

Australia-ASEAN Academics Forum: Online Education during COVID-19 and Beyond

AAAF Dr Nooreen Noordin talk 14th Sep 2021

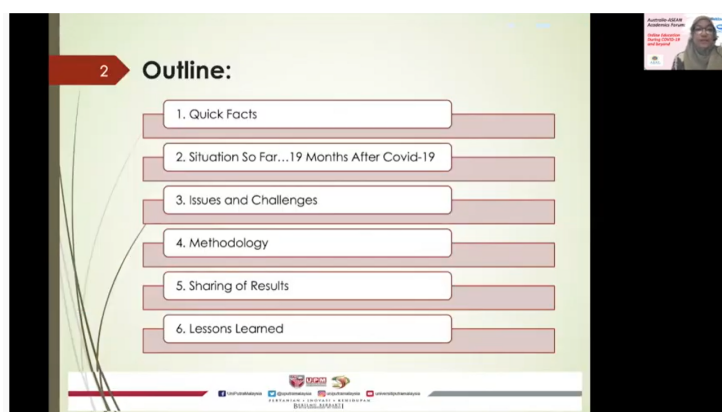
Transcript

Thank you Dr Vinh, thank you for the kind introduction. Let me just share my screen first.



Okay, so hi everyone. It's a pleasure to be joining all of you in cyberspace. I'm Noreen and first of all, I'd like to thank the organizer for giving me this opportunity to share my work. Since last week and yesterday, I listened to fantastic presentations and I've learned a lot from the topics delivered by our speakers, so I'm just happy to be part of this academic webinar and hope to be able to share a bit of what I know, what I've researched on, and hopefully it will be of some use to all of you.

So, my presentation is entitled addressing teachers' remote teaching needs during the COVID-19 pandemic: key lessons learned.



Outline of my presentation. Will begin with me telling you a little bit about my university. Reason being I thought it would be useful for me to provide the context of where I come from and the teacher trainees that we train at our faculty. So I'll be sharing some quick facts about my university and then I'll move on to the situation so far with regards to COVID-19 in Malaysia particularly. It's been 19 months after COVID-19. We've all had to undergo a lot of changes, transformations, moving things very swiftly. So with that, it presented a lot of issues and challenges which I will also be talking

about. And looking into specifically factors that affected the implementation of remote teaching especially. I'll also be talking a little bit about a small study that was carried out and I'll be sharing some of the results later on. And last but not least I'll be talking a little bit about the lessons learned from the experiences that the respondents went through, and what are the outstanding issues, and possibly recommend some solutions.

QUICK FACTS :

- 01 ABOUT UPM**
 - Founded in 1931 and accorded the "Research University" status in 2006
- 02 STUDENT POPULATION**
 - Local -19,700 or 77.6%
 - International – 5,699 or 22.4%
- 03 FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES**
 - One of the 15 faculties in UPM
 - linkages, research, services

Okay, so a little bit about my university. It's one of the oldest universities in Malaysia, University Putra Malaysia or UPM for short. It was founded in 1931 and it was accorded the research university status in 2006. So if you're wondering where UPM is, we're very near to Kuala Lumpur which is the capital city of Malaysia, 30 minutes away, roughly. We're also very near to the Kuala Lumpur international airport and we are also very near to Putrajaya, which is the government administration centre, as well as Cyberjaya, which is our IT and communications hub. So I would say we are strategically located, so that's good. In terms of student population, UPM has about roughly 27,000 students from 18 countries. So if we're looking into local students, we have about 19,700 students which makes up 76.6% of the student population while our international students, they make up 22.4 percent of the student population.

So, this is my faculty. The third picture here, this is the faculty of educational studies. It's one of the 15 faculties in UPM. So, this faculty prepares teacher trainees to become teachers to teach in secondary schools, mainly. That's our core business. So, the faculty offers eight programs at bachelor level and 10 programs at a postgraduate level. So we do a lot of research, provide services, and we do a lot of networking and collaboration with other universities, institutions and the industry as well.

