Mind the Gap: The Reality of Remote Learning during COVID-19

ABSTRACT

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We consider the expectations gap through pre-COVID-19 pedagogical strategies and teaching methods, then outline how we modified them into COVID-19 teaching approaches and designs.

Findings

We found that although expectations differ between university administration, students and faculty staff, there are a number of paths educators can take to close the expectations gap, facilitate interaction and engagement while gently encouraging self-driven student learning in a difficult time.

Originality

The practical exemplars identify steps educators can take as support mechanisms for student learners to embrace and take control of their own education in the remote learning environment and convey the importance of maintaining a sense of belonging. This creates an improved teaching environment for educators and an enhanced learning environment for students.

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Keywords: Tertiary Education, Remote Learning, COVID-19

JEL classifications: I23, I24, N37, P46
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“Nobody signed up for this—not for the sickness, not for the social distancing, not for the sudden end of our collective lives on campus. Not for an online class, not for teaching remotely, not for learning from home, not for mastering new technologies, not for varied access to learning materials” - Associate Professor Brandon Bayne from the University of North Carolina.

1. Introduction

This quote was how a University of North Carolina university lecturer chose to start his syllabus. It highlights that the remote learning environment that we all found ourselves in, was both unexpected and complex. What eventuated was a triangulated expectations gap, between the need to balance competing interests and promises of universities, with student learning needs and experiences, and for educators to encourage interaction through technology in our homes, which became our offices overnight. As at 2 August 2020 the UNESCO showed 1,058,824,335 learners affected by school closures, equating to 60.5% of total enrolled learners, across all levels of education and 106 countries (UNESCO, 2020). In Australia, December 2019 data showed 1,609,798 students enrolled comprising 645,328 commencing and 964,470 continuing students (DESE, 2020a). In December 2019 440,687 international students were enrolled at Australian Universities which had dropped to 404,515 by August 2020 (DESE, 2020b). Research has shown that students learn better when they are actively engaged in the learning process, rather than just passively listening to a lecture (Deslauriers et al., 2019) and that there already existed an expectations gap between incoming student expectations and their actual experience (Pather, 2018). The importance of student interaction in tertiary education is not denied, however COVID-19 highlighted that taking a complete face-to-face learning module and moving it to remote learning resulted in significant gaps that educators scrambled to fill with limited home resources.

Bui and Porter (2010) examined the expectation-performance gap between students, educators and employers, comprised of conflicting performance, constraints and expectation gaps. We focus on a triangulated expectations-performance gap defined as the disconnected ‘meeting of the minds’ between students, educators and universities as to remote learning due to COVID-19. For educators-students this was available time expended on teaching and learning materials and platforms. The triangulation gap was increased by the university-educator gap around time
to meet perceived student expectations given technological resources, and the university-student gap from portrayed learning experiences, and perceived student expectations. Recognising that the university-educator and university-student gaps were outside the educator’s control, we focus on our own experience as educators to improve our performance and close the educator-student gap by facilitating student’s expectations as best as practicable within university constraints. We outline how COVID-19 widened an existent triangulated gap and how educators sought to change the expectations of students to the reality of educator’s performance from what universities had portrayed to students as practicable.

We use pedagogical reasoning around the importance of student interactions at the educational and personal level to identify and suggest ways in which tertiary educators can facilitate a more favourable remote learning environment with little to no notice and minimise the triangulation gap. These suggestions are based on our own experiences and informal student feedback in moving to remote learning due to COVID-19. Our teaching portfolio consisted of three undergraduate units including; workshops for first-year accounting students, the delivery of workshops for first-year undergraduate accounting students; lectures and tutorials for second/third-year undergraduate business law students, and lectures, workshops and tutorials for second/third year management accounting students. Each unit provided synchronous learning opportunities in line with the university’s perception that students wanted to actively attend and participate in teaching activities. Our experience affirmed the gap between university expectations and student reality with fluctuating attendance rates of between 10-40% synchronous participation only. Our advice is provided on the basis of encouraging and facilitating participation for those students who self-selected to attend synchronous activities which was the directional focus of our university.

This paper is set out as follows; section 2 provides the pedagogical importance of student interactions, section 3 outlines the differing expectations during COVID-19 around remote learning including some suggestions to provide a better remote learning experience, section 4 provides a practical perspective on encouraging student participation and moving activities online, and section 5 provides key takeaways.

