

# Higher Education Institutions and Covid-19

Toward Resilience and Sustainability  
Through Emergencies

Edited by Anna Visvizi, Krzysztof Kozłowski,  
and Raheel Nawaz



# HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND COVID-19

Offering insights into the adaptational strategies that were employed by higher education institutions worldwide during the Covid-19 pandemic, this volume considers the lasting effects of adaptation and change, as well as the perception of universities' role in society and desired ways of operating.

Nearly overnight, the pandemic forced university leaders and faculty across the world to switch to remote models, not only of teaching and learning but also of managing an entire institution. This book recognizes how the scale of challenges as well as the range of measures specific universities had to undertake was uneven, with some being better equipped than the others. Using a selection of international case studies, it offers an insight into strategies employed by institutions worldwide to navigate the crisis, and highlights the targets and objectives addressed by them during these processes. In so doing, it offers invaluable lessons for the years to come.

An indispensable study into strategies that result in resilience and sustainability for universities, this book is essential reading for scholars of education, pedagogy, and organizational change in the higher education sector, as well as educational leaders around the world.

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*Edited by Anna Visvizi, Krzysztof Kozłowski, and  
Raheel Nawaz*

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Education and the higher education institutions (HEIs), including the complex and fragile contexts (exogenous and endogenous) in which they operate, constitute the thrust of society. In a world tarnished by aggression and violence, intolerance, restrictions to fundamental freedoms, and questioning of values and principles, HEIs need to reassert their role as beacons that carry the light. HEIs need to serve as the venue where the curiosity of the world and the innocent urge to discover things are nourished and encouraged. Then, HEIs need to promote good research that ultimately will serve the society. While HEIs are also about teaching and learning, teaching and learning in HEIs are but a function of education and community building.

We would like to thank all the contributing authors for their hard work and commitment to this project. We would also like to thank Professor Antonio Botti (University of Salerno) for reviewing and endorsing the book. Above all, we are grateful to the publisher, Routledge, and its entire team for embracing our initial book idea and for granting us the opportunity to collaborate with them on this book.

Very kind regards,  
**Anna Visvizi, Krzysztof Kozłowski,**  
**Raheel Nawaz**  
(The Editors)



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# 1

## HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE POST-COVID ERA

Transformation through crisis and outstanding  
issues

*Anna Visvizi, Krzysztof Kozłowski, and Raheel Nawaz*

### Introduction

Nearly overnight, the Covid-19 pandemic forced higher education institutions (HEIs) to switch to remote modes not only of teaching and learning (Johnson et al., 2021) but also of managing entire institutions, including room and space management, safety and security, payroll, and human resource management, to mention just a few (Visvizi et al., 2023). The scope of institutional adaptation thus required was immense and remains both under-recognized and under-explored in the academic debate (Polese et al., 2021). The Covid-19-induced processes of adaptation and change have had lasting effects on HEIs, including how they are managed and how they operate today, what their perceived and expected role in society is, how students and the faculty are approached, how students and the faculty interact, and how education is delivered (Damsa et al., 2021; Rof et al., 2021).

