DISRUPTION IN GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION: ONLINE LEARNING AS A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Global higher education institutions are attempting to adapt and modify their response to the pandemic disruption. Today, higher education leaders are confronted with COVID-19 and the adaptation to online learning, which tends to be something beyond any institution's control. The adoption of online learning happened in response to COVID-19 when few of these institutions were well prepared for the sudden, disruptive move. Continuous adaptation became the key construct as administrators, faculty and students struggled to implement online learning. It is undeniable that online instruction, use of web tools, and the variety of learning management systems and related applications all create disruption. Colleges and universities must scale up their use of technology to provide instruction, develop expertise in the wide array of hardware, management platforms, applications, and wireless technologies, and design and implement models of using these technologies to provide programs of high quality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Words: COVID-19, Higher Education , Globalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization with changes in the world's economy, increasing diversity, the ubiquitous use of technology, and the COVID-19 pandemic are impacting higher education in ways no one could have predicted (Zhao, 2020).Yet, global higher education institutions are expected to respond to deeply uncertain and disruptive times. The sudden move of instruction to online learning presents tremendous challenges, but also brings immense opportunities (Yan, 2020).New technologies, especially the Web 2.0, and virtual and social networking tools, enable learning to be a phenomenon of participated and shared intelligence enhanced by online learning during the pandemic(Waller, Lemoine, Richardson, 2019).

Global higher education leaders must manage enormous complexity, especially when dealing with disruption. During COVID-19 three dimensions of management are critical for success: (1) global higher education institutions are increasingly rigid and less autonomous and bound by their own institutional policies and procedures as well as state and federal laws (Lemoine,& Richardson, 2019); (2) global higher educational environments are increasingly complex, less able to adapt and be agile (Saykili, 2019); and (3) global higher education institutions are increasingly dependent on technology, as COVID-19 illustrated (Moreira, & Rocha, 2018).COVID-19 created enormous disruption for global higher education that cannot be easily remedied (Blankenberger& Williams, 2020).

The road ahead for global higher education is filled with challenges, risks and uncertainties that began before the pandemic but was exacerbated with the sudden move to e-learning (Adedoyin &Soykan, 2020). In global higher education online learning is about creating direct connections among people through applications of technology. Universities are using online learning as one of the primary means for initiating and maintaining contact with students, faculty, community and staff (Dhawan, 2020).

However, the ubiquitous use of online learning during the pandemic makes disruption more demanding and substantial every day (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2020). Given the problems caused by COVID-19 in the world, online education is the best method to continue learning due to the key constructs of service, cost, quality and efficiency (McCarthy, 2020). The importance of online education has become more apparent than ever before; therefore, it is essential to pay special attention to the appropriate communications and infrastructures required for online learning (Lemoine, Waller, Garretson, & Richardson, 2020).Colleges and universities, traditionally, were regarded as a place to go:land-based institutions where students meet teachers in a face-to-face setting to become informed, but disruption produced by COVID-19 changed all that (Amemado, 2020).

What is Disruption?

Disruption,while an evocative word triggering feelings of anxiety and perhaps even fear–also signals renewal and growth (Millar, Lockett, & Ladd, 2018). Disruption presents a tremendous challenge for global higher education institutions, particularly COVID-19. Some have advocated that disruption is the force that permitted global higher education to expand and prosper (Bellack, 2015).Currently, higher education is fundamentally being disrupted by various new tools and the online environment (Leask, 2020). Rapid advancement of information and communication technologies has brought significant changes in education and the structure of colleges and universities (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2017).

Online learning can be seen as a major competitive advantage in global higher education by enhancing university effectiveness and enabling sustainable development during COVID-19 (Das & Das, 2020).Understanding new information and communication technologies is essential for higher education leaders in both a local and global perspective (Richardson, Jenkins, & Lemoine, 2017), particularly since online learning was the solution of choice to continue learning during the pandemic. Utilizing technology in education is not a new trend but an

unprecedented proliferation in the use of newer, smarter technologies that has started to cause a shift in the traditional paradigms of education (Adi Badiozaman, Leong, & Wong, 2020). Disrupting the traditional ways of education by introducing a new technology cannot be a guarantee in enabling a better educational environment with proven outcomes that focus on preparing individuals with positive impact on society after graduation (Isaias, 2018).

It is true that technology is an absolute necessity in global higher education during the pandemic, but what is more important is how technology is put into use and exploited. Technology is just an enabling tool for learning (Siu & García, 2017). Disruptive technologies are essentially developed to deliver learning in new arrangements rather than disrupting the content of education (Leon & Price, 2016). However, many of these disruptions have not improved the overall quality of students' learning experiences. Therefore, continuous change is necessary for higher education institutions to remain viable in the delivery of education and garner competitive advantage (Lederman, 2020). University leaders want to participate in this global society but must confront the rising costs of technology with the need to avoid obsolescence (Pucciarelli& Kaplan, 2016).

Technology is proving to be a disruptive influence on higher education. With technology as a catalyst, higher education is moving from a knowledge-transfer model to a collaborative, active, self-directed, and engaging model (Marshall, 2018). The teaching-learning process today is no longer defined by the physical boundaries of brick-and-mortar higher education institutions. Rather, teaching-learning has moved beyond the confines of the classroom to being accessible by anyone anywhere. The COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be a blessing in disguise by fast-forwarding the adoption and use of online teaching methods (McCormack, Lemoine, & Richardson, 2020a).

