Chapter 3

Higher Education Institutional Strategies to Sustain Quality Education:
COVID-19 Practices and Lessons

Esra Al Dhaen
Ahlia University, Bahrain

Merlin D. Stone
Merlin Stone Consulting, UK

Mohammed Mahmood
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7754-1495
Brunel University, UK

ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions (HEIs) faced serious challenges that raised concerns about sustaining the quality of education delivered to students and the quality of the graduates produced. Many HEIs throughout the world were unable to sustain the quality of teaching and learning due to many issues including lack of clear strategies, policies, procedures, and practices. This chapter will identify successful practices of HEIs for achieving sustainable quality education during COVID-19, based on transformation strategies in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This chapter will also highlight the role of governance in strategic decision making throughout strategy transformation and the impact of leaders on effective decision making during the crisis in developing successful practices for sustainable quality education.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions constitute one of are the drivers for economic development, by produc-

ing highly qualified graduates to serve society at large. Globally, HEIs faced serious challenges due to COVID-19, as highlighted by various researchers, related to sustaining the quality of education and maintaining teaching and learning quality standards and administrative quality. For instance in Africa's student loans were delayed and kept on hold due to other priorities (Tamrat and Teferra, 2020), while admissions from schools were also seriously affected. Delivery of teaching via Internet prove feasible in many developed nations, but in Africa, only 24% of students had internet connectivity, making online teaching a weak strategy for achieving student learning (Tamrat and Teferra, 2020; Aarts et al. 2020, Mohamedbhai, 2014)

Because of travel bans, HEIs in countries that rely on large numbers of international students, such as the UK and USA, faced serious challenges. This may cause HEIs in these countries to reconsider their internationalization strategies (Altbach and de Wit, 2020). However, international students in the USA and UK seem to be happy with online teaching, feeling secure and safe and gaining the required learning and support (Times Higher Education, 2020).

In Hong Kong, the experience was slightly different, as universities were able to transform to online learning by using their existing teaching and learning platforms (Holliday and Postiglione, 2020). For instance, platforms were used to support student interaction outside teaching hours and a decision was taken to use different teaching strategies, using online teaching for large scale and hybrid teaching for small scale. The classification of large scale and small scale was based on practical learning that was skill-based, to ensure that students gained the required practical skills. The small-scale students attended the campus with strict social distancing measures (Holliday and Postiglione, 2020; Mukherjee, 2020).

At the time of writing (May 2021), the pandemic had apparently just reached its peak, after 14 months, but it was becoming clear that the COVID-19 virus had arrived to stay. Therefore, governments and HEIs needed to re-consider alternative strategies as it appeared that this pandemic was not any longer just a short-term. Sá and Serpa (2020) identified that HEIs needed to consider cultural and consider digital transformation to promote online learning for sustainable education. A framework was proposed by Berisha et al. (2018), covering various dimensions to be considered by HEIs including, teaching, research, internationalization, business alliance, recruitment and infrastructure.

HEIs need to take effective strategic decisions that are long-term decisions guided by rationality (Stone et al., 2019). The United Nations called for a Transformation agenda 2030, covering national strategies for different regions, and identifying that several SDGs were a major priority (The 2030 UN Sustainability Agenda), particularly Quality of Education (SDG4). A report on SDG good practices was published by United Nations highlighting different practices by Asia, China, Europe, America etc. all the regions considered transformation in number of activities including teaching and learning to assure quality education. (SDG Best Practices Report, 2020). In this respect, Martin and Godonoga (2020) emphasised the need to establish a set of policies and procedures governing the implementation of transformational strategies and assuring their smooth adaptation.

HEIs faced serious challenges through COVID-19 which includes attainment of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) specifically for those programmes that are practical in nature such as medicine, engineering etc. (Lucey, C. R. and Johnston, S. C., 2020).

This paper demonstrates some successful practices of HEIs during COVID-19 relating to strategy transformation for sustainable quality education in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This paper also highlights the role of governance in strategic decision-making during strategy transformation and the impact of leaders on decision-making that led to successful sustainable quality education practices during the crisis.

Related Content

Effective Coaching Through Webinar-Integrated Tools: A Research-Based Chapter for Promoting Active Learning in Blended Environments
Stephen Kyakulumbye (2021). *Coaching Applications and Effectiveness in Higher Education (pp. 209-237).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/effective-coaching-through-webinar-integrated-tools/285043

Digital Badge Use in Specific Learner Groups
Jacob H. Askerothand Timothy J. Newby (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/digital-badge-use-in-specific-learner-groups/245769

Higher Education and Smart Specialization in North-East Romania: Opportunities for Knowledge-Based Development
Elisabetta Marinelliand Cosmina Mironov (2019). *Smart Specialization Strategies and the Role of Entrepreneurial Universities (pp. 234-254).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/higher-education-and-smart-specialization-in-north-east-romania/215706

The Next-Generation CBE Architecture: A Learning-Centric Standards-Based Approach
Jon Mott, Rob Nyland, Greg Williams, Michael Atkinsonand Arin Ceglia (2017). *Handbook of Research on Competency-Based Education in University Settings (pp. 134-156).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-next-generation-cbe-architecture/167900

Using Experiential Learning to Improve Student Attitude and Learning Quality in Software Engineering Education
Ferdinand Ndifor Che, Kenneth David Strangand Narasimha Rao Vajjhala (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-22).*
www.irma-international.org/article/using-experiential-learning-to-improve-student-attitude-and-learning-quality-in-software-engineering-education/273133