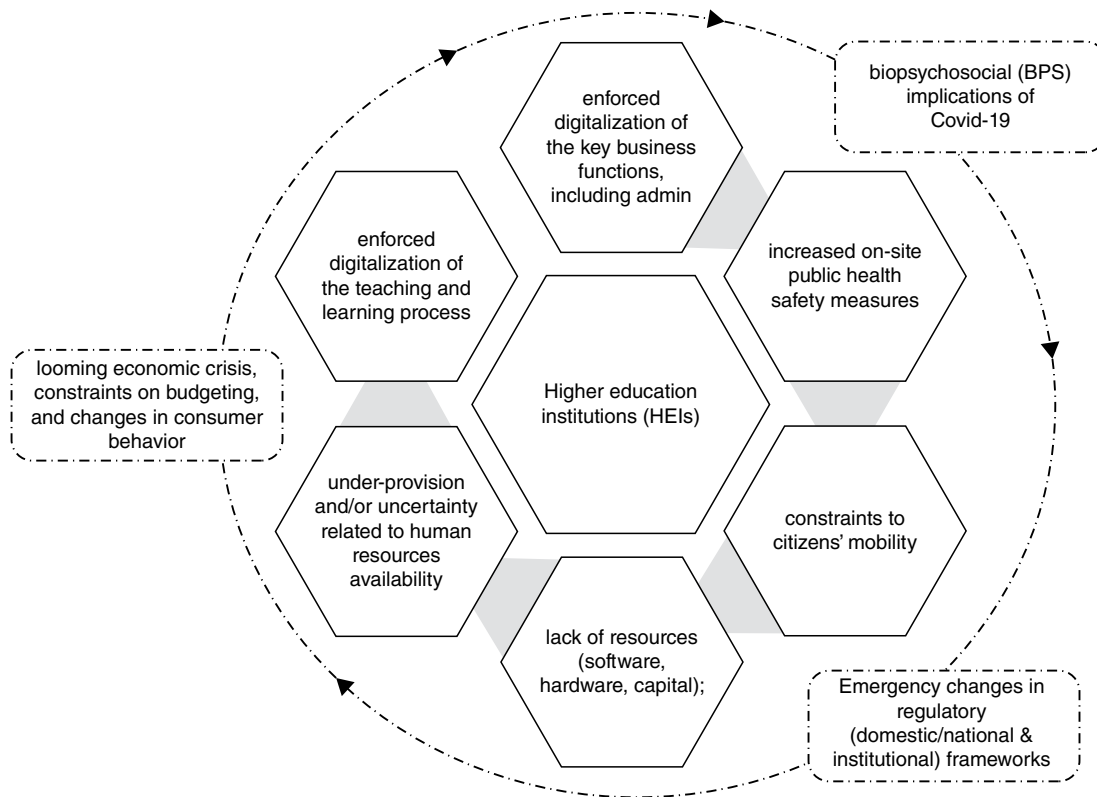
Yet, the Covid-19 pandemic, even if broadly discussed also in connection to HEIs, has not been the source of all challenges HEIs are facing today (Visvizi et al., 2019). Rather, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the already-existing weaknesses and challenges inherent in the ecosystem of higher education. The latter consists of endogenous (specific to the HEIs) and exogenous (specific to the context and structures in which they operate) factors. The system is populated by stakeholders, including the faculty, students, administration, parents, society, and employers (Polese et al., 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic laid bare the pre-existing problems and, frequently, tensions among and between the stakeholders. At the same time, however, the pandemic created an opportunity (think of psychological mobilization, the situation of strain, new enabling regulatory frameworks allowing the university authorities more freedom of



action, etc.) to undertake decisive actions to address the weaknesses and to transform. Indeed, several HEIs used the time of the pandemic to outline strategies for new curricula development, infrastructure development, accreditation schemes, etc. Several outstanding issues remain though and regardless of the scope of transformation already attained, though not evenly, HEIs remain vulnerable today. Accordingly, more reflection and action are needed to render them apt not only to follow and respond to the developments in society but, indeed, to be ahead of them, to chart the unknown, and to do so in the spirit of Enlightenment-inspired education.

New pandemics will come. The Covid-19 experience will thus remain an invaluable source of lessons for HEIs in the years to come. The pandemic placed HEIs at the center of the debate on strategies aimed at addressing and mitigating the implications of an unparalleled emergency. Research suggests that as many as two-thirds of HEIs' senior management and faculty may have been consulted by public or government officials in the context of public policies relating to Covid-19 (IAU, 2020: 6). HEIs, like many other public and private organizations, had to respond to the challenge of adapting to a context defined by increased public health safety measures; constraints to citizens' mobility; a lack of resources (e.g. software, hardware, and capital); under-provision and/or uncertainty related to human resources availability (e.g. due to illness) in the domains of course delivery and administration; enforced digitalization of the process of teaching and learning; enforced digitalization of the key business functions, including administrative matters, and other factors (see Figure 1.1). These challenges were further exacerbated by such developments as the biopsychosocial (BPS) implications of the Covid-19 pandemic (Al-Sabbah et al., 2021), ongoing changes in domestic/national and institutional regulatory frameworks, and finally the realization of the looming economic crisis. The impact of the worsening economic situation on financing possibilities, budgeting, as well as consumer behavior, including those of (prospective) students and their families, provided for an explosive combination of dead ends for HEIs' senior management.

