## Our Poetry

***Josh***

*This year started like many others as an academic.*

*A mid-late phase doctoral student*

*a new position of lecturer*

*in a small regional university.*

*I returned to a quiet and peaceful campus*

*just after the new year break.*

*I was ready to put my head down*

*for a solid month of thesis work.*

*I sat diligently day after day in my office*

*over January,*

*working with transcripts and writing chapters.*

*Blissfully unaware of the collision course*

*we had all accidently found ourselves on.*

*The academic year began*

*attention was dragged away from my thesis,*

*toward the preparation of courses[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*Moodle shells and the planning of field work.*

*I managed to get permission to take my students*

*around Easter*

*to the university’s outback research property*

*Nanya Station*

*I, like them,*

*was really looking forward to it.*

*An opportunity for our students to see arid NSW,*

*despite the drought*

*and the horrors it was causing.*

*At the start of March, I managed a quick trip to Nanya.*

*there,* *I wrote this poem on the 5th of March.*

*Seeing the devastation of climate change*

*up close and personal was hard.*

***Nanya***

*This country is*

*Sick*

*Crook*

*Dying*

*Trees*

*kicking up their toes*

*giving up*

*no water*

*no life*

*Roos and goats*

*Flocking to water*

*stuck*

*dead*

*Fire*

*blackens the landscape*

*what hope do we have left?*

*Rain*

*50mm last year*

*250 in a good one*

*This is the Anthropocene*

*Then rain*

*rain on our trip*

*10mm in a day*

*maybe*

*just maybe*

*we have a chance of recovery*

*but not whilst we live in the Anthropocene.*

*I was in NSW for three days*

*Getting back it was like I was on another planet.*

*People had flocked to supermarkets*

*stripped the shelves bear of*

*toilet paper, spaghetti, flour, and tinned good.*

*People were on edge!*

*Alarmed and worried.*

*COVID-19 was upon us.*

*Within two weeks*

*restrictions imposed,*

*pleas for social distancing and common sense,*

*public health officials were losing their fight.*

*Bottles of hand sanitiser and physical distancing indicators,*

*popped up everywhere*

*COVID-19 got a hold!*

*After a very odd few weeks*

*in which the classroom went on*

*after weeks of slowly stripping back public liberty.*

*The Victorian Premier Announced:*

*“if you can work from home, you must work from home”,*

*and*

*“if you can learn from home, you must learn from home”*

*With these words,*

*we packed our laptops,*

*books, standing desks and monitors,*

*and set up shop at home.*

*Fast forward a week or two,*

*and it was time to deliver the intensive*

*that we were to do in NSW.*

*Instead of the early morning start in the bus to a far off land*

*it was a Teams call.*

*Where I welcomed the students and staff:*

*“Welcome to what is likely to be by far*

*the most bizarre week in your educational journey”*

*This started my first ever intensive at your place,*

*I was thinking of this as a temporary novelty.*

*I was* ***wrong****.*

*The intensive was fascinating*

*but a feeling of peculiarity pertained.*

*In place of workshops*

*synchronous and asynchronous*

*learning activities.*

*Themes of understanding and teaching a place,*

*middle years curriculum,*

*pedagogies and assessment.*

*One of the highlights,*

*students were asked to*

*to think about how they explore the place*

*around them through a lens.*

*Students made a video*

*exploring their local patches*

*adopting perspectives.*

*I made a video,*

*I tried to eat lunch from things*

*I foraged near my house.*

*Titled How not to eat acorns.*

*The students undertook a peer teaching assessment.*

*Challenged to develop a lesson*

*based* *on learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum F-10.*

*Innovative sessions!*

*We did ‘Landcare’ activities*

*looking for small bits of plastic in the backyard,*

*biodiversity audits*

*and even a campfire and storytelling*

*lit by backyard fire pits, candles*

*and even the odd virtual fire on the tv.*

*Reflecting on the sessions*

*I kept coming back to the same point,*

*good pedagogy is good pedagogy.*

*Things that are*

*effective in an online environment*

*use a similar philosophy*

*to things in the classroom.*

*A student-centred constructivist pedagogy*

*that places the learner at the centre.*

*Students’ doing*

*rather than listing*

*proved successful.*

*An approach that*

*although challenging*

*is quick becoming*

*my staple*

*in online teaching.*

***Cam***

*Halfway point in my first academic year.*

*I started this year with two goals:*

*finish my PhD,*

*develop my own course for the first time.*

*My first semester*

*a frantic one.*

*Started in week two*

*of the semester.*

*Had to quickly catchup*

*on teaching.*

*Desperately trying to finish my thesis*

*a looming deadline.*

*Six months later,*

*a much better position.*

*Thesis submitted*

*undergoing examination.*

*Given a course coordinator role,*

*‘HPE curriculum’.*

*Spent months structuring content*

*reflecting theoretical and pedagogical developments.*

*This time, was a godsend,*

*in comparison to the proceeding semester.*

*Everything prepared.*

*feeling positive*

*this would change very quickly.*

*Start of the semester*

*thesis comments back,*

*using my research day to address all the comments,*

*with the help of my supervisors.*

*At the time, COVID-19,*

*was a topic of discussion between colleagues.*

*One of my colleagues,*

*his concern was a trip to Europe.*

*My concern*

*a planned conference and honeymoon in Chile*

*scheduled for October.*

*None of us had any idea*

*how quickly COVID would impact all of our lives.*

*I had not had serious thoughts*

*about how this virus would impact my teaching*

*let alone my planned April Wedding.*

*The semester started well*

*a high level of engagement with my*

