Using appreciative approaches to explore New Zealand youth perspectives of online learning support during COVID-19

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Abstract: COVID-19 lockdowns and interruptions have necessitated large scale, immediate transitions to remote education. The influence of school and university closures on educational progress and achievement is not to be underestimated. This study contributes a New Zealand perspective to discussions and learning from these exceptional circumstances. The study focuses on findings from qualitative analysis of open-text survey responses from youth (aged 16-24). The young people were reporting on their perspectives of remote learning support during the four-week COVID-19 lockdown in New Zealand in March 2020 (n=2,014). Three overarching categories corresponding to individual support, teacher and institute communication, and affordances of online learning were identified. Appreciative approaches provided a conceptual and analytical framework for interpreting the data in terms of national policy and institute-level support, teacher support and practice, and individual youth resilience. At individual student level, it is important to develop their capabilities to learn online. Exploring Appreciative Intelligence with young people as a concept and quality could support them to identify and take positive steps to support their own learning online in challenging circumstances.

Keywords: Appreciative approaches, online and remote learning, learning support, senior secondary students, tertiary students

Highlights

What is already known about this topic:
- There is limited research that focuses on students' perceptions of online learning support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There is limited published research on the experiences of New Zealand students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What this paper contributes:
- A rapid online survey explored New Zealand secondary and tertiary students' perceptions of remote learning support during the COVID-19 lockdown (n=2,014).
- An appreciative inquiry approach was used as a conceptual and analytical frame to identify what worked for student online learning in terms of personal support, institute and teacher communication, and affordances of digital pedagogies.

Implications for theory, practice and/or policy:
- Students need to be supported by their institute and teachers but developing individual student capabilities in online learning is also crucial.
- Appreciative intelligence as a quality and concept could better enable youth to support their own learning online in challenging circumstances.

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Introduction

Our [university] provider kept saying that we were all in this boat together. Realistically though, we were all in our own boats in the same storm, some better able to handle it than others. [Age 19, undergraduate student]

An estimated 1.5 billion children and adolescents in 165 countries worldwide have been affected by some form of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures have necessitated unprecedented large scale and immediate transitions to remote learning and instruction (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Liang et al., n.d.; Mishra et al., 2021; Poth, 2020; Yates et al., 2020b). International studies have shown that for many young people, learning during lockdown can be more difficult to prioritize or engage in and that this negatively influences progress and achievement (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Compounding this, Hasan and Bao (2020) suggest that a crucial factor responsible for students' lockdown-related psychological distress is fear of academic year loss. Lamb et al. (2020) in a report to the Australian Government framed issues facing learners in terms of material, digital, dispositional, and parental support "divides", indicating the disruptive gulf between those who were more able to continue to learn during lockdown and those who were not. They argued that many schools were underprepared for the move to virtual learning, thus creating a school learning-adjustment divide. Other research on educational achievement during lockdown has drawn attention to existing inequities in opportunities to learn. This underscores the importance of understanding and implementing efficacious models of learning support (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Gillis & Krull, 2020; Longmuir et al., 2020; Moore, 2022; Seymour et al., 2020).

While the lockdowns have proved stressful and disruptive for learners and their teachers, studies of lockdown learning present an opportunity to rethink the 'what, how, and where' of remote instruction and support into the future (Brown et al., 2021; Bubb & Jones, 2020). This article focusses on youth (aged 16-24) perspectives of learning support during the four-week lockdown in New Zealand from 25 March to 27 April 2020. Qualitative data and findings from the COVID-19 Youth Voices Matter survey are presented. Following Lamb et al. (2020), we frame our discussion in terms of 'divides', but drawing on strengths-based appreciative inquiry approaches, we propose and illustrate ways to 'bridge' lockdown-induced remote and online learning support divides at levels of institute, teacher, and student.

Literature

There is an emerging body of literature focused on teacher perceptions (Flack et al., 2020; Poth, 2020) and family or parental experiences of student learning during COVID-19 lockdowns (Bhamani et al., 2020; Brom et al., 2020; Priyadarshini & Bhaumik, 2020; Shraim & Compton, 2020). Likewise there are international studies of student learning experiences that outline the many difficulties that students face (Bilgiç, 2021; Cahapay, 2020). However, to date there is less data and reporting on student perspectives of institute and teacher online learning support, and little published research that contributes a New Zealand perspective to what has become a global challenge (Bond, et al., 2021).

