

# Online, Open, and Equitable Education

Lessons from Teaching and Learning  
during the Global Pandemic

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## CHAPTER 9

### **“Knowing that We Are Not Alone”**

Nurturing Faculty Members as Adult Learners  
through Technology-Rich, Task-Oriented,  
Experiential, and Relational Supports

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The COVID-19 pandemic raised significant challenges for the higher education community worldwide, with one particular challenge being the urgent and unexpected requirement for previously face-to-face university courses to rapidly switch to an online format. Suddenly, in March 2020, thousands of postsecondary faculty members and educators in Canada and elsewhere, many with little or no training in online teaching, were required to continue their research and teaching priorities, while also implementing what, for many, was an entirely new way of teaching. Moreover, instructors of all backgrounds and ages suddenly had to prepare and deliver their classes from home, with a myriad of related challenges, and often without proper technical support.

#### **Literature Review**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning had been steadily growing in Canadian higher education. In 2019 10% of all course enrollments in Canadian credit programs at the university and college level were fully online (Bates 2020). In the face of this growth, there were debates about its effectiveness in comparison to in-person learning. While some meta-analyses reported that online teaching is at least equivalent to more traditional formats for those who have access to adequate technology (Means et al. 2009; Ngyuen

2015), others found that the format negatively impacts student performance, especially for students who are more likely to struggle in academic settings (Figlio, Rush, and Yin 2013; Krieg and Henson 2016; Xu and Jaggars 2014; Alpert, Couch, and Harmon 2016). According to Glazier (2021), the relationship between the instructor and student is also important for online learning. From this research, it is clear that online teaching approaches must be intentionally developed to optimize student learning, with a concerted effort to go beyond replicating a physical class/lecture through video capabilities; instead, a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods that promote active learning and personalization for the learner must be thoughtfully deployed. Accordingly, simple comparisons of online to in-person learning miss key contextual information and show that the two are not easily compared.

Despite the growth in online courses prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been limited faculty adoption of online and “blended” teaching and learning formats. While some faculty “early adopters” had implemented online and blended teaching approaches, they were limited in number. These faculty members were innovators with vastly different timelines and needs than the large proportion of “emergency adopters” who suddenly needed to rapidly shift to a strictly online format. The sudden closure of universities across the globe meant that universities had to provide emergency faculty support and develop programs that focused on helping large numbers of faculty to make rapid transitions to teach online. Universities were thus charged not only with continuing to teach their students, but also with teaching faculty members—as adult learners (Collins 2004). The responsibility for responding to the urgent transition to online teaching, in many cases, shifted to teaching and learning centres and their staff who have extensive experience in online education.

Emergency shifts to remote teaching and learning were a common institutional reaction during the early response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Johnson, Veletsianos, and Seaman 2020). While technology provided the ability for universities to transition

to teaching online during the spring 2020 semester, what was offered for the remainder of that semester was described as “emergency remote teaching” (Bond et al. 2021; Bozkurt et al. 2020), in contrast to more robust online teaching (Hodges et al. 2020). The sudden changes that were required, in combination with limited understanding about effective online pedagogy among many faculty, meant that a wide variety of emergency changes were implemented, ranging from many instructors “pretending nothing had changed and attempting to transition their course without making revisions to it” (Schlesselman 2020, 1042), to others reporting that faculty were able to quickly adopt online teaching approaches and make adjustments to assignments, exams, and grading policies (Johnson, Veletsianos, and Seaman 2020).

In the face of the rapid shifts that were required, there were multiple reports of university professors feeling completely overwhelmed by changes brought on by the pandemic and finding it exceedingly difficult to cope with the workload and the new teaching circumstances (CBC 2020). One Canadian study on the impacts of the rapid transitions demonstrated an increased number of university educators who identified feelings of anxiousness: 68% were worried about the impact of the pandemic on their teaching, and 84% of respondents reported “somewhat” or “much higher” levels of stress (Canadian Association of University Teachers 2020). Hodges et al. (2020) suggested that all parties involved—students, faculty, and staff—were “being asked to do extraordinary things regarding course delivery and learning that have not been seen on this scale in the lifetimes of anyone currently involved.”