COVID-19, MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AND BEYOND

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations

ASSESSMENT

- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations
- On-campus school operations

WHAT'S NEXT FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION?

PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS

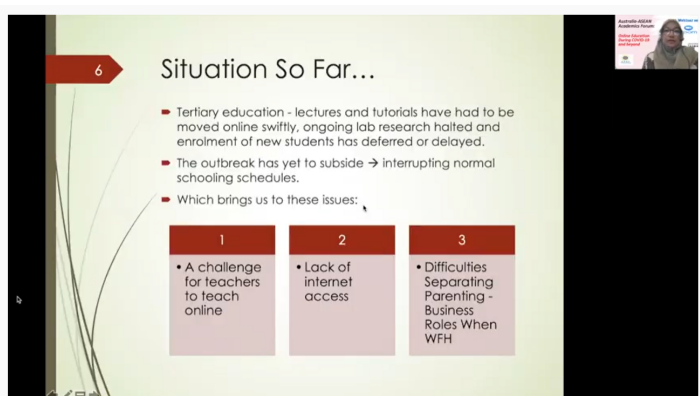
- DATA AND APPLICATIONS**
 - On-campus school operations
 - On-campus school operations
 - On-campus school operations
- TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)**
 - On-campus school operations
 - On-campus school operations
 - On-campus school operations
- COUNSELLING AND CO-CURRICULUM**
 - On-campus school operations
 - On-campus school operations
 - On-campus school operations

So, these are two infographics that I'd like to share with all of you from our newspaper, online newspaper NST, new street time. So, just to give you an overview. Since the second wave hit Malaysia at the end of February 2020, the Malaysian government had to carry out several mitigation strategies and one of them is to enforce the movement control order. So, we had several lockdowns which led to the closure of schools, pre-university institutions, as well as college and institutions of

higher learning. So when we talk about schools especially, the way schools have been operating have had to be restructured. New standard operating procedures have to be created and they had to be carried out. And the government had to give more emphasis on school infrastructure, giving more allocations for maintenance and rehabilitate long-abandoned projects. And I thought this was timely because when the pandemic hit, the students in the rural areas especially were badly affected. They were not able to follow classes online, and basically, this is because lack of technological infrastructure, lack of internet access, and we're talking about a slow or zero internet service in their areas. So it was a challenge for them to follow classes online because of limited applications. And teachers too have had to undergo training, immediate training, to familiarize themselves with online learning techniques, learning about internet data, having to modify their lesson plans and look back at the content, and the kind of content that you're supposed to familiarize, basically, with the online learning platform that was provided to them. So it was a challenge. And with students not having enough devices to go around, they don't have enough gadgets, this adds on to the problems faced by not only teachers but students as well.



So, with schools being totally closed, like I said earlier on, teachers were advised to make online teaching the way forward. Like I said, it wasn't easy. We're talking about schools being closed, and this involves 4.8 million primary and secondary school students and nearly 500,000 teachers. So, we were told to embrace the new normal, adapt, adopt accordingly. You have to make online teaching possible, but it wasn't very easy. It still is not easy for teachers and students, but I would say for the most part of it, students have, they were badly affected, and I would say it was a shock to the students' psychology when the pandemic hit and they were supposed to follow classes online.

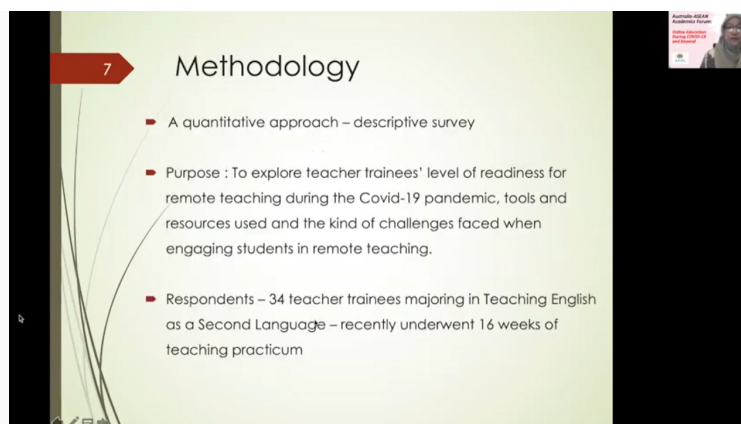


So, with tertiary level students it was the same as well. Lectures and tutorials have had to be moved online swiftly. Lab activities, lab research have had to be halted and enrolment especially, of new students, have either had to be deferred or delayed. So, this disrupted a lot of the university schedule and school schedule and gave rise to a lot of issues which I will highlight here.