A survey of Australian Year 12 students (n=241) by Longmuir et al. (2020) found that most students experienced disruptions and challenges that impacted their learning and achievement due to lockdowns and these stresses were intensified in high-stakes assessment contexts. Longmuir et al. emphasised challenges and highlighted the importance of providing engaging learning content with clear assessment criteria, access where possible to motivational events and activities, and strong and supportive relationships with teachers and peers. In the United States, Gillis and Krull (2020) analysed student surveys to identify barriers and perceptions of effectiveness, enjoyment, and accessibility of the instructional techniques used in the transition to online learning in two introductory sociology college courses (n=69). They found that the techniques used were less important overall than the quality of implementation and level of accessibility of the interactive formats. Most students experienced barriers to their learning. These included internet and technology issues, distractions, increased anxiety, and low

levels of motivation. In the UK, Green (2020) found that school closures posed a significant threat to educational development, with lower SES groups spending less time per day studying and being less likely to have access to devices for learning. Additionally, results showed that private schools provided more live online learning than state schools. Consistent with these findings, issues such as poor internet connection and lack of access to devices were noted in a small-scale (n=5) qualitative study based in the Philippines (Alvarez, 2020). On a more positive note, some students with the necessary space, resourcing, and support were able to work and learn effectively at home (Bubb & Jones, 2020; Rhodes, 2020; The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 2020).

A small number of New Zealand-based empirical studies on child and young adult learning during lockdown have been published. Findings from interview research by Bourke et al. (2021) identified that primary-school-aged children (n=178, Years 4-8) adapted readily to the lockdown circumstances. Bourke et al. adopted a strengths-based approach, assuming that children are "inherently capable and adaptable" (p. 4). With support from family, children were able to find and create opportunities that supported their learning across many dimensions of informal (non-school) and formal learning. Yates et al. (2020) explored New Zealand senior secondary school students' (Years 12 and 13) experiences of online learning. Half of all students surveyed (n=1975) spent less time on learning during lockdown than usual, and felt they learned less. Barriers or concerns included being isolated from friends, lack of academic progress, student well-being, levels of motivation and time management. While students appreciated the greater flexibility and autonomy offered by online contexts, some struggled to manage their own learning in this way. Enablers to learning included direct instruction, receiving feedback, multimedia resources, class discussions, clear communication, interactive activities, and gamification (p. 7). Interestingly, while students indicated they would like to keep the flexibilities that online learning afforded, only a minority (10%) preferred working at home. In a brief overview report, Brown et al. (2021) summarised cross-institutional survey (n=952) and interview research (n=20) to foreground tertiary student experiences of the shift to online learning during lockdown. These were diverse. Consistent with findings by Yates et al. (2020a), motivation in self-paced and self-regulated learning was an issue but students appreciated having flexibility. Access to digital devices and internet connectivity, and a lack of prior experience in online learning were issues for a small proportion of students.

In summary, the challenges and disruptions experienced by students in New Zealand and internationally during the COVID-19 pandemic highlight a need for more and targeted remote learning supports and the importance of understanding students' perspectives and experiences. The research reported in this article adds to what is known about about the types and levels of effective learning supports offered in online and remote learning environments. In what follows we outline the New Zealand context and circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. We explain government-level education responses and initiatives. We then elaborate on appreciative approaches as these relate to this article and analysis.

Theoretical Background

New Zealand response to the move to online learning during lockdown
New Zealand has a relatively small population (close to five million as of 2020) and remote island location in the south Pacific. The first case of COVID-19 appeared on 28 February 2020. The New Zealand Government acted swiftly and decisively, implementing a "go hard, go early" approach (Baker et al., 2020). A 4-tier alert level system was adopted to communicate restrictive measures according to risk (New Zealand Government, 2022). Daily media briefings were held at which Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield and the Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern provided updates. This ensured consistent, coherent messaging to the "team of five million", who were largely compliant and supportive of the measures. The first four-week Level 4 lockdown began on March 25 at 11.59pm. Travel was restricted, and all non-essential services and businesses were closed. Universities, schools, and

other education providers were shut, and learning moved online. This resulted in the mobilisation of the student population home from boarding schools and universities.

Student wellbeing and educational achievement was of primary concern in addition to a range of other government and community-level supports (see, for example, Ministry of Education, 2020c; New Zealand Government, 2020a; New Zealand Red Cross, n.d.). As part of an $88 million centralised education response package, support from the New Zealand Ministry of Education included web-based resources for school-based distance learning, support for parents, teachers, and school leaders, learning support hard packs, and educational television for early childhood and primary students (Ministry of Education, 2020a). In addition, the Ministry began working with schools to assess needs for digital devices in homes. As a result, over 17 000 devices and 2000 modems were sent out, with priority given to lower decile schools and to students in the Auckland region who were impacted by a second lockdown in the latter half of 2020 (New Zealand Government, 2020b). External examinations and portfolio submission dates for the credit-based senior secondary school exit qualification were delayed. Students were also able to gain additional credits based on the number of credits they achieved during the 2020 school year (Authority (NZQA), 2020). The Tertiary Education Commission provided regular updates and guidance to support tertiary education organisations' processes for ensuring continuity and student support. Individual organisations provided targeted support in the form of accommodation rebates, aegrotat and compassionate considerations, and emergency hardship grants (Tertiary Education Commission, n.d.).