## **Context**

Given this challenge, colleges and universities—and in particular, teaching and learning centres—were called upon like never before to provide training, offering one-on-one consultations, troubleshooting issues, developing resources, and finding a way to support faculty through the immediate challenge of moving online. As it became clear that the pandemic would likely impact

programming for additional terms and even the upcoming 2020/21 academic year, many developed longer term programming to draw upon the rich evidence base that supports the effectiveness of online teaching modalities.

This chapter outlines the general approach undertaken at one Canadian university to develop such longer-term support to “keep teaching.” In particular, it describes a week-long intensive training program, which was rapidly developed and implemented to support adoption of effective online practices among faculty, and analyses evaluation data from this program. We provide information about specific aspects of the program that faculty valued, as online learners themselves, to support their development of competencies to offer their own courses in an online format. Through qualitative analysis of evaluation data from the program, we identified four pillars of effective online teaching that emerged during this challenging time for faculty members. We found that faculty development for online teaching during the pandemic was not simply about teaching skills for online course delivery, but that faculty, as adult online learners, deeply valued emotional and relational support at a time when so many faced isolation and anxiety.

### **The Transitioning to Online Teaching Course**

As noted above, at the University of British Columbia (UBC) the online teaching environment was new, both pedagogically and technologically, for the majority of faculty members. This situation created a significant demand for university-wide faculty professional development opportunities—and to complicate matters, the opportunities needed to be created and delivered quickly to enable faculty to keep teaching.

In response to the challenges, leadership at UBC charged the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technology (CTLT) to develop supportive programming to rapidly enhance faculty skills to deliver online courses, to complement services available within faculties. One focus of the response was the development of the **Online Teaching Program**. As outlined in figure 9.1, this programming provided different pathways of support: 1) for those new to teaching

online, 2) for those who wanted to “brush up” on key areas, and 3) for those who wanted higher levels of support. The types of resources available included self-paced online courses, one-on-one consultations, and workshops. This program was developed rapidly with intent to provide flexible support at scale for faculty at UBC.

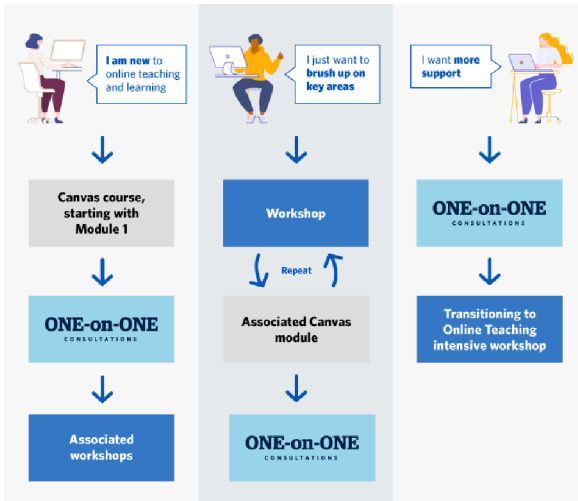


Figure 9.1. The Online Teaching Program at UBC

*The Online Teaching Program by the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology is used under a Creative Commons 4.0 License, CC-BY 4.0*

For faculty willing and able to invest more significant time, one specific component involved a major and rapid revision of a previously existing intensive program, a one-month course that had been offered annually and was intended to support faculty in designing or redesigning courses to optimally blend online and face-to-face teaching and learning. It was rapidly redesigned to provide an intensive and cohort-based one-week experience for those faculty members who sought an intensive learning experience and were able to accommodate this schedule.

To develop a high-quality course quickly, designers focused on reusing, revising, and remixing open educational resources about online teaching and learning, and rapidly prototyping and building the first course model. The intent was to develop a short intensive

course that would model strengths of online learning for faculty members to emulate, and to provide as much support as possible for them to pilot and prototype approaches that could be used in their own courses. A key focus was on incorporating approaches that could be implemented rapidly and effectively, without the necessity for faculty to entirely revise their courses. The course design team (the authors of this chapter) brought a range of pedagogical and technical skills and backgrounds to the process to ensure that the course would be designed and delivered within a tight timeline and respond to different goals of faculty participants. Lucas Wright is an educational consultant with expertise in learning technology. Kari Grain is a faculty member in education who was serving in a dual role as an educational consultant at CTLT (specializing in experiential education) and a sessional instructor in the faculty of education. Charlyn Black is a faculty member in medicine who is active in teaching and who then had a senior leadership role overseeing graduate education for the School of Population and Public Health. In addition, a CTLT learning designer supported the overall course design.

