An Analysis of Student e-Learning Experience in Asia

Qingyun Li[1], Zihao Li[2, *], Jie Han[3], Zhongyang Zhang[1]

[1] Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR, China

[2, *] The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong SAR, China

[3] Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong SAR, China

michaelli@hkapa.edu

Abstract. For performing arts education, Sage-on-the-Stage and Learn from the Master's were discontinued due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All lectures, tutorials, and other face-to-face skill-based training sections were cancelled or replaced by the online model. It is essential for educators to understand how students' e-learning experiences were affected by these educational changes, with unprecedented challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve that, assessment is useful when teachers and students have personalized reports to aid one-on-one mentoring and academic advising. In this study, students and graduates from a leading performing arts institution in Asia were surveyed to gather critical feedback on the online teaching and learning for the continuous improvement of the academic provision, especially on the use of IT technology in the education pedagogy improvement. The First-Year Student Experience Survey (FYSES) and Graduate Exit Survey (GES) are conducted at the institution to analyse students' perceptions of social support, faculty care, mental wellbeing, and campus atmosphere for fostering student engagement, the sense of belonging, and student success, which are particularly important in difficult times of severe financial, social, and personal health challenges. This study reveals some important factors behind the students' dissatisfaction during online learning as well as areas that they are proud of, such as identity and the opportunity to perform. This quantitative study contributes to this understudied field and provides guidance for improving online teaching and learning in performing arts education in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: performing arts education, COVID-19 pandemic, educational changes, e-learning experiences, personalized reports, practice-based subjects, First-Year Student Experience Survey, Graduate Exit Survey.

1. Introduction

From early 2020, performing arts teaching and learning have undergone unexpected changes as the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps across the continents. Confronting the unprecedented challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a wide array of measures is implemented in the performing arts education. That includes active adoption of technologies in learning (Li, Li et al. 2021), performance, production, provision of resources, and support services to promote students' wellbeing. To know how the new measures have helped teaching and learning and how to improve the quality of teaching and learning, researchers have developed several surveys to investigate students' overall learning experience. Similar studies have been carried out in various countries. In Australia, a national-wide Student Experience Survey (SES) is administered to first- and later-year students using the same questionnaire (Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching 2021). In the US and Canada, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is administered to first and senior-year degree-seeking students with specific modules on First-year Transition and Graduate Transition (Indiana University 2021). In the UK, a national-wide National Student Survey (NSS) is administered to final-year students only (HEFCE 2021). The University of Hong Kong conducts Student Learning Experience Surveys to first- and final-year undergraduate students and taught-postgraduate students, respectively.

In Australian project, for instance, there are mixed opinions with regard to what items should be included to measure student experience. The project team for developing the SES faced the same issue in 2011. The works by Palmer (2011) points out that student experience is a broad construct, and the list of its identifiable aspects is, therefore, "potentially endless" (p.35). After a rigorous development process, which included an extensive literature review, consultation with stakeholders, focus group study with students, expert judgment, and validation of pilot data, the Australian SES eventually focused on the aspects of the student experience. It was measurable and linked with learning and development outcomes, and were effective in producing practical insights to aid university quality assurance and enhancement (Radloff, Coates et al. 2011).

In the Australian SES, educational development is conceived as a product of both student involvement and institutional support. The content and construct validity and reliability of student experience measurement were validated by research (Radloff, Coates et al. 2012). Its conceptual model comprises five intertwined facets of the university learning experience as shown in Figure 1 below. Comparing the NSSE of USA, which has a narrow focus on student engagement, and the NSS of UK, which takes a value for money/effort perspective, the Australian conceptual model aligns strongly with the performing arts institution's Student Experience Survey objectives.
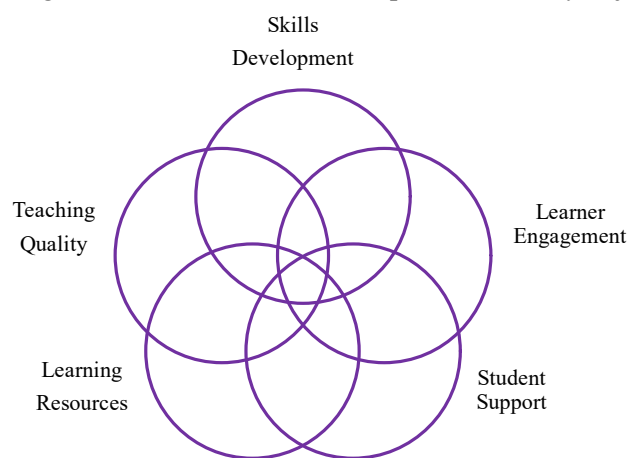

Fig. 1: Conceptual Model of Australian Student Experience Survey (Radloff 2011)

Referring the latest scholarship, following aspects are included in this study for analysing students' learning experience: Learning Experience, Performance and Production Opportunities, Programme Quality, Programme Organisation, Teaching Quality, Workload and Study-Life Balance, Student Engagement, Graduating Students' Satisfaction Ratings on Campus Life Experience, Graduates' Overall Impression of the Institution. The above aspects are included in the First-Year Student Experience Survey (FYSES) and Graduate Exit Survey (GES) for academic year 2020/21 with reference to the trends of the past three years conducted in the institute where this study takes place. FYSES and GES analyse the pandemic affects, and exam the new learning pedagogies in performing arts education. The subject university is a leading tertiary institute in Asia offering performing arts education. It has been ranked highly by the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Ranking under performing arts categories since 2017. It has approximately 1,000 students, offering academic programmes from diploma/foundation to master's degree level in six faculties: School of Chinese Opera (CO); School of Dance (DA); School of Drama (DR); School of Film and Television (FTV); School of Music (MU); School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts (TEA).