By 27 April, with no evidence of community transmission, New Zealand moved down through the levels to Alert Level 1 by 8 June. Schools re-opened, with 80% of students returning by 18 May 2020. Most tertiary institutions remained teaching and learning online until July 2020. As of December 2020, borders remained closed with restrictions and requirements for overseas arrivals to enter mandatory government-managed isolation and quarantine at separate facilities for active imported cases (Baker et al., 2020; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, n.d.). The emergence of the Delta and Omicron strains in New Zealand resulted in further nationwide and regional lockdowns from August 2021.

Appreciative approaches
Strengths-based, appreciative approaches are increasingly being used in transformative teaching and learning (Naude et al., 2014; Quennerstedt, 2019; Sargent & Casey, 2021) and as research methodologies in areas of youth risk and resilience, health and disabilities, and physical education research (Clouder et al., 2016). According to Cooperrider and Avital (2004), to "appreciate" is to "value and recognize that which has value" (p. xii). The appreciative inquiry process as represented by Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) and Cooperrider and Avital (2004) builds on the systematic search for and identification of those aspects of organisations, communities, events, practices, or individual qualities that are most positive or effective. Appreciative inquiry entails defining the area or aspect of interest; identification of what is currently considered positive, working well, or valued; imagining ideal or preferred futures or outcomes; and deciding on systems and execution of a plan of action (Cooperrider, 2012). Sargent and Casey (2021) suggest that "appreciative inquiry is capable of providing a reflective space for practitioners and researchers" (p. 45), providing opportunity to move beyond deficit approaches. As Dvorsky et al. (2021) point out, a sole focus on difficulties carries a risk of ignoring what is positive, and problems can grow to feel overwhelming. In addition, negative or deficit approaches can position those coping with the issue as helpless or unable to change. Instead, it can be beneficial to look "beyond what is broken" (Enright et al., 2014, p. 912). Appreciative approaches incorporate critical or negative aspects as a springboard for change.

Appreciative intelligence is distinguished from appreciative inquiry in that it is an individual quality that describes the ability to reframe or discover at first unseen positive possibilities. These possibilities may exist within a single negative statement or challenging situation, or a series of events. Once perceived, individuals act to transform this potential to positive outcomes (Case & Thatchenkery, 2010; Coghlan &

Brydon-Miller, 2014; Thatchenkery, 2013). While appreciative inquiry is used in this research as a lens for analysis at an institutional level, we access the notion of appreciative intelligence to consider how individual students might reframe and take creative action when encountering issues when working and learning in remote or online contexts.

Methodology

Rapid online surveys have been identified as an effective tool in ascertaining rapid understanding of how particular groups are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic (Geldsetzer, 2020). The anonymous online COVID-19 Youth Voices Matter survey was conducted by a team of population health and education researchers in response to the need to understand the impacts of the pandemic on current and future social, physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Research Design and Data Collection
The mixed-methods survey targeted 16- to 24-year-olds living in New Zealand in the period March to June 2020. A social media recruitment strategy was used to attract the attention and participant of diverse youth participants with design and placement of advertisements targeted to required demographics. Consent was obtained prior to the start of the survey and the recruitment web page included a link to the participant information sheet. Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) (Reference number 24677).

Demographic data including current educational qualification being attained, employment status, age, and gender were collected. Participants were asked which ethnic group they identified with and were able to select as many as applicable. Closed-ended, Likert-type and open-ended questions were designed to assess participants' perceptions, knowledge and experiences during and after the 'Alert Level 4 – Lockdown' - a stay-at-home order that entailed a complete closure across New Zealand, except for essential services. Questions investigated high school and tertiary students' experiences during the rapid shift to studying online (off-campus and from home) and open-ended questions enabled participants to elaborate on this in their own words. Changes in employment and income, and general questions on diet, physical activity and mental wellbeing were also evaluated. A section of the survey focused on an appraisal of basic Covid-10 knowledge, the types of information sources commonly utilised during the pandemic, and whether these chosen sources were deemed trustworthy.

Data Analysis
Data analysis for this article was focused on two items related to students' perceptions of learning support during the COVID-19 lockdown. Students were asked: When schools, universities and training providers were closed, how do you rate the overall level of support you received for your learning? Closed-ended response options were: Much worse, Worse, The same, Better, Much Better. Students were then invited to explain their choice (open-ended response item).

There was a total of n=2,048 qualifying respondents between the ages of 16 and 24. Respondents that did not enter any fields past Question 3 (n=34) were excluded from the data set, resulting in a reduced data set of n=2,014. Response rates for student perspectives of learning support for this analysis were calculated from the total number of students involved in education (n=1472) (i.e., excluding workforce and other). Respondent details are shown in Table 1.

Qualitative thematic analysis of open-text responses was conducted via a team manual coding process using NVivo 12Pro. Procedures for coding, team training and coding discussions are presented in Figure 1. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used as a measure of inter coder reliability (ICR). Appreciative approaches provided a conceptual and analytical framework for interpreting data across national policy and institute-level support, teacher support and practice, and individual youth resilience.

