

Living at Work: Teaching Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This article presents a case study of what educators from an initial teacher education provider in Aotearoa, New Zealand learnt from the collapse of institutional practice architecture during the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. It explores how educators responded to the challenges emerging from living at work and recognises the interconnected links of educators' practices in their sayings, doings, and relating. The study was conducted using semi-structured interviews to gather in the moment lived experiences of nine teacher educators in their 'living at work' context. The insight from these interviews provides a unique perspective of how educator and student wellbeing can be sustained through relationships. The collapse of institutional practice architecture highlighted arrangements and set-ups within the institute that enabled or constrained educator practices and how the changing arrangements impacted student wellbeing.

Keywords: Online teaching; practice architecture; educator wellbeing; context collapse; initial teacher education.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unexpected and profound changes for people. It disrupted 'business as usual' with unimaginable and unprecedented shifts across many sectors, including higher education, when a nationwide lockdown was imposed across New Zealand (Babbar & Gupta, 2021; Tesar, 2021). Traditional educational arrangements were displaced as campuses were abandoned and educators had no choice but to set up workspaces in their own homes. Alternate modes of teaching had to be pursued for continuity of learning (Babbar & Gupta, 2021). Effectively, education and educators were forced into remote instruction (Tesar, 2020). The transition from face-to-face and online teaching to remote instruction was swift, as the New Zealand Government responded to the emerging health crisis. These public health measures meant that many of the pre-existing practice architectures associated with teaching and learning inside educational institutions, ceased to exist in their conventional form. For academics, the sudden transition to online modes of teaching and learning created a reality in which they were "obliged to recreate their lives, and their practices" (Sjølie et al., 2020, p. 85). There is an emerging body of knowledge exploring the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education, including themes related to: attendance, digital technology access and platformisation, modes of education, and what constitutes effective teaching and learning (Atherton, 2020; Leask & Ziguas, 2020; Marinoni & van't Land, 2020; Paliwal & Singh, 2021; Piemani & Kamalipour, 2021; UNESCO, 2020a; Valsaraj et al., 2021; Yunusa et al., 2021). This paper specifically seeks to make sense of educators' experiences of living at work using the theory of practice architecture. Furthermore, it explores teacher wellbeing during this time, recognising that changes in practice brought about new demands, new pressures, new ways of working, and had implications for student success. Accordingly, practice architecture provides a lens through which unexpected changes to educational practice can be examined.



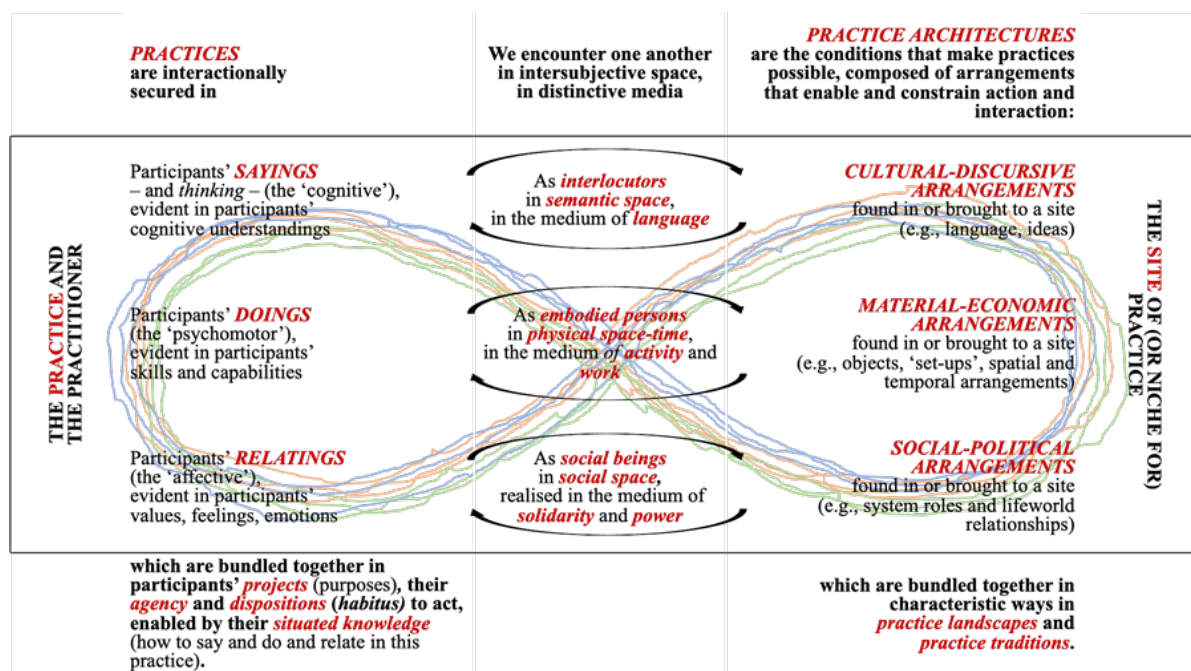
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Practice Architecture Theory

