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COmmunication is RObust when NAtions Come Together: The Importance of Collaboration during a Global Crisis

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Chief Editor's message

The "Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication (JEICOM)" is a Fully Peer-Reviewed Open Access journal publishing articles from all areas of education, innovation and communication. JEICOM's scope is to provide a free and open platform to academics, researchers, professionals, and postgraduate students to communicate and share knowledge in the form of high quality empirical and theoretical research that is of high interest not only for academic readers but also for practitioners and professionals.

JEICOM welcomes theoretical, conceptual and empirical original research papers, case studies, book reviews that demonstrate the innovative and dynamic spirit for the education and communication sciences, from researchers, scholars, educators, policy-makers, and practitioners in education, communication, and related fields. Articles that show scholarly depth, breadth or richness of different aspects of social pedagogy are particularly welcome.

The numerous papers presented every year during the conferences organized by our Institute, the Communication Institute of Greece, enables us and our editorial board, to have access to a plethora of papers submitted. Following a rigorous peer-reviewed process only a selection of the papers submitted, is published twice a year. The current issue of the "Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication (JEICOM)", is the first special issue of 2020 (June 2020).

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COmmunication is RObust when NAtions Come Together: The Importance of Collaboration during a Global Crisis

Contents

Preface. COmmunication is RObust when NAtions Come Together: The Importance of Collaboration during a Global Crisis
Robert J. Bonk, Margarita K. Kefalaki & Fotini Diamantidaki **9**

Pedagogy in the Time of Pandemic: Local Responses toward Global Education
Robert J. Bonk, Margarita Kefalaki, Jürgen Rudolph, Fotini Diamantidaki, Carolin Rekar Munro, Sophie Karanicolas, Paraskevi Kontoleon & Karl-Heinz Pogner **17**

Leading with Emotional Intelligence: How Leaders of a Diverse-Based Urban College in New York Successfully Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis of 2020
Michael Anibal Altamirano & Carlos E. Rios-Collazo **65**

SHARE leadership to solve global problems
Nathaniel Herbst **76**

Maintaining and enhancing students' collaborative learning in a Japanese EFL higher education context
Masayo Kanno **91**

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Preface

COmmunication is RObust when NAtions Come Together: The Importance of Collaboration during a Global Crisis

In times of global unprecedented circumstances, people realise more than ever the importance of communication and interaction. The human mind is an ever-ending source of creativity and determination to keep communicating against all odds. In an era when the global population is on lockdown, humans need to react to this situation and find means that still bring them together and help continue educating, innovating and communicating.

Walt Whitman, the 19th Century American poet of the people, remains for some the quintessential voice of the yet-unrealized American spirit. Emerging from the throes of the American Civil War—one that literally pitted families against each other in mortal combat—Whitman and the nation could not have been blamed if all ceded the dream of peace and prosperity, of individuality and tolerance, of initiative and respect. Clearly, the American nation has an opportunity to revive that dream. But Whitman embraced and expressed the dream that lived in him:

> From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
> Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
> Listening to others, considering well what they say,
> Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
> Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.
>
> Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road" (Section 5 excerpt)
> *Leaves of Grass* (1856 collection)

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Although many around the world might recognize *Leaves of Grass* as one of the finest collections of poetry, not as many know that its author, Whitman, served as a volunteer hospital nurse during the bloody sieges of that horrific war. In fact, using today's lexicon, Whitman would be considered an essential front-line worker. Perhaps that existential period woke Whitman to the realities that must be faced in a world of challenges. While *Leave of Grass* preceded that war, his subsequent collections like *Drum Taps* directly responded to it:

> I am faithful, I do not give out,
> The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
> These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my breast
> a fire, a burning flame.)
>
> Walt Whitman, "The Wound-Dresser" (Section 3 excerpt)
> *Drum Taps* (1865 collection)

We, as educators, are not on that same front line of either Whitman nor today's healthcare heroes—but we are on another. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us to awaken and create a new dream for higher education. Despite being a pale comparison, our responses now and in the future can be "loos'd of limits and imaginary lines" as we embrace "a fire, a burning flame". We need not accept what Hodges and colleagues term "Emergency Remote Teaching" (2020), yet we can build upon its strengths and improve upon its weaknesses. For that same duality of rigour and innovation, Whitman himself supported the use of evidence to reach outcomes: "I like the scientific spirit—the holding off, the being sure but not too sure, the willingness to surrender ideas when the evidence is against them: …it always keeps the way beyond open" (1888).

The authors in this Special Issue touch upon these three aspects of the spirit dreamt by Whitman: being unchained from what has been, keeping the fire for what has not yet been, and bridging both with an innovative rigour.

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Contributions from different countries and educators (Singapore, Greece, Australia, UK, Denmark, Canada, USA, Japan) discuss innovative practices on education, leadership, and communication to show how people, especially the teaching and professional community, can adapt and continue to communicate, exchange, and educate, even during and after these unprecedented circumstances of crisis like the COVID-19 global crisis.

More particularly, this issue focuses on themes that involve pedagogy in different places and universities around the world during the time of this pandemic; how education leaders and leadership in general respond, or should respond, to the COVID-19 crisis; and ways to engage students into collaborative learning.

Robert J. Bonk, Margarita Kefalaki, Jürgen Rudolph, Fotini Diamantidaki, Carolin Rekar Munro, Sophie Karanicolas, Paraskevi Kontoleon, and *Karl-Heinz Pogner*, sign the first paper of this Special issue, entitled "***Pedagogy in the Time of Pandemic: From Localisation to Glocalisation***". This paper describes how higher education institutes around the world have responded to COVID-19. Authors have captured anecdotal responses within and across countries (seven institutions of higher education in Singapore, Greece, Australia, United States, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Canada) that may highlight trends for later consideration.

"***Leading with Emotional Intelligence: How Leaders in a Diverse-Based Urban College in New York Successfully Responded to the COVID-19 Crisis of 2020***" is the second paper of this issue, authored by *Michael Anibal Altamirano* & *Carlos E. Rios-Collazo*. Their article describes how a small educational institution serving a diverse group of urban, under-represented, and international adult students managed to successfully operate amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion provides insights on leadership initiatives that rely on emotional intelligence to maintain student retention, enrolment, motivation, and to protect its human capital (Altamirano & Collazo, 2020).

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Nathaniel Herbst is the third author in this issue, presenting his research article "***SHARE leadership to solve global problems*****".** Leadership sharing as a collaborative approach is necessary for a universal mitigation is proposed in this research as a way to solve global problems. This paper presents a review of a collection of the literature that has surfaced five elements, crucial for effectively sharing leadership. These can be summarized into the SHARE acronym: Strengthening relationships, Having a clear structure, Addressing problems collaboratively, Releasing information, and Enlisting diverse strengths (Herbst, 2020). A more robust implementation of these five features is proposed by the author to be able lead to stronger shared leadership and better outcomes in the coronavirus pandemic. Fostering these attributes in the global community will undoubtedly make the world better prepared to adequately address future crises.

The last paper of this issue is entitled "***Maintaining and enhancing students' collaborative learning in a Japanese EFL higher education context***", **and authored by** *Masayo Kanno***.** Her paper reports on a teacher's ongoing efforts in Japan to develop and deliver distance-learning English as a foreign language (EFL) courses in a higher education context. Drawing on a view that learning is social development, the researcher focuses on the concept of social presence in peer-to-peer communication that could enhance collaborative learning in a virtual classroom (Kanno, 2020).

We thank all of our contributors for this special issue and we hope that our collaborations and endeavours at the international level remain strong, instilling hope and imagination. **Enjoying the journey and not the goal. Enjoying the journey for the wealth of exchanges and experiences, we gain along the way.**

In Cavafy's famous poem 'Ithaca' (1975) the poet skilfully presents us with this wish, that the road indeed remains a long one:

'As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.

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Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.'
[…]
'Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.'

Cavafy (1975), translated by Keely & Sherard (1992)

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During unprecedented times like the ones we currently all experience, **we value the process of collaboration and experiences we gain along the way, more than ever before.** We cherish all of our collaborators dearly; past, present and future ones; more specifically with JALT journal that we have the pleasure in collaborating with on so many different levels, with all of our contributors, members, ambassadors, authors, peer-reviewers and readers. We thank you all for making this collaborative journey a very enriching experience.

Robert J. Bonk & Margarita Kefalaki & Fotini Diamantidaki

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Pedagogy in the Time of Pandemic: From Localisation to Glocalisation

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Abstract

Pandemic—the global spread of an initially local disease like COVID-19—bluntly forces us to stop. How do we respond in higher education to such stopping? Whether at the government level, for our universities, or in our classrooms, no existing playbook prescribes the pathway for dealing with a global pandemic of this magnitude, even now as we emerge from total lockdown to the potential for a new tomorrow. What we have done at this juncture is to capture anecdotal responses within and across countries that may highlight trends for later consideration. Unlike a globalised response that would adopt one approach internationally, our study considers adaptations for local differences in a glocalised set of responses in an attempt to identify new paradigms that reconceptualise not only teaching and learning, but also assessment. Our responses to the pandemic require leadership—from all of us—to leverage a firm and steady presence, care and compassion for each other, and prudent

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decision-making. Moreover, identified issues indicate shared threads across the seven institutions of higher education in this research. From a localised perspective emerge responses at the curricular, institutional, and technological levels. First, changes to courses and curricula must respond to emotional needs of students when transitioning from face-to-face (or hybrid) to online delivery; nevertheless, faculty must ensure that academic rigour is not sacrificed in the process. Second, the mission and value of higher education must indicate that institutions will recommit to faculty support beyond emergency remote teaching; furthermore, a sense of campus community needs to be nurtured. Third, the needs of students and faculty must drive the choices of technology—not the reverse—when determining how to transition to online deliveries; in short, administrators must reprioritise factors used in decision-making. Moreover, a glocalised synthesis of responses across all institutions and levels identifies four clustered themes. First, the disruption of the pandemic may lead to innovations in higher education. Second, the role of faculty is becoming redefined beyond content-specific disciplines. Third, educational models must expand to include individuals other than traditional students. Fourth, rigorous pedagogical scholarship, including leadership, will point to new educational insights. Overall, we stand at the crossroads. Rather than being defined by the pandemic, let us seize the opportunity to transform higher education from *a paradigm that has been* to *the paradigm of what might be*.