Table 1. Respondent details

Gender	New Zealand Pakeha/European	Māori	Samoan	Cook Islands Māori	Tongan	Niuean	Chinese	Indian	Other	Prefer not to say	Total (respondents could select more than one category)
Female	79.6%	14.0%	1.8%	0.8%	1.0%	0.5%	4.6%	3.3%	12.6%	1.5%	119.6%
Gender Diverse	88.9%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	4.4%	0.0%	115.6%
Prefer not to say	52.9%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	29.4%	100.0%

Validity and Reliability

The intent in calculating ICR was to support high standards through external accountability as coders worked through large data sets, and to enhance coding consistency by promoting discussion and dialogue within pairs (Braun & Clark, 2013; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Using iterative analyses an average overall agreement of 0.75 was expected. Overall themes were derived from clustering categories and sub-categories. After the qualitative inductive thematic analysis, appreciative approaches provided a conceptual and analytical frame for identifying 'what works' in terms of national policy and institute-level support, teacher support and practice, as well as what we can learn from instances of individual youthful resilience.

The focus in this paper is on presenting qualitative analyses of themes related to learning support by considering individual perspectives and experiences. Percentage values from clustered open-ended response categories were calculated and are included in findings to give an indication of typicality or relative importance of an issue, contributing to the internal generalizability of the collection of responses (Maxwell, 2010).
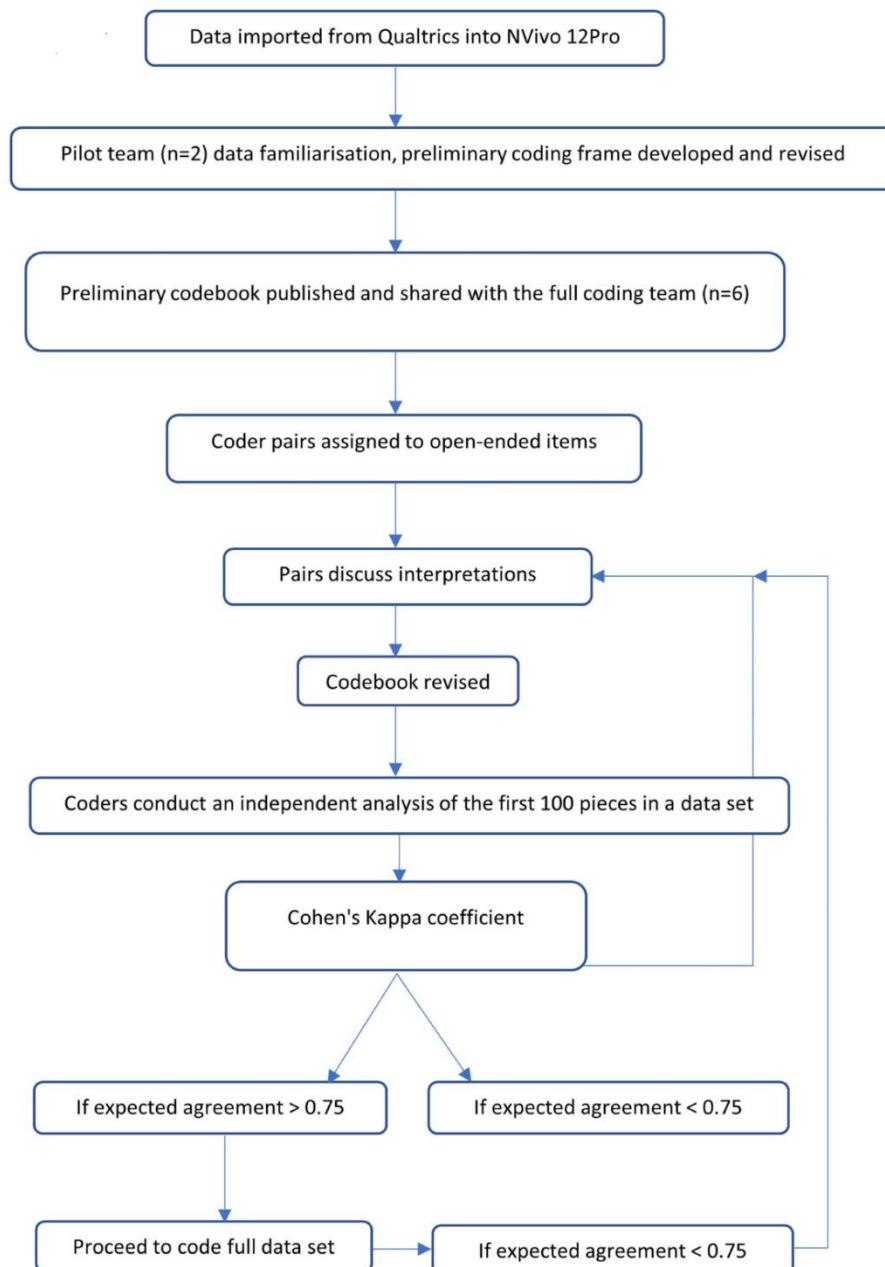
Figure 1. Team manual coding process for qualitative analysis of open-ended item responses