2. The Importance of Student Interaction and Expectations

COVID-19 forced students into an uncomfortable and anxious learning environment that was exclusively online, remote and full of unknowns. Clout (2020) notes that students are asking
for feedback more frequently. This reaction highlights human’s natural instinct to seek interaction with others as well as pursuing emotional support in times of stress. Where students might otherwise interact with their peers in person, the constant line of communication over COVID-19 has become the educators. As highlighted by Muir (2001), one of the many disadvantages of online learning is the lack of synergy and trust which educators had to overcome to enable learning to continue. In many ways, teaching staff became both educational instructors and counsellors in an attempt to build trust while balancing their own personal COVID-19 related concerns. Educators were tasked with re-assuring students that we are all following the same uncertain journey and that they are supported, while delivering academic materials and assessment that ultimately creates the stressors of uncertainty and anxiety.

For many educators, the move to remote learning came with isolation and a sense of disconnect from their university. Teaching teams dispersed to their homes and there was little interaction between staff in both mental health support and academic capacities. Various online options were trialled to replace face-to-face interactions such as Microsoft teams and Zoom. However, our experience was that although we were part of teaching teams with between three to eleven staff (Table 1) there was little interaction between the staff on a regular basis. Interactions were exclusively by email and limited to administrative matters rather than teaching methodology. A fellow academic summarised the university’s attitude as Dory’s “just keep swimming, just keep swimming”. But if we were to expend our buckets of both academic and counsellor support to students, where were we to get support to refill our buckets? We found that our motivation and support to keep going and perusing new avenues for teaching remotely came through our external academic communities at other universities. For example, participation in an MS Teams group ‘I <3 Accounting Education Group’ piloted by Dr Victoria Clout at UNSW, provided a platform to present teaching initiatives and gain feedback, but also importantly to gain collegial support around uncertainties. We thereby set upon the difficult task of remote learning individually but supported internationally.

| Year | Lecture | Workshop | Tutorial | Total Enrolment | Domestic | International | Full-Time Staff | Sessional Staff |
|------|---------|----------|----------|----------------|----------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
Table 1: Teaching Portfolio

Although academic staff accepted the need to facilitate remote learning interactions, it posed the next conundrum of how to engage student learners with different learnings styles, across different countries and time-zones, with varying responsibilities and individualised challenges. Undoubtedly it is easier to interact with students in person as highlighted by Maddux (2004) students prefer traditional face-to-face learning due to the social interactions. However, in the virtual environment it is easier for students to hide behind the screen and let their fears of participation, particularly with large class allocations (Table 1), take over their educational experience. For example, an international university student was caught changing their name to ‘Reconnecting…’ to avoid participating in their Zoom classes. The fact the student still joined the Zoom class showed a willingness to learn, but perhaps a reluctance to the virtual environment. Additionally, some students were found to be logging in to class, but failed to actually interact. For instance, a student was still logged in at the end of a tutorial and subsequently admitted to the tutor they switched screens to online gaming. Educators were tasked with creating a supportive environment purely through words and interactive technological platforms without losing student engagement and rapport. Is it simply enough to say we are available if you need us? An extra level of complexity is the target audience demographics between domestic and international, many of whom were forced to return to their home countries or interstate due to loss of part-time/casual employment to support themselves.

Pather (2018) examined the expectations of first year students with their actual experience, finding that a significant gap already existed between the two, leaving students disconnected and in some cases leading to students abandoning their studies. The expectations gap is attributed to the need for part-time employment, family obligations, financial constraints and lack of awareness of social opportunities. These factors were never more important to consider than during COVID-19. As educators we needed to acknowledge that we were aware that students were facing these significant roadblocks and hurdles in their study, but also to set the expectation that we too were facing them and to get through the remote learning experience was a team effort. Interestingly latter year students were opportunistically using the move to remote learning to their advantage. Many latter year students already self-select to study online, albeit enrolled on campus, and this gave them an opportunity to engage more than they otherwise would have.
So if we are all facing the same obstacles we should all have the same expectations, right? In an attempt to close the educator-student expectations-performance gap and facilitate connectivity educators acknowledged that remote learning was a big change and welcomed student suggestions to assist with their learning experience. This shifted the control of learning to the student, rather than focussing on the students expectations of educators. For example, we showed students our home office set-up and ‘set the scene’ that resources were limited, thereby bridging the expectation gap and benchmarking educator performance expectations.