The practices of educators and educating are influenced by what Biesta (2022) describes as “built spaces” (p. 337). It is, therefore, important to investigate both the complexities of educational practices and how these built spaces influence the practices of educators. According to Schatzki (2005), practices are situated in distinct sites at distinct times and develop according to the conditions of the site at that time. Kemmis et al. (2014) defines these as “practice architectures” (p. 127). Figure 1 shows Kemmis’ (2022) graphic representation of the theory of practice architectures and the relationship between educator practices and institutional practice arrangements (p. 123).

Figure 1

The Theory of Practice Architectures



The framework of practice architecture facilitated the means to analyse both the arrangements that hold practices in place and the implications of changing educator practices for student success. Kemmis et al., (2014) identify educator’s practices as “sayings, doings, and relatings”: sayings (forms of understanding), doings (modes of action), and relatings (ways of relating to each other and the world). They describe the three arrangements that enable or constrain these practices as: “cultural-discursive” in language and ideas, “material-economic” in the physical space and time, and “social-political” in the relationships between people (p. 3).

Practice architectures are a lens for critiquing the teaching and learning practices associated with an educational site. It is these arrangements that, when bundled together, form the practice landscapes and practice traditions of the site. It is also these arrangements, the traditional plans, frameworks, and processes enmeshed in higher education institutions, that Tesar (2020) refers to as being “shattered” during the COVID-19 lockdowns (p. 557). This study investigates how new practices were developed when the shattering of practice arrangements meant practice architecture had to be recreated outside of the educational institute. The theory of practice architectures provides a framework for us to consider the relationship between pedagogy, practice, and practice architectures, how these are intricately connected, and how they are influenced by change (Edwards-Groves, 2018).

In the traditional format of education, educators rely on arrangements that establish the practice landscapes and practice traditions of the institution. These traditional practice landscapes are formed by the entanglement of cultural-discursive arrangements found in, or brought to, the institution through language and ideas, material-economic arrangements, found in or brought to, the institution through objects and spatial arrangements, and social-political arrangements found in, or brought to, the institution through relationships between people (Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2014). The practice landscape

in the higher education context collapsed and became messy. Well-established routines, structures, classes, timetables, and meetings were destabilised. The sense of normality vanished, causing tension between institutional expectations and educators' experiences of reality, "as they came to practice differently under new conditions" (Sjølie et al., 2020, p. 87). Educators processed new ways of working in the intersubjective space between the institute's traditional practice landscape and their own teaching practices. It is in this space that educators were able to find new ways of practicing.

Contextual Background

Although online education has become an essential component of teaching and learning in many higher education institutions, in the School of Teacher Education at Bethlehem Tertiary Institute (BTI) it has never been relied upon as the singular means of course delivery across the teaching programs (early childhood education, primary and secondary teaching qualifications). At BTI, a blended approach to course delivery had been the model of education delivery until the nationwide lockdown. This blended approach was used to complement face-to-face teaching and learning interactions. The rapid move to working at home during the lockdown forced educators to evaluate their teaching practice and adapt to their new working environment (Tesar, 2020). Consequently, discussion concerning the challenges educators encountered with online teaching, their competence, their self-efficacy, and the implications for students became critical to understanding how educator wellbeing could be supported and maintained.