FYSES is conducted in Semester 2 of each Year-1 bachelor students to understand students' impressions about their learning experience and transition into the institution life. Meanwhile, it aims to collect qualitative feedback and suggestions on student needs. GES takes place at the end of students' study to evaluate students' overall satisfaction and perceptions about their learning experience at the institute. It evaluates students' perceived attainment of the graduate attributes and employability skills and to collect qualitative feedback and suggestions on student needs. As a key part of the strategies on student evaluation of teaching and learning in the performing arts education, both surveys collecting students' and graduates' feedbacks on the teaching and learning quality are conducted periodically for continuous improvement of the academic provision. The result is useful for senior management in making decisions. Data are frequently referenced by management staff, programme / major leaders, course coordinators and the subject teachers.

This study, firstly, recapitulates recent research in student learning experience in section two, and describes the survey item, data collection in section three. The survey, result and findings are further elaborated and discussed in section four. The contribution of this study is made in section five.

2. Literature Review

Student learning experience survey is the assessment towards the learning experience on the part of students from different learning periods (Dermo 2009). Coming to the pandemic time, improving the quality of the student learning experience has become a key issue in higher education institutions, and e-assessment has been widely used in collecting students' evaluations of their individual learning experiences. A survey is conducted in the works of (Maqableh and Alia 2021), to evaluate students' online learning experience and satisfaction, identifying the positive and negative aspects of online learning amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic. The data are collected when the emergency shifting to online model has taken place. Students have experienced online learning for three academic semesters consecutively. More than one-third of the students indicate that they are dissatisfied with the online learning experience. Several important factors behind the students' dissatisfaction with the online learning experience are identified. A descriptive analysis of the solutions and a qualitative template analysis of the enablers and barriers has been implemented by the works of (Bastos, Carvalho et al. 2021). A research conducted by the works of (Al Salman, Alkathiri et al. 2021) indicates that the level of students' preference for distance learning is medium in general. The survey identifies students' preferable level and challenges of using distance learning. It suggests that teacher's role is feedback provider, supervisor to students' improvement levels, provider of necessary tests and exams. The result indicates the significant differences in students' preferable in distance learning for both educational level and ICT skills during the outbreak of the COVID19. The study by (Akpınar 2021) presents that the restrictive learning condition has resulted in increased stress, which leads to

downstream negative academic consequences. Public health studies worldwide have broadly reported an increase in psychological issues during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Poor network connections that cause unclear and unstable communications in lectures in the college at Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia is mentioned by (Alchamdani, Fatmasari et al. 2020). They point out the inequality of affordance for internet among students hinders student participation in taking online lectures. As well, the excessive workload makes student concentration decrease. The works by (Salta, Paschalidou et al. 2021) have investigated over 300 students in various majors from two Greek universities. They compare the students' engagement and interaction between traditional face-to-face learning and distance online learning environments. The study focuses on students' views about their engagement and interactions within the learning community in which they participate. The researchers report that there is a statistically significant lower level of emotional engagement in online learning situation when comparing with the traditional learning environment.

Self-regulated learning is introduced in the survey to assess students' ability to learn by themselves. In fact, self-regulated learning is key to active student engagement and improved learning outcomes. It has been shown to be productive of time spent on practicing, better practicing quality, heightened self-efficacy, and achievement of expert performance in a wide array of areas such as athletics, arts, academic studies, and music (Ericsson, Krampe et al. 1993, Lehmann and Ericsson 1997, Bonneville-Roussy and Bouffard 2014, Miksza 2015, Panadero 2017, Ericsson and Harwell 2019). As Miksza, McPherson et al. (2018) put it, self-regulated learning theory offers an evidence-based framework for describing how student artists can be empowered to take control of their own learning and overall development. Therefore, it is a promising area for tertiary institutes to invest resources in research and pedagogical practice to enhance students' quality of learning. Self-regulated learners are characterised as: metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process. In terms of metacognitive processes, self-regulated learners plan, organize, self-instruct, and self-evaluate at various stages during the knowledge and skill acquisition process. From a motivational aspect, self-regulated learners perceive themselves as self-efficacious, autonomous, and intrinsically motivated. In terms of behaviour, self-regulated students select, structure, and even create social and physical environments that optimize acquisition in learning (Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons 1988).

More remarkable advancements are made in applying self-regulated learning to music education within the performing arts landscape. For instance, the research work of Peter Miksza (2015) at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music shows the positive impact of self-regulation training on music students' performance. In practice, Miksza applies self-regulated learning approach in several of his courses, in which students learn the self-regulated practice strategies. Likewise, Hatfield, Halvari et al. (2017) at Norwegian Academy of Music further elaborate that goal setting and self-efficacy are predictive of music students' use of psychological skills for practice (concentration, arousal-regulation, self-control, self-observation, imagery), which are positively linked to self-reflection.

The instrument adapted from the Self-regulated Learning in Music Questionnaire (Hatfield, Halvari et al. 2017) and Self-regulated Practice Behaviour for Music Students (Miksza 2011) for assessing students' self-regulated learning, is used to help boost students' SRL profiles on a personal and School basis. It also aids the provision of group-based training and personalised coaching on developing students' capacity in self-regulated learning and practice based on their strengths and weaknesses in SRL. A different opinion is that the SRL assessment would be useful only when teachers and students have personalised reports to aid one-on-one mentoring and academic advising. A solution to conciliate these different views provides personalised reports to individual students showing their personal scores versus the average scores of the faculty and the institute Researchers in this study have studied the technical issues and found a feasible solution to bridge the gap.

Referring the current student learning methodology and the growing demands from the programme leaders and policy makers in the performing arts education, the survey from the first- year students and last-year students are conducted at the subject institute to analyse students' perceptions of social support, faculty care, mental wellbeing, and campus atmosphere, which are all affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The First-Year Student Experience Survey (FYSES) and Graduate Exit Survey (GES) for AY 2020/21 were conducted with reference to the trends of the past three years. The FYSES has been administered to all students (including postsecondary (PS), undergraduate (UG), and postgraduate (PG)) at the end of their first year. The questionnaire includes eight parts: Part one includes 15 questions about the personal information of the first-year students. Other parts of the survey contain 110 main survey questions, which aim to collect feedback from students about various aspects of their first-year experiences (**Appendix 1**).