The scale of the challenge and the range of measures HEIs around the world had to undertake to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic were uneven. For instance, consider the cases of HEIs in developing countries, where the lack of resources and under-provision of software and hardware were compounded by digital divide and deprivation. Not enough has been written – or succeeded in reaching the broader audience and academic debate – on this issue (cf. Hedding et al., 2020). The point is that several HEIs were better prepared to respond to the challenge of the pandemic than others. Sadly, the usual patterns of exclusions were repeated. On the positive side, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the rupture it caused, led to an unprecedented process of adaptation and transformation of HEIs worldwide, developing countries included.



**FIGURE 1.1** Higher education institutions and their context during the Covid-19 pandemic.

*Source:* The authors.

While HEIs have been struggling with several weaknesses and challenges before Covid-19, the pandemic exacerbated these and, thus, necessitated a strategic response. As a result, HEIs around the world, albeit to a varying extent, have transformed. The outcomes and the scope of the institutional transformation that thus ensued are still unknown. This book seeks to explore and contextualize it. To this end, the chapters included in this book address the following issues:

- Which strategies have been employed worldwide to address the Covid-inflicted imminent challenge, i.e. the necessity to switch to remote learning nearly overnight?
- Which issues and problems have the pandemic brought to the surface of HEIs?
- Which targets and objectives were addressed by HEIs in the process of adapting to the pandemic and transforming throughout the pandemic?
- What lessons can HEIs draw from the Covid-19 experience?
- How to account for organizational change, adaptation, and even business model innovation (BMI) in the context of the debate on higher education?

### **The book's structure and the issues addressed**

The book consists of 12 chapters, including this one. The chapters address a variety of topics consistent with the book's objectives. Considering the breadth and the scope of the topics addressed, the chapters have been divided into four parts. Part I (Chapters 2–5) offers an insight into key changes and imperatives as they have consolidated during the pandemic in HEIs. Part II (Chapters 6 and 7) features a discussion on how the Covid-19-inflicted crisis was navigated in HEIs in Africa. Part III (Chapters 8 and 9) offers an insight into the respective developments in HEIs in Asia. Part IV (Chapters 10 and 11) sheds light on selected challenges encountered by HEIs in Europe and their ways of responding.

The discussion in Part I opens with Chapter 2 written by Lloyd Waller, Damion Gordon, and Donavon Johnson. The chapter, titled 'Prioritizing "people" in digital transformation strategies in higher education institutions (HEIs)', reminds us that people ought to remain at the center of digital transformation. As the authors argue, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 forced most HEIs globally to temporarily discontinue face-to-face operations and migrate most academic and administrative functions to online environments. While some universities have transitioned seamlessly, at least for the most part, others appeared to have been acutely ill-prepared and ill-equipped and have found the task of adapting much more challenging. In this chapter it

is argued that differences in the levels of success of attempts by HEIs to digitalize the delivery of education since the Covid-19 pandemic began are largely based on the extent to which HEIs have digital transformation strategic frameworks in place. It is further argued that to achieve success, these frameworks must enable digital readiness, agility, resilience, innovation, and reciprocal satisfaction in the interactions among the networks of internal and external stakeholders involved in their value chains. A contextual framework to examine the extant literature, documentation analysis of the methodological and interpretive frameworks, and lessons learned from a decade of global experiences with digital transformation strategic thinking within academic spaces are highlighted and evaluated in this chapter. The findings are particularly instructive for HEIs that are operating at different levels of the new digital transformation paradigm in the post-Covid-19 era.

Chapter 3, authored by Pablo de-Gracia-Soriano, Francisco Javier Jiménez-Loaisa, Diana Jareño-Ruiz, and María Jiménez-Delgado, highlights the notion of values and principles in education. The Covid-19 pandemic made it acutely clear that several principles, such as transparency, integrity, and respect for dignity, have been undermined already prior to the pandemic. In their chapter titled ‘Democratic culture in pandemic times: Debate as a tool for educational innovation’, the authors explain that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, HEIs have had to adapt the teaching-learning processes, with the help of ICT, to non-face-to-face and mixed modes of teaching and learning. This chapter presents research carried out from an experience of educational innovation performed during the years 2020 and 2021 with students of the Degree in Teacher in Primary Education of the University of Alicante. The objective of this work is to evaluate the knowledge and perceptions that students have about debate as a tool to generate a ‘culture of democracy’. The measurement instruments used were pre-test and post-test questionnaires before and after a series of deliberative activities. The number of students who participated was 708 in total in online debate sessions, and a sample of 1,111 cases was obtained between the pre-test and the post-test. The results show that university students affirm that building a democratic society requires debating the aspects that are important and that affect them. In this sense, the process has led to the development of competencies for a ‘culture of democracy’ in the situation of a global health crisis in which the university plays and must continue to play a fundamental role.