On a global scale, this shift has given higher education a chance to reimagine what the post-COVID-19 practice architectures of education will look like as institutions design new flexible frameworks that seek to learn from what Tesar (2020) describes as COVID-19's "shattering" of higher education's traditional plans, frameworks, and processes (p. 557). By drawing on participant experiences of teaching during lockdown, this research seeks to understand how those in higher education developed what Bailey et al., (2021) describe as "a mindset for this moment" (p. 493).

Method

Increasingly the narrative of educators' lived experience is significant as initial teacher education (ITE) providers seek to develop a responsive understanding of the change in practice architectures that take place within their institutions. Educator narrative provides an insider human perspective that traditional scientific outside-in theoretical lenses often miss or marginalise (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2012; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2019; Koole & Parchoma, 2013)

This research seeks to explore not a grand narrative, but the micro-narratives within and between teacher educators during COVID-19. Micro-narratives consist of both facts and emotions contributing to the educator's wellbeing. As researchers and educators who experienced living at work, we were interested in how the practice landscape was rearranged to enable and constrain our teaching practices and those of our colleagues. Our response was to bracket researcher assumption and allow the narrative of the participant to be the central focus. It was important for us to be aware of the potential bias arising from our own experience and perspectives as researchers who were also participants contributing to the narrative. We, therefore, did not analyse our own interview transcripts and we used a collaborative consensus-based approach to identify the key themes from participant responses.

Biesta's (2014, 2017) lens of deconstructive pragmatism underpins the methodology used to guide this research. This approach creates an inside and unassuming position for the researcher to explore participants' own narratives of how they deconstructed and reconstructed in the moment meaning during their lived experience of navigating the forced shift to online education (Wood, 2012). These narratives, in the framing of new practice architecture, have the potential to add insights from lived experiences to the emerging discourse in educational spaces and how teacher educators might be supported to pivot contexts in which unpredictable change occurs.

Our research design used semi-structured interviews. Educators were invited to participate in the research during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, after the first nationwide lockdown in New Zealand. Those who chose to be interviewed engaged in a 30-minute semi-structured interview in which open prompts invited them to share their experience of adapting and navigating the role of educator during the pandemic. The use of open-ended prompts allowed each participant, rather than the researcher, to control the narrative and share their experience of living at work during the lockdown. These semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for the researchers to explore participant experiences, practices, value positioning, and expectations in a way that other forms of qualitative data gathering may not have produced (Cohen et al., 2017; Gray, 2018; Schutt, 2017; Winwood, 2019).

The participants in this study consisted of nine teacher educators from Bethlehem Tertiary Institute (BTI) in Tauranga, New Zealand. Participants were from three teaching programs, representing different genders, ethnicities, and varying levels of experience in adult teacher education.

Results

Sayings

Educator's *sayings* (practitioner-talk) are influenced by the cultural-discursive arrangements found in or brought into educational sites. These are represented in the language, ideas, and forms of understanding that educators adopt in their everyday practice (Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis, 2014, 2022). Analysis of the data from participant interviews in this study uncovered changes in practitioner-talk that occurred due to the sudden rupture of existing site practice arrangements. Consideration of ideas, understandings, and language commonly associated with online learning were not fully embedded in practice pre-COVID-19 lockdown. This caused a pressure point for educators. Educators had to navigate new meaning as it was made in the moment. Self-efficacy was especially relevant to how educators perceived and negotiated steps forward in their practice of teaching online (Soncini et al., 2021):

That day that I did the first lecture, I felt so alone, and I didn't know who I could tell. I didn't know who to admit that to, that I felt like I'd utterly failed... That's quite stressful. I think it is because of the technology. But there have been such great highs and great pleasures of being online with people and enjoying what you're doing and getting good feedback as well. (Participant Five)