Keywords: Coronavirus; COVID-19; creativity; crisis leadership; digital education; empathy; global education; higher education; independent learners; leadership; learning to learn; online education; pandemic; pedagogy; student-centred.

1. Pandemic, Education, and Communication

Pandemic—the global spread of an initially local disease like COVID-19—bluntly forces us to stop: to stop traveling, to stop building, to stop congregating, to stop visiting, to stop living as before. Time no longer stretches but rather shatters into before, during, and after the pandemic. Literature can capture this feeling of shattered time, as eloquently prosed in novels by authors such as Gabriel García Márquez in *Love in the Time of Cholera* and Albert Camus in *The Plague*. García Márquez's two lovers hoist the yellow flag of cholera to stay isolated from the restrictive world around them, whereas Camus' Doctor Rieux braves an infestation isolating his town in quarantine. What actions do we as educators choose during sequestrations engendered by our "novel" coronavirus? And how meaningfully can we assess the outcomes of our actions?

For this pandemic, compiling datasets of infection rates, border closings, and equipment shortfalls is problematic, as epicentres ebb and flow across the globe. Responses of institutions to the pandemic are more informative, as in the recent analysis by Crawford et al. (2020) that identified similarities as well as differences in pedagogical digitalisation, often influenced by a nation's economy and its proximity to the original outbreak in China. Eventually, records of pedagogies and technologies will be assessed for effectiveness in meeting our challenge, but such analyses require longer timeframes and larger datasets for validity. As this virus continues to play by its own rules, what we can do now is capture anecdotal responses within and across countries waking from lockdown. Together with findings for the "intra-period COVID-19 response" (Crawford *et al.*, 2020), these awakening trends will become guides on this challenging journey for higher education.

This journey, in fact, may be fortuitous. The extension of local responses on a global scale is not necessarily "globalisation" but rather "glocalisation" [as originally coined by geophysicist Lange (see Roudometof, 2015), developed sociologically by Robertson & White, 2003; expanded economically by Ritzer, 2004; and synthesized by Lange & Meier, 2009]. The former term refers to the adoption of homogeneity internationally; in contrast, the latter term emphasises adaptation for local differences that constitute a diversified heterogeneity. Consider, for instance, distance education enhanced by technology. Globalisation (in its strictest sense) would result in all/most universities adopting essentially similar approaches internationally. Glocalisation, however, would allow for universities in diverse areas (whether geographically, culturally, etc.) to adapt that model. Moreover, pockets of diversification would cross-pollinate, potentially leading to solutions hitherto unknown. That example illustrates the approach of our research: examining the diverse responses of higher education to the COVID-19 pandemic in an attempt to identify new paradigms from that fecund heterogeneity.

This current article undoubtedly joins others in starting the historical record. Across the globe, each author captures a snapshot of not only pedagogy and technology, but also culture and individuality. Understanding why one nation moves education fully online while another places education on hold, as an example, perhaps reflects societal mores as well as computer scarcities. A panoply of schools ranging from state or public systems to private or religious *raisons d'être* may uncover unexpected motives. Communication technologies that fall prey to robotic intruders might suggest security measures. And even why someone would hack into online educational systems during this time of crisis could reveal a wider vista when grappling with the pandemic's aftermath.

We authors had considerable leeway for topics—associations, institutions, programs, curricula, and courses. After all, factors that may be critical in one situation may be tangential in another. Timing relative to 11 March 2020, the date when the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the pandemic, certainly matters. [As much as possible, dates have been specified for time-sensitive information. The evolving nature of the pandemic—including responses by institutions of higher education—rendered full synchronisation problematic.] Nonetheless, we authors shared a common outline for capturing our local situations:

- *Overview of higher education at pandemic onset*
- *Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences*
- *Reflective insight on local response to pandemic*

Taken together, such snapshots of selected pedagogical adaptations may indeed reveal parameters for a global paradigm shift in higher education. For each institution's section, an introductory theme offers institution-specific context; these themes are then joined in the overall analysis for the article. May history thus record that we educators harnessed this pandemic's challenges as an impetus for innovation, comprehension, and glocalization.

2. Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

The following subsections capture snapshots of responses to the pandemic from seven different institutions of higher education from seven different nations across the globe. Table 1 compiles selected responses at the curricular, institutional, and technological levels; Figure 1 exemplifies visually the response of these institutions to the pandemic.

[Insert Table 1 and Figure 1]

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Prioritizing higher education within the knowledge-based economy: Currency highlights societal value of education (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

Singapore's "higher education" scene features local Autonomous Universities (AUs) as well as international universities that have either set up their own campuses or deliver their transnational education through Private Education Institutions (PEIs) in a variety of ways (Sam, 2017; Shukaitis, 2018)—ranging between the two extremes of exclusive use of fly-in faculty and a model in which 100% of the faculty are locally recruited as adjuncts. PEIs are not permitted to offer their own proprietary undergraduate and postgraduate degrees; transnational and proprietary programmes (typically Certificate and Diploma programmes) are under regulatory supervision of the Committee of Private Education—a government agency under SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG). At the time of writing, there are six AUs and 297 PEIs in Singapore (SkillsFuture Singapore, 2020).

Singapore's Global Schoolhouse project was started in 2003 with the aim of attracting world-class universities (Economic Review Committee, 2003; Garrett, 2005; Ng & Tan, 2010; Waring, 2014; Ye, 2016; Lo, 2017). Initially, the Global Schoolhouse project was dominated by research-intensive American institutions (e.g., Johns Hopkins University and Chicago Graduate School of Business; Sidhu et al., 2011). Wharton Business School was contracted to provide expertise in setting up Singapore's third AU, Singapore Management University (SMU; Sidhu et al., 2011), and MIT collaborated with the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) in its first seven years (Singapore University of Technology and Design, 2020). International diversification led to a less America-centric model with the inauguration of transnational campuses, for instance by INSEAD (a highly ranked French business school) and the Indian Jain School of Management (Sidhu et al., 2011). Singapore's Global Schoolhouse project has been substantially modified through the years—also as a result of Singaporeans' concerns of foreigners competing with them for university places and jobs (and local tax payers subsidising their foreign competitors' university education)—with the likely result of an even more vibrant and highly competitive education hub (Waring, 2014).

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

As early as a decade ago, Singapore was already characterised as one of the highly developed knowledge economies (Margison, 2011). Singapore has a population of 5.7 million, an economy worth US$ 503 billion, and a per capita income of more than S$ 89,000 (up from US$ 511 in 1965), which places the Republic within the ten wealthiest countries globally (Waring et al., 2019;

Department of Statistics Singapore, 2020). This city-state also boasts a multicultural population (with an ethnic Chinese majority and large minorities of Malays and Indians, amongst many other ethnic groups), a garden city environment, as well as regional hubs for next to everything. The reasons for Singapore's economic success are multi-layered and complex, but, to some extent, it can be credited to the government's persistent investments in education. High participation in tertiary education can be attributed to both Confucian values (Margison, 2011) and the Singapore government's continuing emphasis and support of lifelong learning in the knowledge economy. The Singapore government's focus on education can be gleaned by looking at the Singapore two-dollar note, which features a classroom setting with the single word "Education".

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

In the first quarter of 2020, the city-state's use of public-health best practices (built on experience from the SARS outbreak in 2003) had garnered praise from WHO (Seet, 2020). The relative success of the Singapore government's early response to the COVID-19 pandemic could be attributed to factors such as fast deployment of testing; rigorous, technology-informed contact tracing; real-time integrated tracking and analytics; availability of expert medical care; and an efficiently imposed system of quarantine orders, stay-at-home notices, and leaves of absence (Craven et al., 2020; Singapore Ministry of Health, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020).

However, in April 2020, the rate of new infections increased alarmingly, and some of the international media that previously cited Singapore's coronavirus response as the gold standard changed their tune and called the city-state disenchanted and Southeast Asia's new epicentre (Fahrion, 2020; Ehrhard & Fähnders, 2020). The fact that more than 300,000 foreign low-wage workers from the construction industry reside in multi-bed rooms in 43 privately run, multi-storey dormitories (that resemble container villages) has turned out to be a major weak point in the fight against the pandemic in Singapore (Hein, 2020; Ehrhard & Fähnders, 2020; Heng, 2020). The Singapore government has certainly recognised the seriousness of the situation. In addition to extending the "circuit breaker" (lockdown-type restrictions during which residents are advised to stay at home as much as possible) to 1 June 2020, medical staff are now stationed at all dormitories; the number of tests has been increased significantly; social distancing rules are enforced more stringently; and many workers have been relocated to vacant apartments, floating hostels, and military barracks (Ehrhard & Fähnders, 2020).

Initially, Singapore's education system did not witness measures quite as drastic as some other countries: Universities and schools were not closed—with some institutions of higher learning teaching fully online, while others pursued blended learning approaches (Crawford et al., 2020). Graduation ceremonies and other large-scale events had been postponed throughout, and overseas

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placements (including internships and exchange programs) as well as inter-university and other external activities were all suspended (*Channel News Asia*, 2020a; Singapore Ministry of Health, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020). Affected students had been provided with alternative, credit-bearing educational arrangements such as online learning, and Singapore's Ministry of Education asked students in local AUs and polytechnics to return from their official overseas placements as soon as possible (Ang, 2020a). Face-to-face classes were supported by online strategies, leveraging the EdTech boom of recent years. Singapore's universities use web-conferencing platforms such as Zoom, BlackBoard Collaborate, Webinar, and Panopto, partially as contingency measures and partially integrated into their learning management systems (Crawford et al., 2020).

With the new, stricter "circuit breaker" measures that were implemented in early April, schools and universities were compelled to switch to home-based learning between 8 April to 4 May (and later extended to 1 June). Universities responded by conducting all lessons online and by converting their exams into a variety of online formats or into take-home assignments (Ang, 2020b). For instance, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) cancelled all undergraduate on-campus exams, quizzes, and tests during the circuit-breaker period, while all other forms of assessments such as projects, reports, essays, presentations, and assignments were to continue and be submitted online (Ang, 2020b). For modules in which in-person continual assessments and exams were cancelled, grades were to be computed based on each student's existing scores (Ang, 2020b). In addition, both NTU and the National University of Singapore (NUS) have begun to allow students to take more modules on an ungraded basis, providing a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) option that does not affect their grade-point average (Mahmud, 2020).

