


Chapter 10

AI, MOOCs, and Microcredentialing Towards an Enhanced and Sustainable Lifelong Learning Framework in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

The fast changing world of work in the digital age has made lifelong learning a necessity. At the same time, it offers various mechanisms by which lifelong learning opportunities can be enhanced and be made more accessible and inclusive to the various types of learners and contexts. With the experience of offering online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic, many universities are now considering this mode of delivery as a sustainability model in the context of lifelong learning. Learning program designs like Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and microcredentialing offer some potential to enhance and provide added value to lifelong learning engagements. Other digital tools like Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be integrated into the model for a sustainable lifelong learning framework.

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INTRODUCTION

The word “sustainability” has always been associated with environment, use of resources, and needs of the future generations (United Nations, n.d.; Greenpeace, n.,d.; and Crawford and Cifuentes-Faura, 2022). Greenpeace (n.d.) also pointed that the “*idea of sustainability is used in a few different ways,*” hence the concepts of “*financial sustainability*” and “*socially sustainable.*”

In business, sustainability is also called corporate sustainability which, aside from the environment, also includes social and financial concerns to “*ensure responsible, ethical and ongoing success*” (TechTarget, n.d.).

In the context of education, Green Office (n.d.) forwarded a definition of a sustainable university, as follows:

an educational institution that educates global citizens for sustainable development, offers relevant insights on urgent societal challenges and reduces the environmental and social footprints of its campus operations, empowers students and staff to act and makes sustainability a central priority.

Crawford and Cifuentes-Faura (2022) also observed how sustainability has acquired a fundamental role in education and forwarded a definition for education sustainability as “*developing educational practices which can be scaled or right-sized without unreasonable exhaustion of resources, or to the exclusion of some populations*”. The experiences of the academic institutions during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic further strengthened the need to articulate the concept of sustainability in the context of continuous operations of the academic institution or ensuring the continuity of the learning process without excluding some groups or sectors of the society. The same authors (Crawford and Cifuentes-Faura, 2022) emphasized the “*critical need to better understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sustainability of learning and teaching practices,* which includes the development of “*sustainable higher education business models*” and concepts on how “*sustainability can be achieved in the new normal particularly considering the unique challenges of developing nations*”.

Taking off from the work of Crawford and Cifuentes-Faura (2022), this chapter proposes an articulation of sustainability of higher education institutions anchored on possible sustainable higher education business models that also take into consideration the major components or features of the concept of sustainability: continuous operations or agility and flexibility to immediately respond to disruptions; reasonable use of resources or not depleting the current resources with consideration of the needs of the future generations; and contributing to the attainment of SDGs.

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