The participants in this study expressed concern, worry, and anxiety related to the condensed time they had to collate and collect the resources and equipment they needed to conduct their work from home. Participant Four expressed this as feeling, "... quite overwhelmed, because I wasn't sure how long it was going to be for, and how much stuff we had to take with us, and we had such short notice." Participant One articulated this feeling also:

Well, it all happened so quickly. I did feel a sense of panic really because it didn't give me time to process how it was going to work, how I was going to get things that I needed from my office. Would I be able to come back and get different things I needed? How was I going to deliver the courses successfully without some of the course texts and resources? It was that control, being controlled you know, it was basically being imprisoned and you hadn't even committed a crime. It was such a feeling of dread, it was horrible, it was terrible. (Participant One)

Because the campus closed, practice-talk became focused on questioning the rising instability that institutional directives could not answer. For many educators this resulted in their loss of voice as they adjusted to the shifting practice landscape. In the words of Participant Five, "Okay, well, we'll sit and wait until everybody else tells us what to do." Guidance was needed as many participants felt uncertain about what was required of them to interact and communicate, "without looking like a total dummy" (Participant Five). As educators began to communicate with one another about their uncertainty, feelings of isolation and loneliness dissipated which allowed practice conversations to emerge. The lockdown brought to the forefront how changes in practice arrangements can create a destabilisation of educator practices, their wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their students. Educators' reactions to transitioning to a home working environment and online course delivery destabilised the language of self-efficacy with words such as 'frustration' and 'anxiety' being prevalent in their practitioner-talk. Participant Nine expressed this uncertainty, "In this sort of time where we don't know what the time frame is going to be, no-one can give certain certainties. You can't say, 'Well, I am sure that we will be on placement next semester.'" Educator stress and confusion highlighted in international research conducted by UNESCO (2020b), affirms the uncertainty our participants expressed regarding how long both the lockdown and pandemic would last. Because of the unfolding situation, certainty could not be guaranteed.

The ramifications of moving teaching and learning to being fully online are evident in the practice-talk of educators. "Daunting" was how Participant Nine identified their thinking around using digital technology to teach online as they had not been told, and had not asked, how to properly use the institute's online teaching tools. Participant Two had similar thoughts, "It was a real anxiety to get au fait with either Collaborate or Zoom to actually do the online teaching. That was quite daunting for me, and I was really anxious about that." The practice-talk of both these educators progressed as they began to collaborate with colleagues. Participant Two summed up their experience of moving from survival to stability and recognised that their increasing confidence in teaching online stemmed from the courage to ask for help from colleagues:

The whole technical part of it was really frightening. But at the same time the learning was huge. Every day there was new learning of something and now I feel more able, Googled up. I'm teaching in a different, and probably more differentiated, way now than I was before. (Participant Two)

A significant finding from the study was that the practice-talk of educators evolved as they shifted from initial shock into a state of survival and then to one of stability which allowed them to explore the landscape of online learning (Piemani & Kamalipour, 2021). Participant Three described their growing confidence in migrating students to online learning, “I had quite a lot of long conversations because they really needed help transitioning to distance learning.” Transitioning from a state of shock to stability in this burgeoning practice landscape was dependent on the competency and skills of educators to adapt their pedagogy to meet their own, and their students’, changing arrangements (Paliwal & Singh, 2021; Soncini et al., 2021; Sjølie et al., 2020).

The language used by participants to voice their experiences of transitioning to working at home and online course delivery showed that the COVID-19 lockdown period was cognitively and emotionally taxing (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Practitioner-talk highlighted the stress resulting from what MacIntyre et al. (2020) perceives as lack of the physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries between the education and home sites:

There's the frustration of getting that routine going, setting boundaries at home to help family members understand when Dad's at work they can't bust in and interrupt. That's taken a while, but the kids have been good with that. (Participant Eight)

Brought to light in this participant-talk is McCallum and Price's understanding of wellbeing as “diverse and fluid” (2015, p.5). Participant Eight's understanding of their wellbeing is clearly connected to self, family, and context:

In terms of family, we'd been doing a bit of preparation beforehand as best we could to try and make sure we had a strategy in place, not just for us but also for my parents, with them being just down the road. We had to be planned with my daughter's health and with my health because we're both in that 'at-risk' category of people that need to be prepared and aware of the situation. Being a creature of routine, and comfortable in that, those anxiety levels did begin to rise. (Participant Eight)

Significant within this, is the participant's conceptualisation of how the blurring of the personal and professional boundaries was a cause of anxiety and frustration (Higgins & Goodall, 2021). Their ability to ‘feel good’ and ‘function effectively’ was clearly connected to their self-efficacy and the challenges they faced working from home (Dodge et al., 2012).