It remains to be seen whether the current move to online delivery will be merely an event-driven adoption or whether educators will continue to use additional technological tools for innovative andragogical practices in a post-crisis environment. It is, however, crucial to differentiate well-planned online learning from courses offered online in response to a pandemic such as COVID-19 (Hodges et al., 2020). The speed at which the move to online occurred in Singapore and many other countries was astounding and unprecedented. Despite research evidence to the contrary, online learning has been often stigmatised as being of lower quality as compared with face-to-face learning (Hodges et al., 2020). Rather than falling prey to this misperception of online learning as a weak option and mistaking current emergency measures with the real McCoy (which usually requires much more extensive preparation), the current emergency measures should perhaps be evaluated as what they are: Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020). Nevertheless, variations in the designation of "faculty" (from fly-in to land-bound and in-between) may prompt other institutions in other nations to revisit their expectations of the traditional faculty role.

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Hellenic Open University, Greece *(Margarita K. Kefalaki)*

Easing the technological transition for adult student professionals: Website logo encourages flexible study at home (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

Contributing to the historical record of this global alert situation during the COVID-19 impact, this section provides a snapshot of professional and personal experiences in the educational environment of Greece (Hellada). Specifically, this section speaks of the way that the university at which I have taught (since 2011), the Hellenic Open University (HOU), has dealt with the rushed educational changes that the global health emergency of COVID-19 imposed.

HOU, founded in 1992 and officially established in 1997, is the only public university in Greece to adopt and operate the model of distance education all around Greece since its foundation. With central offices in Patras and various university branches all over Greece (Athens, Ioannina, Crete, Thessaloniki, Patras, Larisa, Komotini, Hania, just to name some), its purpose is to facilitate the participation of people around Greece. This public higher education institution has students who pay their own tuition fees. HOU offers 48 programs, with the participation of 40,695 students, of which 23,989 are Master's students and 16,706 are graduate students. But how was HOU affected by our uninvited and unwelcomed coronavirus?

Greece, with a population of just over 11 million, had (as of 13 April), 2,145 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 99 fatalities, far lower than elsewhere in Europe[9] (Smith, 2020). Nevertheless, the closure of all educational units at all levels of our country on 10 March (one day before WHO declared the pandemic) highlighted the need and importance of 100% technologically supported remote teaching (e-learning). HOU (educators, personnel, students) already had a demonstrated and long-standing experience in distance education. Still, some courses (five per year) also involved face-to-face interaction. The fact that, due to the pandemic, all these face-to-face courses had to turn immediately into online courses did not cause special problems.

[9] Helena Smith (2020) gives an answer to how the Greek government's quick reaction protected the country's population from a health crisis: "In late February, before Greece had recorded its first death, carnival parades were cancelled. On 4 March, before most of Europe, schools were ordered closed. Within days, bars, cafes, restaurants, nightclubs, gyms, malls, cinemas, retail stores, museums and archaeological sites were also shuttered."

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The combination of off-campus and on-campus education (blended learning or hybrid learning, including synchronous and asynchronous communication) in HOU permits students to attend a classroom in a traditional room of teaching and complete their assignments back at home (asynchronous communication). The quality of academic work is always maintained at a high level, controlled by a form of constant evaluation from the students and a group of educators responsible for the application and assessment of the learning model in the departments that they support. Communication and interaction between the professor/counselor and the students in our university take place mainly through a Learning Management System based on the Moodle platform.[10] This platform provides the possibility of modern or asynchronous teaching and the deposit of educational material (printed educational material, audiovisual material, questionnaires, quizzes, activities, assignments, etc.). Students can also submit their work and obtain feedback, commentary, and grading by their professor/counselor (Alachiotis et al., 2019).

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

Being the professor/counselor of one of the Athens departments (Athens-3), I teach the Master's course for Cultural Units Management (Διοίκηση Πολιτισμικών Μονάδων), which includes 30 adult students of various educational[11] and working backgrounds.[12] After 10 March, all previous face-to-face meetings were transferred to virtual formats, using Skype for Business.[13] These adult students (typically with their own families and of course different responsibilities and needs from a typical teenage student) often require more time and assistance with concurrently learning course content and digital technology. Hence, institutions with similar student populations should expect an effort-intensive transition from face-to-face meetings to digital learning.

However, adults who engage in education beyond traditional schooling and into lifelong learning offer a very important study opportunity of their societal contributions: ensuring the availability and competence of the labour force by extending working life, raising the employment rate, improving productivity, providing educational opportunities for the entire adult population, strengthening social cohesion and equality, and alleviating effects of the recession (Euricide, 2018). Nevertheless,

[10] For more learning tools, it is interesting to visit Top Tools for Learning (https://www.toptools4learning.com/), where the 200 most-used methods of learning in the field of education (personal, professional, higher education) for 2019 are presented—results of the 13th Annual Learning Tools Survey published 18 September 2019.

[11] Two of them already have a Master's degree, and one of them has also a Ph.D.

[12] Advocates, educators, public agents, social media specialists, marketing specialists, philologists, teachers, media professionals.

[13] To name some online educational system possibilities used during this time of crisis, we could speak of Skype for Business (https://www.skype.com/en/business/) and Big Blue Button (bigbluebutton.org), which are also used by HOU, and of course Zoom (https://zoom.us/), GoToMeeting (https://www.gotomeeting.com/), and Jitsi Meet (https://jitsi.org/jitsi-meet/). In Newsletter Εργαστήριο Εκπαιδευτικού Υλικού & Εκπαιδευτικής Μεθοδολογίας (ΕΕΥΕΜ) του Ελληνικού Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου (2020). Η εξ αποστάσεως εκπαίδευση στην εποχή του κορονοϊού. March 2020 | τεύχος 5.

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I believe that the younger generation is much more familiar with new technologies and so can more easily adapt to technological "innovations".

As already stated, in response to concern over COVID-19 spreading in Greece, HOU had already migrated absolutely all courses to online mode as of 10 March (the day that WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic). Everything was in place for our first totally synchronous remote course to be delivered with the help of Skype for Business on 14 March. [Of course, the fact that I speak about adult students (30–70 years old) has had a major impact on how quickly they accept and can respond to changes, especially having to do with technological innovations.]

There was a generally positive response from most of my students; nevertheless, there were cases of students who experienced some slight difficulty in adapting, which is not surprising. Despite some reluctance and uncertainty (judging by emails that I received before the online meeting), the course went extremely well, and the participants seemed to have the inner need to communicate and exchange, even in a digital environment. Students, no matter their age or background, need special support and follow-up from the educator, especially when face-to-face interaction is interrupted. Collectively, we as students and educators need to feel part of a community with common purposes, methods, and actions. All need to interact and not feel alone—no matter how hard a situation might be. But this sense of shared community is not the only prerequisite to online education.

Nowadays, more than ever, with the actual global condition of closure of everything, the need arises for innovative approaches to distance education, along with staff training, to maximize conditions, benefits, and opportunities offered by distance education. Educators should also be educated about remote modes of teaching; in turn, universities should formulate ways of constant evaluation and amelioration of their resources (human and technical). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the running of programmes in higher education, and nearly all universities are now using an online system to deliver remaining parts of the program.

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic will have a significant effect on higher education, as distance education undoubtedly will be expanded. More universities around the world will have to adapt (obtain the needed techniques and technology, train educators, hire and train staff, obtain the right educational resources). In any disruptive period, educators who see the positive side can engage in the outcomes of what is actually being experienced. This huge health crisis can be viewed as an opportunity to widen perspectives. Facilitating that learning, new ways of training and education will be offered and adopted. Teachers and personnel must educate themselves in order to adapt and adjust to new ways of education and communication.

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The fact that all kinds of institutions and universities have urgently moved their classes online in response to the COVID-19 health crisis might engage serious risks. Open-access learning requires a well-planned online process. The rapidity with which some institutions were obliged to make this change might yet come at the expense of the quality of the offered learning experience:

> In contrast to experiences that are planned from the beginning and designed to be online,[14] emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances (Hodges et al., 2020, n.p.).

Institutions like HOU that already had some aspects of e-learning or blended elements in their curricula find it much easier to make the transition to fully online programmes than those who are launching online teaching from scratch. The advantages offered by online education—even under this urgent occasion of hurried moves to online forms—can only be "protected" by recognising that effective online instruction has nothing or little to do with what most of the institutions are actually offering, which Hodges et al. (2020, n.p.) aptly names "emergency remote teaching (ERT)". Being offered quickly to cover the basic needs of communicating with students, this type of teaching cannot, in many cases, represent the well-prepared online course.

University of South Australia, Adelaide

(Sophie Karanicolas and Paraskevi Kontoleon)

Reimagining the virtual delivery of an interactive education: Technology facilitates an interpersonal milieu (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

At the start of 2020, the idea that the COVID-19 pandemic would have a profound impact on higher education in Australia—let alone our University of South Australia (UniSA)—seemed ludicrous. The city of Adelaide lies on the southern coastline, seemingly isolated like the rest of the continent. UniSA, however, conducts research on a global scale, with international students representing about one-sixth of its nearly 34,000 students (UniSA, 2020a). UniSA also "respectfully acknowledge[s] the Kaurna, Bunganditj and Bangarla First Nations Peoples and their Elders past and present, who

[14] For information on higher institutions that offer distance education all around the world, one can take a look at the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, https://eadtu.eu/, and web portals like www.studyportals.com και www.distancelearningstudy.eu (Alachiotis et al., 2019).

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are the First Nations' traditional owners of the land of University of South Australia's campuses in Adelaide, Mount Gambier and Whyalla" (UniSA, 2020b). The Law School especially prides itself on its "practical learning experiences including mooting, negotiation, [and] witness examination" (UniSA, 2020b). COVID-19 would soon be challenging that notion of legal education.

As for the nation, on 20 March 2020, the Australian Government announced the border closure of Australia to all travelers, except for Australian citizens and residents (and their immediate family members) who were returning home. State border closures, except for essential or compassionate travel, soon followed. All incoming passengers, whether international or interstate, were subject to a mandatory 14-day isolation period. On 22 March, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the closure of all pubs, clubs, hotels, places of worship, gyms, sporting venues, cinemas, and casinos. As in the rest of the world, people were required to remain home at all times except for travel to work or for essential services. Families were distanced: Visits to other households and to aged-care facilities where many parents resided were totally banned in the Eastern states. The Australian Government had clear social distancing requirements of 1.5 metres at all times.