In Chapter 4, written by Christophe Premat, the focus of the argument moves toward the faculty and their experience during the pandemic. In his chapter titled ‘The challenges of the new working environment in a constrained digital time’, the author makes a case that the working environment drastically changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, but many universities continued to monitor both remote teaching and research. Switching the work environment from office to home was not easy for many of the faculty

members. This chapter explores the perceptions of the faculty in a Swedish university in 2020. Based on a survey and a virtual participant observation made among the members of a Swedish trade union, the chapter shows that the transition to remote teaching was difficult not only because of the use of new digital devices and software but also because of the constant alternation between office and home. The results of the survey were validated by the virtual participant observation. The findings suggest that in general the faculty was able to adjust and take advantage of the new digital environment. However, several voices stressed that the new situation of remaining/working in-between (office and home) should lead to a structural reorganization of the higher education system.

The notion of faculty's perception of and ability to deal with changes to the mode of course and administrative work delivery, from on-site to remote, are examined also in Chapter 5. In their chapter, titled 'Remote teaching, job satisfaction, and perceived autonomy in HEIs: Exploiting the lessons learned in the post-Covid environment', the authors, Małgorzata Stefania Lewandowska and Vanessa Kutscha, discuss the influence of remote working on job satisfaction and the perceived autonomy of the faculty. A cross-sectional research in the form of a survey was conducted on a sample of  $N = 157$  faculty members at the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, a leading Polish university. In relation to the two modes of teaching – conventional and remote – both work satisfaction and perceived autonomy of employees were examined. The findings show that remote teaching has a detrimental influence on university lecturers' work satisfaction and perceived autonomy. However, there is a considerable difference between the two work arrangements, with conventional teaching resulting in more job satisfaction and perceived autonomy than remote teaching.

Part II of the book opens with Chapter 6, titled 'Exploring the digital divide in African higher education institutions', by Upasana G. Singh. It is argued that the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic halted typical face-to-face learning and forced students and academics alike into the online environment. This chapter investigates whether the already-existing digital divide in Africa impacted students' ability to transition to online learning during the Covid-19 crisis. This study was conducted at two selected higher education institutions in Africa – one in South Africa (SA) and the other in Zimbabwe (ZIM). These sites were chosen based on easy access by the researcher to students at these HEIs. Six aspects were investigated to get a holistic understanding of students' digital literacy level, social capital level, economic capital level, digital access level, ease of transition to online learning, and skills developed through online learning. The preliminary results indicate that a significant percentage of the sample had access neither to mobile data nor to Wi-Fi or to free data at the institution. The overall quality of the internet regarding quality, reliability, signal, and speed was found to be either 'poor at times' or 'good at times' by

a significant proportion of the sample, in each case. A large majority indicated that they found the cost of internet access significantly high. Literacy levels had a significant effect on student perceptions of the general usefulness of online learning. Digital literacy is a significant predictor of fostering independent learning. Good literacy levels for online tools enhance the perception that online learning is useful. Both personal and engagement skills were exhibited as being developed with online learning.

The discussion in Chapter 7, by Philbert L. Vumilia and Ladislaus M. Semali, offers additional insights into the scope and scale of transformation HEIs in Africa were through. In the chapter, titled ‘Perspectives on how COVID-19 disrupts continuity and drives changes in African universities’, by focusing on the case of Tanzania, the authors make a detailed case on how the operation of universities in Africa was disrupted socially, financially, and academically. The authors also highlight in which ways and how the teaching and human relationships were affected. This chapter contextualizes the response of African HEIs. It is argued that both the government’s and the business sector’s responses, including those of universities, were problematic and costly. The authors analyze the role of university leadership and the different levels of decision-making and modes of governance, including the internal dynamics of coping with serious disruptions and changes that impact universities as they manage Covid-19 at the university level. To contextualize such internal dynamics, this chapter examines the case of a university in Northern Tanzania to understand the decision-making processes occurring in teaching and learning during the Covid-19 outbreak and the opportunities to innovate that may ensue. The central concern of the chapter is the dynamic between structures and modes of governance, definitions of knowledge, and the values that those involved in higher education bring to them.