And one of it is how it became a challenge for teachers to teach online and I'd like to share a bit about our experiences at the university. Especially in my case, when I was told to teach online and we started teaching online using zoom as our main platform, it wasn't very easy because all the while, we were so reliant on our face-to-face lectures. And I miss my tutorial sessions with my students, especially because this was the time when I could see them in smaller groups and get them to discuss and debate and get them to present. And it was easy for me to evaluate their participation and performances as well. It's been one more than one and a half years since we got to teach online. It's not that it's not doable. It is doable. But I would say that the quality of interaction had been greatly compromised. So we don't get that spontaneity and that impromptu bits that we usually get when we do our classes in a physical setting.

So the second issue was the lack of internet access. We're still having problems with that as well. We have issues with connectivity, talking about digital device and issues about students not being able to use their mobile data to turn on their cameras and getting kicked out of the zoom room every now and then. So, those are bits of problems that we face. But when you accumulate, when it's accumulated, it became a problem.

And the third issue is difficulties separating parenting, business roles when working from home. I'm a parent still working from home. It's been more than one and a half years already. So, I still find it difficult to balance work, between work and paying attention to my kids at home, paying attention to what they're doing online, their schoolwork, their homework, and making sure that they are actually learning. So, prioritizing has been a challenge, trying to prioritize and find the balance between life, work and family during the pandemic is just, for me, it has been a challenge.



7 Methodology


- A quantitative approach – descriptive survey
- Purpose : To explore teacher trainees' level of readiness for remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, tools and resources used and the kind of challenges faced when engaging students in remote teaching.
- Respondents – 34 teacher trainees majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language – recently underwent 16 weeks of teaching practicum

So, against this backdrop, there was a need to find out whether our teacher trainees back at our faculty, were they ready to teach online. So I did a small study. It was descriptive, just a short survey that was given to them after they had undergone their teaching practicum. So, the purpose was to explore teacher trainee's level of readiness for remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, tools and resources used, and the kind of challenges faced when engaging students in remote teaching.

So, the survey was administered to 34 teacher trainees who recently completed their teaching practicum. They did this for 16 weeks. They started in March and they just ended their teaching practicum last month. So, 16 weeks of teaching practicum and after that we just gave them a short survey, and they responded to the survey. So, let me just share with you guys the findings.

8

Methodology



- An adapted survey was used to gauge the needs of the teacher trainees – 4 sections:


 1. Questions about the job scope
 2. Questions about readiness for remote teaching
 3. Questions about tools and resources they used
 4. Questions about challenges.

- The survey was distributed using Google Forms

So, this was an adapted survey that was used to gauge the needs of the teacher trainees. And there are four sections to the survey. One is on job scope, the other one is on readiness for remote teaching, the third section is about tools and resources they used, and the last section was on challenges. So, the survey was distributed using Google forms.

9

Results: 1) The Job Scope




- Is your institution planning on delivering remote teaching content during the remainder of the current academic year?

Response	Percentage
YES	93.9%
NO	6.1%

All right, so let me just share with you some of the results that I found interesting. And under job scope, one of the questions asked was, is your institution planning on delivering remote teaching content during the remainder of the current academic year. And as you can see, over 90 percent said yes. I'm assuming that when they answered this question, that was the time when the number of COVID cases in Malaysia skyrocketed. So, it has always been 19k, 20k. So I guess, at the back of their minds and everybody's minds as well, it was difficult to go back to what was before. So, and they were told in schools that we're just going to continue teaching online. And of course, the decision to open schools or closing the schools rests in the hands of the ministry of education and of course the national security council.

