

# The Impact of Remote Teaching on Teachers' Pedagogical Insight

Mary C. Kelly

*Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences  
Ireland*

## Abstract

*This study explores insights on teaching and learning formed by International Baccalaureate educators, following remote teaching experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study focusses specifically on insights that have served to enhance pedagogical beliefs and practices, following the return to a physical learning environment. Ten international teachers, stemming from a range of countries, participated in the study, at this private international school context in the Netherlands. They taught at different levels, from Early Childhood to the IB Diploma Programme, using approaches-to-teaching that include inquiry, global concepts, and disciplinary and transdisciplinary understanding. Educational technology was extensively embedded in the context prior to the pandemic. The study is qualitative in nature, involving semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The resulting themes highlight the importance of the intangible aspects of teaching and learning, including an emphasis on human presence, connection, trust, empathy, and wellbeing. Additional insights include increased awareness of the value of adaptability, creativity, acceptance, balance, community-building rituals, collaboration, inclusion, and the potential of immersive technologies for teaching and learning. In addition, the importance of student and teacher wellbeing arose as an integrated theme. General technology use did not figure significantly in the themes, due, in part, to the embedded nature of collaborative online software prior to the pandemic. Overall, teachers felt that the remote teaching experiences served to enhance their practice, and they indicated increased gratitude and interest in aspects of classroom-based teaching and learning that they felt they had taken for granted previously.*

*Keywords: remote teaching, pandemic, pedagogy, insights, approaches to teaching, learning, technology*

## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic signaled a worldwide shift to online learning, resulting in teachers and students needing to adapt, at short notice, to a very

different way of teaching and learning. This monumental change has generated a wide range of educational studies that have explored the impact of the pandemic on engagement with technology, pedagogical practices, student learning, assessment practices, home-school relations, wellbeing, inclusion, and equity in access to remote learning. Overall, the pandemic is perceived to have had both positive and negative effects on teaching and learning, and these effects vary across educational contexts. Many of the perceived negative effects have resulted themselves, on return to the physical learning environment, and other effects have led to ongoing innovations and a reconceptualization of pedagogical practices and schooling. This study explores the perspectives of international school teachers, and focuses specifically on insights developed during remote teaching experiences, that have positively informed their approaches-to-teaching, in a post-pandemic reality, following the return to classrooms.

Prior to exploring these insights, the following section unpacks some of the key patterns that have emerged through global research studies on the impact of remote teaching on teachers' perspectives and practices during the pandemic.

## 2. Literature Review

One of the most significant challenges that the pandemic posed for educators, was the rapid move to remote teaching and learning [1]. Teachers struggled in a number of areas, including how to use different online platforms, how to design instruction for remote learning, how to evaluate student work, and how to support students and families [2]. Even though teachers became more comfortable and efficacious with their use of technology, over time, they continued to have concerns about the lack of social contact with students [2].

Teachers felt particularly challenged by the lack of in-person teaching, and there was a sense that "remote teaching could not compensate for the loss of the subtleties of social human interaction in the classroom" (p. 4) [1]. Teachers grieved the loss of emotional connection to their students [3], they found presence difficult to establish online [4], and online

teachers generally believed that a lack of real-life person-to-person interactions impacted the quality of their teaching [5].

From China [6] to Palestine [7] teachers' efforts at fostering connection and presence were considered a key predictor of student engagement when learning online. To foster engagement, a number of studies promoted the need for interconnectedness online [8], through the creation of socially constructed communities [9], and through small group work learning [2].

Indeed, student engagement figured strongly in research during the pandemic [10], and indicated that students who were innately engaged and motivated in face-to-face environments, prior to the pandemic, continued to be engaged online [11], whereas students who had previously struggled with motivation continued to struggle at home [10]. Teachers' presence, the quality of content, and parental involvement were the major factors that influenced student engagement [10]. Teacher support led to higher levels of engagement, over time, in China [6], and, in Canada, student engagement increased, as teachers became more proficient with the use of educational technology [12], and as learning became more self-directed for the students [3].

Parents proved important, in the promotion of engagement and learning, with a study in England indicating that parental support became necessary to enable younger students' access to learning resources provided by teachers [13]. Meanwhile, in Scotland, parents were considered important intermediaries between students and teachers [14], especially with younger learners.