Regarding education, schools remained open strictly to cater for the children of essential frontline workers; children of parents considered non-essential workers were asked to stay home and engage in distance learning. Just like *that*—parents became full-time teachers, and teachers were expected to develop online teaching skills overnight. University campuses, unlike primary and high schools, were shut immediately. Teaching staff were asked to conduct classes fully online, without any notice. Domestic and international students alike were now isolated and often without employment, as their main employers were all in the service industries.

By 25 March, the Prime Minister announced formation of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC) to develop a coordinated national approach to both the public health and social management of the pandemic. Together with Australia's Chief Medical Officer, NCCC developed an evidence-based response to the management of all health aspects associated with the pandemic. Further formed was the National Cabinet, comprising the premiers of every state of Australia along with the territory chief ministers. Australia was quick to react and implemented strict measures despite low rates of COVID-19 infections when compared against global standards. According to the COVID-19 Worldometer site, Australia had recorded 6,927 cases and 97 deaths, with 6,124 recovered cases, as of 9 May (2020). Australia truly is the lucky country. Its geographic isolation and wide living spaces facilitated containment of the virus.

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

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The "luck" of geographic isolation has not shielded Australia from the pandemic's effects on higher education in general or on UniSA in particular. An email circulated by UniSA President and Vice Chancellor David Lloyd on the evening of 1 February confirmed the university's implementation of recommendations to prohibit travel to China (Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, 2020) and ordered staff and students returning from China to self-isolate for 14 days. This email raised some alarm bells, but in truth most thought that the virus could not possibly affect Australia in any meaningful way. A further email on 5 February confirmed that the university had only a small number of staff and students affected by travel from China. We were safe from COVID-19. Or so we thought.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues with governance in the Australian higher education sector. The World University Rankings reported that Australia's policy to "shift the cost of higher education on to students who now won't be able to get jobs or travel to study is the real crisis here" (Jayasuriya, 2020). So how did UniSA respond to this crisis? The very idea of closing national and state borders, cancelling international and interstate travel, and converting to online teaching seemed like an alternate universe. How wrong we were.

Wind the clock forward to mid-March and, within just weeks, the gravity of the situation hit home for the School of Law. On the morning of 16 March, the Dean of Law circulated an email advising staff that the School was pre-empting the possibility that teaching might soon be online. The next day, the Vice Chancellor sent an email advising staff and students that all face-to-face teaching would be converted to fully online delivery within the week, and that the university campus would remain closed to all staff and students until further notice. This switch has engendered the greatest challenge for many colleagues: reimagining legal education in a virtual environment that had served up to that point as a mere repository of learning and reading resources.

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

Not all higher education teachers have experience with interactive online learning. I had never used Zoom before COVID-19; however, I had been fortunate enough to have had a personal interest in the scholarship of online learning prior to the pandemic. [15] For the majority, the reality of having to change mostly traditional teaching practices overnight to fully online delivery meant that teachers who had spent months preparing face-to-face courses now were swimming in unchartered territory. The overwhelming demand for the use of online teaching platforms such as Zoom in the School of

[15] Reflective insight told from the perspective of co-contributor Paraskevi Kontoleon.

Law meant that, in addition to the obvious anxieties of changing to online delivery, we also had IT issues rendering it almost impossible to get through a virtual classroom without disruption.

I recall receiving that email on the morning of 17 March. In fairness, I welcomed the decision. After all, I live with and care for my mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's Disease; the thought of her contracting and possibly dying from the virus was enough motivation for me. Whilst the conversion from face-to-face to online teaching has been challenging, I have found that it has forced me to engage further with teaching pedagogies, to look at ways in which I can provide better support to students, and, funnily enough, to help me get to know my students better.

Currently, I am teaching a class of 150 first-year students. In our first Zoom meeting, fear amongst the student cohort was obvious. Most already lacked confidence in their abilities to get through their first year of university; the impact of COVID-19 meant a further blow to their confidence. Turning to teaching pedagogies for help, I have found that a pedagogy of care (Motta and Bennet, 2018) and a strong focus on constructive alignment (Karanicolas, 2018) have been my saving graces in this new COVID-19 world.

How have I done this? I have made a point of regularly contacting students (cohorts or individuals) via email; setting virtual meetings with classes, small groups, and individuals; developing succinct and clear audio and video lecture material with embedded quizzes; providing follow-up emails with feedback; and developing videos to further explain difficult concepts as well as to answer students' concerns about assessments.

How do I know this has worked? I have kept the students informed, empowering them to provide feedback on the benefits of these resources and approaches, along with how they may be improved. Feedback from students indicates that 90% have found these teaching approaches beneficial to their education—they have felt supported and motivated to continue learning.

Whilst the pandemic has been difficult and challenging, its change has helped me to develop better teaching materials for students that will help improve their learning experience when we eventually return to face-to-face teaching. Change has also highlighted the need for educators to delve into the scholarship of learning and teaching. To have expertise in only your discipline of practice does not provide the flexibility and the adaptability that will be required of an educator in this new world in which we find ourselves teaching.

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Widener University, Chester, Pennsylvania, United States *(Robert J. Bonk)*

Focusing on experiential community engagement through open education: Course projects adapt for topic, teams, and technology (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

The pandemic's evolution within the United States has been and remains problematic. Across fifty states encompassing a large swath of the North America continent, the virus spreads geographically as well as numerically. Moreover, the governors of these states retain jurisdiction over most—if not all—of their internal responses: *when* to close and open areas for education, commerce, recreation, and so on; *where* to position first-responders and available resources; *what* employment positions and skills are deemed essential; *who* implements, monitors, and assesses data for peaks and lulls; and *how* to negotiate with other states' governors as well as the federal government. [16] Agencies within the federal system, notably the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020a) and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID, 2020), play complementary roles, as do institutions of higher learning, notably the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) School of Medicine, whose Coronavirus Resource Center (2020a) has held an internationally respected position during the pandemic. The CDC also issued guidelines for administrators of higher education institutions (CDC, 2020b).

The first reported case of COVID-19 in the United States occurred in Washington State (on the Pacific side of the country) in January 2020 (CDC, 2020c). In Pennsylvania (on the Atlantic side), Governor Tom Wolf declared a disaster emergency due to COVID-19 on 6 March (Wolf, 2020a), with stay-at-home orders for the counties near Philadelphia (which included Widener University's Delaware County). The order's enforcement officially commenced on 23 March for a two-week period ending 6 April; that period was subsequently extended until 8 May and effective for all 67 counties within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Wolf, 2020b). A three-phase reopening plan, based on predetermined metrics, was announced on 25 April (Wolf, 2020c). Tentatively, the first state counties could begin opening as early as 8 May. (The county containing Widener University, though, is in the last region expected to open.)

In response to concern over COVID-19 spreading in Pennsylvania, Widener University decided, as did several other local institutions, to migrate absolutely all courses to online mode as of 19 March (one week after WHO declared the pandemic). Only "life-sustaining personnel" retained campus

[16] An examination of the disarray of the federal response in the United States is well beyond the scope of this article. Undoubtedly, the response of the Trump administration (ranging from denial and contradiction to aggrandizement and polemics) will be fodder for tell-all books, pseudo-news shows, and late-night parodies.

access after 21 March. Because many courses used traditional methods, faculty were allowed an extra week to prepare for the transition to fully online mode. This switch would remain through the remainder of the spring semester; courses for the summer and fall sessions are to be considered relative to the pandemic's status (Widener University, 2020a).

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

Widener University, a private institution in the eastern United States, comprises a central campus in Chester, Pennsylvania, for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as two nearby campuses for its law schools. As of 2019, the approximately 6,500 students had an enrolment ratio of 3:2:1 for undergraduate, graduate, and law, respectively. Despite its relatively small size, this university offers over 40 undergraduate programs and over 50 graduate and professional programs. Widener University's student body encompasses 22 countries; nearly a third of students are minority and/or international citizens (Widener University, 2020b).

Originally, Widener University operated as a military college. That foundation remains influential in its mission and vision: "Widener is a dynamic, inclusive academic community, transforming students into scholars, leaders, and globally engaged citizens…by creating a learning environment where curricula are connected to societal issues through civic engagement". At all levels of study, students are encouraged to participate in formal courses and informal activities that immerse them into the community. For Widener, that "community" ranges from study abroad and global trips to experiential projects within the surrounding area of Chester (Widener University, 2020b).

As for Chester itself, demographic parameters paint a different picture from the university. For a population of approximately 34,000 residents, the poverty rate in Chester is 35.9%. Four out of five self-identify as Black, African-American, Hispanic, or Latino. Although nine out of ten have health coverage, about one-third rely on Medicaid, the governmental system intended for those of financial need. Homicide (6.92 per 100,000) poses one of Chester's greatest health risks (Data USA, 2020). The city's rate of coronavirus infection on 9 April was 0.08% of its total population (Delaware County Coronavirus COVID-2019, 2020).

If the coronavirus has an upside, that might be its ability to expose the underlying societal inequities within the United States. Non-governmental agencies (NGOs), such as the Health Equity Initiative (HEI) in New York City, continue efforts at ameliorating inequities within the country's health and social systems (HEI, 2020). Anecdotally, community groups report alarming trends in COVID-19 rates for testing, confirmed cases, and deaths. Substantiation remains stymied because not all states release breakdowns by race or ethnicity: 2/50 for testing, 41/50 for confirmed cases, and 38/50 for deaths, as of 30 April (JHU 2020b).

Given Chester's profile, differential effects of COVID-19 by race or ethnicity need scrutiny. Even a quick examination (as of 30 April) suggests differences between areas (total populations) known to be unbalanced by race or ethnicity. Delaware County (which contains Chester) has a higher fatality rate at 6.19 than does Pennsylvania overall (more homogenous) at 5.13 (JHU 2020c).[17] Widener University's investment into the Chester community, evidenced by its Office of Civic Engagement (Widener University 2020c), may potentially address such inequities. Initiatives across institutions, as offered by PHENND (Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development) and Pennsylvania Campus Compact, undoubtedly will be instrumental as well.

