

Chapter 1

Resilience Strategies for Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the various resilience strategies employed by higher education institutions to navigate challenges and thrive in an ever-changing landscape. It interrogates approaches that institutions adopt to build resilience in the face of adversity. The chapter outlines the importance of resilience in higher education, emphasising the need for institutions to anticipate and respond to disruptions. It discusses challenges to building resilience in higher education institutions. Furthermore, the chapter explores the socio-political resilience of higher education institutions, addressing diversity and inclusion, student support, and community engagement. It also examines the role of leadership in fostering resilience, emphasising the significance of visionary leadership and transparent communication. Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted resilience strategies that enable higher education institutions to thrive in a rapidly evolving environment.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of unprecedented challenges and disruptions, the resilience of higher education institutions has become a critical focal point for ensuring continuity, innovation, and adaptability (Dohaney et al., 2020; Almeréz & Duping, 2022). This chapter looks into the significance of resilience in higher education institutions and the strategies they should employ in order to navigate the complex landscape of change and uncertainty. We are confronted with the question of how these institutions should not only survive, but also thrive in the face of multifaceted challenges. According to Bozkurt (2022), due to the rapidly evolving dynamics of global pandemics, technological advancements, and socio-economic shifts, higher

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education institutions are compelled to reposition themselves to withstand these shocks. This implies that institutions should re-evaluate their operational frameworks, pedagogical approaches, and institutional cultures so that they are able to maintain academic quality and continuity (Dohaney et al., 2020). Institutions that have gained sufficient resilience should be able to swiftly and competently respond to crises situations in a manner that provides continuity in service provision (Bartuseviciene et al., 2021). This points to the importance of resilience in institutions of higher education so that they continue to thrive even in the midst of challenges. For higher education institutions to attain this characteristic, it is imperative that they draw resources from a diverse stakeholder base. In this light, communalism becomes critical as a grand strategy for building institutional resilience to be able to collectively weather challenges.

Defining Institutional Resilience

The concept of resilience has been conceptualised to mean organisations, systems, or individuals that are able to respond to, and recover from disruptions threatening their existence (Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016; Linnenluecke, 2017). Institutional resilience refers to an institution's capability to anticipate possible risks, successfully cope with unforeseen events, and learn and adapt to changing situations (Jovanovic et al., 2022; Bento et al., 2021). The same authors add that, for system and institution adaptation, the exploration of new possibilities is required. A number of writers contend that institutional resilience is borne out of knowledge, availability of resources, and power-based relationships (Bento et al., 2021; Bartuseviciene et al., 2021). Other scholars have conceptualised institutional resilience as the ability of an institution to manage shocks and change and that it is not an isolated characteristic or feature of institutions (Linnenluecke, 2017; Bento et al., 2021). Instead, it is the product of a virtuous cycle of institutional performance which according to Linnenluecke (2017), derives from institutional efficacy which engenders trust, legitimacy and credibility. These characteristics constitute sources of resilience that act to reinforce an institution's capabilities. It must be acknowledged that institutional resilience is not a one-time response to a particular event, but rather an iterative multi-stage process from which learning and adaptation occur (Shaya et al., 2022). The concern about rebuilding higher education systems stems from the fact that such institutions play an important role in society to benefit individuals and communities. This position is supported by Bartuseviciene et al. (2021) who posit that higher education institutions strengthen social bonds, ensure employability and contribute to sustainable development hence the importance of resilience in educational institutions.

In the context of the ever-changing higher education landscape, the concept of institutional resilience has gained significant attention as higher education institutions are facing unprecedented challenges. These challenges include global economic turmoil and uncertainty, technological disruptions, and other debilitating global crises. Institutional resilience can thus be conceptualised as the capacity of a higher education institution to anticipate, adapt to, and thrive in the face of disruptive changes. Despite the shocks, institutions must maintain their core functions of teaching, research, community engagement, innovation and industrialisation that should translate to changing people's lives (Murwira, 2019; Muzira & Bondai, 2022).

According to Shava et al. (2022), resilience is not merely about bouncing back from adversity, but it is also about transforming and evolving to meet the demands of a dynamic educational, economic and social environment. This means that resilience should encompass an institution's ability to innovate, leverage human and capital resources effectively, and engender a culture of elasticity and adaptability. It should be able to regenerate itself following severe challenge while maintaining its core functions

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