The first offering of the one-week intensive Transitioning to Online Teaching (TOT) program took place in June 2020. Participants were asked to commit ten to twelve hours to the intensive short course; however, the time spent by faculty members varied depending on their own goals and abilities. In contrast to many other pedagogy-oriented offerings which are typically one to two hours each and scaled to large groups of participants, the TOT was an individually focused program designed to concurrently engage approximately thirty faculty members. It was open to those who were currently teaching or would be doing so in the near future and who were facing the challenge of moving to an online format. Only registrants who met this criterion were accepted. Throughout the summer of 2020, four TOT courses were offered with an aim of supporting participants to ready their courses for online delivery in the summer and upcoming fall 2020 terms. Another two TOT courses were offered during the fall term, with a focus



on supporting faculty to prepare to teach online in January 2021. A total of 155 faculty participants completed the TOT course, with attendees from faculty units and departments across the institution including medicine, science, arts, land and food systems, and law.

The online course was situated in our main learning management system, Canvas. It balanced asynchronous (7–9 hours) and synchronous (two 1.5-hour sessions) learning components, and optional “Learning Lounges” (informal drop-in Zoom sessions), with the timing of these components designed to model their intentional integration. The course placed particular emphasis on “teaching presence” and strategies educators could apply to create more of a sense of teaching presence in asynchronous and synchronous course elements. It also drew heavily upon the Community of Inquiry framework (Vaughan, Cleveland-Innes, and Garrison 2013) in order to maximize social, cognitive, and teaching presence elements to facilitate and model a rich online experience for participants.

The asynchronous course elements included short readings, discussion activities, and “course development challenges.” The TOT discussion activities were designed for participants to share and learn from one another about transitioning their courses online, with some interaction from instructors. The synchronous course components supported real-time connection and discussion between the course participants. By emphasising interaction and connection within these sessions, the course team was better able to leverage what Finkelstein (2006, 285) refers to as the “unique potential of synchronous interaction and real-time communication.” Each day of the course contained explicit learning outcomes and a host of pedagogical strategies meant to offer some variety but not to overwhelm. Pedagogical strategies included synchronous Zoom sessions (using options such as whiteboard, polling, and breakout group discussions), learning lounges, Canvas options such as announcements and discussion boards, optional practical activities, and a course development project.

To help us evaluate the program, participants received a link to a survey during the closing synchronous session of each TOT

program, followed by an email requesting them to complete the short evaluation of the program. The evaluation consisted of a Qualtrics survey asking for responses to three open-ended questions:

1. What were your goals in taking the program, and in what ways were they met, or not?
2. Which aspects of the program were most valuable for you?
3. What changes would you recommend to improve the program?

Answers to these questions were used for ongoing evaluation and improvements of subsequent iterations of the course. Results from the October survey suggested that participants were gaining increased experience and accordingly, significant changes were made to the final course offering in December.

## Methods

Two of the co-authors (Kari and Lucas) collaboratively analyzed data from the evaluation surveys. Given the changing needs of attendees over time and the subsequent changes made to the final course offering in December, the analysis was restricted to evaluation of survey responses from the first course offerings during the months of June, July, August (two sessions), and October. This involved a total of sixty-three completed evaluation forms from a total of 115 participants who completed one of these five course offerings, a completed response rate of 55%.

Thematic content analysis of the sixty-three evaluations was conducted through the manual coding of the open-ended qualitative evaluation responses to identify emergent themes. For the purposes of this paper, we aimed to identify the most valuable aspects of the TOT program for faculty development; thus, we focused the majority of our analysis on open-ended answers to question 2: Which aspects of the program were most valuable to you?