Similarly, a study in Australia [7] indicated that remote learning provided opportunities for young learners and their parents to connect with teachers and their learning during the pandemic. A study in Canada [15] stressed, however, the importance of remote learning being flexible and suitable for the needs of the families. Meanwhile, teachers of younger students in Poland [16], found it important to focus on the emotional and social wellbeing of young learners, over the academics.

Indeed, student wellbeing was a core aspect of remote learning, and especially so, with students who had learning difficulties or emotional challenges [3]. Teachers struggled with teaching online, also, with a study in Canada indicating that more than half of teachers found online teaching stressful and draining [3]. The reduction in teacher wellbeing, over time, impacted student wellbeing given that teacher wellbeing and student learning are inextricably interconnected [8]. Over time, there was a call for increased empathy, flexibility, and communication, on the part of schools, in order to cope with rising stress levels and uncertainty [10], as well as a need for an increase in trust in teachers' capacity to make decisions that they believed were in the best interest

of their students', especially given the ongoing and unpredictable nature of the pandemic [3].

In international schools, this shift was particularly important, where there are a significant number of students, who are learning English, as an additional language, and who were heavily in need of adaptive real-time expertise on the part of their teachers. A study in China demonstrated that online learning was positively received by EAL students, although the level of satisfaction dependent on teachers' confidence with online teaching and their level of skill [17]. Some findings in Saudi Arabia [18], indicated a positive inclination towards adaptive online learning for EAL students, initially, although, a separate study in Saudi Arabia indicated that EAL students had more and more difficulty with assessments as the pandemic progressed [19]. Assessment practices, worldwide, became a crucial aspect of remote learning, and there was an increased perceived need "for formative assessments and timely feedback for remote learners" [20].

Aside from the many unexpected changes and adaptations that occurred, there is no denying that this time period "provided the opportunity to teach and learn in innovative ways unlike the teaching and learning experiences in the normal classroom setting" (p. 138) [7]. Additional advantages included interactivity, adaptivity, choice, student input, alternative ways to provide feedback, and linked representations [2].

On return to the classroom flipped classroom, became a more obvious reality, with class time being used to deepen understanding through focusing on discussion, critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed learning [20]. This shift has opened the door further for immersive technologies, such as augmented reality, and virtual reality, and open access media production tools, as well as real-time collaboration platforms [11]. These tools lend themselves to learning that takes place anytime and anywhere, across spatial and temporal boundaries. These shifts intensify the need for educators to rethink what is possible, from a pedagogical perspective, within contemporary educational contexts.

### 3. Data Collection

A qualitative approach was used to explore teachers' perspective on their insights and realizations following their experiences on remote learning. 10 teachers, from a variety of nationalities, were interviewed using semi structured interviews. The respondents taught across all levels of the school, including early childhood, primary, middle, and upper school within this international school environment. The school is an IB World school which teaches three of the IB programs, the Primary Years Programme, the Middle Years Programme, and the Diploma Programme.

The questions guiding the interviews explored teachers' individual insights, how these insights came to be, and how they believed these insights were going to impact their pedagogical practices following the return to the classroom. The transcripts of the interviews were coded, categories were generated, and these were consolidated into themes and sub-themes, using thematic analysis. The following section identifies these themes and sub-themes, and presents them in conjunction with selected quotes from individual teachers, and they are discussed in light of the relevant literature.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

*Building Relationships:* The first set of insights centered on the role that relationships played during remote learning, with the key themes being connection, trust, and empathy:

- Connection: presence, belonging, intangibles, social interactions, bonding, and parents.
- Trust: respect, responsibility, acceptance, autonomy, independence, and accountability.
- Empathy: responsiveness, understanding, compassion, and adapted expectations.

### 4.1. Human Connection

The importance of human connection was one of the core realizations that was mentioned by teachers, and with connection they mean the emotional, social, and physical connection between teachers and students, and between students and students. T7 commented:

*“One thing that was really hard was being detached from the students”,*

and T5 shared that after lockdown:

*“the thread that forms the student-teacher relationship became more significant”.*

Similarly, T10, shared that her key insight was,

*“the importance of connection, the connection with the children, connection with colleagues, this human contact”.*

With regards to the student-to-student connection, T1 shared:

*“What stands out for me a lot is the need for young people to feel connected to each other”,*

and T7, commented:

*“I think it was important that the students maintained their relationship with the other students”.*

The teachers' comments resonated strongly with research from around the world, which indicated that teachers struggled with the lack of human connection during remote teaching [1], especially given the loss of an emotional connection [3].