10

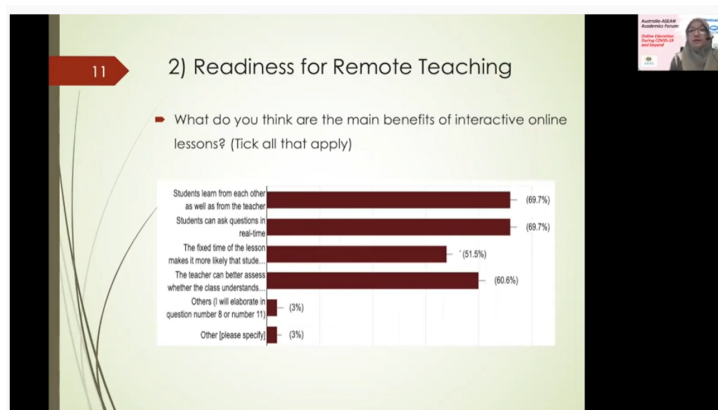
2) Readiness for Remote Teaching



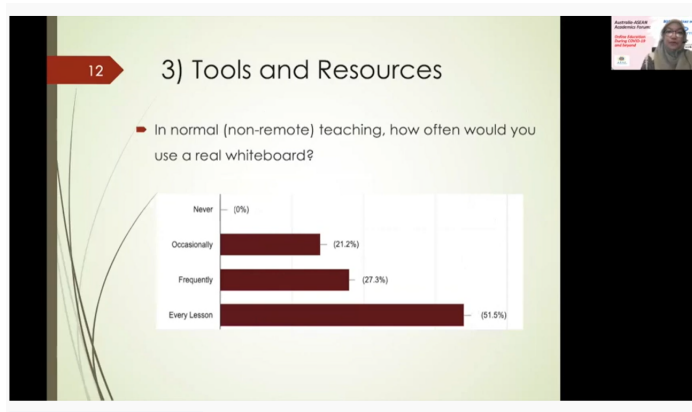
- How confident do you feel that you have the KNOW-HOW and TOOLS to deliver effective remote teaching?

Response	Percentage
Completely confident - I do it all the time and I'm a pro!	15.2%
Hopeful - I've not done it before, but now I can't wait!	6.1%
Reasonably confident - I've done it before, and it went OK	72.7%
Worried - I'm not sure where to start	6.1%

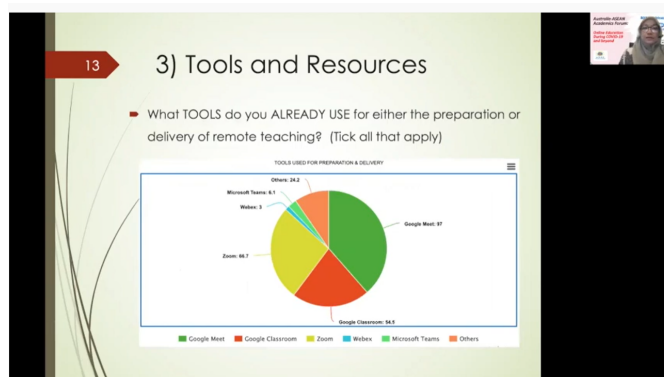
Okay, this under-readiness for remote teaching, one of the questions asked was did you feel that you have the know-how and tools to deliver effective remote teaching. So, over 70 percent of them answered, I've done it before and it went okay. So it was interesting to see that they were reasonably confident when it comes to using the tools to deliver teaching, to deliver content. And I guess, over time, more and more people have begun to adapt very quickly when it comes to using technological tools, digital tools. So, I guess, I mean, after all, we've all had to make that shift. Before, it was learning face to face in a physical setting. Now, we all have to do it in a virtual setting. So, and if you look at 15, this 15.2 percent said, I do it all the time and I'm a pro. So, this lot is, they're completely confident in using technology. So, my guess is these are digital natives and they use technology very seamlessly. So, it's easy to them, unlike me. I'm a digital immigrant, so I had to learn it from scratch. So, the transition wasn't that easy for me. So, under-readiness for remote teaching.