Following an inductive approach, we began with no predetermined theory or framework, and instead allowed the themes to develop through thematic analysis (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays 1999). Given that our evaluation data was derived from a relatively small

number of participants, we opted not to use a data analysis program (e.g., NVivo), but instead chose to manually code the responses in two phases: initial open coding, followed by code refinement and reduction. As per best practices in thematic content analysis, code refinement and reduction allowed for the important process of grouping together similar or related codes and refining the key emergent themes (Burnard 2006). For both analysis phases, the two co-authors worked together, simultaneously discussing the responses and coding them in a shared online document. Initial open coding generated connected and overlapping pedagogical themes such as: technical help, student engagement, empathy building, modeling good teaching practice, and peer learning, among many others. Phase 2 analysis allowed for the collation and combining of related themes, eventually generating four key themes about what was most valuable to faculty members as adult learners in the TOT program.

## Findings

Evaluation feedback from the TOT revealed multiple aspects of the program that faculty members found to be most valuable. From these themes, we derived four key characteristics of valuable online learning for teaching faculty:

1. **Technology-rich:** Abundant attention to technical support in online teaching provides learners with knowledge of learning platforms, new technologies, and pedagogical strategies involving the use of technology. In the case of the TOT, such supports included one-on-one, informal learning lounges, asynchronous discussion forums with peers, curated resources, and synchronous group sessions.
2. **Task-oriented:** Task-oriented course design holds time, space, and facilitated activities for relevant projects that participants need to fulfill at some point, regardless of their level of participation.
3. **Experiential:** Experiential online learning includes the modeling of effective pedagogy and useful strategies that participants can practice as learners in online spaces. Online

learning that is experiential allows participants to experience the role of “learner” in situations where they typically serve the role of “teacher,” therefore generating empathetic and informed decision-making in their own course design.

4. Relational: Relational online learning cultivates a teaching/learning community and holds ample space for peer learning and shared reflection; it includes attention to contextual stressors that may be facing the learners, and encourages support and solidarity through shared ideas and challenges.

Below, we expand on these four characteristics and share some selected quotes from qualitative evaluation feedback from the TOT course.

### **1. Technology-Rich**

Technological support for online educators is arguably the first and most urgent type of support that comes to mind when one thinks back to the onset of the pandemic. Research from the early stages of the pandemic showed that many educators had to teach in an online environment for the first time (Johnson, Veletsianos, and Seaman 2020). Participants in this study emphasized the importance of individualized technical support during the program. In different iterations of the TOT program the participants commented on the specific technical skills that they developed during the course from “sharing slides in Zoom” to creating a welcome video for the course. As was evident in both the survey feedback and in conversations in the learning lounge, for some participants the individualized technical support helped them to feel more confident using different tools in their teaching.

Interestingly, instances where our own instructional team made errors with the use of technology were also a point of reference in evaluation feedback. For example, during one synchronous session, an instructional team member struggled to erase the virtual whiteboard comments, and a participant highlighted this foible as a weakness of our teaching team’s effectiveness. From our perspective, we discussed this as an important teachable moment because it showed

that even people who practice using these technologies are bound to make errors with them. Depending on the learner, this could serve as comforting information (that everyone is prone to error) or give them more anxiety (that they, too, are likely to make errors). This example was a reminder that technology and online teaching tools are not only pragmatic essentials for teaching online, but they are also representative of significant stress, vulnerability, and emotionality for some educators (Cutri and Mena 2020). These stresses were further compounded for learners who felt they were arriving in the TOT with less experience than their peers in online teaching. One participant wrote, "I felt many of the participants already had ongoing online/part-online courses so for someone 'brand new' to teaching with any online component there was a steep curve."

The TOT was designed in a way that allowed for several entry points to a variety of technical teaching components. Our intention was to not only model the ways that tools such as Canvas, Kaltura, or Zoom could be used creatively, but to also provide participants with direct technical support in small group or one-on-one scenarios. "Learning lounges" were informal online drop-in spaces with the most technologically experienced members of our team, and they were well attended by TOT participants. One participant wrote that "the learning lounge was the most valuable—the ability to drop in with [the facilitator] one on one was fabulous." Because of the less structured approach in learning lounges, TOT instructors were able to approach each individual inquiry in unique ways, and this allowed them to support faculty members to troubleshoot issues they encountered, or to practice using specific platforms or tools. Practicing in the presence of an instructor proved to be valuable for one individual who wrote, "The opportunity for some hands-on practice was also really important for me, as I had not hosted a Zoom call or shared ppt slides before—I was able to practice the annotation function, which is going to be crucial in my classes."