Part III of the book, Chapters 8 and 9, takes the exploration to Asia, and specifically to Brunei Darussalam. Chapter 8, titled ‘Transitioning to new norms of teaching and learning: The case of Brunei Darussalam’, by Khairul Hidayatullah Basir, Muhamad Alif Haji Sismat, and Siti Sara Ahmad, opens its argument by reiterating that Covid-19 caused sudden changes in HEIs around the globe. Conventional face-to-face learning proved no longer feasible and has drastically altered teaching and learning experiences, particularly in countries with numerous cases of infection. This chapter investigates the level of readiness to address the challenges related to the teaching and learning environment amid the pandemic, as experienced by the University Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA). Although the campus remained open and essential administrative services were continuously provided according to the university’s Business Continuity Plan (BCP), teaching and learning were conducted online. Both academics and students had to adapt to new norms of teaching and learning to break the chains of Covid-19 transmission in Brunei. This chapter examines data from online surveys on institutional readiness and

challenges in conducting online teaching and learning using technology. The results revealed the preferred mode of teaching and learning among the categories of traditional, online, or structured blended learning. The findings presented in this chapter can enhance HEIs' transformation into a technology-oriented teaching institution as part of efforts to increase readiness to face current and future challenges.

The focus of the analysis in Chapter 9 changes slightly, as the authors, Sallimah M. Salleh, Juraidah Musa, Aliamat Omar Ali, and Marlizayati Johari, address the question of how to prepare teachers, including university instructors, to remote course delivery. In their chapter, titled 'Preparing teacher candidates for online professional practices during the Covid-19 lockdown', the authors elaborate on the development and evolution of a Master of Teaching module. By so doing, the context of the chapter highlights how the program module caters to prospective teachers' learning needs, including instruction and communication skills in an ICT-enhanced environment. The chapter also discusses the challenge of practical skills acquisition, which moved from face-to-face to virtual online classrooms during the pandemic. The first research question elicits what teacher candidates learned using their selected technological tools for their online professional practices. After completing the revised module, the second research question informs lecturers about what knowledge and skills the teacher candidates have learned for online teaching. In conclusion, lecturers learned that the revised module successfully prepared and developed teacher candidates' knowledge and readiness in using the various technological tools for online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Part IV of the book (Chapters 10 and 11) brings the discussion to Europe. In Chapter 10, titled 'A transformative framework for faculty development in higher education', the authors, Alessandra Romano and Domenico Santaniello, present a study on the experience of an Online Faculty Community of Learning (OFCL) facilitated at the University of Siena. The OFCL was composed of 25 faculty members from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds that met regularly and formalized their commitment to innovation in teaching and learning during the emergency remote teaching imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The study of the OFCL experience aimed to analyze how faculty development can be informed by transformative and informal learning when facilitated through the set of communities of practice. Data were deeply investigated using quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative data were collected through an online survey. In the first phase, the survey was administered to the 25 members of the Online Faculty Community of Learning and then it was administered to a larger sample of the faculty population, composed of 80 faculty members of the University of Siena, contacted through snowball sampling. Results contain faculty comments and remarks on how the experience of the Online Faculty Community of Learning impacted their approach to learning and teaching in

online and hybrid contexts and suggest criteria for the construction of a transformative framework for faculty development in higher education. The final section includes recommendations on ways for HEI to support organizational learning and institutional transformations through professional development and virtual faculty engagement in communities of practice.

