

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

RESILIENCE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



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OF RESILIENCE

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09

“In times of crisis, we can still choose how to respond to a difficult situation so that we learn and grow from the experience”

CHOOSING A CULTURE OF RESILIENCE

23

“Our institutions are highly exposed to danger, yet we view our vulnerability as a source of strength”

LIFE ON THE EDGE



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“People want things black and white, but at this moment what we have to learn is that things are changing every five minutes”

IN CONVERSATION WITH MARÍA JOSÉ FIGUERAS SALVAT

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“We want a better world – and now is the time to think more systematically about how universities’ international actions can help to advance that”

TWO PRIORITIES FOR THE REBUILD



EDITORIAL

There is much talk of resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, be it personal, professional or institutional. Indeed, many of us have been called upon to reflect on our own capacity to cope with change and uncertainty in a world turned upside down. But what does resilience mean in the context of international education, and is it a new concept? International education is certainly no stranger to external threats, and institutions, staff and students have shown themselves to be both resilient and resourceful, working collaboratively to identify new solutions and sharing best practices as they arise.

What lessons have we learned from the past, and how are these being applied in the face of the current pandemic? The contributions to this edition of *Forum* magazine draw on personal, programmatic and institutional examples to shine a spotlight on different understandings of resilience in the face of uncertainty.

I'm delighted that Professor María José Figueras Salvat, Rector of Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Spain and President of the Catalan Association of Universities, agreed to be interviewed for this edition. As a Professor of Microbiology, Professor Figueras has unique insights from her academic background, which has helped her to understand resilience as a *modus vivendi* or way of life, rather than as a short-term adaptation to a challenging environment. Professor Figueras also reflects on the collateral damages and collateral benefits of a crisis (the silver lining to the proverbial cloud).

Beyond the interview, this edition features a series of articles from authors in Europe and further afield who explore resilience from various perspectives. From a macro perspective, contributions by Ian

Rowlands (in Canada) and Sabine Klahr and Harvey Charles (in the USA) highlight the opportunities for leadership in a crisis and reflect on the resilience and flexibility which are inherent in internationalisation as a process of change.

A series of articles then looks at national context, drawing parallels with other tests of resilience. For example, María Eugenia Jiménez, Paulina Latorre and Lorena Vieli outline how recent civil unrest in Chile has affected institutional strategies for internationalisation. Similarly, Samia Chasi and Orla Quinlan discuss how societal inequalities in postcolonial South Africa have influenced institutional responses to the current crisis.

At the institutional level, Stephanie Doscher (in the USA) and Alex Rendón (in Ecuador) plot out a set of key steps which institutions can take to design a more resilient internationalisation in the face of increasing uncertainty. Meanwhile Laurence Dupont (in France) highlights how INSA Lyon has acted to ensure academic continuity in response to COVID-19.

Writing on a topic of growing interest to many international educators, Nawazish Azim (in Saudi Arabia) draws us back to the topic of the 2020 Spring *Forum* by encouraging us to consider how digital transformation serves to foster resilience in internationalisation. With blended learning and blended mobility on everyone's lips, this article sets the scene for a series of contributions which look at how programme delivery has responded to the current crisis. In this vein, Leslie Hitch (in the USA) describes how she moved programme delivery online for a group of MBA students in Poland, while Alexander Heinz and Nita Kapoor (in the UK and Norway) outline opportunities for experimentation and transformation in



summer school programming and pedagogy. Grazia Ceschi and Mathieu Crettenand then speak to how an academic integration programme in Switzerland has responded to COVID-19 in support of refugee students.

Turning to questions of individual resilience, Sancha Elevado, Andrew Horsfall, Sapna Thwaite, Renee Welch and Kelly Richmond Yates (in the USA) highlight how they have continued to build cross-cultural dialogue following participation in a Fulbright Scholar programme in Germany. Meanwhile, Juan Rayón González, President of the Erasmus Student Network in Spain, offers a student perspective on mobility during a crisis, while Frank Haber and Jessica Price (in Germany) provide advice for all on how to build psychological resilience.

With thanks to my colleagues on the EAIE Publications Committee for their expert support in reviewing submissions for this edition of *Forum*. We hope that this selection of articles on the topic of resilience will support and guide you in your work, as well as in your day-to-day life in these uncertain times.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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EMBRACING A DIGITAL FUTURE



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With the almost overnight transition to virtual learning at many institutions, technology is being harolded as our saviour at this moment of uncertainty. But going digital is not the same as strategically building and enhancing the student experience virtually – we need to consider the pitfalls and real possibilities of digital learning.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on higher education institutions across the world, there has been widespread championing of the transformational potential of technology. In response to the temporary closure of physical space, an almost overnight shift into the virtual landscape by higher education institutions has foregrounded the value of digitalisation interventions.

In this context, the divide between domestic and international students enrolled in virtual or blended learning programmes has broken down, as all students are physically removed from campuses and attain the status of virtually enrolled individuals regardless of their physical location and citizenship. With this blurring of distinctions, challenges traditionally faced by international students enrolled in virtual programmes are also faced now by the domestic student, and resilience mechanisms that were applied to solve those challenges could now work for the entire student population.