Another aspect that one participant particularly valued was what our team called the "10-minute rule," which we emphasized repeatedly. The 10-minute rule, especially in emergency shifts to

online teaching, was particularly relevant because it encourages learners to spend no more than ten minutes learning a new technology or figuring out a problem on their own. “Once I noticed the 10-minute rule it was golden—you might want to make that even more explicit because the first night I spend more like 100 minutes trying to make the video thing work. Seems like it was a browser problem—but serendipitously it got me into Kaltura Capture which is where I want to be.”

Of great interest to our TOT teaching team was the observation that discussions about learning new technologies were frequently accompanied by expressions of anxiety, stress, joy, and gratitude, among others—an intersection that we discuss later in this paper.

## **2. Task-Oriented**

Principles of adult learning have long emphasized that adult learners typically arrive in educational environments with a wealth of knowledge and experience, but also with a shortage of time or energy due to professional and familial responsibilities (Collins 2004). This has been especially true during the pandemic, wherein increased familial responsibilities (e.g., childcare, elder care) were compounded by workload expectations that suddenly included learning a new skill set for teaching online. Given the tremendous time pressures faced by faculty members during the rapid transition to online teaching, participants expressed an appreciation of the practical and applied nature of the TOT’s workload. It was our aim in the design of the TOT to ensure that the assigned tasks or suggested activities constituted labour that the faculty members would need to do regardless of their time in the course. Several participants reported an appreciation of being “forced” to do the work through the course activities, even though all activities and assignments were “recommended” rather than required. For example, one person wrote that what they found most valuable in the TOT was that it “forced me to sit down and do concrete work for courses.” Similarly, another expressed, “I’m very glad that you forced us to work on something specific about our courses for the last day. I feel that I actually got out something very tangible from this

course (I've re-worked my syllabus and decide how I will balance synchronous/asynchronous activities)."

More insights into task-oriented goals of TOT participants were elucidated through responses to the survey question "What were your goals in taking the program, and in what ways were they met, or not?" Although many mentioned goals related to learning specific technologies and connecting with others who faced similar challenges, several participants shared specific and concrete tasks they had for completing the TOT course and described how they were met by completing the program. For example, one participant wrote their goal was to "rethink my syllabus and modules" and that "I didn't actually finish creating either, but I did make progress." Another participant described some of the course design planning they were able to do within the TOT program: "I made a lot of progress in putting together a vision of what the course will look like, how it will function (from my perspective and from the students' experiences) as well as an overall strategy of how I am going to use my time over the next two months."

### **3. Experiential**

Until recent years, experiential education has rarely been considered in online contexts; instead, the "experience" cited in much of the traditional experiential education literature has been understood as involving excursions outside of the classroom, away from books, and off of the computer. But with recent technological advances and the growing popularity of online education, the dominant understanding of "experiential" has begun to shift and expand to include online forms of experience. Indeed, even learning that happens online or through technology can include Kolb's (1984) four learning modes that constitute the cycle of experiential learning: experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. In particular, the TOT focused on supporting faculty members to learn about and integrate technological tools into their teaching and course design. Educational research has long indicated that modeling the effective integration of technology is a vital means of teaching educators in online spaces (Hughes, Liu, and Lim 2016). Furthermore, it has been

consistently demonstrated that effective faculty development for online teaching is contingent not only on technological learning, but also on a pedagogical emphasis—that is, a focus on how to teach using such technologies. Koehler and Mishra (2005, 113) pointed out that “merely introducing technology to the educational process is not enough to ensure technology integration since technology alone does not lead to change.”

