

## **Transforming Instruction in Global Higher Education: Online Learning as Innovation During a Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic made the business of global higher education more complicated and competitive each day. Globalization with changes in the world's economy, increasing diversity, the ubiquitous use of technology, and the COVID-19 pandemic are impacting higher education in ways no one could have predicted. The sudden move of instruction to online learning presents tremendous challenges for global higher education institutions. Adding the precarious nature of face-to-face instruction as a result of the pandemic, the future is complicated with most universities using online learning as an innovation to continue instruction. The road ahead for global higher education is filled with questions, hazards and uncertainties that began before the pandemic but was exacerbated with the sudden move to online learning.

*Keywords:* online instruction, global higher education, COVID-19, innovation, transformation

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## **Introduction**

The global COVID-19 pandemic is the type of external force that transforms organizations: either devastating them or fostering resiliency (Alvarez, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). COVID-19 has led to an unprecedented challenge for society due to the uncertainty and chaos created around the world (Evans, 2020; Lemoine & Richardson, 2019, 2020; Radha et al., 2020). Global higher education institutions were forced to move rapidly from face-to-face class to online learning, to stay viable (Amemado, 2020; Mukherjee, 2020). Closing universities and taking students and lecturers out of the classroom was a pedagogical transformation that required rapid mobilization across all university staff and resources (Alea et al., 2020; Cutri & Mean, 2020; Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020). Higher education institutions during COVID-19 faced the unique challenges of smoothly maintaining the process of learning while ensuring that it was still beneficial (Richardson et al., 2019; Robertson, 2019).

Administrators and faculty skeptics concerned about the efficacy of online learning soon gave way to adaptation as most higher education institutions quickly moved instruction to fully online

programs, whether institutions, staff, faculty, and students were ready or not (Johnson et al., 2020; Mittal et al., 2021). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic did not provide institutions the luxury of planning and implementing strategic change efforts (Mishra et al., 2020; Naciri et al., 2020). Transformation happened very quickly, but not easily (Watermeyer et al., 2020). This transformation continues as global higher education attempts to stabilize the present while continuing to deal with the ongoing challenges of the unknown (Murgatroyd, 2021; Ralph, 2020; Zhu & Liu, 2020).

Higher education today faces its greatest combinations of challenges: economic uncertainty, quality assurance, globalization and the pandemic overlaid by the need to use technology for learning during the pandemic (Bhagat & Kim, 2020; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). While global higher education institutions faced a number of opportunities and challenges as the result of a digital technology revolution, none were as daunting as the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through the immediacy of online learning (Chea et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2021b).

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, most global higher education institutions were forced to quickly adapt