



# The Covid-19 Pandemic, Protests and a Pedagogy of Care

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As lecturers move into new and unfamiliar teaching spaces, there is a need to move beyond it being ‘business as usual’, both for our students and for ourselves. There are obvious changes: lectures presented using different technologies; engaging with technology to a far greater degree; potentially not having a group of students signalling whether or not they understand what is being taught. However, this ‘different’ pedagogical space provides an ideal opportunity for us to rethink, at a deep level, the teaching and learning activities (TLAs) which we use when engaging with our students.

Student feedback has long been solicited to provide input to academics on how their TLAs are experienced. Feedback also provides students with a voice, an opportunity to express their thoughts, experiences and concerns. This is particularly useful for students who may not otherwise feel that they have agency within a collective. Academics engage with student feedback at very different levels. For some, this is a ‘ticking-the-box’ exercise, an administrative requirement and no more. For others, it provides an opportunity to contemplate how students experience their teaching, how to improve interactions and how to help students engage more effectively with the discipline; with the goal being improved student learning.

Taking full advantage of student feedback requires a certain degree of humility from a teacher. It means acknowledging that the TLAs we had planned were not perfect and, therefore, that as practitioners, we are not perfect. We are also acknowledging that there are, perhaps, many opportunities for improving our TLAs. In obtaining feedback, we invite our students to collaborate in the planning of future teaching and learning activities. However, obtaining one-off feedback from students,

whether half-way through the semester or at the end of the semester, means that changes are only likely to be implemented with the next group of students.

My challenge to my fellow academics, therefore, is to:

- Open up for debate the existing ways of engaging with students in their construction of knowledge;
- Use this opportunity to create new ways of being in our lecture theatres;
- Obtain feedback timeously, to benefit the existing cohort of students;
- Empower students with a voice which they know will be heard.

A successful transition to more collaborative teaching and learning spaces will require a pedagogy of care. It will necessitate discussions with students about how to make their feedback useful. It will require confidence on the part of students that their feedback will be received without prejudice. It will require humility and contemplation on the part of academics when receiving frequent input from students, always seeking out the pedagogical nuggets. It will require prompt interventions to implement useful suggestions which benefit our current students.

Finally, we should always remember to ‘close the loop’ by acknowledging our students’ voices; their contributions to the construction of knowledge.

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