Findings and Discussions

Appreciative inquiry approaches entail an analysis of both effective and ineffective aspects of the area under study. In this research, three interrelated themes represent students' perceptions and experiences of what was effective or helpful, and what did not work in terms of the remote learning supports provided by their institute. These themes are (1) personal support, (2) institute and teacher communication, and (3) affordances and limitations of online learning or digital pedagogies. Unless specified, "teacher" is inclusive of schoolteachers and university tutor or lecturers.The response rate for the item ranking perceived level of learning support was 87%. Across the five options, a total of 44% of all respondents stated that the level of support for their learning from the education provider was either worse (37%), or much worse (7%). Overall, 30% stated that the level of support was unchanged. 26% indicated that support was better (23%) or much better (3%). The overall response rate for the open-ended item was 77%.

Personal support Key to students' ability to persevere with learning in challenging circumstances was the type and level of personal support offered or available from providers, and whether that support was efficacious. 48% of all open-ended responses mentioned this aspect. Recognition of the unique and challenging lockdown circumstances and prioritizing wellbeing over educational attainment were also important.

> We were checked up on and they made sure we were OK first before caring about schoolwork [Gender unspecified, Year 13, age 18]

> It is much harder to support each individual student through an online meeting. Particularly how my school handled it, where we did not need our cameras on. I thought about how easily people could just not be present [Female, Year 13, age 17]

Tertiary students are possibly viewed as being more autonomous, however, a common response in this group was that students felt their provider failed to understand their changed circumstances:

> My provider seemed unaware that people's lives and living situations had changed and I was unable to keep up with the workload expected [Male, undergraduate student, age 19].

An incidental positive outcome for students who lacked confidence was that receiving individualized support in online environments became less intimidating:

> We were all regularly updated and checked in on as opposed to those who usually seek it personally in person [Female, Masters student, age 22]

> I'm not confident talking to my teachers so sending an email was way easier [Gender unspecified, Year 11, age 16]

For the group who commented that the level of support had not changed, 65% felt that their teachers always cared for and supported them.

> The teachers always care for our learning and that didn't change in lockdown [Male, age 17, Year 13]

A smaller proportion of this group (11%) commented on balancing the positive and negative aspects of support, with this being teacher and subject dependent:

> For some classes there was better support with teachers checking in and being more understanding while others were worse due to teachers just sending out work with the expectation of having it completed and not providing any support unless requested [Female, age 18, Year 13]

> Support in subjects like music and drama was incredible even if the performance standards were not possible. I only had trouble with Media Studies as support was not consistent or clear, and now I have fallen behind [Female, Year 12, age 17]

Students were gracious, noting that teachers were "trying their best" [Male, Masters student, age 24], and were "not used to compensating for online learning" [Female, undergraduate, age 20]. The comment that: "Teachers were often just as lost as the students" [Female, Year 12, age 16] is typical of the level of youthful pragmatism and understanding.

Nevertheless, personal support for students to sustain motivation and employ capabilities related to self-regulation was critical. If this fell away, students tended to reduce their efforts:

> I had little to no support from teachers and I lack the self-motivation [Male, Year 12, age 16]

> [There's] lots of distractions and no one is making you do the work, so you don't. [Male, undergraduate student, age 19]

A small proportion (10%) of students stated that they were aware of the impact of their own actions, with a lack of progress attributed partly to internal (self) rather than external support factors:

It was easy to be distracted by video games [Male, Year 12, age 16]

I believe that the opportunity for help was there, I just didn't take it [Female, Year 12, age 16]

There were mixed responses with respect to personal support for developing resilience and coping strategies. Students indicated that they were aware of the possibility and power of changing mindsets or reframing situations, yet felt they needed help to make the shift:

They threw us into the deep end and didn't help me move mindset [Male, age 17, Year 13]

Although likely to be demanding for teachers, these findings show that knowledge of students' personal needs and circumstances as well as personal support in the form of individual teacher attention are important factors if students are to feel supported in online or remote learning.

In contrast, some young people saw the lockdowns as an opportunity to "learn to be more versatile" in online environments [Male, age 17, Year 12]. Another stated that: "It took a while to get used to, but I got there with time," indicating cognisance of their ability to accept change and develop resilience to adapt [Male, age 20, undergraduate].

One young person interpreted teacher work expectations as an indicator that they could achieve in challenging circumstances:

The fact that we were still given work to do makes us realise that COVID won't stop us from achieving our dreams and goals [Female, age 17, Year 12]

These are instances of appreciative intelligence where young people were able to reframe and identify positive aspects and aspects that were within their own control in a challenging situation.

Institute and teacher communication Connected to personal support, clear and timely communication and updates from teachers and institute meant that students were more easily able to progress their learning. On the other hand, disjointed communication, delays in response to questions, and lack of clarity of information or instructions contributed to frustrations, with 70% of all respondents in the 'worse' or 'much worse' categories commenting negatively on this aspect. Students contrasted teacher real-time responses or instant feedback with delays in replies. Waiting time impeded student progress:

Teachers wouldn't check their emails regardless of if the task was time-sensitive [Male, Year 13, age 17]

Communication was more difficult and responses from lecturers were delayed. Some lecturers did not offer sufficient assignment instructions [Female, age 20, undergraduate student].