Doings

Changes to the material-economic arrangements of the institute during the COVID-19 lockdown had a significant impact on educator's practices. The material arrangements in ITE encompass physical spaces (teaching spaces, offices), the arrangement of space and time (timetables, meetings), and the access to and availability of physical resources. Educators were forced to reframe their practices in their personal spaces as it became apparent that “we are not so much working from home, but living at work” (Variyan & Reimer, 2021, p. 2):

Probably the hardest impact for me is working in my kitchen because I am on the dining table. I don't have a closed room, a closed office or anything like that. I've found that even the chair I am sitting on isn't a computer chair so, you know, you get a sore back. (Participant Four)

The trickiest thing has been the fact that Kevin and I have always had our computers beside each other in the office. When I am working at the institute and then I am just in there for a quick short time in the evening that's fine, but he's finding it hard having me in there all the time. So, what I am trying to do now is do any of my online work like this in Oscar's room so that my talking does not annoy him. (Participant Nine)

Both Participant Four and Nine explain how the rearrangement of spatial architectures within the home had repercussions with other people living in the house as decisions related to the use of space had to be negotiated both intrapersonally and interpersonally. Educators not only had to consider themselves, but other members of the family as they constructed their new hybrid ‘living at work’ reality. This led to an increasing awareness by participants that students, at the same time, were also navigating the reconstruction of their own hybrid reality and were looking for support from educators to do this successfully.

Rearrangement of physical workspaces became an urgent priority for the educators in this study to maintain normality for themselves and their students. Entry and exit from the teaching space were non-existent, leading to an inability to separate different rhythms of life from each other. Working at home during lockdown produced new forms of social time, being more circular without a set rhythm (Bancroft, 2021). According to Variyan and Reimer (2021) the shift from purpose-built educational spaces to kitchen tables and living rooms both enabled and constrained educator's practices. Gourlay (2020)

suggests that the reconfiguration of workspaces led to a conceptual move from structural to personal agency and became evident in what educators had to say about working from home.

Further complicating the change in physical space was the accompanying change in the organisational structure as timetables and work plans had to be adjusted at an institutional and program level to accommodate the new working reality. Participant Eight noted, “One of the hard things about working online is almost it can become a 24/7 job.” All participants expressed the regularity and intensity of meetings, the time needed to reshape lessons, an increase in pastoral care to support students’ wellbeing, and time to read and reply to an increased number of emails had a bearing on their ability to carry out functions in other areas of their life.

Participant One’s thoughts reflect what Zhang et al. (2020) identify as the challenges and limitations educators faced in shifting from face-to-face to online learning, “Online stuff, like Padlet, if you create more than three then you have to pay for it. I’ve found that quite challenging, when I’ve gone to the leadership team and asked for that and had no response back.” The constraints of paywalls and restrictions caused by individual and institutional financial limitations impacted Participant One’s sense of self-efficacy and practice. This highlights how leadership decision-making was based on processes designed for fixed institutional practice arrangements rather than the fluid reality which had emerged almost overnight (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Participant Eight also indicated this in their comments:

We had some bandwidth issues early on. That’s the major thing that concerned me. We faced the situation of my wife being at home at work, the two kids being at home and needing the social interaction that the Internet provides, and connection for school, and for my work. (Participant Eight)

Additionally, the arrangement of physical resources in and between homes influenced educator self-efficacy:

Because my personal laptop’s quite old, I have found working from home, not having the equipment, is quite stressful. When things break down, I’ve found that difficult. (Participant One)