Teachers developed a number of different ways to enable connections to emerge, both during lockdown, and in the follow up hybrid contexts. T4 believes that it is important to honor students' needs to belong, as she claims:

*“We just cannot ignore everyone's natural need to belong and the need to be seen and heard”.*

With this in mind, T3 let students at home:

*“feel that they are still a part of the class and that we have not forgotten about them”.*

A strategy that proved positive, for another teacher involved starting classes with rituals and routines in order to build community. T8 shared:

*“As a way to reach out and let them know that I was thinking of them, and also to help them develop an interest in something that they may not have experienced before, I shared world music from various artists”.*

The importance of the connections that form in physical classroom environments, was also stressed by teachers. For example, T4 shared:

*“My students found it reassuring to see me back in class, as so much happens in a classroom that is not content related or even language related”.*

Similarly, T7 commented:

*“When you are in the classroom it is organic, and you can notice more, I guess, you can see things that are not spoken, you can see things in the interactions with the teachers, you can see things that we take for granted in the classroom”.*

Both emphasized the importance of the intangible aspects of teaching, and the degree to which these aspects impact relationships and learning.

Human presence, in particular, was commented upon, and the role that this plays in educational contexts, with T4 sharing:

*“Online communication lacks the human presence, the sense of understanding and compassion that one displays in person, either consciously or not”.*

This importance of presence remained, once teachers returned to the classroom, with T7, sharing, that what resonates for her in a post-pandemic reality is:

*“an attitude of being really present, and noticing, and having a holistic approach”.*

These comments reflect the findings of research carried out, elsewhere, which indicated that presence was difficult to establish online [4], and the fact that this lack of presence impacted teaching [5]. There was a sense that priorities had shifted for a number of teachers, over time, partly due to the fact that administrative mandates had not focused on relational needs, initially, with T10 commenting:

*“The academics were still taking priority, and were taken very seriously”. She was concerned that “we weren’t really prioritizing the connection and the wellbeing of the children”.*

The concerns raised, elsewhere, through a number of studies, and especially in studies with younger children [16].

Similar concerns were raised with regards to how teacher teams functioned. However, following team-building training, T10 described teacher teams as more “humane” and “supportive” now. Connection between parents and their children, was also commented on as an important focal point. Some teachers were conscious of the need to design activities that enabled parents and children to bond, given that they were all at home together. For example, T7 shared:

*“One of the positives, for some families being home was an opportunity to create that bond and spend time with their children”.*

She made an effort to design activities that would:

*“get them outside doing things together”, and “at home, it was simply, cooking, and finding ways for them to connect”.*

These experiences reflect a number of studies that demonstrated the important role that families played in supporting learning during the pandemic [13][7].

#### 4.2. Trust

Another resounding insight, on the part of teachers, was the important role that trust played during the lockdown, and the degree to which this insight is still relevant. This was the main insight for T2, and it was referred to, indirectly, by a few other teachers. T2 shared that:

*“The distance learning experience has been very successful in terms of trust”, and she believes that “If students feel trusted and know that they have a voice*

*in their own learning it will spark their intrinsic motivation, in a way, I believe, that few other things can”.*

Trust appeared to be a pivotal factor in empowering students to be autonomous and responsible learners, with T5 sharing:

*“This trust gives students confidence to advocate for themselves, and this, in turn, helps them to take ownership for their actions and their work”. T2 claimed that “a very important aspect of trust - building, is to literally tell students that you trust them”, which she continues to do, now that learning has moved back to the classroom. Trust, proved important, not just with individual students but with groups, with T1 commenting, “effective group work starts with teachers providing clear instructions and trusting students to do their best”.*

Trust of teachers was also raised by T10, as important, given that she believed that top-down administrative mandates complicated intuitive initiatives on teachers’ part to address student needs, a point that emerged through research as salient during the pandemic [3].

#### 4.3. Empathy

Empathy for students and for their needs and the needs of families, emerged as a key insight, with T5 sharing:

*“As a teacher we get to know our students through building responsive and empathetic relationships”. To illustrate this point, T8 shared, “During that time, I had very little distance learning time with my Grade 10 advisory class, and I tried to think of some interesting ways to engage them, that had nothing to do with what was going on for them in their classes”.*

This was an effort, on his part, to empathize with students need to have a break from academics, and to engage them regularly with fun activities. Other teachers realized the need for more empathy, for themselves and the students, on return to the classroom, with T6 claiming:

*“We have, in the past, been putting too many expectations on our students, our colleagues, and ourselves, and we are now back to doing it”.*

The comments reflect the call, over time, from both students and teachers for increased empathy, balance, and flexibility, in order to adjust to the impact of stress on teachers and students during the ongoing pandemic [10].