Chapter 11, titled ‘ICT for higher education institutions: Insights from university museums’ performance management’, by Michela Magliacani, Daniela Sorrentino, and Gennaro Maione, sheds light on HEIs’ third mission, i.e. engagement with the broader public. The spread of Covid-19 spurred the digitalization of HEIs. While previous research has predominantly studied the impact of the pandemic on teaching and research activities, this chapter focuses on HEIs’ third mission, as activities including knowledge transfer and public engagement. A public management perspective is adopted to explore the implications of the contextual changes due to the pandemic on how people and activities are managed in university museums, as relevant organizations within the universities’ third mission. A case study has been conducted by gathering data from documents and focus groups involving key actors of the University of Pavia’s museums’ system. The findings highlight how the technology-driven changes in the settings and activities performed by the university museums influenced the functional components of their performance management system (PMS). The results also suggest that placing information and communication technology (ICT) at the center of institutional strategies might be not enough to ensure the proper link between contextual changes and those systems that are supposed to manage people and activities within HEIs. To this aim, in the structuring of every HEIs’ governance, an adaptive educational environment should be promoted, pivoted on practitioners’ digital professionalization and skills development.

### **Discussion: No one-size-fits-all strategy exists**

The chapters included in this book elaborate on how HEIs worldwide adapted to the emergency caused by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and how HEIs have thus transformed. The pace and depth of the transformation have not been even; institutional, political, legal, economic, and cultural factors were at play. The chapters included in this book suggest that similar strategies were employed worldwide to cope with the necessity of delivering the course content remotely, i.e. in a non-face-to-face manner. Differences would emerge, however, as regards the speed of technology adoption and the specific tools, or platforms, employed to this end. The uptake of technology enabling remote mode of instruction was gradual as HEIs would both wage their resources and experiment with diverse providers and ICT-enabled solutions. In many instances, both faculty and students had to reconcile with the idea of a new normal, consisting of restrictions to mobility and remote course content delivery.



In this context, it is important to remember that the business sector, in this case, remote learning platforms' providers, including Zoom, Webex, MsTeams, Google, and others also had to be proactive in identifying HEIs' needs and responding to them instantly. By 2023 'the market' has been divided and HEIs continue utilizing the packages negotiated during the pandemic. The availability of platform-based tools facilitating teaching and learning has thus incrementally transformed the way communication takes place in HEIs and how these respond to ad hoc emergencies. It is interesting to realize how (organizational) culture influences (the frequency of and the rationale behind) the use of platform-based tools. Undeniably, several practices developed during the pandemic, e.g. online meetings, organized for ease of logistics or cost saving, are to stay for the considerable future in HEIs.

Whereas considerable attention has been paid in the literature to technology uptake and technology adoption strategies in HEIs at the administrative level, much less has been said about the faculty and their capacity and ability to use this technology (Bojović et al., 2020). The chapters in this book, e.g. Chapters 2, 4, and 5, address this issue more or less directly. Chapter 6 adds to this conversation by highlighting the frequently overlooked structural constraints to technology adoption and technology use. Chapters 6 and 7 refer explicitly to the case of Africa, including Zambia and Tanzania, and highlight poor quality internet connection and the absence of portable devices as inhibitors of technology uptake. Power shortages would constitute an equally tangible barrier to effective course delivery remotely. Notably, problems of poor internet connection would harm the teaching and learning process in other locations too.

What remains to be said is that no one-size-fits-all strategic approach to Covid-19 and its implications was possible. As the pandemic began, HEIs were left on their own, seeking to stitch together and adjust to the only gradually evolving set of regulatory changes designed by respective authorities by means of containing the spread of the virus. As law follows developments in society, several gaps and loopholes were left unattended, thus frequently forcing HEIs to improvise.

The chapters included in this book demonstrate that the pandemic brought several 'old' problems to the institutional surface (cf. Kozłowski, 2021). Overtly or not, these issues are also discussed in this book. Consider the initial excitement surrounding the debate on digital transformation in higher education (Visvizi et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic, as Waller et al. demonstrate in Chapter 2, has taught us that only human-centered technology, i.e. driven by the needs and focused on addressing the needs of the individual and society, is about to add value to education. This is a very important lesson, which should remind us that HEIs' vocation is education, not just teaching and learning.

### **Outstanding issues: Focus on community and the common good**

Central to education is the understanding and recognition of the community and of the common good. The absence of face-to-face interaction, including the daily chitter chatter, a cup of tea or two, or simple meetings, has undermined the coherence of the fabric connecting the faculty, the administration, and the students, i.e. the stakeholders. Few statistics exist on the stakeholders' perceptions of their place in this community and their feelings about it post-pandemic. Research and personal observations suggest that students feel alienated, disengaged, resorting to their high school networks and friends, rather than being able to build new networks (Zhu et al., 2021). Even less has been said about members of the administration of HEIs who serve as their pillars and who were particularly challenged during the pandemic.

