Building Meaningful Connections with Large Online Classes

Dr Yuhui Gao
DCU Business School, Dublin City University
yuhui.gao@dcu.ie

Aims

Fostering effective learning and motivating students' engagement in large classes continues to present its challenges. The purpose of this study is to reflect on some key lessons learned from teaching large online classes during the pandemic.
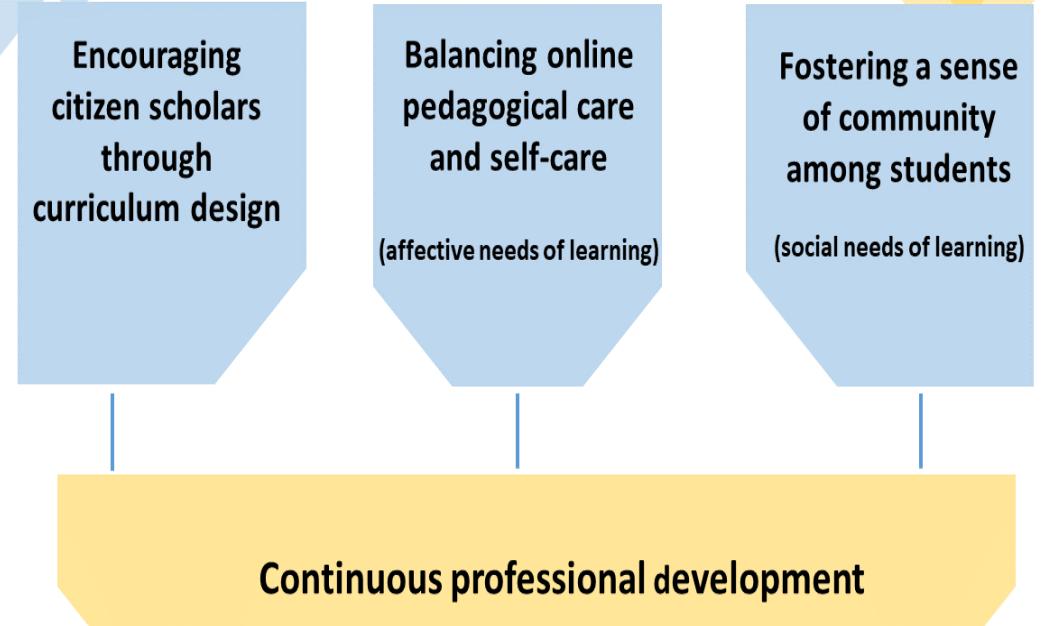
Reflection on Implications for Practice

➢ Commitment to continuous professional development. Rich resources for teaching practices (e.g., DCU teaching online resource bank, Harvard Business Publishing Education teaching resources) and students' online engagement activities (e.g., breakout rooms, polls, Vevox, H5P). *Do one thing at a time*.

➢ Design meaningful assessments to encourage students develop citizen attributes such as resilience, adaptability and ethical leadership. Active engagement in societal problems gives students a motivation to learn, a purpose to carry out the coursework and a desire to be a citizen scholar (Arvanitakis & Hornsby, 2016).

➢ Balance online pedagogical care and self-care (e.g., FAQ sheets, online synchronous office hours, email hours, mid-term survey).

➢ Promote communal learning by students helping each other (e.g., online discussion forums; informal 'hallway' conversations, listening). Online learning communities can only be *communal* rather than *virtual* if they can create a feeling of connectedness and a sense of belonging and togetherness.

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Encouraging citizen scholars through curriculum design

Balancing online pedagogical care and self-care (affective needs of learning)

Fostering a sense of community among students (social needs of learning)

Continuous professional development

"Many thanks for all of your hard work and lectures during the first semester. Although the circumstances were far from ideal your lectures were engaging and thoroughly enjoyable".

References

Arvanitakis, J. & Hornsby, D. (2016). Are universities redundant? In D. Hornsby and J. Arvanitakis (eds), Universities, the Citizen Scholar, and the Future of Higher Education, 7-21. New York: Palgrave MacMillian.

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