

LEARNING DESIGN VOICES

PREPRINT

Academic Development as Compassionate Learning Design: Cases from South Africa and Egypt

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Introduction

The disruption of higher education due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced educators and institutions everywhere to rethink higher education provision. The need for emergency remote teaching meant that educators who knew little about online teaching and those who lacked time and resources to work on learning design ended up teaching online in ways that were not always fully thought through, at a time when they and their students were undergoing the trauma of the pandemic and struggling to cope with inequalities that were exacerbated by this situation.

In this chapter, we share our understanding of compassionate learning design, informed by humanising pedagogy (Pacansky-Brock, 2020) and trauma-informed approaches (Imad, 2021a, 2021b; SAMHSA, 2014), at the intersections of equity and care (Bali & Zamora, 2022). Compassionate learning design, as we conceive it (Gachago et al. 2021, in Bali & Pallitt, in press), is a critical *praxis* that results from a desire to enhance learner *participation* (Fraser, 2005; Wehipeihana, 2013), and centre processes around social *justice* (Fraser, 2005; Tronto, 2015), while recognising the importance of *care/affect* (Noddings, 2012; Imad, 2021a). As such, it strives towards "parity of participation" (Fraser, 2005), wherein all learners, including the most marginalised, have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making in their learning experience.

A theoretical framework for compassionate learning design

Our understanding of compassionate learning design therefore has four dimensions (Gachago et al., in press):

1. The desire to increase the *participation* of learners.
2. A recognition of the importance of *affect* and how that impacts on learning, as seen in the emergence of interest in humanising, care and trauma-informed pedagogies.
3. An understanding of *power and history* and how that affects our ability to participate: our positionality and intersectionality and how they influence our pedagogies.
4. The aforementioned dimensions result in a *commitment to act*, to take responsibility and move towards more socially just learning design.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between care/affect as an underlying principle, participation (parity) as process, and justice as a desired goal or outcome (even if never reached, this is the intention), with praxis as the intersection between them. This praxis includes both change on an individual level, but also on departmental and institutional levels, as the case studies shared below demonstrate.

