

Chapter 2

Is Online Learning the Future of Global Higher Education? The Implications from A Global Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Technology for learning and globalization make the business of global higher education more complicated and competitive each day particularly in the unfolding pandemic of COVID-19. Innovation and change in global university instruction require adaptive technologies in response to the demands of a knowledge economy where students are engaged in rapid technology acclimatization in a constantly changing world. As the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century unfolds, significant changes are taking place in global universities to accommodate the needs of more students, different students, and challenged students. The global pandemic has forced most of the global higher education community to offer instruction through online learning. Although universities extensively use e-learning, distance learning, online education, remote learning, or some other form of technology-driven education currently, what are the prospects of online learning in the future after the pandemic?

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INTRODUCTION

Market forces are driving much of global higher education to accommodate students through online learning during the global pandemic due to COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, changes in global university instruction were being propelled by two economic forces: marketing to potential new students and competition to recruit, admit and retain those same students (Thambusamy, Singh, & Ramly, 2019). In addition, calls for increased accountability or quality assurance and adaptability impacted admission, retention and preparation of students and become the catch words for the past five years (Andrade, Miller, Kunz, & Ratliff, 2020).

New organizational structures and systems to promote quality learning while moving from face-to-face to remote instruction and e-learning are being tested by the COVID-19 global pandemic. However, moving global university instruction to an online environment has proven more difficult than planned (Ali, 2020). The university online learning instruction system must meet standards of quality coupled with concerns for access demanded by an increasingly technological and diverse student body and a progressively unsettled society disrupted by the pandemic (Blaschke & Bedenlier, 2020; Nabokikh, Ryattel, Sanovich, & Lapteva, 2020). Global higher education has recognized that innovation in teaching and learning is absolutely essential, but not without numerous challenges. Ethical, educational, and financial considerations demand quality instruction for students who want to be employable in increasingly competitive global markets (Naqvi, 2020).

IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION

Standards of quality are demanded by an increasingly technological and diverse society, both locally and globally (Lodge & Bonsanquet, 2014). The critical aspect for global higher education is not the demand for more, but the realization that creativity, agility, and innovation are unequivocally essential to make progress toward meeting enrollment demands and accountability standards (Baxter, Callaghan, & McAvoy, 2018). The real demand for quality often comes from students engaged in attempting to obtain the necessary degree for upward social and economic mobility.

The recent decline in public financial support for global higher education is having a significant impact on all sectors of global higher education and the global pandemic has exacerbated the situation (Ortagus & Yang, 2018). As the cost of global higher education rises and as governments break with their long-standing commitments to underwriting this cost, global higher education must explore opportunities and consider new ways of increasing access and growing additional learning opportunities, such as online learning, *while* remaining personal and affordable (Deming, Goldin, Katz, & Yuchtman, 2015).

Global higher education institutions are leaving traditional brick and mortar physical spaces and venturing into a virtual assortment of educational models advocated by a digital economy (Zorn, Haywood, & Glachant 2018). Therefore, global universities are being forced to reconsider their missions and goals. Society no longer grants privilege and financial commitment to higher education. Tax dollars are scarce or non-existent due to other demands from society caused by the pandemic (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). In addition, many perceive that those receiving the most from higher education institutions should pay for the privilege which has caused dramatic increases in tuition and fees (Steger & James, 2019). Global higher education is perceived to be very costly and the costs have been rising rapidly. Higher education is also widely seen as highly beneficial to the country's economic and societal development;

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