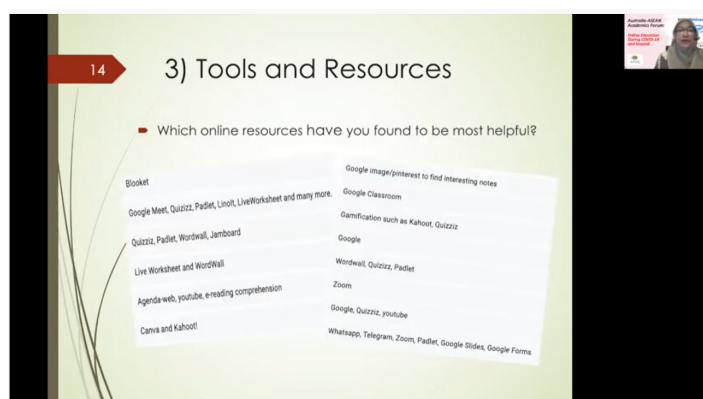
Another question that was asked was what do you think are the main benefits of interactive online lessons. So, as you can see, the top two items here gained the most responses. One, students learn from each other as well as teacher. So, I guess this is especially true when teachers are able to make the lessons interactive. If they are able to gamify the lesson, make it, add that element of competition, they were able to use Kahoot quizzes, so that made the lesson interesting for the students. In the second one, students can ask questions in real time. So still, there is a need to be able to ask questions in real time. And I guess, doing it online benefits both the introvert and extrovert students, because for the shy ones, they are able to type their questions in the chat space or the chat box. And this brings in the element of flexibility and convenience when it comes to communication. Plus, the session can be recorded so the teacher or the student can always come back to it later.



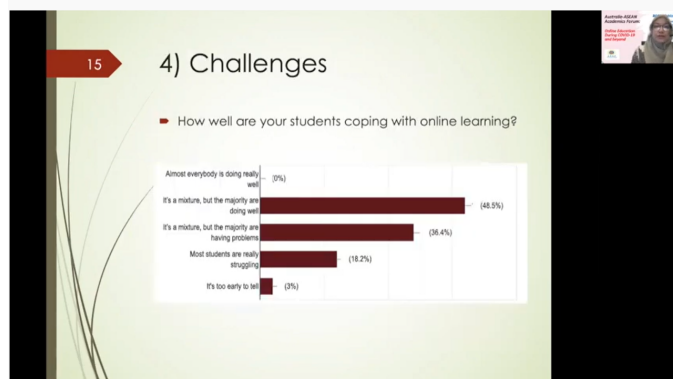
One of the questions, in the normal setting how often would you use a real whiteboard. As you can see, over 50 percent of them answered every lesson. I need to tell you that, for the cohort that underwent the teaching practicum and finished the practicum recently, they went through their first year, second year and third year face to face, and they were able to do their micro teaching sessions face to face. So naturally, I suppose, when it comes to getting ready for the practicum, initially they thought they could do it face to face. So, I guess, this is an expected response when you have that style of teaching already being trained. All right, so you use what is the most convenient which is our reliable whiteboard.



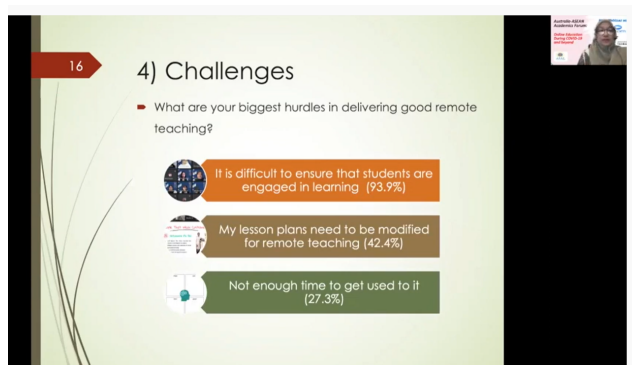
Okay, so other tools and resources also, one of the questions was what resources do you use for either the preparation or delivery of your teaching. So, as you can see here, majority of the responses comes for Google Meet and also for Google Classroom and for Malaysian teachers especially and students, Malaysian teachers and students have recorded the most number of logins to Google Meet, especially, and this is because Google Meet has been made an official platform by the ministry of education. So, for all teachers and students in Malaysia, they are provided with an official email from the ministry of education and with that, you are able to get access to what the ministry has prepared in terms of modules, training packets, applications, they're all in there provided by the ministry's educational resources and technology division. So it's quite useful. But you have to have an official ministry of education account. So this is what my kids are using. So, I've been able to see and browse what they are able to get access to and it's quite interesting. There's a lot that they can do. So for zoom, I guess, for zoom, it's widely used in most universities. I know that UPM pays a lot to get the premium version and to get high quality audio and video. And of course, we also use Teams and WebEx. But zoom would be the most popular one.