Compassionate Learning Design

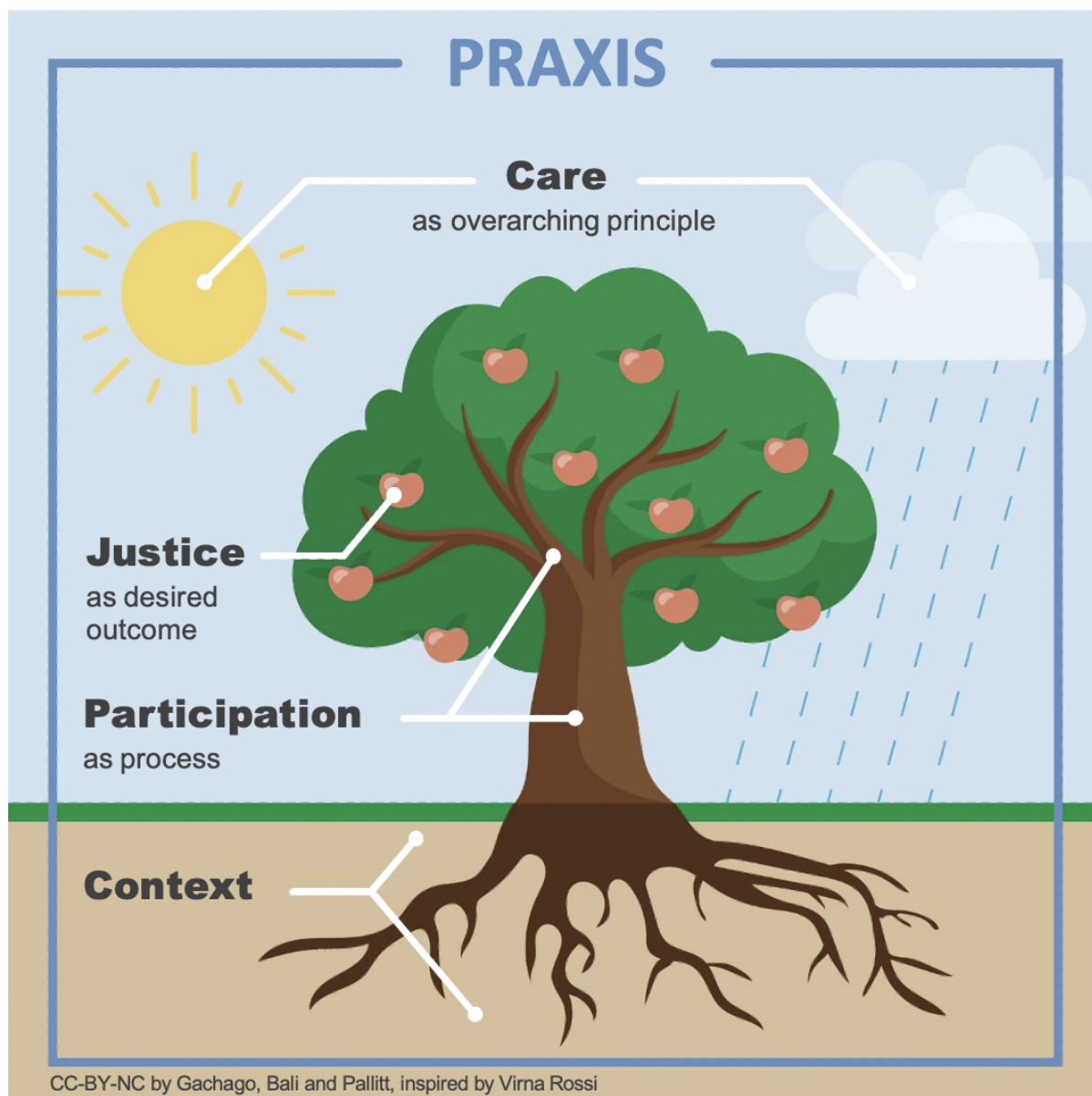


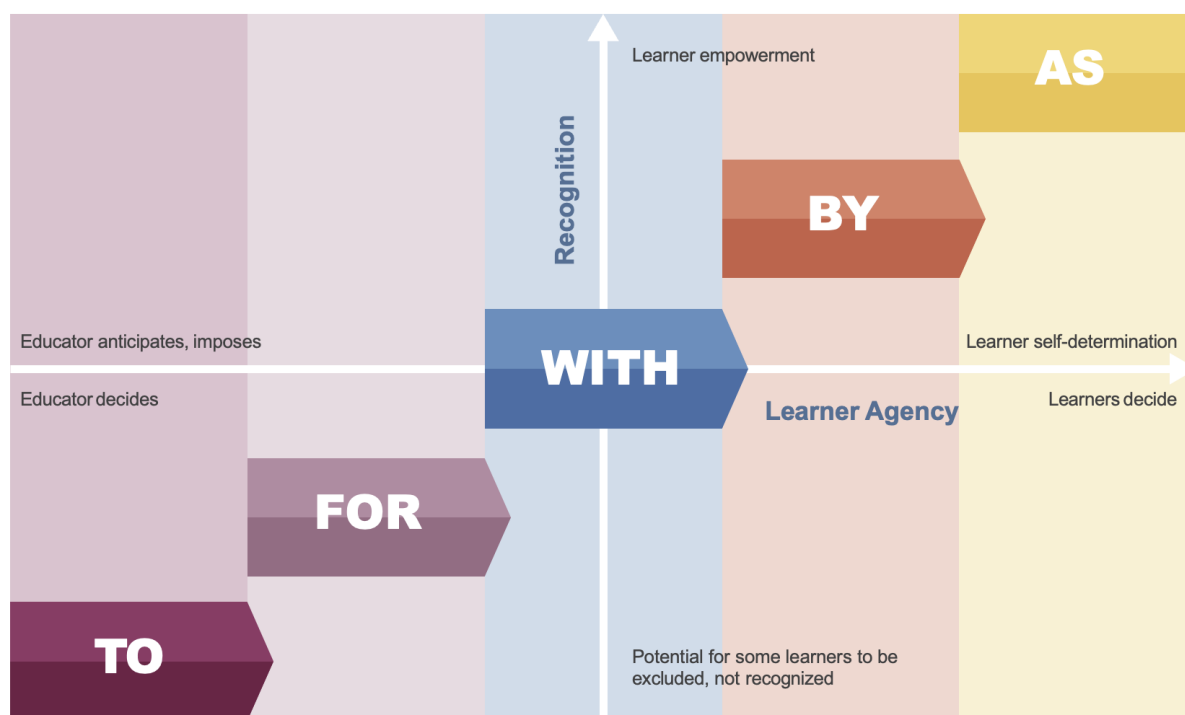
Figure 1: Care, justice, participation and context in the praxis of compassionate learning design

ALT TEXT: Image of a tree, with trunk representing “participation as process”, the sun and rain “care as overarching principle” and fruits as “justice as desired outcome”, resulting in “praxis”

Wehipeihana’s (2013) work on indigenous participation in monitoring and evaluation processes and its application to faculty/educational development, as presented by Carolyn Ives in Longstreet et al. (2020), inspired our compassionate learning design model. Wehipeihana’s model can be helpful in showing different approaches to participation. Her model is about Western evaluation with Indigenous groups, and the levels of doing so involve:

- **TO:** Evaluation done *to* indigenous groups, based on the assumption that Western experts know best. This is the most harmful form of evaluation. Participants are not invited to the table. A meal is prepared for them based on what the designer assumes they need.
- **FOR:** Evaluation done *for* indigenous groups by Westerners, which is benevolent but patronising. Participants are not invited to the table. A meal is prepared for them after perhaps surveying them on dietary requirements.
- **WITH:** Evaluation done *together*, but most likely with Western ways of doing things. This is the first step towards participation. Participants are invited to the table as guests and offered a variety of prepared meals to choose from.
- **BY:** Evaluation done *by* and led *by* indigenous groups (representation), but possibly still using worldviews of Westerners or needing to explain ways of doing things. Participants are invited to join the preparation for a meal at a table, where they may help prepare the meal, but the ingredients and tools are already there.
- **AS:** Evaluation led *by* indigenous people who have complete autonomy to enact their worldview without having to justify their actions. Participants design their own table, bring their own ingredients and tools to make the meal their way.

We adapted Wehipeihana's model to education (Gachago et al., in press), as illustrated in Figure 2. In this chapter, we are using the model in the context of educators and educational developers (as did Longstreet et al., 2020, who inspired our work), replacing “educator” with “faculty/ educational developer” and “student” with “faculty/teaching staff”, because in this context, the faculty/ educational developers are designing and facilitating learning experiences of educators at their institutions. Often, educational development is offered *to* educators by experts who assume they know what “best practice” is and what educators “need”. This is expressed in the term “academic development”, often used as a normative concept with an implied deficit in higher education contexts, which is open to dispute (Quinn, 2012).



CC-BY-NC by Bali, Gachago and Pallitt, adapted from Wehipeihana (2013)

Figure 2: The desire for participation – from designing with empathy to co-designing with compassion

ALT TEXT: continuum of participation from *to* to *for* to *with* to *by* to *as*, along two axes (recognition and learner agency)

We recognise that when educational or academic development work is centrally mandated and designed, it may come from a place of empathy (designing *for*, e.g. surveying educators to gauge interest and need, or responding to feedback after events) rather than compassion (*with* and *by*, empowering educators to co-create their professional development journeys according to their own philosophies and values). This then may lead to a more critical view of educational development, examining how broader structures may impact on teaching and learning practices and enabling us to move beyond the pathologising of individual educators' practices, as argued by Quinn (2012). This requires more than participatory educational development practices, as we will explain below.

Trauma-informed approaches to educational development for lecturers and student development (Imad, 2021a, 2021b) as well as humanising approaches to teaching online (Pacansky-Brock, 2020) gained currency during the COVID-19 pandemic. We draw on these humanising approaches in different ways as part of our support work. However, while these approaches centre agency, they do not necessarily unpack what such agency could look like and what different levels of agency there are. Wehipeihana's model helps us think about how agency plays out along a continuum towards more participation and self-determination. While, in our experience, most educators might embrace the *for* and *with* levels and feel satisfied that they have addressed and fostered participation and agency, we strive towards the *by* and *as*, which we believe to be more empowering for educators and result in their needs being met more compassionately. We also assert that other dimensions of our model need to be at play for compassionate learning design to be realised. In this sense,

participation does not automatically lead to the centering of care or to an orientation towards social justice. It is only through an underlying ethic of care in the ways educational development is conducted – and a recognition of positionality, intersectionality and the nuances of social justice in our respective contexts, both with educators and students at our institutions – that we may realise a more compassionate learning design “praxis” that involves iterative adaptations/revisions as we reflect on our practices and how they align with our values and intentions (see more in Gachago et al., in press).

Case studies

Through analysing three cases from three higher education institutions in the Global South located in South Africa and Egypt, we reflect on what the move to emergency remote teaching and learning has enabled as well as the fault lines it has uncovered in our education system. In this case, “learners” are the teaching staff/faculty at our institutions and the term “educators” refers to ourselves as faculty/ educational developers. We analyse the cases through the lens of compassionate learning design to support departments and institutions in the creation and facilitation of context-sensitive and flexible learning experiences with and for students. Based on design dimensions we created for context-sensitive networked professional development (Gachago et al., 2020; NLEC, 2021) and theories of social justice (Fraser, 2005; Tronto, 2015), we developed this framework further to help us reflect on our own teaching and learning practices, which we hope will inform our and others' practices going forward.