Findings from qualitative evaluations suggested a particular value for TOT participants in experiencing the course in an online space, as learners. For example, one person wrote, “I enjoyed learning experientially by going through the course and seeing how the technology is used.” As course instructors, we aimed to demonstrate the use of any pedagogies or technologies that we taught about so that participants could undergo an online form of experiential learning. Participants indicated in synchronous sessions and in evaluation responses that it was useful for them to understand how an online course looks and feels from the learner’s side; from this experience, they were able to glean strategies and ideas that they could use in their own courses. For example, in response to the question, “Which aspects of the program were most valuable to you?”, one participant wrote, “The modeling from the instructional team. Seeing them using all the ‘techniques’ and ‘approaches’ suggested, help me think if they were appropriate to my class and my learning objectives.” In a similar vein, another participant indicated that:

The opportunity to be a “student” in an online course was really valuable, giving me a chance to see it from the “other side.” The way the instructors structured the Canvas platform and communicated with us provided me with a really valuable model from which I feel I can pass forward to my own students.

This imagery of the “other side” of the teacher/learner relationship in TOT emerged repeatedly. One participant wrote, “Perhaps the most valuable aspect was to have experienced the asynchronous activities and challenges somewhat from a student’s perspective



albeit it was only for a short period of time.” Another cited the value of being guided through the learning process by somebody else, saying, “I also liked how [TOT instructors] sent overviews of our readings and discussion activities every day. It is nice to have somebody else (for a change) ensuring that you are doing the right work.”

Empathy and a transformed perspective emerged as valuable experiences for several faculty members who rarely have the opportunity to be in the role of learner rather than teacher:

I think through taking an online course, I identify some feelings students may have. For example, they may feel bad that they are not able to complete all the work. I learn to empathize with their feelings when they come to ask for extra time for assignment submission. Another thing I came to realize is it will take a lot more time for students to learn a new subject than someone who has many years in the field. All those are very valuable experiences for me.

Participants pointed out that in their unusual role as a “learner” in that educational relationship, clear communication throughout the program was vital. This emphasis could be due at least in part to the fact that modes of communication have, by necessity, shifted so drastically in the transition from in-person to online teaching. One participant articulated that the most valuable aspect of the program was “the organization of the course (from the announcements, communication, expectations), to the readings, to the ‘assignments,’ and synchronous sessions). Everything was valuable, particularly seeing how the instructors modelled effective communication with us.”

Taken together, participants in the TOT valued the experience of being a learner when they are so often accustomed to the role of facilitator, educator, and guide; moreover, they recognized that their experience as learners in this setting enabled an immersive

understanding of pedagogical techniques and technological components that may or may not work in their own teaching contexts.

#### **4. Relational**

It is not a new or radical proposition to suggest that adult learners benefit tremendously from their peers and learning community; in fact, scholars of adult education have long emphasized the importance of social relationships and extrinsic factors as a key motivator for adult learning (Collins 2004). What is unique about this finding, in the context of a rapid shift to online teaching among faculty members, is the extent to which they appeared to value the sense of solidarity and emotional support gained through interactions with peers. Evaluation data elucidated that faculty participants in the TOT placed a high value on the experience of connecting with a teaching community not only for the purpose of sharing ideas but also for the purpose of gaining comfort through reflecting upon shared challenges and fears. With the pandemic's isolating effects and the physical displacement of university community members, participants cited an array of positive impacts from the teaching community connections that were forged throughout the program. They referenced the value of peer learning in synchronous small-group discussions and asynchronous discussion boards, as well as the mutual sharing of teaching strategies.

One sub-theme that arose among participants was a sense that through discussion forums and synchronous sessions, they were able to brainstorm pedagogical ideas and share problems and solutions among peers. For example, one participant used the term "crowdsourcing" to describe this process: "Some of the readings were helpful, but what felt productive to me was the crowdsourcing of problems and solutions from fellow participants and from the facilitators." Another participant, echoing this sentiment, called it "collective wisdom": "Collective wisdom from the synchronous sections were most valuable to me." Other participants used pragmatic language, saying that they valued "the ability to connect with other faculty members and hear their ideas—I got concrete, valuable ideas."

The interdisciplinary nature of the synchronous learning space was identified as particularly enriching for some participants: “I got a couple of good ideas from some colleagues from different faculties. I think the break-out room discussions were the ones that I really learned the most from.” Participants identified that hearing from peers was not only valuable for the brainstorming and problem-solving potential, but also for the pragmatic examples that were offered up by several educators. One participant wrote, “The online discussion and break-out room discussion are so valuable to me, since I had the chance to hear concrete examples from others and think how those strategies can be applied to my own teaching.”