The GES has been conducted yearly to understand the employment situation of the HKAPA graduates. In GES, students are asked to complete an online questionnaire to illustrate their employment situation and share their learning experience in the HKAPA. The survey was conducted by self-administered online questionnaire. The questionnaire includes two parts: Part One which has 5 questions about the personal information of the graduates, and Part Two which contains 20 main survey questions (**Appendix 2**).

3.2. Data Collection

As shown in **Table 1**, the response rate of FYSES for 2020/21 is 14.2%, slightly below the previous year's response rate of 14.6%. The response rate of the GES dropped from 16.1% of 2019/20 to 6.3% in 2020/21. There are only five respondents from postsecondary (PS) programmes and one from Postgraduate (PG) programmes, making it less meaningful to examine the means of the GES ratings at programme level, although they are still reported in this paper for reference. To boost the respondence rate, both FYSES and GES questionnaires have been simplified in the following academic year.

Table 1. Response Rate by Programme Level

FYSES						
AY	**Survey Mode**		**PS**	**UG**	**PG**	**Institution**
2020/21	Online	Sample Size	N/A	32	7	39
		Response Rate		14.5%	15.9%	14.2%
2019/20	Online	Sample Size	N/A	31	6	37
		Response Rate		16.0%	11.1%	14.6%
2018/19	Online	Sample Size	4	12	1	17
		Response Rate	11.8%	7.3%	2.2%	7.0%
2017/18	Paper	Sample Size	10	122	19	151
		Response Rate	28.6%	66.7%	28.8%	53.2%
GES						
2020/21	Online	Sample Size	5	19	1	25
		Response Rate	4.6%	8.6%	1.5%	6.3%
2019/20	Online	Sample Size	6	40	7	53
		Response Rate	7.2%	21.4%	11.7%	16.1%
2018/19	Online	Sample Size	3	31	13	47

		Response Rate	4.6%	17.4%	16.3%	14.6%
2017/18	Paper	Sample Size	44	145	9	198
		Response Rate	68%	87%	16%	69%

4. Data Analysis and Result

The comparisons in the areas of Learning Experience, Performance and Production Opportunities, Programme Quality and Organisation, Teaching Quality, Workload and Study-life Balance, Level of Engagement, Student Life Experience, and Graduates' Overall Impression of the Institution are presented in the following sections.

4.1. Learning Experience

For the feedback from first year's students, it is encouraging to see that rating on Learning Experience rebounded from 4.08 points in 2019/20 to a 4-year high of 4.63 in 2020/21 (**Fig. 2a**), reverting a downward trend since 2017/18. Both UG and PG programmes observed improved FYSES ratings in 2020/21 than that of the previous year.

In contrast, the graduating students' rating on Learning Experience dipped slightly to 4.13, along with the downward trend since 2017/18. It is noted that although the rating of PG programme dropped from 5.17 points to 4.00 in 2020/21, it is not a reliable measure because the sample size was insignificant - only 1 respondent in 2020/21 (**Fig. 2b**). At the UG level, the 2020/21 cohort was more satisfied than the 2019/20 as indicated in their higher GES ratings on Learning Experience (4.22 vs. 4.11). This finding implied that the institution was reasonably successful in overcoming the challenge of COVID-19 during 2020/21, based on the hybrid learning pedagogy which was firstly proposed by (Li, Li et al. 2021) and applied in the performing arts education in HKAPA from early 2020. With this pedagogy, teachers in HKAPA developed different kinds of online courses, webinars, innovative performance projects, and synchronous online learning students to improve their learning experience. Teachers regard students as 'partners' in developing a course as it progresses, not just in term of giving feedback but in finding their own ways to achieve outcomes.

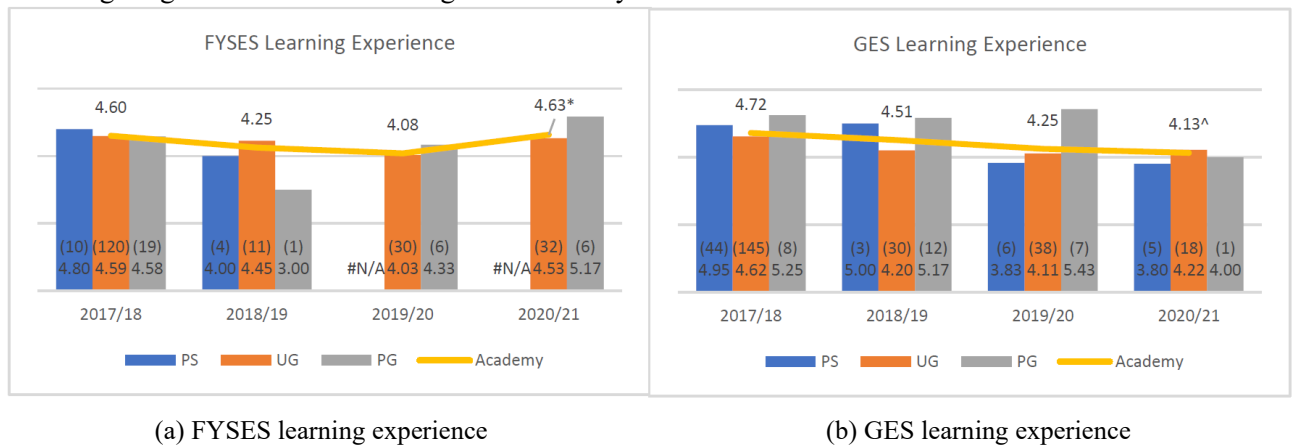(a) FYSES learning experience   (b) GES learning experience