3. Expectations and Learning Techniques

“I’m not crazy. My reality is just different than yours.” – Cheshire Cat.

Analogically as educators we fell through the triangulated rabbit hole into a world of competing expectations as to what remote learning would look like from our institutions, our students and the reality of what was achievable in a short amount of time. The perspectives of academics on the ground can best be captured through online platforms. For example Brabazon (2020) said “the move online under COVID-19 is not called “online teaching” but “remote learning”, which universities seem to think absolves them of the responsibility to give faculty sufficient technological training, pedagogical consultation, and preparation time”. Alexandra Finley, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh via Twitter (@AlexJFinley 24 June 2020) posted “Admin in 2020: please be prepared to teach online, in person, both simultaneously, on a moving train, while juggling, in a burning building, under the seas, during a wrestling match with a T-Rex, as a hologram, and riding a unicorn. Also be safe and we value you”. These quotes highlight the gap between expectation and reality. The expectations portrayed by universities to students on what to expect from educators were not mirrored by the reality of resources and support given to educators. It may seem on the surface simple to move all materials online and conduct real-time classes via Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate, but the added level of support students expected was underestimated. With work moving online universities and students alike were incorrectly assuming educators were available and connected 24/7. After all, we were in isolation, what else did we have to do? This led educators to ask themselves what was achievable to support students with the resources available.

The first stage was to address the distinction between remote learning and online education. While interchangeably used over COVID-19 to describe education they have distinctly different meanings. Universities have been promoting online education for years and we have
accepted this as educators to be online classes, self-driven and largely in the students own time around other commitments. As we moved online due to COVID-19, this terminology was increasingly being used and blurred the line between those enrolled online and internal students now learning from home (remote learning). Content originally written for a face-to-face experience was moved to the virtual world, however the structure remained the same and educators sought to use resources available to them to keep the activities and learning as personable and face-to-face, albeit distant, as possible. By comparison, online education saw little change and continued to comprise flipped learning, interactive modules, online assessments, discussion forums, and self-directed learning. These units are well planned and tailored to the online environment. Internal students expect a certain level of educational experience that is inclusive of social interactions, therefore the key to retaining students was building resilience to the pandemic through student engagement, communication on a personal level, and utilisation of technology.

The second stage was for educators to determine how they could achieve a similar face-to-face experience in a remote virtual environment. Pre-COVID-19, Deslauriers et al. (2019) found that students in the active classrooms learned more, however students perceived that their perception of learning was lower than their passive environment peers. Their findings highlight that educator superiority, positivity and attitude may influence student perceptions of learning and encourage passive learning environments. In addition, the study indicated that students associate their increased effort required through active learning to be a poorer learning experience. Deslauriers et al. (2019) argued that these issues need to be met head-on early in the semester by reminding students of the importance of engagement and cognitive input to study. This study provides suggestions such as quick active learning tests, seeking feedback from students, and using pedagogical strategies to increase active learning benefits. Just one year after this study was published, we have a remote learning environment where strong student attendance and engagement is not guaranteed with many students having to prioritise family and work.

This presented educators with a big issue, how do we implement the pedagogical learning strategies from prior research to this new entirely remote online learning environment? Bao (2020) outlines six instructional strategies to improve students learning in the online environment including; preparedness for unexpected technological problems, helping students focus their attention by dividing materials into smaller units, the use of voice in teaching, the importance of teaching assistants in providing student support, active learning outside class,
and effectively combining online learning and offline self-learning. Transferring Deslauriers et al. (2019) into these strategies we can take away some key paths of implementation for creating a better COVID-19 remote learning experience for students. First, regardless of the learning platform it is important to maintain and develop the educator-student relationship and establish boundaries early on through expectation setting. Second, to stress the importance of participation, engagement with staff, and self-driven learning. Third, to provide opportunities where students can practice interaction and engagement online without the stress of assessment. Fourth, to maintain a personable relationship and persona. Students react more favourably when they feel they are being heard and understood. Lastly, keep the learning vibe on a more relaxed level and play off student interactions positively. These paths, when merged together, maintain the student engagement and differentiate remote learning from online learning.