Disruption Due to COVID-19

Digital technologies have enabled global higher education to continue despite the COVID-19 pandemic: at least for those with access to hardware, software, and the internet (Daniel, 2020). Global higher education institutions have had to move quickly rather than strategically plan for changes in teaching-learning environments (Watermeyer, Crick, Knight, &Goodall, 2020). In fact, universities around the world embraced the transition to an online teaching-learning environment with remarkable speed. Leaders had to innovate to find creative solutions to the pandemic disruption (Lemoine, McCormack, Waller, Garretson, & Richardson, 2020). Across the globe, higher education institutions radically redesigned teaching and learning in unprecedented ways by adopting online learning. As such, innovation of online learning was not a one-shot activity but a process of developing sustainable competitive advantage (Ananga, 2020).

Under the circumstances of the COVID pandemic it was a logical decision to use online teaching methods. Online teaching methods are used to support, enhance, and optimize the delivery of knowledge (McCormack, Lemoine, & Richardson, 2020b). Online teaching is a broad and evolving concept and refers to the way electronic devices are being used to transmit information between teachers and students (Martin, 2020). The use of online learning is

becoming pervasive and is having a major impact on global higher education as a result of COVID-19, yet this change in instructional delivery came with several logistical challenges and needed modifications (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, &Koole, 2020).The major contributor to the expansion of e-learning in global higher education is the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 led to significant innovation in universities regarding the processes used for teaching and learning (Waller, Lemoine, Garretson, & Richardson, 2020). Online learning introduced considerably greater agility and capacity for delivery into courses, programs, and institutions (Ali, 2020).

The development and implementation of online learning provided opportunities that irreversibly revolutionized approaches and methods used in global higher education (Gigliotti, 2020). This is a period of significant change in global higher education as universities attempt to respond to the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities present in this global society as a result of COVD-19. These changes are driven by forces which are almost impossible to predict. Therefore, the most critical challenge facing global higher education leaders is how to develop the capacity for change; because change is inevitable (Lemoine, Jenkins, & Richardson, 2017).

The rapid nature of change is exacerbated for institutions of global higher education as they respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic where they operate in a continually fluid and uncertain environment (Hossain & Wood, 2020).

Faculty must prepare students to be able to find the information they need and the knowledge of how to analyze appropriately and not just to regurgitate facts, as often happened in the past. This requires faculty to use online learning as a tool to assist the learner with the task of learning. This will transform the way students learn and the way educators teach in the coming decades (Baber, 2020).Mitigating the disruption while ensuring quality will require institutions of higher education to undergo a change in conceptualizing the use of online learning in teaching (Lemoine&Richardson, 2020). Faculty are crucial for inclusive and equitable provision of high-quality online education; they are expected to have knowledge, skills, and ethics to conduct online teaching (Johnson, Veletsianos, & Seaman, 2020).

Disruption in the Future

But what is the future for higher education and online learning while continuing to face COVID-19? The pandemic is not gone so how will universities adapt? Will some open for face-to-face instruction and face renewed outbreaks? Will others stay completely online? The future is unclear except for one thing: online learning will continue to be a reliable method for advancing instruction in higher education because universities are forced to increase their online learning capabilities for the quality implementation of educational programs (Abdulkareem&Eidan, 2020).The COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a driver for change, forcing the rapid and impressive shift to digitalization for universities worldwide while creating massive disruption (El Masri&Sabzalieva, 2020).

This inevitable and unforeseen transformation had a profound impact on the organization of higher education institutions; readiness, efficiency and collaboration were crucial and will

remain relevant in the future.Learning and programs about online learning, including online teaching and learning tools and strategies, need to be offered on a regular basis so that students, teachers, and staff could have the opportunity to advance their knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of online learning (Coman, Țîru, Meseșan-Schmitz, Stanciu&Bularca, 2020). COVID-19 has created invaluable options to transform disruption into creative, flexible and inclusive opportunities for teaching and learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

2. CONCLUSIONS

(1) Global higher education leaders must develop ways to creatively use resources during disruptions like COVID-19.

(2) Fundamental systemic change has been slow to develop in higher education, particularly with regard to teaching and learning. However, COVID-19 disrupted the change from face-to-face instructional delivery to the almost instantaneous move to online learning.

(3) With the pandemic, online learning became the go-to technique for continuing delivery of instruction when institutions were closed for face-to-face instruction.

(4) For many administrators and faculty online education became a major disruption that may become a recognized alternative to traditional face-to-face higher education because it is less expensive and can improve students' digital proficiency.

(5) The lesson has been learned from the COVID-19 disruption: prepare faculty, students, and administrators for further instructional disruptions, especially the use of online learning.

(6) Global higher education institutions will need to reconsider how they teach, particularly using online learning during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

(7) Survival for global universities means adaptation to disruption: innovate or get left behind.

(8) Adapting to the use of online learning may be one of the primary disruptions necessary for the future of global higher education.

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