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

Amongst the many courses offered at Widener University are those in professional writing, which typically include community-based experiential projects (Bonk, 2013). Although relatively small in the overall scheme of the institution, this program already offered hybrid versions of undergraduate courses, as well as an online graduate course in healthcare writing. All of the undergraduate courses continue to use the open-access texts that had been curated in the previous two years. An electronic (but not open-access) text for the graduate class had already been made available by the publisher. All these students had access to a customized website for providing online writing support, a critical need in a communication-driven world (Bonk, 2019). A librarian was added to class rosters within the Canvas (https://www.instructure.com/canvas/) learning management system.

Class assignments were easily adapted for a fully online delivery. The entry-level class adjusted its experiential project into a team proposal to use social media to foster a sense of campus community despite their isolation. Mid-level classes, which did not have specific community projects, migrated to a fully online platform that simulates modern business. Healthcare professionals in the graduate class, already pushed to personal limits, used an optional blog to share healthcare updates, trade coping techniques, and express human emotions. On an individual basis, deadlines for assignments were delayed so that these front-line professionals had time for home and family. Several students expressed gratitude for such latitude extended to them during the pandemic.

As suggested by these loosely representative courses, the switch from in-person or hybrid to virtual depends on myriad factors for pedagogical success. The entry-level class, as an example, benefited from analysing how pandemic updates could be disseminated without inundating email accounts; in the process, they discovered even more about the coronavirus. In contrast, the graduate class needed to step away from pandemic-related assignments; most selected topics from their own careers but saved the optional blog for catharsis.

[17] Case fatality rates calculated from data as of 30 April 2020.

Extending educational opportunities to the wider community similarly must remain cognizant of local situations. Open-access tutorials on writing, for instance, have been intentionally designed for the Chester Education Foundation (CEF) using the LOOC (Localized Open On-line Content) model (Bonk, 2016). Although not a project during the current timeframe, a previous class collaborated with an accessibility officer on teaching adjustments for students with special needs or functional disabilities. In a survey of U.S. colleges/universities admitting students with special needs, 70% used technological adaptations (Raue & Lewis, 2011)—a level requiring further attention.

Pressure from the pandemic, though, has relegated many responses to the ERT (Emergency Remote Teaching) mode (Hodges et al., 2020). But these "disruptive" pressures can be viewed as teaching opportunities. Developed by Clayton M. Christensen in 1997 for management science, disruption theory posits that an upstart's innovations can disrupt an incumbent's dominance (Denning, 2016). Even incremental innovations arising from the ERT mode at institutions (such as those profiled in this article) may quicken migration of higher education to a new pedagogical paradigm. Insights from other learning theories should additionally be considered. Connectivism, posited by George Siemens, specifically "addresses learning in complex, social, networked environments" (Siemens & Conole, 2011), in response to ongoing influences of the Internet and related technologies. Certainly, theories like these can be juxtaposed when elucidating the trajectory of higher education.

University College London, United Kingdom *(Fotini Diamantidaki)*

Nurturing imagination and collaborative co-creation by shared interests: Co-creative collaboration nurtures imaginative spirit (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

The response to the pandemic in the UK has been slow and erratic from the outset. Criticism around lockdown measures and lack of clear guidance is ongoing and we all live the consequences of a prolonged lockdown. Universities across the UK increasingly express their concerns over recruitment, financial implications and behavioral consequences (Universities UK, 2020). The reaction of Universities across the UK however has been proactive and teaching is entirely moved online from the early stages of the pandemic with a focus on wellbeing of students and staff alike (Universities UK, 2020).

University College London (UCL) was founded in 1826 to open up university education in England to those who had been excluded (UNESCO, 2020). In 1878, UCL became the first university in England to admit women as students on equal terms with men (idem). UCL is associated with

several major teaching hospitals—such as the University College London Hospital, the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, the Royal Free Hospital, and Moorfields Eye Hospital—that provide healthcare and contribute to medical practice (UCL, 2020c). During COVID-19, multiple research advances are taking place, with a focus on vaccination, rapid testing, and development of ventilators for hospital beds (UCL, 2020d). UCL prides itself on being London's global university, with students from 150 countries studying on its campus within a diverse and dynamic student community (UCL, 2020b). UCL is currently ranked eighth among the world's top-ten universities by the QS World University Rankings (2020).

The UCL Institute of Education (IOE) is the education school of UCL, specialising in postgraduate study and research in the field of education and social sciences; it is one of the 11 faculties at UCL. Historically, IOE opened in 1902 as a constituent college of the University of London. Its aim since being established as a college has been to provide teacher education and to train secondary school teachers by offering higher degrees. IOE has the largest portfolio of postgraduate programmes in education in the UK, with over 19,000 students on different postgraduate routes: from the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) teacher education courses to Master's level and doctoral programmes. In February 2014, IOE and UCL announced their intention to merge, and the merger was completed in December 2014 (UCL, 2020a). The UCL IOE has been ranked first in the world for education for the seventh consecutive year running (QS Top Universities, 2020).

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

The PGCE course feeds in to the wider landscape of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and it is crucial to examine, as its disruption has considerable implications for a sustained supply of teachers in schools. PGCE is a university face-to-face course that lasts one academic year. This postgraduate course provides Master's credits and offers QTS (Qualified Teacher Status)—a compulsory government requirement to teach in the UK. All PGCE teachers during the course receive a unique teacher number and register with the government as a teacher. The course is a balance between theoretical pedagogy and school practice. All PGCE students start at university in September, with the subject area tutors teaching the specific pedagogy in their discipline area. University input also entails a professional studies programme that allows students to discuss and think about the role of the teacher as a whole.

The professional aspect of the course continues in school and is run by a senior member of the leadership school team; following an intense six-week period input at university with subject and professional studies, students are placed by UCL in their first school placement between October and January. Input from UCL tutors continues throughout the term, with students spending four days in school per week and one day at university, whilst students develop their teaching with the

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help of school mentors. A full training programme (provided twice a year) is available to our partnership schools. During term time, UCL tutors visit schools to provide support and formative feedback to PGCE students. At the end of January, when students finish first school placements, they return to UCL for three more weeks of input—a combination of theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings, assignments, and preparation for the second placement, which takes place between February and May. It was in mid-March, as students were in their second school placement, when COVID-19 caught us (like so many) by surprise.

Face-to-face teaching ceased formally at UCL on 13 March. At that time, PGCE students were still in school placements, as the guidance from the government was "to keep calm and carry on" with all schools still fully operating. Major questions arose during that time on whether we should pull our students out of schools, as well as what that would mean for their degree and qualified teacher status. Questions also arose on the impact for the thousands of international students: Should we advise them to leave the country before lockdown would happen? We then found ourselves in a situation in which international students were asked by their home countries to return whilst still in school placements. Academic staff, as a result, spent inordinate time and effort providing advice and reassurance to very confused students, many of whom could not decide whether to leave or stay as their next step.

Crucial decisions had to be taken quickly, and UCL's response (after the initial general panic) was eventually quite positive, focusing on students' well-being and prioritising family. UCL announced officially on 18 March that all PGCE students were to be pulled out of school; international students were strongly advised to return to their home countries. Soon afterward, the announcement came by the government to close down schools at the end of that week. As many countries then gradually announced lockdown, the UK remained unsure as to which way to go. International PGCE students mostly chose to return to their home countries. UCL also announced that all PGCE students would keep their bursaries (i.e., shortage subjects like PGCE Languages receive government bursaries to train) and would still receive QTS, based on their school experience up to 18 March. School reports and university tutors' judgments are taken into account to grant QTS.

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

The debate currently continues on the best mechanisms to support current PGCE students: either as Newly Qualified Teachers in September or by arranging a third school placement. In the meantime, PGCE teaching continues as per UCL's motto of "remote, not distant learning". Our newest ally is Microsoft Teams to stay connected with students and colleagues for class sessions, meetings, and supervision. We set up teaching and learning materials weekly on Moodle (https://moodle.org/), an

online university platform allowing students to study prior to the live sessions; we also teach via Moodle Collaborate (https://docs.moodle.org/dev/Collaborate) and its interactive tools.

The PGCE Languages course is currently in its summer term and will be finishing on 23 June. Traditionally, it is the most exciting part of the course when all creative projects come together. Some projects start in school, with PGCE students planning and teaching a series of lessons, as well as reflecting on their own teaching and other students' learning based on school mentors' advice. With this course aspect no longer possible, we had to rethink not only how to keep the creative character of the course alive but also how to keep the students engaged, working, and collaborative. One aspect of creativity that we foster during collaborative projects is what Fisher (2004) describes as "info-structure", meaning "making alliances and benefiting from the distributed intelligence of others" (p.17). Nurturing creativity relies then on "interconnectivity through learning conversations with others" (idem). This aspect takes place during live sessions when we discuss readings along with ideas for the projects, and when students eventually work in collaborative groups.

Another crucial aspect of creativity that we foster is allowing student teachers to consider different possibilities of one idea and helping them to interpret existing situations in a new way (Selkrig & Keamy, 2017). An illustrative example is the way in which we adapted one of the course projects, the short-film project. Under normal circumstances, this project is mainly run in school placements where students plan and teach a series of lessons leading up to a short film made by and with their pupils in school. During these unprecedented circumstances, students still plan a series of lessons as usual for a secondary school class leading up to the short film. However, the short-film protagonists are PGCE students themselves. As they are not in school but in quarantine, we encourage them to share hobbies and uplifting activities that help them to remain positive.

Following our conversation, all students felt comfortable sharing interests. It was rewarding to see that, based on hobbies, they were already forming groups with common interests. This adaptation of the task allows them to still complete it, whilst thinking about pedagogy, lesson planning, and use of vocabulary and structures at the secondary-school level. Most importantly for me, they learn to use their existing experiences and co-create something new, which, according to Pendleton-Jullian & Seely Brown (2016), is actually an interpretation of imagination—what they define as "pragmatic imagination". They argue that imagination is not an abstract concept but rather a result of cognitive processes and the formation of mental images. In this view, everything that we see is mediated by images that we hold from past experiences. Indeed, images are personal and cultural interpretations of the "real" experience (Pendleton-Jullian, 2018).