Fig. 2: Learning Experience (AY2017/18 to 2020/21)
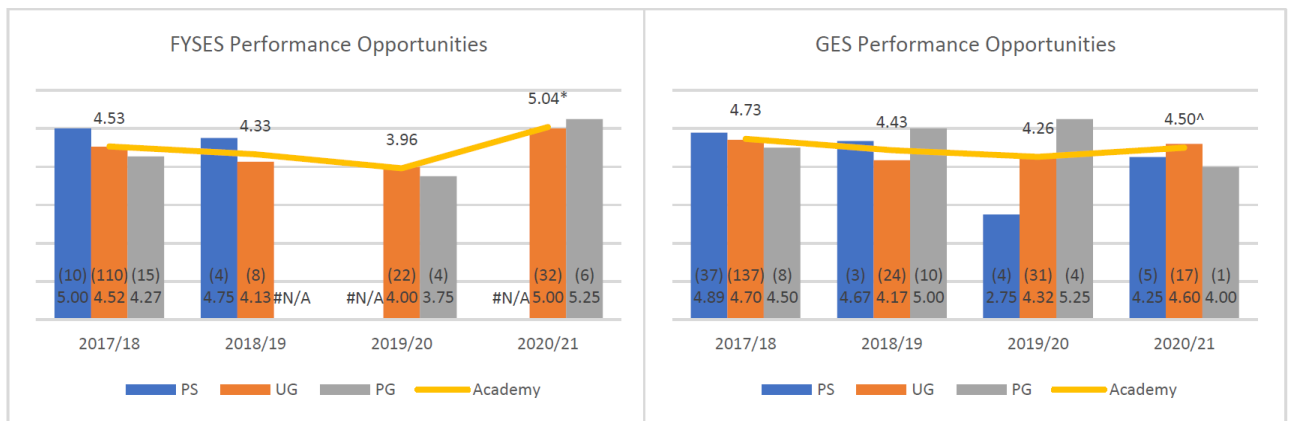
Note: In all figures in this section:

(1)* : YoY mean difference is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level; ^: YoY mean difference is insignificant.

(2) The figures in () are the sample size. PS programmes were not included in the FYSES since 2019/20.)

4.2. Performance and Production Opportunities

Sufficient performance and production opportunities are one of the major considerations that prospective students decided to study at the institution. The works of (Li, Li et al. 2021) also report that innovative performance projects (HKAPA 2021) is introduced in HKAPA in 2020 for encouraging

students to create innovative artwork (s) or project (s), with higher-order thinking and to promote themselves in the arts-self-efficacy, inspired by the artistic restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project motivates students to articulate, generate original ideas in various performance & production projects and presentations.

It is encouraging to see that both the FYSES and GES ratings on Performance Opportunities in 2020/21 show a notable rebound from a 3-year downward trend since 2017/18 (Fig. 3a and b). The institution's average FYSES rating on Performance Opportunities jumped from 3.96 points to a 4 year high of 5.04. Both UG and PG programmes showed improvements, with UG's rating jumping from 4.00 to 5.00 points and PG rating from 3.75 to 5.25 points (Fig. 3a). The overall mean of GES rating on Performance Opportunities rebounded to 4.50 points in 2020/21 from its 2019/20 low of 4.26 points (Fig. 3b). The improvement was shown across the PS and UG programme levels with PS rating rose from 2.75 to 4.25 points; and UG rating rose from 4.32 to 4.60 points. The FYSES and GES ratings on Production Opportunities are similar. The institution's average FYSES and GES rating rebounded in 2020/21 (5.17 and 4.52) from their three-year low (Fig. 3c and 3d). Cohort analysis shows the same result. Fig. 3c and d demonstrates the positive results of the Schools' enormous efforts in minimizing the interruptions on student performances/productions during the 2020/21 pandemic times.

(a) FYSES Performance Opportunities   (b) GES Performance Opportunities
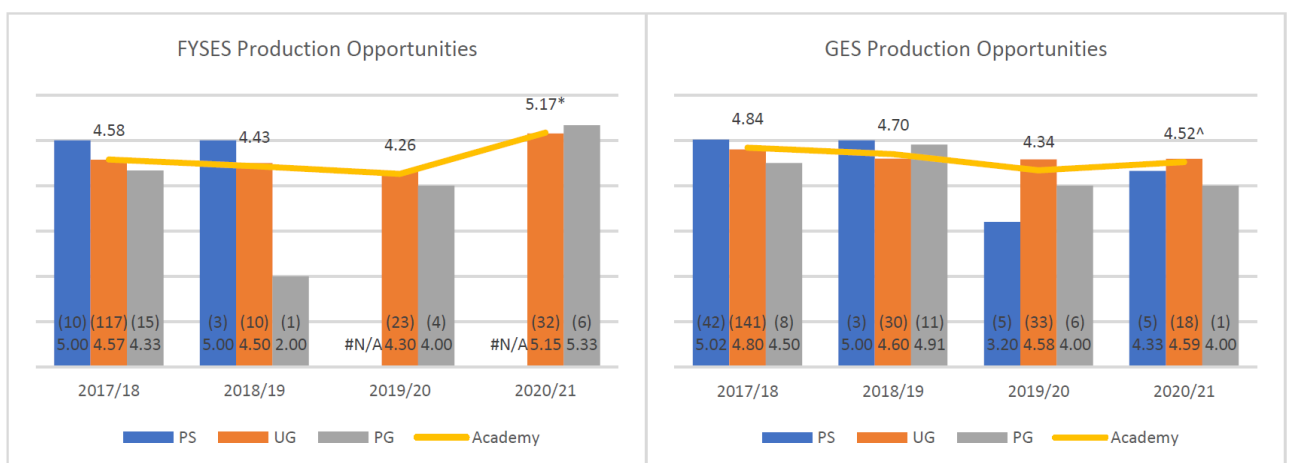
(c) FYSES Production Opportunities   (d) GES Production Opportunities

Fig. 2: Performance and Production Opportunities (AY2017/18 to 2020/21)

(Note:(1)* : YoY mean difference is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level; ^: YoY mean difference is insignificant.(2) The figures in () are the sample size. PS programmes were not included in the FYSES since 2019/20.)