The level of individual and type of teacher communication was variable. Students (22% in total) commented that "all the good [teachers] stood out" [Female, undergraduate student, age 20]. Others noted that teachers were absent or offered restricted contact hours. One student stated that their tutor discouraged them from emailing and kept just two online office hours per week [Female, undergraduate student, age 20]. Another remarked that they followed up with a teacher after six days of no replies [Female, age 20, undergraduate student]. Even a one-day lag in responses to emails slowed progress and this impact was compounded as the lockdown period progressed:

If I emailed them, someone would reply but by then the questions was irrelevant [Male, Year 13, age 17]

Interestingly, an over-abundance of email communication was as much an issue as a lack of:

Lots of emails about similar things crowding out your inbox and you miss important ones [Female, undergraduate student, age 18]

Overloads of emails and google classroom notifications, made it confusing to keep track of and hard to understand [Female, Year 13, age 17].

Affordances and limitations of online or digital pedagogies A small proportion of students commented on ineffective workarounds in course work which was incompatible with digital or online modes (8%), leading to negative perceptions of learning support.

> Lab work was entirely out of workbooks, no interaction or discussion [Female, undergraduate, age 21]

> Online music lessons aren't effective [Female, Year 12, age 16]

For three individuals, having poor or no internet access made it difficult to contact teachers for support:

> I had no online access and so had to make do with hard copies. It was difficult as I couldn't really contact the teachers for help [Male, Year 12, age 16]

While devices were sent out to school-aged students who needed them, for one student, the assistance arrived too late:

> Lockdown was over before the laptop they sent arrived [Gender unspecified, Polytechnic student, age 16]

Connected to personal support, students mentioned feelings of invisibility behind a screen and feeling as if they were on their own:

> As teachers couldn't look around the class and see if you were falling behind, it was 100% up to ourselves to keep pushing forward [Female, Year 13, age 17]

Other issues were created for students when institutes failed to coordinate their programmes and assessment timing. If more than one teacher assigned group work in the same week/s this meant that students struggled to coordinate online meetings with others who had different subject areas and timetables.

On the other hand, students appreciated being able to pause, rewind and replay teaching sessions, or "keep the answer saved" [Male, Year 12, age 16] when receiving feedback from teachers. Some students enjoyed learning at their own pace, experiencing lockdown learning as distraction-free and easy to get work completed.

For the 30% of students who reported little to no change between lockdown learning and regular face-to-face support, one reason was that students were comfortable with the use of digital devices and online interaction:

> I could email the teacher if I needed help the same as I could go up to them in class and ask [Female, Year 11, age 16]

For others in this group, teacher/tutor responsiveness and accommodating actions compensated for limitations of the online learning environment. This was related to teacher support and communication, for example, ensuring prompt responses to emails and checking in with students often:

> My teachers would check on me with email and if I needed help, they'd video call me [Female, Year 13, age 17]

Others argued that the affordances of online learning (for example, no distractions, flexibility, an abundance of online resources, an ability to revisit teacher feedback and lectures) and challenges in learning support (for example, lack of one-to-one contact with tutors or difficulties in learning new content) balanced each other out to produce no overall change.

In sum, processes and practices to do with personal support, communication, and affordances of online learning were complex and interrelated. Appreciative approaches entail an analysis of both effective and ineffective practices. In the data analysed for this study, there was a noticeable mirroring of comments around institute and teacher actions or inactions that differently enabled and obstructed students' ability to learn during lockdown, and that did or did not contribute to students feeling supported. For clarity these are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors attributed to student perceptions of greater or less support for learning during lockdown

Element	Factors attributed to greater support	Factors attributed to less support
Personal support	Teachers responded to, checked in with and cared about students as individuals	Teachers only messaged the class or group as a whole
	Teacher feedback was regular, comprehensive, and meaningful	Teachers responded to submitted work sporadically or with one- or two-word responses
	Fairness and accommodation in workload including communication with students about what is fair/realistic	No recognition of stress/workload perceived to be unfair/ unrealistic demands
	Accommodations and adjustments to assessments to increase flexibility or clear, realistic deadlines set well in advance	Adjustments to assessments increased overall workload e.g., from tests to multiple assignments
	Teachers made provisions for those with challenges or learning needs	Teachers treated all class members the same in the online environment even if they usually made provisions for those with learning needs when face to face
Teacher communication	Teachers/tutors responded to emails and questions promptly	Delays in responses especially when task was time-sensitive OR discouraged individual's emails OR only accepted questions in class over Zoom
	Teachers communicated daily/regularly	Teachers set work and communicated once a week or less
	Teachers were persistent, deliberate, and creative in their approaches to contacting students	Teachers were absent or relied on students to be proactive
	Clear, communicated plan for learning	Last-minute changes
Teacher and institute communication	Clear instructions for assignments and learning tasks which accounted for the online environment	Insufficient instructions
		Conflicting information released from different lecturers/teachers
	Consistent messages school or institute-wide	Little to no adaptation or accommodation to take the online learning environment into account
Institute communication	Clear structure and timetables	Muddled schedules which were inconsistent/liable to change at the last minute
Affordances and limitations of online learning	Teacher preparedness for online learning e.g., able to use Zoom break outs, understanding of how to structure Zoom time with independent learning, familiar with digital accountability and attendance such as students to have cameras on	Teachers lacked skills in online learning and teaching
	Learning tools and learning management system (LMS) easy to navigate and use	Learning tools and LMS difficult to navigate
	Finding creative ways to support students in practical subjects	Support in practical subjects less than ideal e.g., increasing written work or assigning countless YouTube videos