It is not surprising, then, that information technology is being heralded as the saviour of this moment in history.

CHANGED LANDSCAPE

While most institutions already used a virtual component in their learning and teaching processes, the shift since COVID-19 has involved the digitalisation of a vast and rapidly increasing number of education programmes and modules. Features include virtual classrooms, online lectures, online meetings, live-streaming of presentations, online guidance and mentoring, and technological software and resources shared between multiple programmes across institutions.

While methodologies such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and blended learning are already familiar, the changed landscape calls for a robust student experience in the complete absence of physical interaction between peers, mentors and advisers. Faculty and education advisers have to reimagine the



pedagogical framework. Student motivation and focus have an important role to play, as does the development of communication skills across media. Understanding and sharing perspectives on curricular

How to teach is just as important as what to teach

concepts, inviting peer reviews, giving honest feedback while remaining sensitive to the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of all peers, without recourse to physical interaction or bodily cues – these are all skills that online learning demands and can help develop among students.

Institutions that have already internationalised through COIL and blended learning will obviously benefit from that past experience. In these institutions, however, there is evidence to suggest that

although online learning has made higher education accessible like never before and reduced the cost of education, the graduation rate of those who learn online is lower than for those who learn in person.¹ What does this tell us about the status of online learning and teaching, and about digitalisation tools? Are there ways available now to address the pitfalls of online learning and teaching?

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

As educationists and mentors, we have to address the fact that merely moving the classroom to a virtual space does not ensure student engagement and participation – which are key factors in achieving deliverables. Using a digital tool is not the same as strategically building and enhancing the entire student life cycle and experience virtually. To address this gap, the first suggestion I have is to implement the idea of ‘digital transformation’, which aims to strategically transform an entity with the help of IT

tools and technologies, and to achieve business outcomes by measuring customer satisfaction.

For institutions, this means taking a long-term view and adopting technology as a strategy for innovation at all levels. It involves viewing education and its processes from a student-centric perspective and making cross-organisational changes to achieve student satisfaction. This may mean creating a roadmap for transforming or initiating a set of digitalisation technologies, based on the business requirements of institutional departments. In addition to the robust technical know-how needed, it is almost as significant to cultivate an institutional mindset that believes in the transformative impact of new technologies and their uses for high student engagement and retention rates.

In the field of pedagogy and student engagement, we need to think again about innovations in teaching that may boost retention. While digital transformation can lead to strategies being formed and

tools implemented, if these tools do not deliver the course in the right way then learning does not happen. How to teach is as important as what to teach. Factors to consider here are the media used, the expectations of learners, course deliverables, peer support, collaboration across media, methodologies used by teachers, and proficiency of teachers in the tools used.

TECH COLLABORATIONS

Coupling pedagogical innovation with technology is a way forward into the future. But the question remains: How can we do so? It has been suggested that private technological firms collaborating

model may also be deployed in elite universities to a minuscule population who can afford this mode of education – the assumption here is that students will still want to physically attend an elite university, where learning developed organically outside the classroom, will now be the most sought-after commodity of the university experience.

ROLE OF POLICY

While such predictions about the future help us to imagine different scenarios regarding the coupling of education and technology, it is important to iterate the role of policymaking in this process. In

Clearly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to the next steps for the future.

What is clear, however, is that in the post-COVID world, the ‘new normal’ requires us to provide accessible education for all while staying true to the spirit of higher education. While our smartphones have brought us closer to each other, we also have to ensure that we are really learning and communicating with each other in the best possible way. Those who can use their imagination to create the right future in our collective minds are what the world needs now – and they are our leaders of tomorrow.

—NAWAZISHAZIM

The ‘new normal’ requires us to provide accessible education while staying true to the spirit of higher education

with higher education institutions may be one way of evolving with the times.² Tech firms and top-tier universities working together may offer a roadmap for a future in which both entities benefit. Universities could increase their gross enrolment ratio by improving their online offerings with the use of big firms’ technology, and the cost of education may go down for many as we move away from the traditional face-to-face model of imparting knowledge.

While this may be good news in the sense of making education accessible and affordable for a large majority, a lot depends on the quality of education and the value of the degree. A blended learning

a developed nation such as the United States, collaborations between big tech and universities may foster an increase in public funding for higher education, but it is questionable whether this would be the case in developing nations. In India, for example, there is a governmental push to increase the gross enrolment ratio through online learning, but internet accessibility for most students is questionable. Private investment (and possibly control) in public education in India may also increase the cost of tuition for a large number of students; here, regulation policies may be helpful to monitor the emerging scenario and ensure accessibility and affordability of education for as many as possible.

1. Marcus, J. (2020, February 20). How technology is changing the future of higher education. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/education/learning/education-technology.html>

2. Galloway, S. (2020, May 11). The coming disruption: interview with Scott Galloway (Interview by James D. Walsh). Retrieved from <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/05/scott-galloway-future-of-college.html>



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