4.3. Teaching Quality

With respect to convincing companies and performers alike to step out of their comfort zones, policy researchers argue that arts-tech is a trend no one can afford to ignore. Technology, in the form of the interactive media, software and computer games sector, is quite simply the engine of growth within the creative cultural industries, generating the highest value and the most employment. The development of digital learning is introduced in the course design in the institution, which involve different types of technology, including augmented/virtual reality, VR simulators, artificial intelligence, motion capture technology, etc. Meanwhile, the items in table 2 for teachers to understand what student want to learn, and how students could be motivated to learn, applying tried and tested frameworks that structure creative and learning processes and employing the best variety of pedagogical practices should govern the approach to 'live' and online teaching equally.

The FYSES rating on Teaching Quality in 2020/21 jumped to a 4-year high of 4.95 points from its 3-year low of 4.19 in 2019/20 (**Fig. 3a**). Highly satisfactory ratings are shown at both UG and PG levels. However, the GES ratings on Teaching Quality slid from 4.27 in 2019/20 to 4.08 points in 2020/21 (**Fig. 3b**). It may because only one student responded to PG programme with quite low score (3.0).
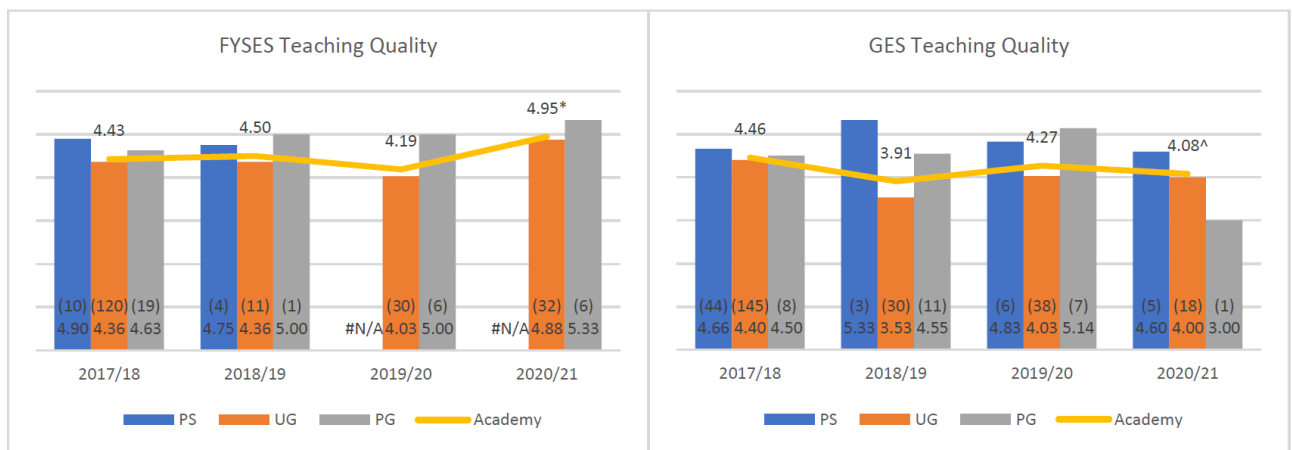
(a) FYSES Teaching Quality (b) GES Teaching Quality

Fig. 3: Teaching Quality Rating (AY2017/18 to 2020/21)

(Note: (1)* : YoY mean difference is significant at the $p<0.05$ level; ^: YoY mean difference is insignificant. (2) The figures in bracket () are the sample size. PS programmes were not included in the FYSES since 2019/20.

According to the key driver analysis in the survey report of FYSES and GES last year, five factors contribute to Teaching Quality as listed in **Table 2**. In AY2020/21, the graduating students' ratings on these factors decrease on a YoY basis, indicating that the pandemic lockdown hindered the teacher-student interactions to a varied extent.

Table 2. Key Drivers of Teaching Quality (based on GES)

Mean Rating	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Sample Size	**198**	**44**	**51**	**24**
(a.) The teachers were good at explaining things.	4.50	3.98	4.37	4.13
(b.) The teachers made it clear what they expected from students.	4.30	3.80	4.16	3.75
(c.) The teachers usually gave helpful feedback on my work.	4.44	3.95	4.24	4.17

(d.) The teachers were enthusiastic about the subjects they taught.	4.53	3.80	4.43	4.33
(e.) The teachers were usually available to discuss my work.	4.33	3.89	4.14	3.92

4.4. Workload and Study-life Balance

These two questions: Workload and Study-Life Balance were introduced in GES from 2019/20. It means only two-year surveys about workload in 2019/20 and 2020/21 were conducted. The 2020/21 GES shows that UG respondents considered their workload "Just Right" fell from 66% in 2019/20 to 58%, whereas the share of graduating UG students feeling their workload "Too Heavy" increased from 34% to 42%. Similarly, the percentage of PS respondents feeling their workload "Just Right" fell from 83% to 50%, whereas those considering their workload "too Heavy" increased to 50%. (**Fig. 4a and b**)