Another sub-theme that arose in this theme was a sense of interpersonal and communal connection, which seemed to highlight feelings of generosity and mutual support:

I truly appreciate the generosity of my colleagues who were eager to share their experiences in such great detail.

Even though it was only a week it was nice to see a support community forming amongst the educators present.

Beyond an appreciation of a generous community of fellow educators, one participant identified the specifically inter- and intra-personal exchanges that enabled their own learning. They wrote, “The activities were exceptional, as they allowed self-reflection and meta-cognition, and allowed us to think about what would work best in our own courses as we plan to teach the next two terms. Creating a platform for this intra-personal and interpersonal exchange depends a lot on the questions, and thanks for designing them so thoughtfully.”

It may be an understatement to say that the pandemic presented educators with challenging situations both professionally and personally. During several iterations of the TOT, faculty members tearfully shared stories about the stress they faced, and—among other things—the anxiety of learning a new technology or teaching strategy in the

midst of societal upheaval. It was not surprising, then, to see that the evaluation data were replete with comments about the impact of a nurturing environment and the sense of comfort gained through connection to others faced with similar challenges. For example, one participant responded that the most valuable component of the TOT was “realising that we’re all in this together and that we’ve got this :)”. Similarly, another wrote that the most valuable aspect was “to know that we are supported!” One participant wrote that they valued “meeting other folks and feeling less anxious as we are all sorting out our issues together.” There was an undeniable sense of comfort derived through shared learning and a visible sense of solidarity with other university educators who were facing similar struggles:

Our discussions were very valuable—knowing that you are not alone in trying to figure out this transition and finding that people are willing to generously share their own experiences (and failures) was very important to boost my own enthusiasm and interest in implementing some of these approaches in the future.

## Implications

The findings from our TOT course illuminated several insights that we had anticipated, and several that surprised us. For example, as facilitators of the TOT, we expected evaluation data that elucidated the high value that participants place on technology-rich, task-oriented teaching and experiential, practice-based aspects of the intensive course. However, the prominence and recurrence of the theme of relational learning in the evaluation data has constituted an important insight for us as educators; it shone a light on a deeply human and interpersonal aspect of adult online learning that is often underplayed in comparison with the curricular and technical components of teaching people (like university faculty members) who are already experts in their own right. Education, as the late Brazilian philosopher-activist, Paulo Freire, espoused, should not

be an act of depositing information into a learner's head (what he termed "banking education"); instead, it ought to cultivate solidarity amongst people who are not the same but share in similar struggles (Freire 1972). In the context of supporting university educators to teach online, this means using technology, task-oriented activities, and experiential learning as interconnected strategies to cultivate a sense of community among learners. While the solidarity that Freire spoke of was imbricated in socioeconomic status and identity, he was clear that one of education's key purposes *writ large* is to bring people together across difference and enhance critical understandings of the unique contexts and struggles facing each learner.

The implications of such relational emphases can be far-reaching, if you consider that the task of online education is not just to teach the pedagogical and technical content, but to also cultivate a sense of community. "Knowing that you are not alone," as we shared in the findings, is what one TOT participant claimed as the most valuable aspect of the course. This phrase is a poignant reminder that faculty development for online teaching during the pandemic was not only about supporting efficient and effective online teaching, but also about the cultivation of whole adult learners who needed the comfort of relationships and community in a time when so many faced isolation and anxiety. The TOT was not the only support our faculty members had access to, and it was likely just one of many educational opportunities that faculty members took advantage of. Although it is tempting to say that evaluation data collected during a pandemic was reflective only of that moment in time during which university educators faced unprecedented stressors and drastic shifts in their teaching identity, to do so would discredit the valuable teachings that this era has bestowed on us. Even if we, as university educators, never again face a universal, societal transition as disorienting and rapid as COVID-19, it remains true in our educational context that faculty members are still adult learners who, as they navigate changing personal and global contexts, want to know that they are not alone in their struggles and successes. The lesson to take forward, and indeed the key recommendation

that our work has elucidated, is for online educators to consider relationships, community, and solidarity as vital factors in engaging online teaching practice. This relational learning, in tandem with technology-rich, task-oriented, and experiential pedagogies, offers a holistic approach to teaching faculty members as adult learners.

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