We share these case studies for reflection and analysis, rather than as exemplars, and discuss a context-driven approach to compassionate learning design that can be used going forward. All three of the authors used combinations of theories in our context which influenced how we supported staff and/or students. There are many ways to practise compassionate learning design and many theories one can use to inform one's approach.

University management at our institutions mandated training (where training on functional learning management system [LMS] use was assumed to be sufficient) and requested attendance figures of lecturers who attended these sessions. In the process of reflecting on our contexts and approaches to academic development together, we realised that there is a tension between institutionally mandated training imposed by management and more intentionally designed staff development opportunities which are responsive to staff and student needs and emerging contextual dynamics. Our approaches illustrate our agency as faculty/ educational developers and recognition of the agency of the educators we worked with to find the cracks and the potential for empowerment through compassion.

As faculty/educational developers, we have historically been marginalised, operating in *liminal* spaces within our institutions (Little & Green, 2012). In the wake of the COVID-29 pandemic and the move to emergency remote teaching, we suddenly became central to our institutions' educational offerings (something like “VIPs”), where we had power to use our expertise in digital education to suggest “best practices” to educators. We had a choice to make in how to take on this new role. Would we use our power to push an institutional agenda or could we empower educators at a time when they were facing so much uncertainty and losing control over much of their lives during the pandemic? We also realised that our approaches to offering professional development online during a crisis

would serve as a model for educators with their own students. The following case studies describe our approaches to academic staff development during COVID-19.

Towards communities of practice at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa (Daniela Gachago)

My case study is based at a large university of technology (a previous “technikon”, akin to a polytechnic in other contexts) in the Cape Town metropole. The global COVID-19 crisis hit South Africa hard. South African higher education had already seen major disruptions in the preceding five years. Student protests in 2015, 2016 and 2017 highlighted the inequality that persists in the country's tertiary education system and pointed to the need to rethink approaches to addressing systemic problems (Mbembe, 2019). The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) serves a large student population from underprivileged backgrounds, but also from both urban and rural contexts. Many of our students rely on resources offered on campus and in residences, and it could therefore not be assumed that students would have the kind of access to devices, data and a conducive study environment necessary for continuing the academic project online during pandemic lockdowns.

Phase one: Support “to” and “for” staff

In April 2020, the South African Minister of Higher Education announced that universities would need to move to “multi-modal remote learning systems including digital, analogue and physical delivery of learning materials in order to provide a reasonable level of academic support to all our students at all institutions in order to save the academic year” (SAnews, 2020: npn). Unlike other countries and other South African institutions which began immediately, CPUT only started what was termed the “multimodal project” on the 1 June 2020, following government guidance, with two months of enforced break. This gave us faculty/ educational developers in a central support unit an unusual amount of time to offer extensive staff development programmes to support our colleagues in moving their teaching online.

Following a similar trajectory to other staff development units worldwide¹, we first offered a series of intense, daily two-hour webinars over approximately two months, focusing on technical LMS training with the integration of some pedagogical advice. In hindsight, it was unsettling how we moved very quickly to this familiar but not necessarily most effective training mechanism. We had quite successfully run fully online short courses on blended learning course design in the past, albeit with relatively small participant numbers. These short courses covered pedagogical content, learning design activities and the integrated use of various tools, and combined independent online activities and collaboration with short synchronous meetings. We found this helpful in sustaining longer relationships with colleagues and creating deeper engagement and conversation around teaching and learning online. However, faced with the urgency of responding to COVID-19 and the uncertainty reigning on campus, we fell back on tried and tested, short skill-based workshops (as mandated by senior management).

At the time we did not consider the synchronicity/online nature of the webinar format and consequent potential for unequal access among colleagues – and we had fantastic results.

¹ <https://educationalist.eu/whats-next-for-faculty-development-fa1440c096c3>

As colleagues were not teaching and were under pressure to prepare for online learning, we had 100–300 participants on a regular basis at these webinars (which we recorded and shared for later use with colleagues who could not make it). We supported these webinars with various resources, such as online learning and teaching guides, often adapted from resources shared by other institutions under creative commons licence (for example, UCT's low tech online teaching resources). We also offered one-on-one consultations and technical support to staff and students via a helpdesk.

With time, we were able to improve and diversify our practices, offering more choice and sensitivity towards differently positioned colleagues. This also meant a move towards a more peer-support or mentoring approach, facilitating the sharing of good-practice webinars and the establishment of inter-faculty WhatsApp groups.

Phase two: Support “with” and “by” staff

One of my roles as a faculty/educational developer was to coordinate and liaise with our e-learning champions in various faculties and departments. One of the first things I did when COVID-19 hit us and uncertainty ruled, was to create a WhatsApp group to connect these e-learning champions and allow for sharing and collaboration across faculties; and as such mitigate against the uncertainty that we experienced over many weeks and months, with little and sometimes confusing communication from university management. While the majority of e-learning champions had never met before, my strong relationship with them and the trust we built up over years of working together transferred almost immediately into the WhatsApp group and allowed for intense engagement over many months.