4. The Reality of Remote Learning

This section details our personal experiences moving to remote learning. Unless we are able to form a connection, which encourages students to log in and interact, the remote learning platform is not likely to be successful. Admittedly this turned out to be easier with first year students who perhaps had more of a willingness, drive and craving, to be interactive and seek contact with educators as found by Pather (2018). The latter year students, many of whom while enrolled as internal self-select to learn online, continued to rely on recordings for lectures. So how did we create a personable social connection between ourselves and our students? The answer hinges on one underlying principle, be approachable. This is supported by student feedback provided in this paper.

To facilitate student driven learning we obtained informal feedback from students around the mid-semester and then end of semester for reflection. There were no observable differences in feedback between units, however as with face-to-face learning, attendance and interaction decreased from 100% at the start of semester to around 50% across the three units. We observed low attendance for lectures which were asynchronous in both Corporations Law and Strategic Management Accounting. Workshops in Introductory Accounting and Workshops as well as Tutorials in Strategic Management Accounting were well attended with high participation and engagement. Blackboard engagement was limited with students preferring individualised support through email.
4.1 Encouraging Participation

4.1.1 Create a Sense of Comfort

We started each session by simply saying ‘Hi’ followed by a message that the class would start in 5 minutes, get comfortable and grab a coffee. We then asked students to express how they were feeling, what the weather was like or how their past week was using emojis. This created a sense of calm and relatability to students of the technological generation. COVID-19 was already creating anxiety and fear of unknown, being relatable and talking about our experiences in isolation/lockdown through non-verbal means was a good ice-breaker at the start of each class. When students hear and see similarities in experiences it creates a sense of comfort for them, that they are not alone and that it is a safe space to ask questions. To this end we were not simply checking-in with students in a general sense but opening the communication channel in such a way it promotes a safe environment. As humans we rely on that ‘vibe’ and physical gestures to truly feel comfortable opening up and communicating with others. For example, “...is always cheerful ... tone and manner were welcoming and encouraging”. Without the physical elements the importance of words becomes greater.

4.1.2 Set the Scene and Check-In

As educators we are often reminded that we are not counsellors however our duty of care to students was never more important than during remote learning. Students and educators similarly posed questions as to whether mental health call centres truly understood the impact of COVID-19 and the move to remote learning on students mental health. Although support was offered to students through counselling services, whether advice was practical to the unique circumstances of COVID-19 remains to be seen with many students saying they were unable to find appropriate support. In this sense, while maintaining professionalism, it was important for educators to implement strategies to help alleviate the psychological burden placed on students. We identified some simple strategies to help students’ transition. We utilised the technique of maintaining engagement through a casual and enthusiastic approach. To do this we used different tones, posed questions and continually checked in with students. For example, “tutorials have been highly engaging which has been a struggle this semester due to everything being online” and “... was very interactive, asked many students to engage and provide answers to complete the questions”. As with a face-to-face class it is important to set the scene of the class. Setting out expectations as to study requirements in a firm manner however being clear that there was an understanding of the difficulties was important. Simply
asking students if they were okay, did they need further assistance and making students feel connected rather than uploading materials, talking and wishing them luck, was well received by students. To this end, it’s important to not just ask how students are at the beginning of the class, but to pause and ask at spaced out intervals.

We found that delivering the lecture standing up also allowed us to be more interactive through voice and convey a sense of enthusiasm in the material rather than being monotone. Our bodies react to movement and this helps to emphasise important materials. Although students had a reluctance to turn on their cameras, we were able to turn this into a positive by providing light-hearted comments such as “I’m sure you’re all in your PJs”. Adding humour to the class made students feel at ease. While we wanted to maintain the educator-student relationship, from a psychological learning perspective it is important to build the relationship through common-ground.

Remote learning and camera shyness removed the facial expressions of students that we often use as indicators of confusion or misunderstanding. Many universities also suspended teaching evaluations over COVID-19, which has been a double-edged sword. Educators, while protected from the difficulties of moving to remote learning, also lost their means of determining how students were managing with the materials and feedback on the cohorts learning styles. Remote learning became a top-down approach where universities told educators how to deliver materials, what resources were available and what students wanted. But this one size fits all approach does not work for student learning across a range of disciplines. It was therefore up to educators to conduct their own unofficial surveys to determine how students perceived their learning experience. We recommend asking for informal feedback on a weekly basis and also through an anonymous survey through, for example, Socrative or Blackboard at the mid-semester point. This allows for time to adjust to the cohorts needs before the final examination.