The case of the faculty in the same context is particularly complex. It involves questions of trust among the faculty members, disengagement, dissolution of the community, lack of transparency, cases of incivility and mobbing, and frequently weak institutions to remedy the situation (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2021; Anjum et al., 2019). These issues were substantially exacerbated during the pandemic-related lockdown, remote teaching, and the absence of a social space, a venue, for the faculty to interact. Chapter 4, by Premat, indirectly addresses some aspects of this issue by highlighting the problem of 'workplace liquidity', i.e. work at home and/or office, which concerns the majority of the faculty. Covid-19 augmented the problem of work-life imbalance in that the working hours of the faculty were extended during the pandemic. In the post-pandemic period, the online option, e.g. to advise students beyond office hours, to attend meetings, to respond to countless emails, etc., is largely seen by the administration as a smart solution, a justified addition to (or even part of) work obligations. And yet, sometimes someone should step in to say that the faculty is contracted for a specific number of hours, not more (cf. Mukhopadhyay, 2022; Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2021; Palumbo et al., 2021). To be sure, the faculty wishes to do their best by teaching and supporting teaching through research and publications. However, there is also the twin issue of sustainability and burn-out, i.e. how long can the faculty deliver its best, while not burning out (cf. Taylor & Frechette, 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020)? The post-pandemic reality suggests that this issue requires urgent consideration.

Talking about community, it is important to mention the worrying direction in which the evolution of the student-faculty relationship has taken during the pandemic and afterward (Tormey, 2021). Practice suggests, even if laudable exceptions exist, that students who had socialized in HEIs during Covid-19 (cf. Gelles et al., 2020), and hence in the remote learning environment, tend to be unjustifiably demanding toward the faculty, as well as claiming more that used to be the good norm. Examples would include the expectation of

unreasonably prompt responses to students' emails, the expectation that there would always be slides to accompany the in-class presentation of a new topic, rudeness as well as unreasonably harsh and unfounded evaluations of the faculty (Lakeman et al., 2022; Irwin & Cederblad, 2019). Importantly, there are no tools that the faculty can resort to defend themselves against unfair actions on the part of students. This issue too requires urgent consideration. In this book, Chapter 3, by Soriano et al., frames this issue by reference to democratic values and norms, and to the instrument of debate. More needs to be done, however.

### **By means of conclusion**

The book uncovers some of the pre-existing challenges HEIs need to face. It also suggests ways in which these can be navigated. This is particularly true in Chapter 8 by Basir et al., Chapter 9 by Saleh et al., Chapter 10 by Romano and Santaniello, and Chapter 11 by Maglicani et al. Chapters 9 and 10 demonstrate how consequential the focus on the faculty and their ability to deliver course content in a remote fashion is. Chapters 8 and 12, each in their own ways, focus on the question of HEIs' role in society and how it has transformed during the pandemic.

The chapters included in this book go well beyond the Covid-19 debate, i.e. beyond the analysis of the implications of the pandemic on HEIs. Rather, they treat the pandemic as a benchmark to argue what has been done and what could be done differently, and in which ways HEIs thus transformed over the past years (Nawaz et al., 2022). Admittedly, the cases examined in this book, including references to the Global North and the Global South, offer invaluable insights into the existing practices, developments, and emerging trends. Moreover, a detailed focus on technology adoption, on modes of course content delivery and on tools aimed at enhancing teaching and learning, will allow the reader to understand the mechanisms at play in HEIs. The spotlight on faculty and the specificity of their ways of managing and coping with the implications of Covid-19 on teaching, learning, research, and admin work adds a very important, yet largely neglected, aspect to the conversation. More would have to be said about the HEIs' administration and their contribution to HEIs' resilience during the pandemic as well as about how this experience informs their operation today. Simultaneously, the notions of organizational change, adaptation, and even business model innovation (BMI) are topics yet to enter the center stage of the debate on HEIs. This book evidences the relevance of these notions and suggests ways of navigating them. Given its scope, structure, and content, the book will be of great value to a variety of readers, including researchers, managers in HEIs, education experts, and even students.

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## Prioritizing 'People' in Digital Transformation Strategies in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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