The other challenging thing for me has been getting resources from the library because I’m now starting to think about course critique and course material and things like that. Not being able to access eBooks from our library, I have found that quite frustrating. I think some of the students have too, regarding assignment work. (Participant One)

While a portable laptop computer was provided by the institute to all full-time educators, it did not prove to be the silver bullet that the leadership team hoped it would be. Educators revealed the disparity of resource access influenced their wellbeing and ability to support their students. For example, Participants Six and Eight talked about how access to other digital resources in the home, prior experience in online teaching platforms, pre-existing offices in their homes, and the foresight to self-manage the material-economic arrangements by purchasing extra equipment, enabled them to make the transition to working at home smoother than some of their colleagues. However, their experiences of integrating digital resources into their teaching and student learning meant that their colleagues had expectations of them being the ‘go to’ person for digital pedagogy and troubleshooting. This required time and all educators needed money and approval for tools to teach to a standard that empowered, rather than undermined, their self-efficacy and sense of wellbeing.

Relatings

Teaching is a relational practice. Without the social-political arrangements found in relationships between people, Norsworthy (2021) suggests that “the purpose of teaching is diminished” (p. 53). Varyyan and Reimer (2021) exhort us to examine the social role of architecture in the way it shapes practices. Educators in this study signposted relationships as having the greatest impact on their practices. Participants revealed a growing understanding that student success was connected to communication that went beyond academic input and focused on their wellbeing. For Participant Eight, this became evident in discussions that began with, “Let’s catch up and make sure that you’re okay.” Within the new online practice architecture, student success was connected to making sure that the negative feelings they experienced were minimised by educator-initiated connection as explained by Participant Eight, “... playing an active role. Not just in the learning but in the overall hauora (wellbeing) of the student.”

Another participant highlighted how relationships helped educators move from a state of shock to stability. Initially Participant One expressed feelings of dread about isolation, however they found ways to communicate with family, friends, and colleagues which provided the relational support they needed to be an effective practitioner:

It was so lovely having messages from colleagues; I thrive off the connection of others and they went out of their way to help me feel connected. Although I was physically isolated, they made me feel that I wasn’t isolated emotionally, and those

friendships and collegial relationships were strong if not stronger than ever. Knowing that there was regular support made a huge difference. Everyone was trying to do something for each other and that was special. That was the big thing for me, feeling connected. (Participant One)

Relationships proved to be pivotal in re-establishing educator self-efficacy and resilience. Many educators initially experienced what Bancroft (2021) describes as “imposter syndrome”, that the new online reality would expose them as being a fraud (para. 1). Support from other educators provided reassurance that they would be able to teach students online confidently and effectively. Participant Five recounted:

...coming out of that class feeling like I need to resign now because that was the worst teaching that I had done in my life. I feel so bad. That was just a failure, it was a flop... They didn't understand me, I lost them... Just in my own self I thought, this isn't going to work for you. You're not going to be able to do this and I don't ever want to do that again.

Practitioner-talk revealed collegial support was vital in overcoming the initial state of destabilisation. Participant Two talks about how a colleague's creation of short 'how-to' videos and role-modeling of digital pedagogy during meetings allowed them to move from a state of anxiety about online teaching to a state of comfort. This led to them being able to state, “I am using lots of technical stuff, which I haven't felt confident with. I was surprised I got there so quickly.”

The impact of these changes was reflected in student feedback that saw their success being directly linked to the educator's ability to pivot and adapt.

Discussion

In order to foster wellbeing within educational institutes, consideration must be given to how educators' thinking and use of language pre-figures the construction of their practices, and how their practices responsively prioritise relationships and student learning in times of uncertainty (Higgins and Goodall, 2021). Changes in educator sayings and doings came about through relationships. Educators employed various relational strategies to increase self-efficacy and confidence in their new teaching reality. Strategies such as sitting in on colleague's online lectures, observation of teaching practice, and regular team meetings via Zoom were all employed to increase confidence in the online teaching space. This was vitally important to support improved student engagement and mitigate their withdrawal from study. Technology also enabled educators to connect with family members around the globe. While they recognised virtual connections made it possible to support each other during the enforced lockdown, there was a recognition that virtual connection is not the same as, and cannot replace, physical touch.