#### 4.4. Insights on Student Learning

The second set of insights centers on student

issues and approaches to learning.

- Student Issues: student engagement, student needs, wellbeing, isolation, and EAL difficulties
- Approaches-to-Learning: skills, dispositions, communication, collaboration, and cooperation

Teachers identified a number of insights that emerged in relation to student learning, and student needs. Student engagement came to the fore as important, with teachers' identifying difficulties with engagement through screens, and realizations on how much easier it is to engage students in a classroom context. For example, T4 shared:

*"A few of my students were really struggling or even misbehaving. In fact, a lot of these issues were sorted within a week of my returning to campus". In contrast, another teacher (T9) realized, on return to the classroom, that "kids cannot sit down and listen for an hour anymore, they just can't". She added that, "there has to be more engagement. I had to start bringing in the tools to be able to engage all of the kids, collectively". For her, these included "short video clips, collaborative work, group work activities, making something".*

There seemed to be an increase in teachers' awareness of the need to pay closer attention to what students needed, as opposed to following administrative mandates during remote learning. This was particularly the case with the EAL students, who had limited English language skills. For example, T5, shared, that "EAL students are particularly vulnerable during distant or concurrent learning especially with respect to their academic progression", and "because of the tenuous nature of distance learning for EAL students, I was even more attentive to their individual needs". Her approach reflects the trend that EAL teachers took in a number of contexts, especially when it came to the adaptation of assessments [20].

Interestingly, T9 noticed that one of the biggest challenges, for her, was the fact that:

*"some students who excelled in the classroom environment just could not function outside of a structured classroom". Meanwhile, "other students who actually really struggle paying attention in a classroom environment, suddenly became my rockstar students".*

This prompted her to revisit how she designed her lessons, so that she could "find a way to engage students who were normally engaged in a social structure, in a digital structure". In contrast T2, found that the students:

*"who did not respond that well, almost without exception, were the same ones who were not that motivated before".*

T2's observations closely reflect research that indicates that students' motivational levels remained consistent both before and during the pandemic [10][11]. But with additional support and guidance, T2 acknowledged that:

*"they too managed to learn",*

meaning that the unmotivated students responded, over time, reflecting studies that demonstrated that increased teacher support led to higher levels of engagement during the pandemic [6].

Overall, there was a sense, for the teachers, that student-wellbeing needed to take center stage, given the unique nature of lockdown. Although, they recognized that this had not been prioritized during the lockdown experience, to the degree to which it could have been. T4 comments that:

*"when we teach online, we often prioritize content over mental wellbeing", with the consequence being that "feelings of isolation, for students who struggled, led to frustrations". Meanwhile, T10 exclaimed "I did not understand why we were not discussing the impact of online teaching on the wellness of the children, and we were just carrying on with the new Math curriculum".*

Despite the lack of administrative support for wellbeing, teachers made an effort to promote wellbeing in a variety of ways. For example, T8 shared that he introduced rituals that were not academic:

*"selecting music that could elevate mood, and give us a country to focus on, is something that the students enjoyed, and responded to".*

He chose the option as he finds music to be a powerful conduit for mood.

With the much younger students, there were concerns about the suitability of the approaches adopted during lockdown to the developmental needs of the students. For example, T7 shared:

*"The parents were expecting to see these academic results, but what was really fundamental is that the children were developing their motor skills". She highlighted the importance of "interaction with others, and taking turns, and building empathy and speaking" for development, as well as learning to "negotiate" and "problem solve" and "how to comfort others".*

She felt that much of this valuable learning was missing during remote learning. This is an interesting point, given that the school is a private fee-paying school. Her thoughts reflect research in Canada that stressed the need for remote learning to be

developmentally appropriate and adapted to the needs of the younger learners [15].