4.1.3 Maintaining Student Alertness

Adding breaks into the material also serves to maintain student’s attention. Pedagogical research shows that students have limited attention spans and face-to-face movement extends this however for remote learning to be effective, breaking up talking into smaller, more manageable pieces of information is easier to absorb and retain to long-term memory (McLean et al., 2016; Roehl et al., 2013; Baily and Konstan, 2006). Students were receptive to ‘clarity’ breaks which allowed them to affirm their knowledge on one topic before moving to another. We found students were able to bounce questions off each other and this provided the mental
stimulation to increase alertness continuing forward. Student feedback was “...kept me engaged by asking the class if they understood after [each] explanation, as well as staying down to Earth”. Another strategy was to include short, non-graded questions and polls. These kept students engaged while providing educators with an indication of student understanding of concepts and application. We also noted the importance and receptiveness of students, to engage with assignment preparation conversations and the opportunity to form study groups through the Blackboard Collaborate platform. These simple additions maintain student alertness and involve them in their learning journey.

4.1.4 Utilise Student Interactions

Educators often underestimate the importance of student interactions in remote and online learning. When students see their peers answering questions, they are more willing to do the same. The key in responding is not to say an answer is wrong, or incorrect, but to phrase it in a positive manner such as “great point, lets further think about it this way...”. This provides students with positive reinforcement, as noted “…made sure everyone participated and ensured that there were no “wrong” questions...teaching style motivated me to attend every Tute this semester”.

4.1.5 We’re Going Forward Together

Finally, be positive in terms of forward planning and acknowledge this is the now, but not forever. Positivity keeps students engaged and prevents the doom and gloom aspects of the COVID-19 environment. In keeping with the light-hearted approach, when you don’t get the student interaction you want, keep your cool! As an example, when no students showed to a tutorial, we took the approach of sharing a picture of Donkey from Shrek ‘there’s no one here beside me...’. This highlighted to students that the tutor showed up, ready and willing to teach if they also log-in and join.

4.2 Moving Activities Online

When designing the structure and activities in our move from face-to-face to remote learning there were several important considerations. Firstly, the balance between recorded aspects and live aspects of the content and activity delivery. Recorded aspects are referred to as asynchronous meaning that they were “not happening or done at the same time” (Cambridge
English Dictionary, 2020) so students have the flexibility to watch and participate individually in their own time. In contrast the live aspects are referred to as synchronous meaning that they were “happening or done at the same time” (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2020) so students can interact and participate in real-time. Several studies concluded that both methods complemented each other and there was a need particularly in online instruction to have a balance between the two. Asynchronous instruction offers flexibility, individual attention and is beneficial for discussion of complex ideas as it reinforces cognitive participation, for example self-reflection. On the other hand, synchronous instruction increases student motivation to learn and enhances the sense of community as a result of the live interaction and often resulted in lower retention rates (Hrastinski, 2008; Bernard et al., 2004; Davidson-Shivers et al., 2001 and Bonk et al., 1998). In addition, by combining both forms of instruction overall communication and engagement increased as the interaction between the two encouraged different styles of participation (Haythornthwaite and Kazmer, 2002 and Hrastinski, 2007).

Secondly, how to break up the activities to ensure that students are engaged, and the information is retained. This style of breaking up activities is often referred to as micro-learning where information and activities are delivered in short segments that are paired with relevant learning objectives (Major and Calandrino, 2018). According to Cole and Torgerson (2017), using short spurts of content or activities is especially useful for adult learners which is the demographic we teach at university. While there are many different ways to design a course using the theory of micro-learning, what is important is to ensure that it provides the best link to the content, fosters engagement and gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge (Trowbridge et al., 2017).

4.2.1 Example of Weekly Learning Pathways for 2nd and 3rd Year Management Accounting Subject

| Week 1 onwards | Week 2 onwards | Week 1 onwards |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| **ASYNCHRONOUS** | **SYNCHRONOUS** | **ASYNCHRONOUS** |
| Pre-Class: Review the Topic Material |
| - Topic Slides |
| - Textbook Readings |
| Lecture: Guided Learning |
| Recording Available Wednesday 6pm |
| Except Guest Lecture – OA (5): Live and Not Recorded |
| Workshop: Active Learning |
| Live Class: Wed 10am Recorded |
| Tutorial: Active Learning |
| Live Class: Wednesdays Not Recorded |
| Post-Class: Reflect on Topic Material |
| - Review notes and questions |
| - Attend consultation to ask questions |

