

11th SEAMEO-University of Tsukuba Symposium (Virtual)
Technology and Values - Driven Transformation in Education
20-22 February 2023

ABSTRACT

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Topic: Lessons from Lockdown: Relational Pedagogy in Online Teaching

The lockdowns occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic had profound implications for teaching in the higher education sector (and others) in Aotearoa/New Zealand (and elsewhere). Teachers who preferred to teach synchronously found themselves required to teach online via Zoom, whatever their previous intention, pedagogical approach or teaching philosophy. Because they faced galleries of students often with their cameras off and seemingly too self-conscious and out of their comfort zone to respond to prompts or questions, they tended to fall back on lecturing them – and to feel as disengaged as they seemed to be. No matter how the teachers then responded, what this feeling of disengagement demonstrated was that *education is always relational*. For teachers and students, having to respond to the shift in educational technology from the physical classroom to the virtual Zoom room interrupted the educational relation that was most familiar to them, namely, that of face-to-face engagement between teacher and students, however we conceive of the politics of that relation (teacher-led, learner-led, learning-led, educational) and whether or not we include an object of study in it (which sets up a more-than-binary relation). In this short talk, I will reflect on why the interruption of the normal educational relation by the move to Zoom might have been a good thing – or, at least, a productive thing – for teachers – and also, in turn, for students. I will explore that move to Zoom in educational context in which I teach, which is distinctive in that I teach in a country that is officially and increasingly bicultural – settler (Pākehā) and Indigenous (Māori) – and attempting to reckon with an Indigenous worldview and educational philosophy that is expressly relational. If I were to offer a preliminary conclusion about what I am learning from my response to the move, it is that *teachers and students need to trust in the educational relation* – which may be challenging for both, although in different ways and for different reasons – *for that relation to be truly educational*.