## 5. Approaches to Learning

Approaches-to-learning (ATL) is an integral aspect of learning within an IB environment, and it comprises a wide range of skills and dispositions, that students develop to guide their own learning. Several of these skills and dispositions were mentioned by teachers as important during remote learning, as well as on the return to the classroom. Overall, teachers realized that many students really wanted to learn. For example, T2 commented:

*“I was also aware on a conscious level of students’ willingness to learn, or, at the very least, of their wish to do well”*

and T1 shared that:

*“Distance learning has taught me that students truly want to learn, and to provide quality work, even without the teacher being present”.*

From a practical skills perspective, a number of teachers noticed changes in students’ processing skills, in particular. For example, T9 noted:

*“Their skill level has shifted. Just the way that they process information and flip from one thing to the next is just faster now”. At the same time, she noticed that “they lost that skill-set of being able to sit and focus on one person for a length of time”.*

One of the key ATLs, communication, proved problematic during remote learning, as expressed by T4, who commented:

*“Online the power of human communication is fragmented, and authentic communication is somewhat limited, because it certainly isn’t natural to communicate on screen”.*

She felt that online communication hampered the relationship between students and teachers, and between the students.

Dispositions were also identified as important in the remote learning experience, including the capacity for students to be independent learners. For example, T5 commented on the importance of:

*“students’ confidence to advocate for themselves, and this, in turn, helps them to take ownership for their actions and their work”.*

### 5.1. Insights on Approaches to Teaching

The third set of insights centers on teaching skills:

- Adaptations: acceptance, creativity, and modifications.
- Strategies: engagement, balance, feedback, structure, reflection, letting go, and lowered expectations.
- Technology: online platforms, and flipped classroom

Overall, teachers’ insights on teaching centered on their need to be adaptable and flexible in their approaches to teaching, with T4 realizing that:

*“Our lockdown has had positive impacts on our teaching”, especially given the opportunities to learn new skills”.*

and as T7 commented:

*“There was definitely a lot of adaptation. Figuring out what works and what does not work”.*

That’s not to say that this journey was easy, as shared by T2:

*“What to me was the most stressful during distance learning, was that I had no way of knowing how students would be engaging in lesson activities when they were at home”.*

To cope with this uncertainty, she realized “that the only way to deal with this was to accept this fact, and do the best I could, and let go”. This idea of letting go of control, came up on a number of occasions with other teachers, with T2 saying:

*“The most difficult thing was to find a balance between control, how much and how often I checked their work and gave them feedback”.*

T2 also realized that:

*“regular feedback was more important than ever, under these circumstances”*

and she:

*“focused on finding strategies, that would provide instant feedback during lessons”.*

Feedback was indeed raised as an important issue during the pandemic, with an emphasis on an increased need for “formative assessments and timely feedback for online learners” (p.138) [20].

Teachers incorporated a number of other strategies, to compensate for the shift in learning to an online environment. For example, they added more detail to tasks, so that the assignments were clear. T2 shares:

*“I explained the reasons for asking them to carry out a task in a specific way”*,

and T10 shared:

*“if you were not meeting online then you had to make sure you explained everything precisely in a video to show the children what to do which was just a difficult thing to do”*.

As the lockdown continued, teachers noticed that remote learning was impacting how students learned, so the need to alter expectations became evident. As T5 shared – “Students were slower initially in acquiring content, and this required more input time and patience and energy”. She realized the need to “reduce the burden of product as much as possible, understanding that what students can achieve at a distance is very different to what students can do in the classroom”. The lowering of expectations led to insights beyond the classroom, as well, with some teachers appreciating the additional free time during lockdown.

For example, T6 shared, “During the lockdown, I learned new skills and developed new hobbies, and it was lovely”. The return to the classroom led to the insight that free time “shouldn’t be a luxury!”. She felt that she “should have time to enjoy these things when there is no pandemic or remote teaching”. She began to wonder:

*“Why are we pushing ourselves so hard? and Who benefits from this?”*.

Indeed, T10, has similar feelings, saying:

*“We don’t need to stress ourselves. There is a bigger picture”*.

This line of thinking surfaced for other teachers, as well, with some wondering if parental expectations were a major force in the nature and pace of teaching and learning during remote learning. T7, for example, said that:

*“there was pressure to have those things that the parents recognized as school”*,

even when teachers felt that this was not what was best for the students. Teachers engaged with the parents’ expectations in different ways, with an early childhood teacher (T7) advocating:

*“parental education” so that parents could better understand “these things that we can do in classrooms, but which may be invisible for parents”*.

It appears that school administrators may also have played a role in the specific way that remote teaching and learning unfolded. According to T10 this may have been because they:

*“had to feel that they were in control in an uncontrollable situation”*.

T10 wonders if it was, perhaps, the administrators:

*“panic to please the parents, or to meet accreditation standards”, that caused them to “focus on the academics” as opposed to addressing wellbeing*.