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Discussion

This study identifies a range of online learning supports for senior secondary school and tertiary students. While many students experienced challenges in their learning during lockdown it is evident that the level of challenge varied and was dependent on a range of circumstances (Alvarez, 2020; Green, 2020). This highlights the need for equitable, effective learning support (Bond et al., 2021). Findings underscore the importance of solid personal student support, sound, timely institute and teacher communication, and teacher skills in remote and digital pedagogies. These results reflect those of Bilgiç (2021) and Stewart (2021) who found that regular communication and feedback from instructors contributed to students' learning during emergency remote teaching in the pandemic. These results also lend weight to findings by Gillis and Krull (2020) who noted that relationships between student and institute and individual teacher are of key importance along with the implementation of quality, accessible support systems. Consistent with findings by Yates (2020), barriers and concerns for online learners in our study included worries about lack of academic progress, and for some, struggles with motivation and time management. In addition, as found by Brown et al. (2021), our findings reinforce the need for the development of teacher and student capabilities in exploiting the affordances of online learning (flexibility, fewer distractions, ability to learn at one's own pace) while diminishing negative aspects. While students in our study were understanding of teachers' own lockdown-induced challenges, if students struggled to get the learning support they needed, they were unable to progress.

Contexts and practices that encourage and support young children's learning as identified by Bourke et al. (2020) are different to those that support the learning and achievement of young adults. As noted by Longmuir et al. (2020), high stakes assessment environments have significant impact at senior secondary and tertiary level, and our findings draw attention to these issues. It is possible that worries and demands related to the gaining of qualifications for youth aged 16-24 contributed to the higher proportion of students reporting negative experiences of learning support. This adds a to a sense of accountability and temporal urgency to improving the efficacy of online support at this level, with the need for creative solutions even more important for courses involving a practical component.

Students, their teachers, and institutions have little control over the challenging circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. But as and when nations adjust to a new COVID-19 'normal', education systems must learn from interruptions and lockdowns to improve remote instruction, remembering that future circumstances including those unrelated to the present pandemic may again necessitate extended periods of online learning. Also, as Mishra et al. (2021) point out, beyond COVID-19, online teaching approaches will continue to be used and routinely integrated with face-to-face options. Lamb (2020) noted that during the first Australian COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, schools were underprepared for initial rapid shift to remote education. Student comments from our research point to this also being the case for some New Zealand education institutes. We concur with Bubb and Jones (2020) and Brown (2021) who suggest that now is the time to take stock, rethink and focus on the 'what' and 'how' of remote learning going forward.

Appreciative approaches offer us a conceptual and analytical frame to identify and consider 'what works' for learners across different levels of the education system (Clouder et al., 2016; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). Consistent with Lamb et al. (2020), we have identified learning 'divides' as those aspects of online support likely to contribute to widening gaps in progress and achievement. 'Bridges' are practices that enhance and support learning. Patterns in our data have identified the same but opposite aspects that positively and negatively impact learning. This mirroring of responses is significant because it points to clear evidence from young people themselves about how bridges might be built across divides to improve progress and achievement in remote or online environments. At national level the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Education responded promptly to address student learning and welfare concerns. These centralized supports formed critical initial 'bridges' intended to support and sustain learning during lockdown (Ministry of Education, 2020a). Related to support for learning, national-level challenges include consideration of how to augment and extend these provisions. High-

level national support needs to be complemented by coordinated institute-level leadership and responses.

Findings from this study identify useful action points at institute level for improving remote and online learning support. This must include support for both students and their teachers. We posit some key questions for leaders to reflect on as they continually improve: At institute level, what are key the supports and messages that need to be consistent and clear and thus led from top-level management (Fullan, 2008)? How at faculty or department level can institutes better support teachers and students? An example of institute level and faculty support identified by this study is the need for teachers to be able to coordinate work plans to ensure students are not overloaded with simultaneous tasks and assessments. In online environments there are fewer opportunities for day-to-day, face-to-face connections which usually facilitate this kind of negotiation. Post lockdown, students indicated that they would like to keep the flexibilities that online learning enables. Our findings about advantages of flexibility and lack of distractions when learning at home have implications at institute-level for rules and provisions around on-site spaces where young people can work and learn without interruption.

