

Chapter 7

Australian Educator's Reflections and Use of ICT and Technology: Reimagining Online Teaching and Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 impacted all aspects of life and education across the globe. This case study forms part of an ongoing project. The authors are academics working in music education across two universities in Melbourne, Australia. Using blended synchronous learning environments (BSLE) and the universal design for learning framework, this chapter examines ways that teachers used representation, action and expression, and engagement while teaching online. Survey data collected across phase one (March-April 2021, N=105) and phase two (December 2022-February 2023, N=104), were thematically analysed. Two emerging themes (modifying learning environments and developing innovative assessments) are discussed. As recommendations are made, longitudinal research is imperative to further understand how teachers and students continue to interact with learning environments. Continued understanding of the pandemic and the use of technology in teaching and assessment is essential to ensure we best prepare teachers and students as the educational landscape remains uncertain.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Covid-19 pandemic took centre stage across the globe all aspects of human life have been significantly impacted including the education sector. According to UNESCO (2020) “the pandemic affected more than 1.5 billion students and youth with the most vulnerable learners hit hardest”, where “91.3% of the global student population were out of school due to the pandemic” (Basham et al., 2020, p. 72). It is no surprise that the pandemic has had a devastating impact on education and training during this unprecedented time. The sudden impact of working from home had myriad affects on teaching and learning (Hobbs & Hawkins, 2020), as educators across the globe had to rapidly “develop online lessons and practices while parents and caregivers were pushed into the role of co-educator” (Basham et al., 2020, p. 73). Information and communication technologies (ICT) were creatively used to remotely engage students across all age groups as teachers had to be adaptive in their selection and application of different technologies. While many higher education institutions offered distant learning as planned delivery prior to COVID-19, transitioning to remote teaching for many teachers was a challenge around the globe (de Bruin & Merrick, 2022; Joseph & Merrick, 2023; Toquero, 2020).

Online delivery is a complex process that is continually “moving, blurring and shifting” (Ling, 2017, p. 562). That challenged teachers to engage students in inclusive assessment design through authentic learning experiences. Authentic learning experiences are not a new phenomenon, it closely resonates with 21st century learning where “technology literacy includes knowledge of technology systems as well as the ability to apply knowledge in authentic ways for authentic purposes” (Kereluik et al., 2013, p.136). Researchers have identified how highly engaged students have autonomy over their learning where activities reflect the real world of the learner. These tasks foster collaboration that enable student reflection and provide opportunities to demonstrate authentic understanding in their learning context (Herrington, 1997; Herrington et al., 2010; Rieger & Rolfe, 2021). Lombardi and Oblinger (2007) assert that “the internet and a variety of emerging communication, visualization, and simulation technologies now make it possible to offer students authentic learning experiences ranging from experimentation to real-world problem solving” (p. 1). During the pandemic, teachers used pre-recorded video and audio files combined with screenshots, text and images that showed how “students can create media and express themselves in varied and multimodal ways” (Rao, 2021, p.1).

The authors are tertiary music educators working at two different universities in Australia. As Melbourne endured one of the longest and strictest lockdowns in the world (Jose, 2021), we commenced a national study in 2021 *Reimagining the future: music teaching and learning, and ICT in blended environments in Australia*. We draw on elements of learning frameworks including Blended Synchronous Learning Environments (BSLE) (Wang & Huang, 2018) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018). By employing these frameworks, we explore and discuss the context of the learning environment within online delivery. Teachers used representation, action and expression combined with engagement for the learner variability in relation to “abilities and strengths, support needs, backgrounds and experiences, preferences and interests” (Rao, 2021, p. 2). This study adds to the growing body of research about reimagining teaching and learning during COVID-19. In this chapter we focus on two questions from the wider study:

- How did educators change their strategies and approaches to teaching, learning, using music technology and ICT?
- How did educators modify assessment processes using music technology and ICT?

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