As T10 shared:

*“I did not understand why we were not discussing the impact of online teaching on the wellness of the children. We were just carrying on with a new Math curriculum”*.

This is an interesting focus, indeed, given the burgeoning focus during the pandemic, of the need to address the social and emotional needs of students [3]. These experiences during lockdown have “highlighted the importance of wellbeing” for T10, and now, following the pandemic, she is:

*“motivated to take more action in this direction”, as a teacher, as she now appreciates “relationships, connection, and wellbeing above everything else”*.

## 5.2. Advances in Technology

Innovative ways to use technology was also a key insight that arose for teachers, and there is obvious interest in continuing to implement some of these skills, with T4 saying:

*“When used efficiently technology can provide rich opportunities for learning”, and “some of the techniques I used online, I will continue using in class”*.

Similarly, T7 spoke about the opportunities to engage in novel sharing activities:

*“because they were home there were things that they could share that they could not easily share if there were in school”. For example, “they could share their pets, and one of the kids had a pet snake, and the Dad had a lizard”*.

T9’s core insight was what she describes as “the advancement of technology skills for both teachers and for students”. She commented on the opportunity for teachers “to learn how to use different platforms, getting children engaged, with different types of technology, just to keep their attention, and for sharing information, and presenting information”. She described the “shift in how, both teachers and students, jumped in their skills, in being able to use and integrate technologies in the classroom”. As a consequence of this increase in students’ digital skills, T9 claims that:

*“technology is not going anywhere, if anything its use is becoming exponential, now we are using it more fluidly in the classroom”.*

Consequently, she finds that “creating a flipped classroom is suddenly possible” in a post pandemic reality.

Overall, she feels that remote teaching and learning “gave us this push into this digital educational era”. Even though she was an avid user of technology prior to the pandemic, she uses it:

*“in a more integrated way, and in a more progressive way, that supports my units of inquiry”.*

These approaches enable her to “get the students into other ideas and perspectives through technology”. Remote teaching and learning experiences became a “window of opportunity” which enabled a “shift in her approach to teaching” as she began using immersive technologies, such as AR, VR, and MR:

*“to empower the learning and to engage and immerse students in it”.*

For example, she says:

*“instead of just showing a picture of a refugee child when we were learning about human rights, I could actually integrate the students into a 360 VR experience of a refugee child’s life”.*

T9’s comments reflect research that highlights the ways in which the pandemic has prompted the continued shift towards the integration and use of innovative technologies in the classroom [2].

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers have found remote teaching experiences valuable in terms of pedagogical insight. A number of these insights center on the enhancement of their approaches-to-teaching, a deeper understanding of students’ approaches-to-learning, and an increased awareness of the social and emotional needs of students. The role of human presence, connection, trust, and empathy in teaching and learning arose as major themes, in addition to awareness of the value of adaptability, acceptance, balance, and the potential for immersive technologies to enhance teaching and learning. The findings reflect many of the themes that have arisen, worldwide, to describe and evaluate the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning. However, given that educational technology was embedded in this context, before the pandemic, teachers’ insights focused less on technology, and more on the intangible human factors governing teaching and learning.

## 7. Implications

An interesting study, particularly because it was carried out in an environment where technology was already heavily embedded prior to the pandemic. The fact that technology use did not figure significantly, in teachers’ reflections, gave space for the less tangible aspects of teaching to arise, in a way that may not have been as evident, otherwise. It is the intangible aspects of teaching that often remain unaddressed in education, but, as seen in this study, conscious awareness of these qualities can have a positive, and even transformative effect on teachers’ pedagogical approaches and dispositions, as well as on their personal life goals in a post-pandemic world. This begs the question as to why the concepts of presence, connection, empathy, and trust, are not more center stage in educational literature, pedagogy related discussions, professional development workshops, and in conversations with parents. The research clearly indicates the added value of initiating conversations that focus on these delicate yet powerful personal and interpersonal qualities.

In addition, it is clear that the role of technology in education, has shifted from it being a tool that is helpful in accessing and processing resources, to one that also plays a role in forging deeper social connections through collaborative online learning practices, as well as through immersive approaches, that foster empathy for the lived experiences of others. It will be interesting to observe the ways in which shifts in the use of technology will continue to impact classroom-based teaching, and pedagogical insights, over the longer term, especially now that blended learning has become more commonplace in post-pandemic classrooms.

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