N.B. Asynchronous to be completed in your own time and Synchronous are live activities.
Figure 1: Weekly Asynchronous and Synchronous Schedule for Learning

Figure 1 was inserted into one of our Blackboard sites to provide a visual explanation to the students of the weekly learning pathways. Each activity was described as either asynchronous or synchronous and details on what students could expect to allow them to plan accordingly. Feedback included “structuring of learning resources and material and logical flow from lecture-workshop-tutorial was great”. Changes were made to ensure students had the same level of engagement with the material as well as opportunities to ask questions and apply theoretical knowledge. The first activity was Pre-Class and it reminded students of the importance of preparing for class. This activity was an opportunity for students to review the topic material such as topic slides and textbook readings. The feedback received from students indicated that having the reminder displayed in each topic’s folder allowed them to take control of their learning and engage with the material prior to class. One student noted, “thank you for the effort put in to deliver the content in an online format. I’ve no doubt about the difficulties associated with it and I am very grateful”.

The second activity was guided learning through a recorded lecture. The recordings were broken down into learning objectives to support the philosophy of micro-learning. The content for each topic was discussed in detail with real applications to ensure students could see the link back to the real world. There was one guest lecture during the semester, which was a live class, however it was poorly attended which reinforced the benefit of having the lecture as an asynchronous activity as it allows more flexibility.

The third activity began in Week 2 and was in the form of a workshop. It was a synchronous activity that allowed students to engage with active learning. The interactive workshop included a topic summary from the previous week’s lecture, different activities or tutorial style questions and then a question/answer section. The workshop has been well attended and the engagement during the semester has been reasonably high with students coming to class well-prepared and keen to learn. Additionally, by recording this activity students have the flexibility of asynchronous instruction as well as the opportunity to revisit the activities and engage in self-reflection.

The fourth activity, the tutorial, was the second synchronous activity for the students a week. This activity is centred on active learning and utilised breakout rooms to allow students to work in teams. The breakout rooms made the students more comfortable to use their microphones and engage with other students. Overall, we found that case studies were a great breakout
The tutorial materials needed to be adapted to the remote learning online environment which involved rewriting the material. The case study questions were reworked to be more critical thinking style of questions, requiring students to explain the steps involved in providing a response. This change was important in the move to remote learning to ensure students were actively engaging with the material and developing a better understanding of the process. Additionally, PowerPoint activity sheets were created to share in the breakout rooms to provide students with a visual resource that they could use to work together on case studies.

The last formal activity was the remaining asynchronous activity and encouraged students to reflect on each topic’s material by reviewing notes and questions. Additionally, a weekly virtual catch-up coffee chat was organised to provide students with the opportunity to informally connect with both the unit coordinator and other students. The students responded really well to this informal connection with many showing up on a weekly or fortnightly basis simply for a chat. Many students brought their coffee and commented on the benefits of being able to engage with both the unit coordinator and other students in an informal setting. This response reinforces student emphasis on personal connection.

**5. Conclusions**

COVID-19 shifted the dynamic of tertiary education. An already existent triangulated expectations-performance gap between educators, students and universities became more evident. Educators sought to reduce the educator-student gap while conceding the university-educator gap remained as performance expectations increased based on promises to students despite limited resources. We observed no attempt by universities to close the gap despite educators highlighting the requirements of time and technology. Similarly, the university-student gap remained with university attendance expectations not coming to fruition. The pivotal ‘meeting of the minds’ as to expectation and reality never transpired. Educators pursued avenues to reduce the educator-student expectations-performance gap and create an effective remote learning environment.
We provide suggestions on how to engage effectively with students in an online remote learning environment while minimising the educator-student expectations-performance gap. We believe that using the suggestions provided can assist educators to reflect on their own teaching and to facilitate student engagement and learning. We identified the importance of encouraging student interactions while maintaining student expectations. Student participation could be encouraged through creating a sense of ease, maintaining alertness and utilising student interactions by breaking material to foster micro-learning as well as balancing asynchronous and synchronous instruction. These strategies proved successful across year levels and subject areas. What has become the motto of COVID-19 is never truer - we’re all in this together. As educators we can facilitate and provide opportunities to actively engage and learn but it is up to the students to grab these opportunities and control their learning path.
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