One tension held by educators was how the collapse of institutional practice arrangements brought about relationships with family and work vying for priority. There was a need to give support to, and receive support from, colleagues to get the job done. This tension co-existed alongside the uncertainty, concern, and support that each educator felt for their immediate and extended family. The sustaining of educator wellbeing transpired because of nurtured relationships, with friends, family, colleagues, and students. The lockdown showed that relationships were essential to sustaining learning and foundational to educator and student wellbeing (Bishop et al., 2002; Blackie et al., 2010). Moreover, Loughran claims that “The heart and soul of teaching begins with relationships” (1997, pp. 57-58).

Forming a New Practice Landscape

The findings from this study make several contributions to understanding how practice architecture might be rearranged to support educators working differently to support student success. Soncini (2021) claims that the lockdown not only created personal fear for people, but it also brought about intense work stress. Participants in our study affirmed this in the way they unpacked their experiences of working from home. A new practice landscape was required that included new ways to practice differently under changed conditions. The ways in which institutional arrangements have changed and educators came to practise differently are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples of Transformations in Response to Working from Home and Teaching Online During Lockdown

Practices	Practice architectures
Sayings	Cultural-discursive arrangements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utterances shifted from survival to stability to growth within the rhythm of life: work-to-rule vs work-to-live. • Educator’s work can be done in flexible ways in flexible spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator voices within the context are just as relevant as voices upon the context. • Greater autonomy has been given to educator decision-making. • A shift to a high-trust model relying on educator accountability is linked to ‘Working from Home’(WFH) policy. • Specific policy changes include working from home, attendance, late assignments, wellbeing, tikanga Māori, admissions, program regulations.
Doings	Material-economic arrangements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators work in flexible ways to suit their life rhythms at home and onsite. • Innovative use of pedagogy has been integrated into continued practice. • Changes in ways of using digital technology have been used to build community. • Alternate study pathways for students have increased. • Hybrid learning has been normalised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators are encouraged to incorporate their natural rhythm into their working life – WFH policy established. • Academic regulations and policies have been reviewed. • Policy is working for people rather than people working for policy. • Educators are engaged in informal PLD via digital activators to support switching between delivery modes. • Timetables are more flexible to complement life rhythms and a ‘new normal’.
Relatings	Social-political arrangements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between educators and students has migrated to informal digital networks. • Mentoring time with students has increased. • Student wellbeing has been enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator work plans have been changed to include more cohort mentor time with students. • Prioritisation of the lived experiences of staff is evident in policy review.
Projects	Practice-traditions
Transitioning to flexible ways of working (or resisting); responding to uncertain times and unprecedented situations (or not)	An emerging tradition of flexible work, practice, and delivery
Situated knowing, dispositions (habitus)	Practice landscape
Learning how to practice differently in ITE, responding to unprecedented change and government mandates	Educational landscape of ITE and education in New Zealand affected by COVID-19

Implications for Practice

Four main themes emerged from our data analysis:

1. Practice arrangements emerge from within a given context.
2. Educator agency is critical in the navigation of ‘in the moment’ change.
3. Practice arrangements must allow educator practices to be responsive to the natural rhythms that emerge from a given context.
4. Structural inequality of resourcing must be addressed to create an even playing field for educators.

1. Practice arrangements emerge from within a given context.

We discovered that institutional practice arrangements, designed to respond to challenges, must be flexible and responsive. In an educational institution, applying out-of-the-box solutions in the face of uncertainty will not always be in the best interests

of educators and students. This is a result of fixed solutions being unable to adapt to the special practice arrangements that either enable or constrain practices in a given context at a given time. The only place for responsive practice arrangements to appear is inside the context itself. The development of new and fluid practice architectures is fundamentally based on considering educator and student experiences. Both educators and students will be able to navigate the shifting practice landscape in ways that preserve self-efficacy and build a foundation for success if site conditions are created to incorporate flexible and reflexive practices.