This WhatsApp group started as a community of practice (reflected on in Gachago et al., 2021), with a clear purpose to share good practices of online learning, and, at the beginning, it was used extensively for this. As these colleagues all identified as e-learning champions, their passion for and experiences with blended and online teaching and learning created a vibrant space for sharing and discussion. But somehow this space also quickly transformed into something more, moving away from purely professional conversation to more personal and emotional engagements. There was a strong sense of care in the exchanges of these mostly women academics, who connected not only through their professional practices as academics pushing hard for innovation in their respective departments (and experiencing a huge amount of resistance), but also their similar experiences of multi-tasking, gendered distribution of labour and other challenges shared during these trying times. There was also a growing sense of responsibility for each other and belonging to this space that was experienced as different from other academic spaces we inhabited.

Finally, what made this space particularly useful was that it allowed participants to grow the confidence to push for changes within their departments that they would not have had without the support and encouragement of their colleagues. Many of the kinds of innovations (such as online summative assessments), which they had advocated for for many years, often with a huge amount of resistance from colleagues and management, were now suddenly possible. And even where there was still resistance, their shared support and encouragement allowed them to take firmer positions in their departments that they might not have taken without this engagement with this group of academics. This strengthened not only their positions in their departments, but sometimes even faculty and institution wide.

Supporting emergency remote teaching at Rhodes University, South Africa (Nicola Pallitt)

Rhodes University faces an intersection of social justice issues that filters into how we think about and support lecturers and students. A small, research-intensive university, Rhodes University is located in Makhanda, a small town in South Africa's Eastern Cape province. The city's ageing and ill-maintained infrastructure creates challenges for the community and university, from the provision of water to roadworks. Sixty per cent of staff and students are female and 55% of students received national student funding in 2021, indicating their family's low financial income status. The student demographics have shifted dramatically in recent years, from mainly white and middle-class students to a majority black student base with a larger number of students supported by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

Phase one: Support “to” and “for” staff

The university acquired a mobile app for our Moodle-based LMS in 2019, as the university was considering sending students home to study because of water scarcity in Makhanda. During the initial phases of the hard lockdown in 2020, a fellow educational technology specialist doing academic development work and I emphasised the importance of mobile friendly, low-tech approaches to emergency remote teaching among educators. We made videos demonstrating the use of the app, as educators with access to laptops and good connectivity had to shift their mindsets about the potential students they were designing for. While students received data from the university during this period and mobile network providers zero-rated URLs within the university's domain, uneven connectivity and infrastructure were major challenges in the province and other places many of our students call home.

Lecturers reported getting a better sense of students' circumstances. Many students reported how their circumstances were not conducive for learning in terms of lack of private space and small homes with many family members where they were often expected to perform household chores and participate in their online studies in between the demands of home life. As students came back after the hard lockdown, lecturers introduced more bandwidth-intensive forms of engagement into their teaching, such as the use of online meeting tools. However, when lockdown restrictions were tightened and students were sent home again, lecturers had to revert to their earlier approaches; they learned that students learning online on campus and students learning online at home are different. To design for emergency remote teaching adequately, educators needed to first understand their students differently, which involved empathy and some engaged in more compassionate approaches. Many educators were unable to go beyond empathy because of their own socio-emotional loads associated with the impact of the pandemic.

My colleagues and I were tasked with designing a student orientation for an online learning site to support students. Resources from the site were also shared openly as open educational resources on the university's open access repository. Key resources were translated into isiXhosa. We ensured that the site and resources were mobile-friendly and used these as an example to introduce educators to concepts such as scaffolding, low-tech principles, accessibility and how they might go about redesigning their course sites for

emergency remote teaching. Staff were encouraged to see their course sites through the eyes of their students during the initial stages of the pandemic and as mobile users. It was also about modelling a combination and length of resources that would be digestible and not overwhelming (i.e. reducing complexity and cognitive load). Some lecturers saw this kind of design for online, and mobile learning in particular, as “dumbing down” content and continued to share the same volume of readings, etc.

While we modelled this approach for educators to use with students, we realised that we were modelling an unsustainable practice through our own approach to supporting educators, which initially took the form of webinars and online resources (March to August 2020). We did so partly because all the other teaching and learning centres were doing it and it was mandated training. It was not an approach they could replicate with their students, as it was bandwidth intensive and the use of online meeting tools was expensive for students as they were not zero-rated by mobile network providers in the same way as university domains.