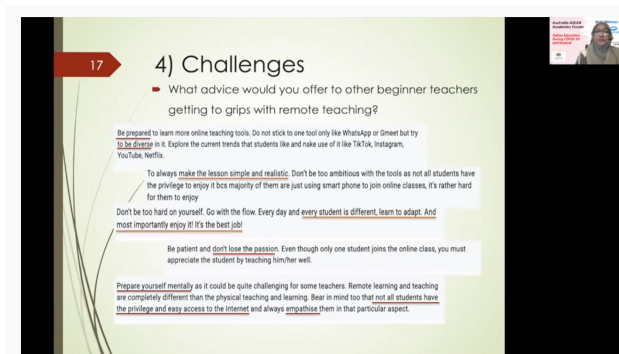
Okay, so the last question, I asked them which online resources have you found to be most helpful. And these are some of the responses given. This was an open-ended question. So, it just goes to show that digital technology, online tools are everywhere and they're becoming more popular and people are beginning to use it frequently. And it's wonderful to see the teacher trainees using a lot of different tools or applications here. So, apart from what's listed here, they also use Quizlet, Flipgrid, [?]. So, out there, there are many tools here to choose from. So, I always tell my teacher trainees you don't, you're not, it's not because you don't have enough resources to choose from. Your problem now is to choose the one that is going to be suitable for your group of students. So, you have to experiment all the time and see which one stimulates them.



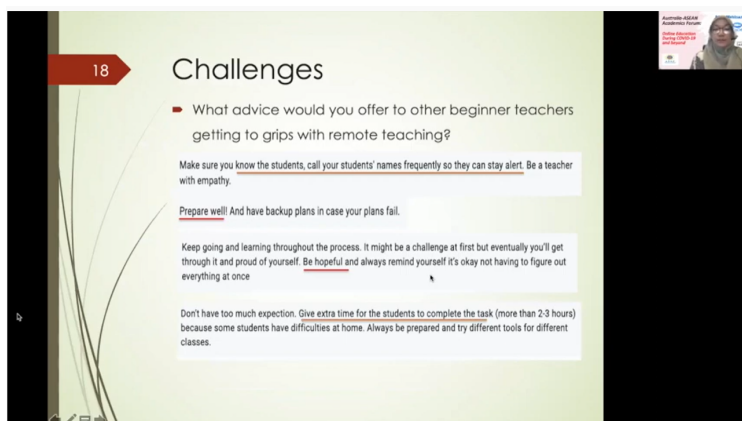
So, under challenges, one of the questions asked was how well are your students coping with online learning. And it's interesting to see that 48.5 percent responded saying that it's a mixture, but majority are doing very well. And 36.4% says it's a mixture. But majority are having problems. So, I guess, the problems could be due to lack of internet access, not being able to manage their time, too much information, how digital natives these days, the long texts are not doable for them. All they can take in is bite-sized information. And some also said they feel very stressful facing fatigue and exhaustion because of having to face the screen from morning until afternoon. So, these are some of the problems that they face.



Okay, so under challenges, another question that was asked was what are your biggest hurdles in delivering good remote teaching. So, the top three hurdles that I've listed here, 93.9% of them said it's difficult to ensure that students are engaged in learning, either online or offline. And the second one is my lesson plans need to be modified for remote teaching, so integrating technology in their teaching was a challenge, and navigating the use of technology and making sure that what you introduce in your lessons go in line with your learning outcomes. So, that was a problem. The third obstacle is not enough time to get used to it.