*students in the curriculum course.*

*An equal emphasis on practical and theoretical concepts,*

*to understand the curriculum and how to apply it.*

*A variety of classroom and outdoor activities.*

*The unfolding nature*

*of the COVID pandemic*

*changed all of this.*

*The first restrictions*

*emphasised clean practices,*

*physical distancing.*

*As we limped on to week three,*

*with case numbers increasing,*

*the Premier gave a stay at home order*

*and insisted that all work,*

*if possible,*

*must occur from home, including education.*

*Significant change to my classes.*

*Upheaval in the world of PE!*

*Staff confused. Unsure,*

*how to include practical elements?*

*Teaching entirely online*

*a new challenge.*

*Questions,*

*What does PE looks like during a pandemic?*

*A subject that suffers from continual contesting.*

*Pulled in different directions.*

*PE again being asked to define itself,*

*within this new ‘normal’.*

*In England,*

*a TV presenter and author,*

*Joe Wicks started a daily class on YouTube.*

*His classes gained popularity*

*dubbed the ‘face of PE in England.’.*

*Led to fierce debate in PE circles.*

*International debate, whether what Joe was doing was actually PE?*

*Some argued it is positive, getting students active*

*Others argued that it only emphasised the physical activity.*

*Therefore, it should not be considered PE.*

*I align more with the later view.*

*There has been no clear, solution to PE during a time of crisis.*

*This pandemic*

*an opportunity to grow?*

*I already had strong views on the nature of PE*

*concerned about the use of ‘multi-activity, sport’*

*Regularly seeing the approach,*

*without much educative purpose.*

*Now no longer viable, in an online environment….*

*I think*

*it provides*

*the opportunity for to reflect on:*

*What PE should look like?*

*How we much emphasis in sport?*

*Over other essential elements…..*

*Although, this pandemic,*

*a lot of challenges for everyone,*

*a number of opportunities for physical educators.*

*I have a lot of HOPE for the future.*

***Alex***

*It is week two*

*of Victoria’s second lock down.*

*I am happy*

*my wife and I moved*

*to a coastal town.*

*We walk on the beach*

*I go for the odd paddle*

*we explore the reserve*

*with our 15-month-old daughter.*

*Small rays of sunshine lessen the pain.*

*Missing family*

*and friends*

*under severe lock downs of Melbourne.*

*Lucky I have a job.*

*It has been hard*

*workload issues*

*administrative red tape,*

*tight deadlines,*

*rapidly moving*

*complex practical programs*

*online!*

*I can’t help getting emotional*

*several times a week.*

*The cracks start to appear*

*within our staff and student body.*

*COVID-19 is a well-being issue*

*It is not normal for 18 – 25yr old’s*

*to be caged-in, to social distance.*

*It impedes how they come to learn about the world,*

*each other*

*and themselves.*

*Learning about the world is experiential and social,*

*In physical and outdoor education*

*our classes are full of learning by doing.*

*Interacting with others, visiting places.*

*Educators challenged on multiply fronts,*

*How do we ‘do’ outdoor and physical education online?*

*Teachers, myself included, scrambled!*

*How to move to the online world?*

*My teaching during the first lockdown*

*was a shamble.*

*A hack job video,*

*an article to read*

*an online synchronous class.*

*Distracted by an avalanche of administration*

*documents for situations A – Z*

*a program review*

*changes to timetables*

*student consultation.*

*I should have ignored the red tape.*

*Most of this work, wasted!*

*as management changed its mind.*

*Leadership on all levels,*

*under pressure*

*not making the best decisions?*

*I don’t think anyone is to blame.*

*I’ve decided to change my ways*

*re-ordered my priority list,*

*Teaching and student contact*

*my number one focus.*

*Administrative deadlines pushed out or ignored.*

*In the online world,*

*I forgot about my pedagogical foundations*

*all those ‘you just do it’ teaching skills.*

*By way of consequence,*

*students learning off the rails.*

*It was later,*

*when I took leave*

*I was flooded with embarrassment*

*about the mistakes made.*

*I forgot,*

*to begin with* ***who*** *I am teaching?*

*This has always served me well   
but like the novice educator,*

*on their first day I placed too much focus* ***what.***

*The thing that should come last in the art of teaching!*

*The online content*

*for a very active social cohort*

*had little*

*social and active learning*

*– what was I thinking???*

*The readings and discussions thought provoking.*

*Experience tells me that most of these*

*disappear from students’ minds*

*by the same afternoon.*

*I had not asked or correctly judged,*

*what the best course*

*of action was*

*for the students in my care.*

*I wonder why I forgot*

*the two things that have been a stalwart of my teaching craft?*

*Students needed*

*an active and social experience*

*– an outdoor education experience.*

*“an experience [that] arouses curiosity,*

*strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes*

*that are sufficiently intense*

*to carry a person over dead places in the future” (Dewey, 1997, p. 38).*

*Dead places we are experiencing now with COVID-19.*

*At heart is a simple question –*

*why did I drift?*

*COVID-19 is exposing*

*a major crack in our system*

*– the shift from* ***who*** *our students are*

*to a tick box system.*

*A system overloading us with administration*

*rather than focusing on the pedagogical needs of our students.*

*Whether we are teaching face to face or online,*

*how can we best support*

*outdoor and physical education teachers?*

*Particularly when students need HOPE teachers most,*

*during a pandemic.*

1. At the university where we all work we refer to units or subjects as courses and degrees as programs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)