This dynamic definition of imagination posits the theory that everyone has the capacity to imagine and therefore create. It comes as a welcoming response to any person's arguing of being neither

creative nor imaginative. Instead, imagination and creativity can be collaboratively nurtured and constructed, allowing everyone to bring individual outlooks and interpretations of the surrounding experiences. This process then collaboratively feeds into constructive co-creation. Technology functions as a facilitator of this process: *How* to achieve desired outcomes may be changing, but the outcomes themselves may remain constant.

Copenhagen Business School, Denmark *(Karl-Heinz Pogner)*

Transforming higher education into a true community of practice: Deliberate decision-making defines practice (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

Higher education in Denmark takes place at universities, university colleges, and academies of professional higher education. Most of the higher education institutions (including all universities) are regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The eight Danish universities are responsible for the biggest part of the public research and offer research-based higher education at the Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. levels. The financing of the universities primarily comes from government grants (basic research grants, grants for research-based public sector consultancy, and research grants in open competitions). The principal share of public funding for higher education, which is allocated through the taximeter scheme based on student activity (passed examinations), accounts for approximately 67.5% of the total (CBS, 2020a).

Essentially, almost all education in Denmark is (tuition) free. This tuition-fee-less system applies to not only Danish students, but also students from countries in the Nordic Council or from countries in the European Economic Area or European Union. All Danish citizens (and many others meeting certain criteria) are offered monthly financial aid when studying. The Danish Higher Education is in principle financed by the taxpayers—an approach making citizens, students, the state, government, Parliament, politicians, and employers all salient stakeholders (CBS, 2020a).

Copenhagen Business School, understanding itself as a business university, aims at combining relevance for business, organizations, and society with academic rigor (see Finch et al., 2018). Mission, vision, and strategy had been in the last rounds of consultation and decision-making when society was locked down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy emphasises both neo-liberal employability (see Wiepke, 2009) of upcoming knowledge workers and the graduates' capability for knowledge building, as well as the personal and social *Bildung* (Olesen 2011) of students as

reflective practitioners (Schön, 1987 & 1983), responsible citizens, and managers. CBS "aims at leveraging global intellectual leadership to transform society with business, tackling challenges with curiosity, creative new ideas, and collaborative engagement" (CBS, 2020b). Education aims to give individual graduates the competencies to be "independent in thinking and collaborative in action, […and to] balance competitiveness with trustworthiness" (CBS, 2019).

Acquiring these skills, competencies, and capabilities can be supported by the *leitmotiv* of the independently and critically thinking learner who makes decisions and choices on a well-informed basis, especially when solving wicked or not-well-defined problems. This educational strategy can, of course, come under pressure in times of crises; however, as crisis management and crisis communication research tells us, a crisis also opens up opportunities to learn and emerge as a more resilient organization with a stronger reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). These opportunities can lead to innovative changes overall.

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

Teaching is, in Danish higher education, often understood as facilitating and supporting students' learning, i.e., not only acquiring but also transforming and building or creating knowledge (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2014) and thereby progressing in the Zone of Proximate Development (Vygotsky, 1978). It combines traditional classroom teaching and lectures with one-to-one consultation, group work, seminars, and, in particular, project-based courses with problem-oriented projects, often in areas outside the university. The teaching "must" include methods that can develop the students' independence and ability to create knowledge and to be innovative (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2020). Deeply embedded throughout the entire Danish educational culture (see Illeris, 1974), this ideal of the independent learner is a strength of Danish higher education in the context of developing resilient and sustainable solutions for crisis situations: when the educational system itself is under pressure; when "business as usual" no longer remains an option; and when "back to normal" is no longer a viable solution because a "New Normal" has developed.

When the COVID-19 virus reached Denmark [(first case confirmed 27 February; highest incidence of 466 new cases 3 April; general decline thereafter (Norrestad, 2020)] and began to become both a global and national pandemic, the Danish society, including the private and public sectors, was locked down quickly by the Danish (minority) government. The Health Authorities and all parties in Parliament backed the governmental decision. Schools, high schools, and all higher education institutions closed immediately. The universities instantly declared transformation of all activities (education, research, administration) into digital and online activities. Both full-time academic staff (with research, teaching, supervision, and examination obligations) and a huge number of external part-time teaching staff (carrying out research-based teaching, advising, supervision, etc.) were

expected to organize teaching from home offices. At the same time, students were expected to move into home study rooms, using digital communication and remote learning. Hence, remote teaching and online learning became the New Normal for all teachers and students.

The technical part of this transformation/transition was a minor problem because the infrastructure (hard- and software) was more or less in place; in fact, Denmark ranks rather high in different digitalization indices (e.g., DESI, Digital Economy and Society Index; and DiGix, Digitalization Index). As about 20% of the full-time students are international students, those students also had the chance to study and do their individual and/or group projects from "home" (i.e., wherever they were living or staying). Teachers had to learn by learning-by-doing how to teach, supervise, advise, and coach (groups of) students in a kind of Emergency Remote Teaching (Hodges et. al. 2020). Students had to learn how to learn in synchronous and asynchronous settings and how to conduct their problem-oriented (group) projects under lockdown conditions for universities, organizations, and society (often locations for their investigations and projects).

Teachers and students began to muddle through the situation; the official motto (given by the Dean of Education) became "OK is good enough—for now". But much creativity and innovation also had been set free. The majority of online teaching, supervising, and feedback was evaluated as "OK" by students—and sometimes as "surprisingly good under the given circumstances".

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

Teachers (both full-time academic staff and external part-time teachers) began to organize online meetings to share experiences—sometimes together with students. These bottom-up initiatives, a kind of "Community of Common Destiny", have been focusing primarily on Ed-Tech, how to cope with the situation, how to "survive", and how to reach the aforementioned "OK". Conversations still are primarily spinning around the questions of how to *teach* online. To a much lesser degree, conversations and courses reflect on how to *learn* and even less on questions of *what* students should learn and acquire and *why* they should learn it—despite the fact that the answers to these questions should be the basis for the decision of *how*.

Almost never in this transition phase were questions raised about how Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) could be transformed into sustainable, resilient, reflective, blended (f2f and online/digital) *learning*: a pedagogy that could incorporate well-known concepts like learning to learn, problem orientation, participant-managed project work, student-centred supervision (Ankersborg & Pogner 2020), and academic literacies (Lilies et al., 2015) in order to come closer to the transformative ideal of the independent and critical learner. The New Normal should not only include transparency about the learning objectives of CBS's mono-disciplinary and multi-/interdisciplinary programs and courses, but also the alignment of expectations for how to organize (online) teaching, supervision,

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and learning. Furthermore, it should encompass transparency and reflection about expectations, norms, and genres of academic Discourse Communities and academic Communities of Practice (Nystrand, 1982; Swales, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pogner, 2012) so as to empower students to grow into the identity of legitimate—albeit peripheral—participants, acquiring and developing competencies for themselves, organizations, Denmark, and the global society.

After two months of lockdown, all parties of Parliament agreed on a step-by-step, careful, and prudent reopening of the private and public sectors, along with the social life of our citizens. Still, many restrictions will constrain everybody's daily life and operations of universities in the future. CBS buildings will remain closed this semester, all written and oral exams (the latter often based on written synopses, essays, internship reports, mini- or year-long projects, and Bachelor's or Master's theses) will be conducted online. In the next semester, all lectures must "go digital", and 50% of all activities (exercises, seminars, workshops, etc.) must be digital when/if universities open partially.

This New Normal offers the opportunity to transform the pre-corona practice and emerged corona emergency teaching into online and offline "conversations [that] should not be understood as a technique to transmit knowledge, insight, and experience between individuals. A conversation is a human activity that contributes to that we develop our understanding of the world and strengthens our capability to reflect" (Lauvås & Handahl, 2006). Preconditions for this approach and for a changed practice are meta-competencies for critical reflection, independence, and argumentation of teachers and students—no matter if they have grown up in an educational culture fostering these meta-competencies or if they are encountering them for the first time. As an outgrowth from the pandemic's disruption, the Community of Destiny (Pogner & Søderberg, 2003) could become a Community of Practice for the world of higher education.

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Royal Roads University, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada *(Carolin Rekar Munro)*

Galvanizing leadership of change with empathy in an unknown future: Programs offer guidance and leadership for students (Figure 1)

Overview of higher education at pandemic onset

That which once seemed an improbability became our reality. The pandemic crept with stealth into Canada, causing the Canadian economy to hemorrhage and putting the normality of our lives in a coma. My academic home, Royal Roads University (RRU), along with other post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, was declared a non-health emergency service for the purposes of delivering remote learning (Government of British Columbia, 2020).

The Government of Canada, through the Incident Response Group on Coronavirus, established the infrastructure to contain the virus and mitigate the crisis. Their response plan was guided by the following principles: collaboration with provincial and territorial government leaders to ensure a harmonized response in the health system; evidence-informed decision-making; proportionality of response to the level of threat; and flexibility to tailor actions as new information surfaces. Immediate responses included funding for borders and travel measures; repatriation of Canadians; sustainability of the National Microbiology Laboratory, which oversees testing; and funding for vaccine and antiviral development and clinical trials (Government of Canada, 2020a).

Canada's Public Health Agency ramped up its communication and public education efforts. Access to daily updates and health self-assessments are available through Canada's coronavirus website, the COVID-19 app on iOS and Android, and an information hotline. Daily, *Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivers an update from his home, followed by debriefings from Canada's Chief Health Officer. Leadership* messages—such as "flatten the curve", "go home and stay home", and "it's for now, not forever"—are frequent and pervasive. Moreover, these anthems have joined the lexicon of our time (Public Health Services of Canada, 2020).

For individual Canadians, first implemented was the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, which provides $2,000 monthly to workers who lost their income. Available for students (without summer jobs from May–August 2020) is the Canada Emergency Student Benefit, which provides $1,250 monthly for students or $1,750 monthly for students with dependents or disabilities. Increased funding was given to local food banks to purchase and distribute basic necessities to Canadians in need; homeless shelters to provide additional beds and barriers for physical distancing and to convert stadiums and hotels into temporary lodging for the homeless; women's shelters and sexual assault centres to protect women and children fleeing violence; centres for seniors to provide

delivery of food and medication and to accompany them to doctor appointments; and a "Kids Help Phone" to provide mental health support to children. Homeowners facing hardship are eligible for mortgage payment deferral (Government of Canada, 2020a).

