Learning from Lockdown

Aims of presentation:

1. to introduce the two IOE institutionally-supported studies conducted last year, one involving student representatives the other surveying UCL undergraduates;

2. to share the framework that guided the analysis of students’ views of their experiences and priorities surrounding online learning, gathered via focus group discussions and an online survey;

3. to propose alternative conceptions for what could be a meaningful and rich online educative experience;

4. to discuss our findings and their implications for theory, research, policy and practice in a post-pandemic context;

5. to describe how staff and students collaborated on carrying out these projects, and later worked together to write an academic paper about to the two projects.
Learning from Lockdown:
Listening to students’ voices about the challenges and benefits in the post-COVID-19 digital practices

Cosette Crisan together with Kristyna Campbell, Lauren Clark, Lesley Gourlay, Evi Katsapi, Katherine Riding, Ian Warwick

UCL Institute of Education
Introducing the two institutionally-supported studies

IOE student voices exploratory focus groups

Context

- Carried out as part of the work of The ‘Sustainable Futures for Taught Provision’ (SFTP) IOE Task and Finish Group. One aim of which: "Prepare for long-term sustainability of high quality online and blended learning across all existing accredited provision."

Methods

- Selection of participants: Student Academic Representatives from a number of IOE departments, including Centre for Doctoral Education and ITE.

- Data collection: Participants asked about: teaching and learning as connected, questioning and inclusive (taken from SFTP). FGDs run June 2020. Twenty-seven students took part in six focus groups (three to seven participants per group), lasted 40-60 mins, via video-conferencing, recorded with consent.

- Analysis: thematically, to illustrate the three areas (connected, questioning inclusive)
Introducing the two institutionally-supported studies

IoE (CPA) Postgraduate Survey

Context
• Exploring the experience of PGT students as they attempted to cope with the sudden move to online, mainly asynchronous learning as a result of the pandemic.

Methods
• Designed an online survey (n=28) to explore experiences of students with online learning focusing on technology, pedagogy, communication with peers and teachers, and advice for the next cohort
• Drawing on survey responses, a video for the next cohort was produced spotlighting student voices and experiences (n=6)
• Results from the survey were shared with staff to help inform course design for the next academic year
• Video was disseminated to incoming students to help them prepare for online learning

Case study & Resources https://www.ucl.ac.uk/changemakers/case-studies
Staff and student collaboration

• The Idea for the ChangeMakers study was influenced by my own personal situation at the start of the first lockdown (struggling to study alongside work and home-schooling responsibilities and finding support through virtual coffee mornings);

• How were other PGTs coping during this hugely disruptive period, both practically and emotionally? Were other PGTs engaging in virtual activities ‘outside’ their MA studies?

• I suggested surveying this cohort (the ‘Covid Cohort’) as a ChangeMakers project which Dr Crisan supported. Dr Crisan introduced Dr Clark as a second staff member, who in turn introduced Kristy Campbell (IoE MA student) as an additional member of the team.

• ‘Reflections from the ‘Covid Cohort’; A collaboration between staff and students to support online learning for CPA PGTs’ was funded under the student-staff partnership scheme ‘ChangeMakers’.

• Together, the student-staff team created an online survey to elicit CPA PGTs’ views online learning experiences, identified key issues, then invited students to contribute to a short film titled ‘Preparing for Online Learning - Tips and Advice from the COVID Cohort’.
Alternative conceptions for meaningful and rich online educative experience

• 'Advisory' discourses surrounding the Covid crisis and the pivot to digital education emphasise interaction (e.g. Barratt 2020)

• May be performative (e.g. Macfarlane 2017), or even examples of learnification (Biesta 2012)

• 'Active learning' is often undertheorised, assumed to 'emerge'

• The complexities of student engagement need to be recognised

• Connectedness, questioning and inclusion are core values

• However, student perspectives are lacking on what generates and supports these

• Critical analysis of difference, affect, relationality, and operations of power in digital education is required
Findings and Implications for theory, research, policy and practice in a post-pandemic context

Connected

• Sense of isolation
• Sense of belonging / Sense of community
• Disconnection from peers / relationships
• Connection to opportunities

Questioning

• Overlap between questioning and connectedness, comfort/connection facilitated engaging in questioning.
• Relationality and rapport very important: with respect and autonomy mentioned as important values to uphold
• How to: Identify evidence-based resources and approaches. Dialogue to deepen understanding. Reflective questions, criticality, diversity of material, disruptive thought.

Inclusive

• Digital resources needed - Moodle, Lecturecast, Collaborate, Teams, Zoom
• Promote equality and diversity in all areas: including assessment, material, attitudes, staff, students "Diversity in leadership as well can be quite an inspiration"
• Students acknowledged staff’s efforts to decolonise and diversify the curriculum but noted that more action was needed.
• Students asked for more references from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic academics on educational policies, change and legislation.
Findings and Implications for theory, research, policy and practice in a post-pandemic context

**Synchronous Learning**

✓ **Positives:** likeness to face-to-face teaching, live discussion, teacher presence encouraged engagement, interactions and friendships with other students and staff, peer-led activities, a sense of belonging, real-time dialogue;

X **Barriers:** living conditions, language, issues with technology, mental and physical difficulties, work and family commitments.

**Asynchronous Learning**

• **Positives:** full-time work, time zones, watching recorded presentations, strong written material; asynchronous dialogue creates opportunities for questioning.

X **Barriers:** disengagement / zoning-out.

‘live is more engaging, but asynchronous is more inclusive’
Staff-Student collaboration

➢ Writing and publishing a scientific research paper:

➢ Presentation at *UCL Education Conference 2021*

➢ Invitation to present at *RAISE Conference*, Sept 2021, ‘Reflections from the Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment COVID Cohort’

➢ Presentation at *International Inclusive and Supportive Education Conference 2021*