Phase two: Support “with” and “by” staff

Participation in synchronous online professional development opportunities dropped dramatically once the realities of online teaching played out, in which preparing for class and online marking demanded more time. With a change in lecturers’ workload demands and available time, we shifted our focus to refining and creating additional online resources (end of 2020 and start of 2021). Being responsible for supporting the LMS and responding to educators and students via our ticketing system, these requests were used as a barometer for what resources were needed and when.

“How much information can staff cope with right now?” was the question we asked ourselves on a regular basis and informed how we communicated with educators about resources, how we introduced new tools, and so forth. Timing, volume and relevance became key principles as part of a trauma-informed approach where we tried to decrease the level to which educators were overwhelmed. We sent out timely short communications via our “RU Teaching Online” course site, the university mailing list and supplied HODs with useful timely resources that link to resources on the course site where we curate and organise support resources. We regularly requested educators to share feedback about their preferred forms of professional development and design offerings and resources in response.

Trauma-informed principles (especially as relates to socio-emotional and cognitive load) informed how we adapted our approach, communicated with educators and students, and designed online resources to support them. Attendance at [online sessions](#)² dwindled dramatically and we found we needed to work strategically to sustain our own energies. While many of our webinars went beyond functional LMS “training”, we found that more pedagogically-oriented sessions were the least well attended. We found that educators’ engagement with pedagogical aspects were best mediated through engagement with fellow educators. Educators were invited, and later volunteered, to share their practices and experiences and some shared resources that they created for their students. We were nominated for teaching awards in 2020 and 2021, but could not be recognised in this way due to the fact that our department hosted the award. We believed this was because

² https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLe454_IxjIKQeb_FypopXrz66OQosl6qT

educators recognised that we were going beyond “training” to modelling care and creating opportunities for co-creation. “RU Teaching Online” became more than a course site with resources, it was a facilitated learning community for educators. Our tagline ending all communications was and continues to be “Keeping you connected”.

Educational Development Support at the American University in Cairo, Egypt (Maha Bali)

I am an Associate Professor of Practice at the Center for Learning and Teaching (CLT) at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Egyptian internet infrastructure can sometimes be unstable and unreliable, even in privileged areas. The majority of AUC faculty and students live in these privileged areas, and for scholarship students the university provides devices and support with home/mobile internet. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to move to remote teaching, faculty whose home internet was unstable were allowed to connect from their offices on campus, although this was probably not a suitable choice for mothers whose young children were home from school.

In my department, I had a large responsibility during the pandemic, but was not the ultimate decision-maker. Our role was initially to fulfil the recommendations of top administrators, but we decided to listen to faculty and students and adapt in ways that centered care during a traumatic time. We tried to ensure that learning experiences were equitable, believing that “[t]he work of the educational technologist is care work: we help our colleagues manifest care in their classrooms against all odds” (Gray, 2018/2021, p. 54). While my case study highlights the change in the level of agency and participation of faculty in their professional development, and the care we used in our processes, there is an underlying praxis of constantly iterating and reflecting while we take action and adapt it in order to ensure a socially just learning environment for students and teachers alike.

Phase one: Top-down support “to” faculty

In anticipation of possible closure, senior administration asked CLT and the IT departments to offer training on basic LMS functions and lecture capture software. While we conducted this training, we modularised it and made sure that faculty could choose which elements they needed training on, as some were already familiar with these tools. This was not a participatory approach, as the administration decided what we needed to do *to* faculty. Moreover, we anticipated that faculty with more interactive teaching styles would need more advice on ways to conduct online discussions effectively, as well as alternative approaches to online interaction including asynchronous (e.g. Google docs and collaborative web annotation) and synchronous video options (e.g. Zoom). Further conversations with faculty during these training sessions confirmed this need and we started offering documents with tips on how to get started. We initiated a more responsive approach *for* faculty, based on the needs they expressed.

Phase two: Responsive support “for” and “with” faculty

Once the institution and government confirmed university closure and the move to emergency remote teaching, the support we offered changed from tools to pedagogy and

included remote, one-on-one support and troubleshooting. Faculty could sign up online for technical or pedagogical support and we also started offering workshops via Zoom.

Administration requested that we create documents on our website explaining to faculty how to convert their activities and assessments to alternatives online. Although these documents were initially created by us, using our own experience and internet research, we also received many phone calls and made many phone calls with faculty to explore what they found applicable in their contexts and the kinds of barriers they faced. When requested to do workshops on things like “alternative assessments”, we kept updating the content and approach based on these conversations, conducting the workshops *for* faculty after hearing their feedback. Sometimes we conducted one-on-one consultations and departmental consultations on adapting assessments. In later iterations of workshops, after faculty had tried the online assessments, we invited some faculty from different departments to share their experiences (see, for instance, the “Faculty Share Good Practice” webinar³).