Businesses are also on the receiving end of government assistance. To avoid layoffs, employers are eligible for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, covering up to $847 per week of an employee's wages. Two key programs are in place for small businesses: 1) the Canada Emergency Business Account, which provides interest-free loans of $40,000; and 2) the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance, which lowers rent by 75% for businesses affected by COVID-19 (Government of Canada, 2020a).

As of 30 April, the daily increase of COVID-19 cases nationally slowed to 3%, down from 31% in mid-March (Government of Canada, 2020b). This dramatic drop mobilized government leaders to chart plans for reopening the economy. Given regional differences in case numbers, each province has jurisdiction to lift restrictions based on medical intelligence from provincial health officers. Canada's Chief Public Health Officer offered reason for optimism, yet Canadians must continue to practice safe distancing to minimize the occurrence of a second wave of the pandemic (Government of Canada, 2020c).

Sociocultural, geopolitical, and other influences

Established in 1995, RRU is a small, private university that has graduated over 20,000 students in the fields of leadership, business, environment, communication, tourism, hospitality, and social justice who contribute to their communities in over 60 countries. RRU offers applied and professional programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels, as well as certificates, diplomas, executive, custom, and continuing education. Our cohort-based programs are offered in three formats: 1) on-campus classes, 2) blended, combining online courses with residencies ranging from one to three weeks; and 3) completely online learning (Royal Roads University, 2020).

RRU is tucked away on 565 acres of oceanfront and old-growth forest located in Hatley Park National Historic Site on Vancouver Island—the far west coast of Canada. On the ancestral homelands of the Xwsepsum and Lkwungen nations, RRU was originally the site of the Royal Roads Military College. Emblazoned on signage at the entrance to RRU is *Life. Changing*, which signifies the most frequently articulated experience by students (Royal Roads University, 2020).

The centerpiece of RRU's approach to pedagogy and research is its *Learning, Teaching, and Research Model* (LTRM). Grounded in the caring, accountable, and creative values of RRU, LTRM serves as the cornerstone for recruiting and developing faculty. It consists of three core categories: 1) *applied and authentic* (interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary; experiential and participatory; and, outcomes-based); 2) *caring and community-based* (co-creative; and place- and virtual space-based);

and 3) transformational. The aim of the LTRM is to provide the architecture for creating innovative and immersive experiences for students, thereby fostering their development as lifelong learners who are adept at real-life problem solving (Royal Roads University, 2019).

When WHO declared the global pandemic, RRU began migrating all on-campus programs and residencies online—a plan tentatively in place until December. With 25 years' experience designing and facilitating synchronous and asynchronous online courses, RRU is positioned to manage this transition. The faculty's fluency in the virtual playground, guided by RRU's Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies, is creating a relatively seamless continuation of student learning. Still, heavy lifting remains, especially migration of three-week residencies from on-campus to virtual formats and administration of online examinations. Moodle (https://moodle.org/), RRU's delivery platform, is being tested to its fullest with podcasts, digital storyboards, student-generated vodcasts, simulations, live cases, and breakout rooms for team-building and collaboration. Padlet (https://padlet.com/) is also being used for teams to co-discover and co-create learning.

RRU's President convened a COVID-19 committee with representation for academics, student life, communications, facilities, international students, and study abroad. Through weekly email broadcasts and video messages, he addresses the community with messages of gratitude for the work done, hope for the future, and an overview of response plans in play. To ease the hardships for students, emergency financial support is available, as a result of additional funding from the British Columbia government; late tuition payment fees are suspended; and a monthly tuition payment plan is available. Online mental health counseling is available, along with weekly wellness workshops (Royal Roads University, 2020).

Reflective insight on local response to pandemic

With daunting speed, students are wrestling with complicated and complex transitions. Their world shifted drastically with abrupt curricular modifications and sudden loss of on-campus community, residencies, jobs, research projects, international study pursuits, and convocation. For some, these challenges were compounded by a lack of basic infrastructure for online connectivity, time-zone differences, and health concerns for themselves and loved ones. A breakdown in mental health was triggered, impeding students' abilities to be fully present, focused, and productive during clases.

The pandemic demands that faculty plan for an unknown future, innovate with urgency, and evolve new ways of thinking about teaching and learning; equally imperative is being mindful of and attentive to students' well-being. We can play a vital role in relieving some of the heaviness that students feel, uplifting their optimism and hope, and fostering their resilience in a world spinning out of their control. In so doing, our online classrooms can serve as a regenerative home and a temporary haven from the madness of the crisis.

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3. Glocalising the Localised Responses

Exploration of Themes by Level

As dedicated researchers during this pandemic, we have not only much to discover but also many opportunities for re-imagining our paradigm of higher education. In fact, the very nature of this pandemic suggests using a "novel" form of analysis. Consider the approach used in public health to investigate, mitigate, and eradicate the "novel" coronavirus—epidemiology:

> The word *epidemiology* comes from the Greek words *epi*, meaning on or upon, *demos*, meaning people, and *logos*, meaning the study of. In other words, the word *epidemiology* has its roots in the study of what befalls a population [emphasis added] (CDC, 2020d, n.p.).

In the arena of public health, epidemiologists investigate tentative causes, predetermining factors, geographic distribution, and temporal trends for diseases or other health events, in order to postulate and test explanatory models; such analytics can indicate potential solutions. Everyone is now keenly aware of these parameters as related to COVID-19 from a medical perspective, but these parameters can be extrapolated to higher education during this pandemic.

That is the crux of this article. Each section has examined an institution within a nation, looking at its localised responses in three areas:

- *pandemic onset* (geographic distribution and temporal trends)
- *other influences* (tentative causes and predetermining factors)
- *reflective insight* (explanatory models and potential solutions)

At the localised stage of this pseudo-epidemiological analysis, clusters of shared issues have been identified on the curricular, institutional, and technological levels. In particular, distinct patterns of responsiveness at the curricular level, recommitment at the institutional level, and reprioritization at the technological level have emerged. The following text explores these three patterns in an attempt to draw together anecdotal data across the seven institutions. Figure 2 visually encapsulates our own feelings at two stages: (a) the peri-pandemic stage of our localised responses to the pandemic; and (b) the post-pandemic stage of a glocalised paradigm.[18]

[Insert Table 2 and Figure 2]

[18] Creanne-team sketches by Anne Pässilä; photos by Jussi-Pekka Kekki.

Curricular Level—Responsiveness

The transition to digital learning cannot be solely a technological transfer of course materials to a learning management system. Although some course components may easily be transposed, others require flexibility and adaptability; team projects and community outreach, as examples, require student-teacher negotiation for underlying goals of such assignments to be achieved. Nonetheless, provisions for alternative modes of earning course credit are needed, particularly as students cope with technological challenges, shaken confidence, and mental stress. Faculty need to consider all these holistic dimensions as they respond to students' learning needs.

Institutional Level—Recommitment

Addressing the disruption of this pandemic (and potentially other cataclysms), administrators must see the learning process as an investment rather than an expenditure, particularly in our knowledge-based economies. Educators must be supported as they delve into the scholarship of online delivery. Moreover, in moving beyond the ERT mode, higher-education institutions can proactively assess and plan for online pedagogies, community outreach, and collaborative co-creation. The lost sense of community is also a crucial consideration—for students and faculty alike. Empowered resilience with a splash of empathy can support these efforts pedagogically.

Technological Level—Reprioritization

As higher education emerges from the crisis-driven transition, the impetus for innovation must not be squandered. Technological details—whether synchronous/asynchronous models, online modes of advising and counseling, or time-zone connectivity—can be addressed operationally; however, strategic decisions at the start must be prioritized for learning to be geographically remote but not pedagogically distant. These considerations extend beyond administrative halls: Faculty must be open to learning not only communication technologies but also multiple disciplines so as to adapt when the unexpected happens yet again.

Exploration of Themes by Cluster

As in epidemiological studies, collected data can be viewed and examined from different vantages. Complementing the more localised responses at curricular, institutional, and technological levels (as just done in the preceding subsection) is a synthesis to reveal themes of a more glocalised nature. Four thematic clusters emerge, as summarized in Table 2 and explored below.

Cluster 1—Disruptive Innovation

Although the hardships unleashed by the pandemic can in no way be considered a blessing, their resultant disruption to the *status quo* does offer an opportunity for innovation. Essentially, higher education is now moving from (borrowing a medical metaphor) the emergency department and intensive care unit to the post-operative ward—and eventual discharge. According to Christensen's disruption theory (elaborated in Denning, 2016), incremental changes—if innovative—can erode established norms. Hence, the ERT mode can be a "stepping stone" to higher education not as the destined but as the definers of new academic Communities of Practice (Pogner, 2012).

Cluster 2—Faculty Redefinition

The pandemic has clearly highlighted the need to reconsider the traditional definition of "faculty". Providing discipline-specific content, of course, does not change; however, the manner in which content is delivered is reshaping the expectations for faculty. Knowledge outside one's discipline—especially but not exclusively technological expertise—requires faculty to stay on the leading edge of ongoing and future developments in higher education. Certainly, the delivery of *content* must now consider the dialogic *context* of that delivery (Britzman, 2003), particularly for confidence, emotions, imagination, resilience, and other holistic dimensions of education.

Cluster 3—Expanded Inclusivity

Education is no longer demarcated by years of study or presence in classrooms. Rather, education is more fittingly viewed as lifelong learning. European institutions of higher education, recognizing demographic shifts in student populations, are developing non-degree programs for working adults and other individuals who may not want or need a degree (Henderikx & Jansen, 2018). Additional groups, especially those with socioeconomic or functional deterrents, must also be accommodated as education shifts toward digital modes of delivery. The flexibility inherent in virtual learning can be harnessed to support this expanded inclusivity.

Cluster 4—Pedagogical Research

For digital learning to be fully respected in higher education, researchers must emphasize a more rigorous focus on pedagogical scholarship. In essence, the core approach to "educating educators" can be enhanced by reliable studies of the practice of teacher education (Britzman, 2003). In light of an expanding inclusivity of education, institutions should develop deliberate strategies for joining efforts with the school system. Nonetheless, this challenging vision of a new paradigm necessitates

leadership across the educational panorama (Henderikx & Jansen, 2018). Educational leadership, in and of itself, deserves more attention (beyond this paper) in rigorous scholarship.