2. Educator agency is critical in the navigation of ‘in the moment’ change.

Creating a stable foundation for both educators and students was reliant on the educator’s ability to prioritise their personal efficacy. Our findings show that educator confidence and competence grew from being able to adapt familiar institutional practice arrangements to self-constructed practice arrangements in the moment. Educator initiated decision-making supported their progress from a state of survival to one of stability and then growth. Changes in institutional social-political arrangements highlight the disconnect between traditional arrangements and those that were required to maintain relational teaching practices. Educator agency proved to be significant in initiating the co-construction of holistic ways of working alongside students to successfully support their own transition to a new way of learning.

3. Practice arrangements must allow educator practices to be responsive to the natural rhythms that emerge from a given context.

Holistic practices must remain at the forefront of any decision that seeks to prioritise educator and student wellbeing. Our findings show that educators who were able to adapt their own work-life practices to the natural rhythm that emerged during lockdown were more effectively able to embrace different ways of practising with new practice arrangements. This was strongly evident in the way that material-economic arrangements had constrained the online learning space as being a nonrelational and distant space. The educator’s awareness of their own rhythm of life and willingness to listen to the students enabled changes to timetables, pedagogy, and use of digital platforms, resulting in a responsive reimagining of online spaces that fostered new ways of building community.

4. Structural inequality of resourcing must be addressed to create an even playing field for educators.

The issue of structural inequality in resourcing for teachers is a complex and multifaceted problem that requires careful consideration and action. To create an even playing field for educators, it is essential to address the root causes of this inequality which are situated in institutional practice architectures (cultural-discursive, material-economic, social-political). Addressing these inequalities may involve educator voice in strategic planning, resource allocation, access to professional development opportunities, and technical support. What we have learnt from times of uncertainty, is that to address structural inequality, leadership must take a stance that begins with the question, ‘What do you actually need?’ and ‘How can we resource this?’ The capacity to resource educators must be taken into consideration rather than the institute assuming that one solution will work for all. Ultimately, addressing structural inequality in educator resourcing is crucial to ensuring that all students have access to high quality education and that educators have the support they need to do their best work.

Limitations

While the themes that emerged from this study have implications for practice, they only represent one specific context. The breadth of understanding could be further strengthened by utilising similar data collected from other ITE providers in New Zealand for comparative analysis. This would allow a more detailed understanding to compare institutional responses to the collapse of practice architecture. In the future, insight from these initial findings could be further supported and developed by the analysis of additional interviews exploring educator responses and understandings of how practice architecture has changed within BTI over the last three years.

Conclusion

What the forced containment and working from home revealed was that educators, over time, found new and different ways of working remotely that buoyed their wellbeing and self-efficacy. Once educators began to collaborate, they created interconnected coping strategies to deal with the stress of both isolation and changes in work practice (Kim & Asbury, 2020). It became apparent, after the initial shock, that institutional frameworks scaffolding wellbeing were unable to effectively support educators in responding to the unique complexity and contextuality of their experience. Considering this, educators created their own set of leadership competencies to support their wellbeing (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021). Educators were able to use these leadership competencies to support each other and then work together to support students when institutional arrangements to safeguard wellbeing collapsed (Kim & Ashbury, 2020).

According to Schatzki (2022), “Crises have a knack of revealing structures that are unattended to until the crisis occurs” (p. 307). The COVID-19 pandemic, resultant lockdown, and mandatory working from home were crises that presented opportunities for institutional practice arrangements to be reconfigured. This study has demonstrated how living at work has revealed the intricate connection between educator sayings, doings, and relatings; the impact these have on educator’s practices, and the importance of nurturing relationships between educators and their colleagues and students. It also identified how relatings are integral to educator sayings and doings. Palmer (2017) advocates that people are made for relationships, and without these our wellbeing is negatively impacted. The educator voice within this study highlights the importance of insights from the intersubjective spaces in which educators encounter one another (Kemmis et al., 2014). A lens of practice architecture theory has enabled this study to demonstrate the importance of educator voice in understanding how institutional practice architecture enables and constrains practices that contribute to educator wellbeing and self-efficacy and, therefore, student success.

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