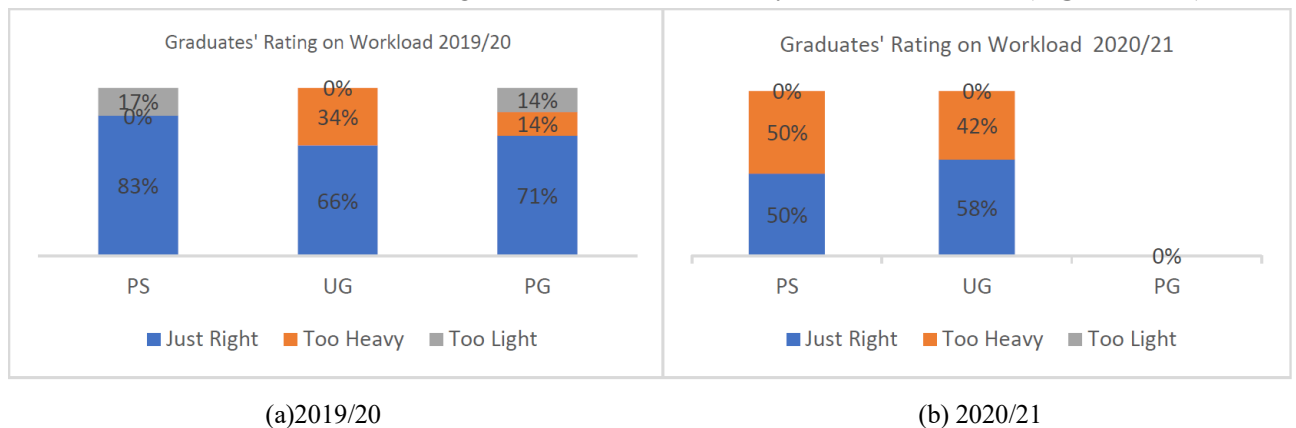(a)2019/20   (b) 2020/21

Fig. 4: Workload Rating (AY2019/20 and 2020/21) (Note: There were five PS respondents and no PG respondents the GES workload rating)

Students are more willing to take creative risks and reflect on their own work more effectively and sincerely. The end product is usually for the entire class to view rather than just for self-reflection. One student reports:

> *My teacher asked us to do Vlog (video log) and eJournal entries each week. I thought it was boring at the beginning. Yet, once I got into it, it was so much fun. I have learned a lot in video editing, sound mixing, and animation effects. In the end, I have put together my works in one video. Everyone in the class loved my presentation so much and I felt great!*

The Study-Life Balance is another aspect that shows a relatively low rating. A positive sign is that the FYSES rating in 2020/21 rose to 4-year high of 3.85 points with improvements at both UG and PG levels (**Fig. 5a**). However, the GES rating continued its decline to a 4-year low of 3.04, with deteriorations at both PS and UG levels to a rating of 3.00 points (**Fig. 5b**). Overall, the improved performance of the FYSES ratings over that of GES is a positive indication that the workload situation is improving after the introduction of the Curriculum B.
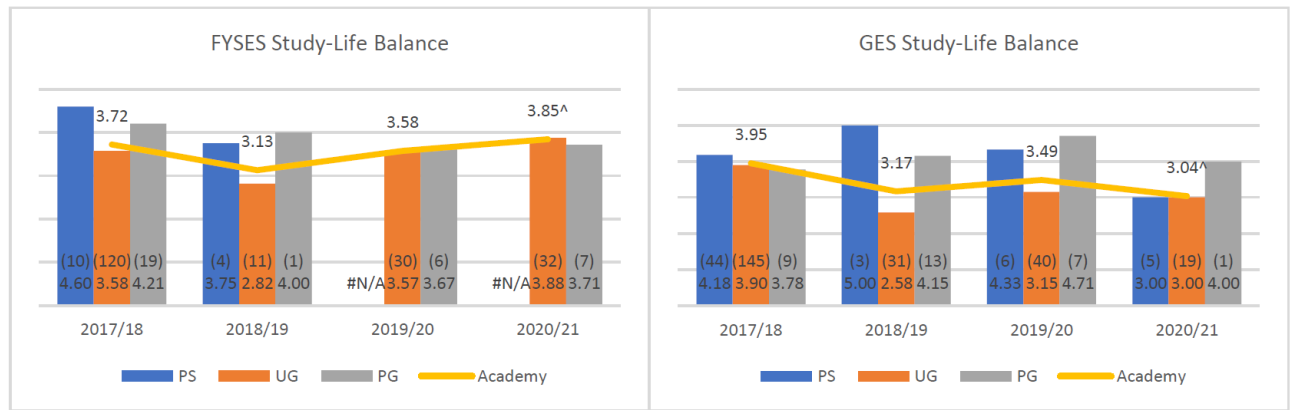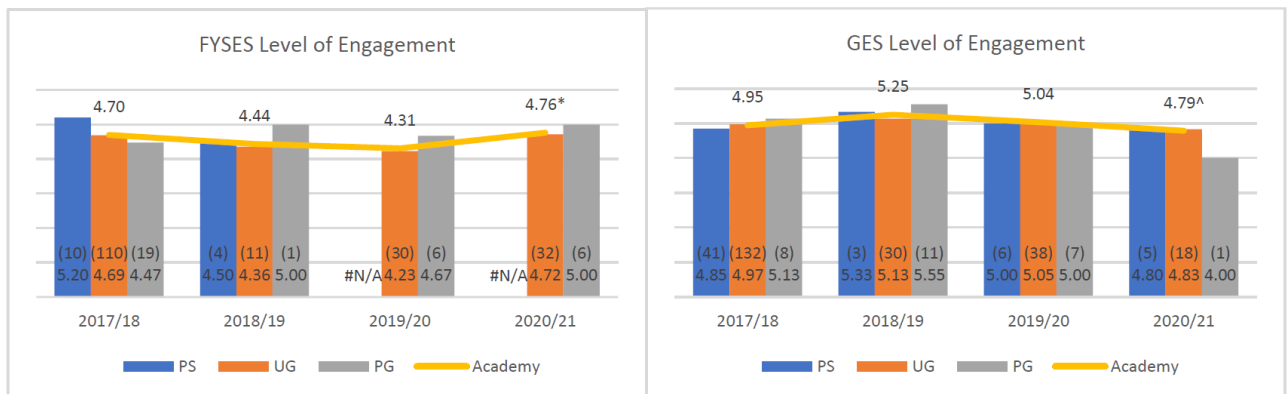
(a) FYSES Study-life Balance   (b) GES Study-life Balance

Fig. 5: Study-life Balance Rating (AY2017/18 to 2020/21)

(Note: (1)* : YoY mean difference is significant at the $p<0.05$ level; ^: YoY mean difference is insignificant. (2) The figures in bracket () are the sample size. PS programmes were not included in the FYSES since 2019/20.