One of the points for contention in the process of recommending alternative assessments was that we were driven by care for students, wanting to ensure they did not have additional anxiety in times of trauma, while at the same time recognising (especially from late-night phone calls from faculty) that this process was anxiety-inducing for faculty as well, on top of the added cognitive load of the pivot to online and other household responsibilities and health-related uncertainties. For example, we hoped to avoid use of any kind of online proctoring because of internet instability and invasion of students’ privacy; however, some faculty who teach introductory quantitative courses requested it, so the university introduced it, cautioning people to use it only when necessary. As someone who also teaches undergraduate students, I also discussed online proctoring and its harms and dangers in class, and supported students in their protest against its use. One of my students was able to rally his colleagues and convince their department chair to ban proctoring in their department.

For ongoing learning communities such as our year-long Faculty Institute for Learning and Teaching, which I co-lead, I asked them what they needed, and they requested a session on conducting seminar-style teaching online. We conducted the session itself in a seminar-style fashion, with some of the faculty who have experience with online teaching sharing tips on engaging students online via discussion forums and other means. This was an example of collaboration of faculty/educational developers *with* faculty for professional development.

We recognised the need to offer care for teachers so they could care for their students. In the first semester of the pandemic, I offered open-ended “morning coffee”, my boss offered “afternoon check-ins” and several of us led “ask us anything” sessions to offer socioemotional support and immediate troubleshooting for people who did not find what they needed in the documentation on our website or did not have time to request consultations. These sessions also gave us an idea of what people needed and helped us design workshops.

When we started offering webinars on topics that came up during consultations, we heard from faculty members that they came not only for the content of the workshops but also to see us model how we used Zoom, so we became more intentional about our modelling of

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1xd1OxE9nk&t=5s>

processes. For example, instead of recommending breakout rooms as a way to engage students in small-group work, we would use breakout rooms during our sessions to show how it is done and later offer another session on how to use breakout rooms for people who wanted additional support in the use of breakout rooms.

We continually adapted our recommendations due to student and faculty feedback. Initially, we had recommended doing more asynchronous learning to avoid heavy reliance on unstable internet connections, but it seemed that the Egyptian government improved internet infrastructure during the pandemic and most people were able to connect relatively smoothly most of the time. We also realised that the pandemic situation was unlike previous online learning: faculty had little time to prepare; lockdown meant there was no social life outside of class; and people had a heavy cognitive load because of the trauma of the pandemic itself, affecting people's ability to manage their time and learn (Imad, 2021a, 2021b). In comparison to asynchronous sessions, synchronous sessions seemed to create a lower cognitive load, require less time management and meet a novel socio-emotional need. As more students and faculty chose to integrate synchronous learning into their courses, we started to offer more workshops on how to do so effectively.

Phase three: Preparing for fully online semesters

To prepare for fully online semesters, we created a self-paced online course on designing a course for fully online teaching, and in parallel started offering a three-hour Zoom-based institute that would model good online synchronous interaction, particularly using Liberating Structures⁴ for organising conversations among small groups of faculty, and using Google docs for collaborative editing.

Beyond the workshops and consultations, our department also offered a newsletter, *New Chalk Talk*, usually published every two weeks. Historically, some newsletters were authored by CLT and some by individual faculty members. We had several special editions during the pandemic, including ones authored by us offering top administrators advice moving forward, such as on designing equitable learning experiences. Eventually, we started publishing summaries of feedback from students and faculty surveys conducted by the institution, as well as our recommendations based on these.

Eventually, we started to recognise the need for faculty to hear from each other (rather than us at CLT as "experts") and started writing newsletters where we posed a question to a select few faculty, reporting back their responses based on their practices. This was an example of faculty development *with* faculty and *by* faculty, even though we were selecting which faculty's views would be represented in order to have diversity. One of the exemplars of this practice was an article where we cast our net wide and asked a large group of faculty to volunteer to write their tips, with a broader question rather than a specific one, and we ended up curating recommendations by 17 faculty members (Addas et al., 2020) and later republishing these tips in regional and global spaces. Afterwards, faculty were encouraged to curate their own newsletters within a department that already conducted a lot of their own professional development amongst themselves, and they shared it with us for publication (see Lewko et al, 2021). This was an example of faculty development *by* faculty themselves.