So, under challenges, an open-ended question as well, and the question was what advice would you offer to other beginner teachers getting to grips with remote teaching. And these are some of the responses that they have given. So, I just like to point out a few. So, be prepared and be diverse. Exploring is the key here. So, make use of other applications like TikTok, or Instagram or YouTube and even Netflix. I'm not sure how that's possible but it's all about experimenting, I suppose. Make your lessons simple and realistic, and this one is interesting. Now, this participant said don't be too ambitious, as not all students have the privilege to enjoy, because majority of them are just using smartphones to join in the class. So it's rather hard for them to enjoy the application to the fullest. So, another student said every student is different. Learn to adapt and most importantly, enjoy it. It's the best job. So, I like the positivity here. So, be patient, don't lose the passion and prepare yourself mentally. Not all students have the privilege to easy access, easy internet access. And try to empathize, be sympathetic towards the situation that they are in while trying to follow your classes online. So those are quite interesting for me.



More responses, okay. Know the students, call up their names so that they can stay alert. I think for this teacher, she had problems or he had problems, making sure that students are following the classes online. So, I guess this is where it's important to teach students about online etiquette and the rules and regulations when following classes online. How to chat responsibly, how to use the chat box, mute your microphones when you're not talking, give some grace if the teacher or the student is having problems, technical problems, or having miscommunication. So it's all about having the patience, prepare well and be hopeful, and always remind yourself it's okay not having to figure out everything at once, and give extra time for the students to complete the task. And I find this very interesting as well, as when I reflect on my own teaching, especially when giving or assigning tasks to my students, I find that it's difficult to give a shorter deadline. You have to give them space and the time to work on the assignments.



Okay, so the last section is on the lessons learned. Experiences. As educators, we all have a shared goal, especially during these COVID times, and that goal is to prepare our students for the new reality. Yes, we have done this for more than one and a half years and we're approaching 2022. But I always remind myself we always have to be mentally prepared. And the COVID situation has yet to subside. And as we approach 2022, we're facing a lot of uncertainties still. If you have heard of the acronym VUCA, V-U-C-A, v stands for volatility, u stands for uncertainties, c, complexities and a, ambiguities. So, with the VUCA situation going on, it gave rise to a lot of issues and challenges and these have all left many teachers, many students, many lecturers plunged into uncharted waters, so to speak. So, but whatever it is, learning has to continue and teaching and learning does not stop with COVID-19.

So I have here with me five aspects from remote teaching, synchronous and asynchronous activities, alternative assessment, parent-teacher support and support from faculty and administrative staff. But I'm just going to focus on remote teaching. And by the look of things, many of our educational institutions, particularly in Malaysia, we're still going to be using, doing things online. Online teaching will still continue, so it looks like it's going to be with us for quite a while.

So, what do we do? So, apart from having a positive outlook towards online teaching as teachers, we need to find ways, new ways, or improvise on the ways we try to engage our students. I believe that student engagement is important, and as teachers, we must not see distance as a barrier. Instead, we must see, we must work on making the distance disappear. In my opinion, this is just my opinion, we have to set realistic goals, we have to use tools that we're comfortable with. If you're comfortable using certain online tools because you are able to use it at ease, use them, and meanwhile try to experiment on other tools as well. But whatever it is, it's important for us to be open-minded. And I think flexibility is key here. And we need to figure out how to provide a rich learning experience for our students, especially in a virtual setting. Because for me, at the end of the day, you don't want your learners to get the short end of this pandemic and to lose out on getting the learning experiences that they should be getting. So, I suppose this disruption has led to opportunities. It has opened up opportunities for us to rethink about our roles and for us to try new approaches to what we have been doing the same way here for so many years. So, it's time for us to look forward to 2022 with renewed spirits and guns blazing, ready with all the tools that we have learned, and use it effectively.

And that brings me to the end of my presentation.