



What can learners learn from the remote learning experience?

I think there's lots of lessons we learned, in a way a crisis can often bring about change and, you know, we can look for the positive from the crisis.

The word was always catch up, catch up, catch up, catch up. These children are missing out. They've missed out on a lot, they've missed out on social things. But you know what, Stephen Heppel, proposed a counter argument and was very clear in saying they're not missing out, they're just learning in a different way. And we need to just acknowledge that. In other words, if you just apply what we offered during remote learning to what would have happened in class, we're not valuing what happened at home during that most extraordinary time.

We learned that school doesn't have to be a single building that everybody turns up for at the same time, at the same place, in the same time, in the same place you know every day. School learning doesn't necessarily have to be from nine till 3:30. Now, we've always known that and we've always had things like homework and so on. But by presenting the lessons packaged differently, learners could make choices about how and when they accessed and how they responded and reacted to it. So I think we've learnt that lessons can be presented differently and responded to differently. We've learnt that learners can take more responsibility for their learning than before, they can direct it more effectively themselves. I think we also learnt a negative, which was that not all the learners had the skills necessary for that remote learning. In part, I think that was due to the curriculum change, was it 2012? When we switched from ICT to computing and so we actually narrowed the curriculum, we took out a lot of the skills that then we found that the kids needed.

Now, if I look at some of the students, because I did a big piece of work after when schools started to go back. And what I was hearing from so many students is that they loved it after the initial shock, now, not everybody because everybody learns differently, but I'm just going to tell you about some of the ones. So let's pick out some and groups. A lot of Dyslexics really, really liked working from home. Why? The reasons they gave me. Number one, I can use the assistive technology without being embarrassed about it, nobody else knows I'm using it. Number two, it doesn't disturb others. So one boy was telling me about speech to text, text to speech. It wasn't an embarrassment, he wasn't embarrassed, but he said it disturbs the others on my table. So what do I do? Do I have to go in the corridor? I don't want to be in the corridor to do it. We also have then if we bring in the children with ADHD into that same group, because they all mentioned this, the ability to get up, go and get a drink and have a biscuit while you thought about the question and then come back and do it.

And one boy told me, when it's a really tough one, if it's a really tough one, he said, I like to go outside, I shoot five hoops on the basketball, but I'm thinking about the question and I come in and within five hoops, Carol, I can always get the answer. And I went, that's great.



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Now, they obviously can't do that in the classroom. They're children who struggle to sit still for a lesson. But because we had asynchronous learning, on the whole, there were some taught lessons where they had to be on Zoom at a perfect time. But on the whole there was work set, most people took the model of asynchronous learning. There was work set, there were a couple of times you had to be on during the day and the rest of the time you could do the work as you wished as long as you got it done. And so many people have handed in more assignments, completed all tasks, were able to use assistive technology, and then got their good marks that they were entitled to. And there are so many children who just learned that they could be successful learners during that time. I don't want this to disappear.

Other things I think we could learn more about is actually teaching and learning online, is a different thing to teaching and learning in the classroom. I think there's a danger in some of the online resources that are being lauded in simply seeing a teacher standing at a screen, presenting a PowerPoint and then saying, right, pause the video now, answer questions one to twelve and then restart the video. We're saying that as actually appropriate use of technology for online teaching learning, where we need to learn more about the ways in which teaching and learning can be different.

So, for instance, pupil collaboration, possibilities for research, possibilities to go off in your own direction and perhaps studying the same subject, but finding your own route through it, and finding what are the things that you find interesting and that click for you and make the connections for you in building your own understanding of the world. Particularly if we were to look at, say, constructivist learning, the possibilities for exploration and for managing your learning, managing what it is you want to find out more about, I think that's something we've learned that we don't know enough, we don't know enough about.

In this transition, where we're transitioning back, I guess what I'm arguing is we shouldn't be too quick to just go back to what was the normal before. And there are lots of reasons for that. First of all, you can never go backwards in life, you can't go backwards and it's a very bad thing to do so. Secondly, as the phrase went round on all social media, it's not normal, it's the new normal. And the new normal has to incorporate everything we've learned about teaching and learning and pedagogy and what children need and get from it and what teachers need and get from it. What, also what the problems are, because there are problems, there are certainly workload issues that need to be addressed and management issues and of course the huge issue of equity at home, which I haven't really even touched on. So in our hurry to go back, should we forget all the gains? And I think we should acknowledge the gains were significant for certain groups of students. They were, absolutely.

They may well have found that they got better responses from learners when those learners had their own time to think about, so that they didn't have the same pressure [as] in the classroom. They may have learnt that there's different ways of asking children to collaborate, putting them already we have children working in groups and classes but we can put them in different groups, we can work over different periods, different times, we can ask them to work in different ways. For instance, they could as a group



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take on different roles, different aspects of expertise, different aspects of research and bring those together in ways that yes, they can do in a classroom but they can probably do it more effectively when they are working online as a group. So, many teachers understandably found working remotely difficult. In some instances people were teaching live in a classroom while simultaneously videoing what it was they did and then putting that out later for the kids who hadn't turned up in the classroom. There was a lot of additional pressure put onto them. But at the same time what that did was create resources, creative resources that they could then put out to all pupils later on. All pupils would be able to replay that lesson in order to revise and reinforce their understanding. So what are the ways that practice changed, that actually we want to hold onto?

Have you sat down with your students and asked them what was it like for you? What were the things that helped you? What did you struggle with? Are you trying some innovative things? I would like to feel that we start to share somebody who maybe does, instead of handing out worksheets for homework, does one night, five till 5:30, does a Zoom homework. Are we exploring what we had and saying how can we make it fit into what we do now?