.

In researching this topic, we use the exploratory method by interpreting our experience based on reflection. In this case, we not only use the favoured form of reflection-on-action but also include our insights from reflection-in-action (Helyer, 2015) to show how we regularly made changes to improve learning outcomes. Experiential learning is a crucial concept as we link conceptual and empirical knowledge for students in a new environment (Caffarella & Barnett, 1994). We consider how to facilitate learning activities in this platform and agility in that creation. Also, we acknowledge student needs, the context of adult lives, different processes of learning and active involvement in the learning process. Integrating experiential learning presents challenges to accommodate different learning styles and our learning style as teachers (McCarthy, 2010). Using reflection as a research approach, Brammer and Clark (2020) offer a commentary on the future of management education after COVID-19. In shifting to online learning, teachers must consider these styles and attempt to

accommodate learning styles through active learning. Further, after investigating online teaching during COVID-19 lockdown, Bryson and Andres (2020) highlight the need for aligning both students and teachers in co-creation of the learning process.

### **Panel Overview**

The panel will discuss courses delivered within the University of Auckland Graduate School of Management Business Masters courses. The coursework masters degrees are designed for students with a degree in business or a relevant discipline. The classes are delivered in quarters and take 15 months or 18 months, depending on the chosen major. As the courses are delivered in 10-week quarters, it is a rigorous programme and context moves quickly. The majors offered are in international business, management, marketing, professional accounting and human resources management.

As mentioned, the panel members have experience in teaching different subjects in the business master's programme. Therefore, as a panel, we can share our expertise across various courses such as human resource management, professional development, supply chain management, strategy capstone. One of the panel members is the director of the master's programme and so can bring in the operational perspective of delivering a business master's programme through remote teaching. An exciting aspect of our experience is that we had experience in teaching a course entirely online, from start to final assessment, and also of transitioning from classroom teaching to remote teaching halfway through the term of a class. The first one occurred when New Zealand went to the first lockdown in March 2020, and the second one was when it went into the second lockdown in August 2020.

In our panel presentation, we will highlight four areas that can help the academic community to learn from each other and become effective teachers across different teaching platforms.

The four items are briefly described below:

1. **Preparation:** We had a very short window of three days to prepare for remote teaching. Within these few days, we had to gather the necessary hardware and software for our computers, and plan on how to deliver the teaching material and conduct assessments. Such preparation at short notice required us to dig into our experiences in making quick changes in other circumstances. Hence, the preparation was based on our teaching experience, intuition and collaboration across the teaching and professional staff.
2. **Delivery:** The delivery of the course has different components like plenary, tutorials and team-based learning, which mainly focused on application exercises. But, moving to online platforms require the delivery, including the assessments, to be reconfigured to suit the new format and of the learner's situation. Hence, instructional design and strategies need to be reformatted and refocused.
3. **Achievements:** These are mostly in the form of learning about pedagogy, technology types, ability to choose different teaching methods, ways of interacting with students who were under lockdown and not able to meet not only teachers directly but also their classmates. These lessons were learnt through reflective practice, both during and after, the delivery of the courses.
4. **Challenges:** The challenges relate to different aspects such as technology, pedagogy, class management, assessments, self-motivation, monitoring students who require additional help and reformatting assessments.

The above broad themes will be discussed along with other related aspects such as support from the management and colleagues. The question and answer session at the end will provide an opportunity for fellow academics to probe further and crystallise our learning to share with others.

### **Session Description**

The session will be for 60 minutes. The actual time allocation will be, as shown below:

- 05 minutes: Introduction – topic and panel members
- 40 minutes: A panel discussion on four themes – preparation, delivery, achievements and challenges
- 10 minutes: Question and Answers time from the audience
- 05 minutes: Closing comments by panel chairperson

### **Conclusion**

The impact of COVID-19 on higher education has brought about massive disruptions and unexpected challenges for which we, the academics, have not been prepared for, or not expected to. However, the way the academics in general and business academics, in particular, have responded to the situation is highly commendable. The transition is not without hiccups. There were various types of obstacles, small and big, that we have to navigate and overcome. By sharing our experiences in the form of a panel presentation and engaging with our academic peers, we hope to contribute to the ongoing learning required to be effective teachers.

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