⁴ <https://www.liberatingstructures.com/>

Global-scale care in educational development

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, *Equity Unbound*⁵ (an open community which I co-facilitate) offered “Continuity with Care” conversations for educators and students, and later offered sessions open to anyone in the world to attend on topics like trauma-informed pedagogy by experts like Mays Imad. My institution did not have funding to conduct these, so I conducted them publicly via *Equity Unbound* and invited faculty from my institution to attend (and many did).

Around August 2020, I started co-curating/co-creating community-building resources for online teaching under the umbrella of Equity Unbound (which was funded and hosted by OneHE) using demo videos and resources with adaptations offered by educators from all over the world. This was a case of educational development support “by” educators “for” educators and “as” educators, since they brought in their own practices to share and offered adaptations for others with different contexts (more on this by Bali & Zamora, in press). Originally, I invited particular people to share, but later there was also a button for anyone in the world to contribute and people I did not know contributed valuable resources to the collection. These resources centre equity and care and exemplify “socially just care” (Bali & Zamora, 2022); they recognise the global need for socioemotional care and community-building in online teaching, while also recognising there is systemic inequality in educators’ readiness to do so in a fully online class as well as in the support available to them institutionally. They are designed to promote equity, and each activity has adaptations for different cultures and different technologies and tools, as well as templates and additional resources to save educators and faculty developers (many of whom were burnt out by then) time.

Discussion and conclusion

The positions of national governments and responses by university management at different institutions informed how relationships between care, participation and justice took shape. At some institutions, management led the first response to remote teaching and learning. In other institutions, lecturers had more freedom and flexibility. We were also conscious of student data shifting as national plans in our countries and universities evolved. Our institutions shared some approaches amongst each other, such as “low-tech” principles that respond to an awareness of students’ data constraints. We were conscious of lecturers’ increased workloads, the challenges of adapting their face-to-face teaching for online teaching, the stress of rapidly needing to become familiar with tools and practices many were not familiar with before the pandemic, and the added complexity of teaching students who often did not have the resources to learn online.

What emerged from our reflections is that what drives us and energises us is care and affect, as well as are our underlying principles. Our reflections show how only through constant communication, feedback, reflection and redesign (responding to the always changing and uncertain contexts we were working in) could we offer support that was caring and responsive to the changing needs of our colleagues. However, care can be both paternalistic and parochial (Tronto, 2013), and can lead to burnout if not distributed equitably

⁵ <https://onehe.org/equity-unbound>

amongst carers (Bali & Zamora, 2022). In our reflections, we recognise the need for the participation of both care givers and care receivers, educators, students and management and have all moved towards more participatory approaches over time (from *to* and *for* to *with* and *by*). However, we also recognise the need to co-create conditions for participatory parity in order for everyone to truly participate equitably. Only then can justice be achieved, but justice is never a guarantee:

While justice can be understood, can be felt, there is no template to follow, or checklist to work through for ensuring a just outcome. The requirements are humility, a respect for context, and a willingness to listen to the most marginalized voices...
Not all problems can be solved, but all problems can be illuminated. (Ursula Franklin, in Meredith, undated, para 13 & 18)

Conversations around how care during the pandemic was gendered, raced and classed (and how care was unequally distributed and taken up) are crucial in the endeavour to support academic staff in these difficult times: they illuminate injustices that are both common across contexts and differ in nuanced ways by context. Praxis then can be seen as the sustained relationship that is needed to change practice through engaged conversations and ongoing reflexivity.

We believe that compassion cannot stop at the individual level, but needs to be infused in both institutional culture and systems to allow broader uptake (e.g. Baran & Correia, 2014). In the current climate of neoliberal marketisation, compassion can very easily be sidelined as something that is relegated to certain groups in an institution, such as women or people of colour, with potential detrimental impact on their academic careers, or certain departments or units, such as student counselling. Care and compassion are not individual practices, but collective responsibilities towards building a higher education system in which we can all flourish.

This leads us to important questions on what the role of faculty/educational developers is in building a culture of care, in modelling parity of participation and in striving towards socially just outcomes is. To what extent do educational developers themselves have agency in order to cultivate it in others, and how do the power dynamics between educators and educational developers come into play? How does this work against a backdrop of administrators focused on neoliberal marketisation and competition? How might this reflect on the learning experiences of students? Are departments/centres of educational development primarily ones that respond to the needs of the institution/administration, or do they work as partners with teaching staff and envision strategic directions for the institution (Czerniewicz, 2021)? These questions unveil the complexity of applying our model in practice and how it might manifest in different contexts, and the fact that we need to strive towards a more compassionate learning design model. As bell hooks (2003) suggests in *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, acts of care have been and remain acts of political resistance and often go against institutional cultures. Educators and faculty/educational developers need to continue to resist and form allegiances to support long-term culture change towards more compassionate institutions.

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