4.5. Level of Engagement

Fig. 6 shows that the FYSES rating on their Level of Engagement in 2020/21 rebounded to a 4-year high of 4.76 points from its 3-year low of 4.31 in 2019/20. In contrast, the GES rating on the Level of Engagement dropped to a 4-year low of 4.79 points, which still indicates strong student engagement.

(a) FYSES Level of Engagement   (b) GES Level of Engagement

Fig. 6: Student's Level of Engagement Rating (AY2017/18 to 2020/21)

Note: (1)* : YoY mean difference is significant at the $p<0.05$ level; ^: YoY mean difference is insignificant. (2) The figures in bracket () are the sample size. PS programmes were not included in the FYSES since 2019/20.

According to the key driver analysis in the survey result of FYSES and GES, social factors (Socialized with Classmates and Day spent at Schools) are two contributors to first-year students' engagement. As shown in **Table 3**, FYSES ratings on these two aspects improved in 2020/21. On the other hand, self-agency factors (Contributed to Class Discussion, Prepared for Class, and Collaborated with Classmates after Class) are contributors to graduating students' improved engagement. The GES ratings on these three aspects dropped in 2020/21, indicating that the pandemic had a negative impact on student engagement.

Table 3. Key Drivers of Student Engagement AY2019/20 and AY2020/21

| Key Drivers of Student Engagement	FYSES		GES	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Sample Size	**36**	**38**	**51**	**24**

Socialised with Classmates	3.39	4.34	4.33	3.63
Day Spent at School (No. of days/week)	4.83	4.97	5.12	5.00
Contributed to Class Discussion	4.42	4.24	4.45	4.42
Prepared for Class	4.25	4.61	4.65	4.29
Collaborated with Classmates after Class	4.08	4.26	4.78	4.25

4.6.Students Life Experience

Similar to Student Work-life Balance ratings, there is a divergence between the first year and graduating year students' ratings on Student Life Experience. The FYSES rating rebounded to a 4-year high of 4.45 points with improvements at both UG and PG levels. The UG programmes performed particularly well with their average ratings leaping from 3.62 to 4.47 points. On the other hand, the GES rating slid modestly to a 4-year low of 3.83 points (**Fig. 7a and 7b**).

The item "Like Being an Academy Student" is another measurement of students' overall satisfaction. **Fig. 7c and 7d** show that first-year students' rating on this aspect rose to a 4-year high of 4.77 points in 2020/21. Graduating students' rating also increased from 4.09 to 4.28 points. That implies the academic programmes and performance opportunities have created a positive impact on students' sense of belonging and identify – proud of being a learning in the institute.

The rating results suggest that the institution has fostered a safe and welcoming environment for positive interactions among students, peers, staff, and teachers. Meanwhile, continued effort is needed to further enhance various aspects to provide students with excellent study experiences at the institution.
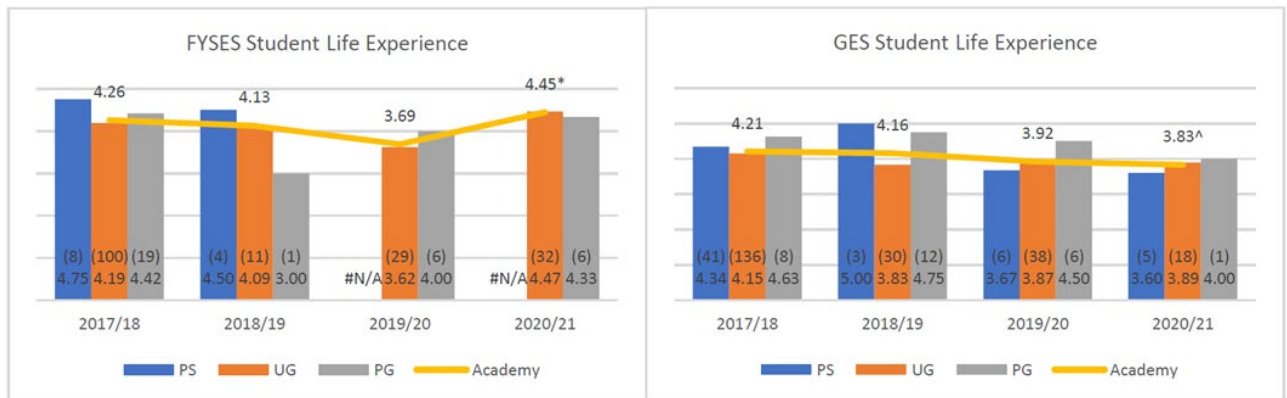
(a) FYSES Student Life Experience

(b) GES Student Life Experience
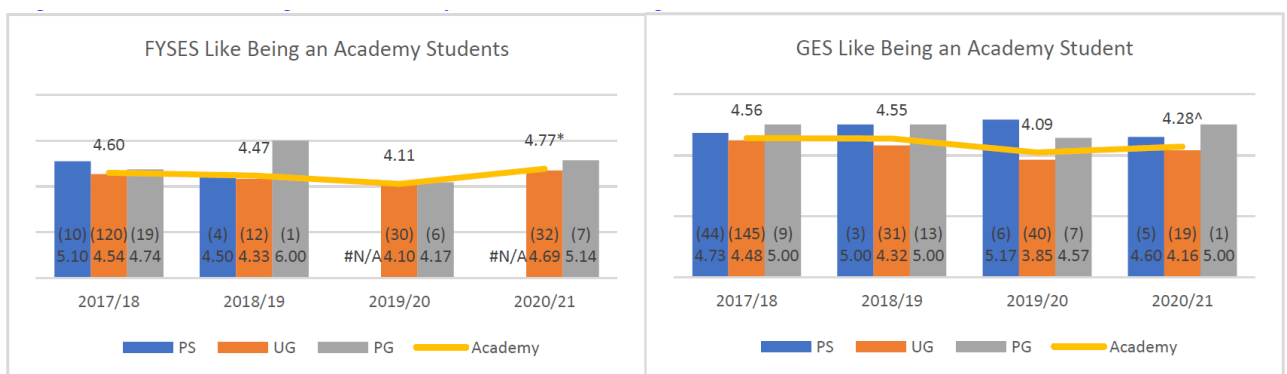
(c) FYSES "Like Being an Academy Student"