At teacher level, our findings provide evidence of helpful practice when inquiring into questions such as, 'What more can I do to support learners at whole class, group, and individual level?' 'How do I realistically balance, coordinate, and communicate my availablilty to ensure that students feel supported' (Capahay, 2020)? An example from our data that has implications for a return to face-to-face, in-class modes is the application of online environments to support those students who might otherwise feel unable to contribute or ask questions in class. When online, students felt less shame, less judgement from peers, and less fear of approaching a respected or senior tutor. Knowing this, teachers can employ strategies that better support these students. Another factor is clear communication around availability of teachers. The usual level of support and keeping of office hours outside of lockdown is not available for comparison, but it is important to note that with no other opportunities for spontaneous face-to-face interaction, tight office hours translated to a feeling of less support. Additionally, when face-to-face a teacher might notice a student off-task or struggling and move to help them. In both synchronous and asynchronous online environments, it is more difficult to notice students who might be struggling or falling behind, and in the absence of systems for individual check-ins, this relies even more on students themselves to come forward (Bilgiç, 2021).

Instances of youthful appreciative intelligence Bourke et al. (2021) identified that the lockdowns provided opportunities for many youngsters to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, persistence, and a tolerance for uncertainty in challenging situations. This was echoed in the learning support data from our Youth Voices Matter survey. Findings also revealed a complex mix of personal dimensions impacting students' learning during lockdown associated with individual motivation and self-regulation (Gillis & Krull, 2020). We agree with Bozkurt (2022) who argues that "improving resilience is not limited to an organisation's capabilities, it is also related to students" (2022, p. 10). Teachers need to know how best to help students in online environments, but students also need to be supported into viewing themselves as capable, self-regulated online learners. As noted by Cahapay (2020) and Priyadarshini et al. (2020), studying in a classroom is a different experience to studying online, however, learning capabilities and skill sets required for both modes can be transferrable and can support students to be better equipped as learners overall. Bozkurt (2022) argues that when encountering challenges that are within their control, students need the ability to realistically identify and assess a range of options and decide on positive action they might and can take. This appreciative stance can help to place issues within a wider context of potential and possibilities and is a powerful position from which to begin to respond (Dvorsky et al., 2021). Drawing on the notion of appreciative intelligence, students who stated that they lacked motivation, were easily distracted, or wanted teachers on hand to keep them 'on task,' could be seen to be stating an implied positive. In other words, these sentiments could be reframed as: "With support I can be motivated, and I'd like to be more motivated. I need to help my teacher understand this and seek support." If students find they can more easily ask questions online or by email– what is it about this environment and increase in confidence that they can draw on, or what will they keep doing as they adapt back to face-to-face contexts? How can students employ and take advantage of learning

flexibilities offered by their institute and teachers, and how might they best communicate their needs in this area? Students valued the opportunity to return to teacher comments and feedback. Would it, therefore, be advisable for students to audio-record interactions with teachers when receiving instructions or verbal feedback on work? Promoting discussions such as this with students that engages with their self-knowledge and learning behaviours, named and framed as the quality of appreciative intelligence, could support capabilities for improved student learning and self-regulation. This is an area that would benefit from exploration and research.

Limitations We acknowledge there are many complex dimensions impacting students' abilities to learn well online and institute/teacher abilities to offer learning supports. Social dimensions such as teacher-facilitated peer-peer interaction and online group work have the potential to decrease student isolation and enhance engagement (Bond, 2020). Other dimensions including students' home environment and educational resourcing (Green, 2020; The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 2020), and overall health and wellbeing such as the amount of sleep or levels of physical activity are not reported here. It was not possible in this research to conduct a region-by-region analysis of difference in students' responses. The New Zealand COVID-19 response was centrally managed as a whole-of government response, hence all areas of New Zealand were targeted by the 4-week lockdown that was the focus of this study. In identifying needs for learning supports we have not considered the different home situations of teachers or lecturers during lockdown and the demands on this group. We acknowledge these aspects as being areas for further research.

Conclusion

Youth are a key demographic impacted by the pandemic. It is crucial that their voices are heard and included in education responses. The Youth Voice Matter survey of remote learning supports provides an opportunity to highlight evidence from students who, as it were, 'weathering the same storm' in different learning circumstances. We can learn from these struggles and successes. Findings from this study have significance for ongoing pandemic-related lockdowns as well as other situations where online learning might be necessary or advantageous. Our findings contribute an analysis of institute- and teacher-level supports that might act to bridge some learning support 'divides.' This analysis of what is working from an appreciative stance is a basis for developing improved systems and responses that can be taken to scale across schools and institutions. Finally, a new indicator going forward could be the ability and capacity of youth themselves, with equitable support, to identify possibilities and potentials in challenging situations and act to reframe and transform this potential to positive outcomes for themselves and others.

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