

Chapter 4

Forging the Future: Entrepreneurial Leadership in Higher Education as a Catalyst for Post-COVID-19 Recovery

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed unprecedented global economic challenges, reshaping industries, societal norms, and the educational landscape. Amid this turmoil, higher education stands as a beacon of resilience and innovation, holding the transformative potential to rebuild economies and steer nations toward a sustainable and prosperous future. By nurturing minds and fostering creativity, higher education paves the way for recovery, reshaping the economic and social fabric in its wake. This chapter explores the pivotal role of entrepreneurial leadership within higher education as a driving force for recovery during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It advocates for the adoption of transformational leadership practices that embrace innovation, adaptability, and collaborative problem-solving to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the global crisis. Specifically, it positions the Entrepreneurial University Model as a blueprint for fostering an agile and forward-thinking academic culture that can cultivate the skills, resilience, and entrepreneurial mindset.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified global economic challenges, exposing vulnerabilities and demanding innovative solutions to rebuild societies. In this rapidly evolving landscape, higher education emerges as a cornerstone for shaping the future, offering transformative answers to meet the demands of a post-pandemic workforce. The knowledge and skills required for effective functioning in an increas-

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ingly complex global economy are undergoing fundamental shifts, underscoring the critical role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in equipping graduates for the challenges ahead.

HEIs are uniquely positioned to respond to the fast-changing global labor market by fostering the competencies necessary for rebuilding economic infrastructure and steering economies toward sustainable growth. This transformation requires institutions to adapt to new realities, prioritizing the development of graduates with entrepreneurial, scientific, creative, and emotional intelligence skills—qualities that are paramount for thriving in the emerging job landscape. The pandemic has catalyzed a profound rethinking of the types of jobs available and the skills in demand, with future opportunities hinging on adaptability, innovation, and collaboration.

To address these challenges effectively, a unified effort between academia and industry is essential. Collaborative partnerships can ensure the delivery of well-rounded graduates equipped to rebuild societies and economies in the aftermath of the pandemic. Central to this transformation is the adoption of transformational leadership—a leadership style that champions innovative change, fosters resilience, and empowers individuals and institutions to rise above adversity. By cultivating a culture of innovation and collaboration, HEIs can create a vibrant professional learning community that drives forward meaningful and sustainable progress.

This chapter explores how the strategic application of entrepreneurial leadership can redefine academic practices and shape the future of higher education. It begins by affirming the proactive role HEIs have played in combating the challenges posed by COVID-19. The discussion then delves into key areas of entrepreneurial activity, defining academic entrepreneurship, contrasting traditional and emerging perspectives, and showcasing illustrative case studies from New Zealand’s higher education sector. These real-world initiatives serve as a testament to how entrepreneurial leadership is being operationalized within academia to foster resilience, drive economic development, and support long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, the chapter explores the symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and academic entrepreneurship, offering a conceptual and practical roadmap for fostering dynamic, future-ready educational ecosystems. The narrative culminates in a set of evidence-based recommendations grounded in the Entrepreneurial University Model—an approach that integrates entrepreneurial principles into the institutional fabric, leadership strategies, and educational mission of HEIs.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that embracing entrepreneurial leadership is not merely a response to crisis but a strategic imperative for shaping the future of higher education. By embedding a culture of innovation, resilience, and purpose, HEIs can empower graduates to lead with vision and integrity—paving the way toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and hopeful post-pandemic world.

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