(d) GES "Like Being an Academy Student"

Fig.7: Overall Student Life Experience and "Like Being an Academy Student" Rating (AY2017/18 to 2020/21) (Note: (1)* : YoY mean difference is significant at the p<0.05 level; ^: YoY mean difference is insignificant. (2) The figures in

4.7.Graduates' Overall Imperssion of Institution

The institution strives to provide an innovative and rigorous fine arts programme that nurtures 21st century performing artists. Four factors shown in **Table 4** are associated with graduating students' willingness to recommend the programme to others. It is encouraging to see that the GES ratings are improving in the aspects of "Instilling Students with Passion for the Performing Arts" (3.88 points), "Stimulates Creativity" (3.4 points), and "Encourages Experimentation" (3.80 points). The mean rating on "Rigorous Education" is 4.16. The ratings of UG programmes are also improving on a YoY basis across these four dimensions. However, their scores are still in the range of 3.32 – 4.11, which cannot be deemed as outstanding. As the institution will implement its newly designed curriculum (B & C) of the UG programs in the coming year, continue to monitor whether these ratings will be useful. Data will provide indicators on the effectiveness of the new UG curricula.

Table 4. Graduates' Overall Impression of the Institution (AY2017/18 to 2020/21)

Academic Year	Level	Sample Size	Instilled Students with Passion for the Performing Arts	Provides Rigorous Education	Place that Stimulates Creativity	Place that Encourages Experimentation
2020/21	Institution	25	3.88	4.16	3.40	3.80
	PS	5	4.00	4.20	3.40	3.40
	UG	19	3.79	4.11	3.32	3.84
	PG	1	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
2019/20	Institution	53	3.87	4.19	3.28	3.49
	PS	6	4.17	4.83	3.83	3.67
	UG	40	3.68	3.93	2.95	3.28
	PG	7	4.71	5.14	4.71	4.57
2018/19	Institution	47	4.02	3.98	3.47	3.81
	PS	3	5.33	5.00	4.67	5.33
	UG	31	3.65	3.58	2.94	3.32
	PG	13	4.62	4.69	4.46	4.62
2017/18	Institution	198	4.33	4.44	3.97	4.11
	PS	44	4.59	4.68	4.43	4.5
	UG	145	4.23	4.37	3.8	3.97
	PG	9	4.56	4.56	4.44	4.44

5. Discussion

In 2020/21, confronting the unprecedented challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the institution implemented a wide array of measures, e.g., active adoption of technologies in learning, performance and production, and provision of resources, and support services to promote students' wellbeing. In parallel, the Curriculum B of UG programmes has been phased in since 2019/20 and Curriculum C is supposed to be implemented two years later. Both curriculum B & C programmes aim to grant more autonomy to learners, by giving them more time to explore and emerge in practical activities, such as performance, conferences, and workshops.

With all the pandemic challenges, including limited space, internet, and technology, the GES for 2020/21 found positive student satisfaction (ratings above 4.0 points) across the key aspects of Performance and Production Opportunities, Learning Experience, Programme Quality, Teaching Quality, Student Engagement, and Identity as an Academy Student ("Like being an Academy Student"). That improved rating indicates that despite difficulties, the institution has done decent job

in the above areas. It also implies that students value Performance and Production Opportunities more than anything else when evaluating the Programme Quality. However, year-on-year (YoY) comparisons show a decline in GES ratings in the areas of Learning Experience, Programme Organisation, Teaching Quality, Study-life Balance, Student Engagement, and thereby the Student Life Experience. In terms of Study-life Balance, both UG and GES considered their workload "Just Right" during the study. However, their stress level went up significantly when they reached the final year of study. This study recommends a more balanced approach to course workload to alleviate stress and balance the workload and study-life throughout student academic studies at both UG and GS levels.

The rebound of the FYSES ratings to 3- or 4- year highs is an encourage sign across the aspects of Learning Experience, Performance and Production Opportunities, Programme Quality, Programme Organisation, Teaching Quality, Study-Life Balance, Student Engagement, Student Life Experience, and Identity as an Academy Student. The better performances of the FYSES over the GES give a positive signal that the new initiatives for enhancing the curricula and student support are on the right track of implementation, albeit in the challenging times of the pandemic.

On the other hand, Programme Organisation, Study-Life Balance, Student Life Experience (graduating students only), and a number of student support services have ratings below 4.0 points, indicating some room for improvement in these areas. The same is valid for constructing the institution as a place for instilling in students a passion for performing arts, a mindset of creativity, and an ideal institution for experimentation and innovation.

It is recommended that continued efforts are directed to three areas. There are (1) Further enhance the pedagogical design to promote students' self-agency, autonomy, experimentation, and creativity, especially in the senior years of study and online learning settings; (2) Further strengthen student support in community building, wellness, and career services, and (3) Better balanced workload for all learners throughout their study years.

6. Conclusion

This study has conducted surveys with the students and graduates in a leading performing arts institution in Asia. Researchers have collected key data on the teaching and learning quality for the purpose of continuous improvement of the academic provision. The First Year Student Experience Survey (FYSES) and Graduate Exit Survey (GES) are conducted in the institution to analyse students' perceived social support, caring teacher, mental wellbeing, and campus atmosphere for fostering student engagement, sense of belonging, and student success, which are especially important during the difficult times of severe financial, social, and personal health challenges.

The study identifies critical factors behind the students' dissatisfaction during the online learning. A wide array of measures is proposed in this study to surmount the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in the performing arts education, including active adoption of technologies in teaching, learning, performance, and production. It also recommends provision of resources and support services, which can be broadly applied to in institutions to enhance students' online learning experience, increase their satisfaction and promote the wellbeing. Such findings are beneficial, and they offer pragmatic and effective strategies for other education sectors, such as Physical Education, Vocational Training Programmes, among others.

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