Exploration of Themes by Reflection

Just as public health focuses on the group rather than the individual, so too has our epidemiological approach to glocalisation of higher education during this time of pandemic. Individual contributions have teased at the humanisation of our research. Although an expansive examination of these critical considerations would need to (and should) be tackled in a separate but complementary research study. Nonetheless, the following piece—eloquently captured by Carolin Rekar Munro—reflects on lessons learned by one of our co-authors.

In the trenches of this crisis, educators are humbly on the receiving end of many lessons that guide teaching and learning during and through crisis. The ongoing transition relies on three overarching parameters: leadership, empathy, and structure.

First, true leadership—the leadership that galvanizes and inspires—shows up in times of crisis. It is during the most distressing times in our collective lives that we thirst for someone to lead us through and out of pain. For it is in times of crisis that the real leaders show up: early and often; wielding strong and enduring values as their compass; maintaining clarity in their mission; and offering an abundance of faith, hope, and light. Ultimately, a leader helps people to gain traction during distraction by leveraging optimism and realism (Heifetz et al, 2009) and "feeding faith and starving fears" (Maxwell, 2020). It is this leadership that, we, as faculty, are called to exemplify.

Our students, who are exhausted and overwhelmed, are in need of someone who is calm, consistent, and firm; offers prudent advice as the precursor to making smart decisions; and has a steady hand to steer them in and through adversity. At this time, we must expand communication with our students through virtual office hours and regular check-ins, thereby signaling to students that we are here for them and receptive to connecting with them on issues that matter most to them. Communication also positions us to refer them to assistive facilities, such as wellness counselors, accessibility services, learning coaches, and financial services.

Second, empathy is the fastest way for us to build trusting and respectful connections with our students, especially during times of distress. Empathy is the artfulness of "seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another" (Adler, 2016). It begins with being cognizant of our internal dialogue, which is a primary determinant of whether connections with our students will be arms-length transactions or meaningful alliances. Our inner voice—with its intricately woven web of values, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions—shapes not only our thinking, but also our speech and our behaviours. For the most part, we do not even realize the

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domino effect that our private thoughts have on how we act and react to others, as well as how our students experience us.

During the pandemic, our students may be acting and reacting in ways that are counter to our own ways of responding; they may be testing our patience and draining our mental, physical, and spiritual energy. We must, at all times, be cognizant of the lens through which our students perceive and experience the world. Such cognizance is the heart and soul of empathy. Specifically, we are called to shift gears and enter into dialogue with care, compassion, and curiosity about the world of our students; and to strive to comprehend and appreciate them, regardless of how divergent their beliefs, values, and response behaviours are from our own. We are invited to ask more questions, leave more space in conversations for students to share their stories, put our assumptions and judgments in abeyance, and generatively listen—a form of "communion or grace that is our capacity to connect to the highest future possibility that can emerge" (Scharmer, 2008).

Third, structure and routine provide students with the comforts of certainty, consistency, and stability in a world that is spiraling out of their control. The anxiety experienced by students can be tempered when students know that a carefully crafted framework exists for their learning. Upfront, let us provide clear course and instructor expectations; hold space for students to articulate their expectations of the course and us; and encourage students to organize their day with the routine of making a daily calendar with set time to study, network, have lunch, and take physical activity breaks. As well, let us make clear our expectations of how time will be used synchronously and asynchronously. Since synchronous learning can lead to cognitive overload and fatigue, we must preserve this time as sacrosanct for 30–45 minutes of content that drives value and inspires action (Clark & Sweller, 2011). Anxiety reduces the ability to process information by 80%, shrinks attention span to 12 minutes, and limits capacity to retain any more than three main ideas (Goodwin, 2019).

Whether we are leading at the government level, for our university, or in our classroom, no existing playbook prescribes the pathway for dealing with a global pandemic of this magnitude. Our local and glocal responses require leadership—from all of us—that leverages a firm and steady presence, care and compassion for each other, and prudent decision-making. With these qualities in hand, we will be even better prepared to plan for an unknown future, galvanize change with urgency, and gain ground in a COVID-19 reality.

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4. Conclusions on Shifting to Glocalisation

Unlike a globalised response that would adopt one approach internationally, our study considered adaptations for local differences in a glocalised set of responses toward an attempt to identify new paradigms that reconceptualize not only teaching and learning, but also assessment. Moreover, identified issues indicate shared threads across the seven institutions of higher education.

From a localised perspective emerge responses at the curricular, institutional, and technological levels. First, changes to courses and curricula must respond to emotional needs of students when transitioning from face-to-face (or hybrid) to online delivery; nevertheless, faculty must ensure that academic rigor is not sacrificed in the process. Second, the mission and value of higher education must indicate that institutions will recommit to faculty support beyond emergency remote teaching; furthermore, a sense of campus community needs to be nurtured. Third, the needs of students and faculty must drive the choices of technology—not the reverse—when determining how to transition to online deliveries; in short, administrators must reprioritize decision-making factors.

Moreover, a glocalised synthesis across all institutions and levels identified four clustered themes. First, disruption from the pandemic may lead to innovations in higher education. Second, the role of faculty is becoming redefined beyond content-specific disciplines. Third, educational models must expand to individuals other than the traditional student. Fourth, rigourous pedagogical scholarship, including leadership, will point to new educational insights. Any or all of the themes explored in this article could serve as a topic for future research.

Overall, our findings indicate that we stand at a crossroads. Rather than be defined by the pandemic, let us seize this offered opportunity to transform higher education from *a paradigm that has been* to *the paradigm of what might be*. The opportunity is ours to choose or to lose.

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Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Table 1. Localised trends in responses of higher education to the COVID-19 pandemic

Nation / Institution	Thematic Topic Explored by Nation / Institution	Localised Trends in Responses of Higher Education to the Pandemic		
		Curricular Level	Institutional Level	Technological Level
Singapore / Higher Education	Priority of higher education in the knowledge-based economy	Affected students provided with alternative learning to earn credit	Sustained investment in lifelong learning for knowledge economy	Continued innovative andragogy in the post-crisis environment
Greece / Hellenic Open University	Technological transitions for adult student professionals	Total transfer to digital requires adjustment for students' needs	Planned online pedagogies vs. emergency remote teaching	Opportunity for teachers to learn new communication technology
Australia / University of South Australia	Reimagining the virtual delivery of an interactive education	Low student confidence requires pedagogies of constructive care	Need for educators to delve into scholarship of learning/teaching	Adaptability requires expertise beyond own discipline/practice
United States / Widener University	Experiential community projects supported by open education	Virtual tailoring of projects for experiential civic engagement	Recommitment to mission and values for community outreach	Synchronous vs. asynchronous provision of academic support
United Kingdom / University College London	Imagination and collaborative co-creation by shared interests	Live sessions to discuss project ideas and share personal interests	Imagination and collaboration by virtually shared personal interest	Platforms to connect students by "remote, not distant learning"
Denmark / Copenhagen Business School	Transforming higher education into a community of practice	Problem-based (group) projects reflective of practitioner rigour	*Bildung* (empowered resilience) as pedagogy before technology	Online supervising/counseling, internal group work, and exams
Canada / Royal Roads University	Galvanising leadership of change with empathy in unknown future	Breakdown in mental health that impedes focused class presence	Loss of community: residencies, research, jobs, convocation, etc.	Basic infrastructure for online connectivity across time zones

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

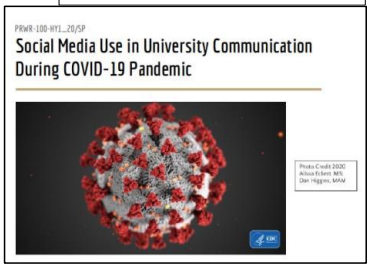
Table 2. Clusters of glocalised themes built from localised observations to the COVID-19 pandemic

Glocalised Themes	Localised Observations	Nation(s)
ERT as disruptive "stepping stone" to future	ERT as innovative disruptions leading to innovations	Singapore, US, Denmark
	Situational flexibility in remote teaching and learning	US
	Community of destiny vs. practice over the long-term	Denmark
Expanded definition of faculty expectations	Melding of categories for on-campus with off-campus	Singapore
	Imaginative, collaborative, and co-creative parameters	UK
	Empowered resilience and flexibility for the unknown	Denmark, Canada
Wider inclusivity across student populations	Age expansions, societal inequities, and special needs	Greece, US, Canada
	Partnerships with school systems for lifelong learning	UK
	Multi-dimensional and holistic well-being of students	UK, Australia, Canada
Research-driven scholarship into pedagogies	Teacher education addressing new models of learning	Greece, Canada
	Data-driven research to reduce online-learning stigma	Singapore, US, Australia
	Enhanced leadership forms at all levels to drive vision	Canada

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

"Navigating Uncertainty" student series (Canada, Royal Roads University) (https://www.royalroads.ca/)

Students' team report on COVID-19 (United States, Widener University) (https://phil.cdc.gov/)



Practice decisions by choice (Denmark, Copenhagen School of Business) (https://studentlife.cbs.dk/)

Visual learning environment webpage (Australia, University of South Australia) (https://online/unisa.edu.au)

"Stay Home, Study at Home" website logo (Greece, Hellenic Open University) (Ministry of Health https://www.eap.gr/el/)

Currency emphasizing education (Singapore, Higher Education) (Photo credit: Jürgen Rudolph)

"Remote, Not Distant" theme (United Kingdom, University College London) (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/)

Figure 1. Institutional snapshots for localised responses of higher education to the COVID-19 pandemic

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Figure 2(a) Localisation

Figure 2(b) Glocalisation

Figure 2. Artistic representations of the transition of higher education from (a) localisation to (b) glocalisation

Creanne-team sketches by Anne Pässilä; photos by Jussi-Pekka Kekki.

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
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Leading with Emotional Intelligence: How Leaders in a Diverse-Based Urban College in New York Successfully Responded to the COVID-19 Crisis of 2020

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Abstract

Strategically inclined organizations recognize the role of emergency management in their plans to address "worst case scenarios". The world has been impacted with unprecedented challenges permeating all kinds of civil structures. The COVID-19 disease, a simple micro-organic form of life, has destroyed global markets and people. In the United States, approximately 881,000 Americans have lost their jobs in the month of April 2020 alone (USDL, 2020). In terms of American education, the higher learning community has been forced to spin on its axis when public health measures have forced traditional colleges and universities to suspend residential learning, faculty staff have been laid-off and/or furloughed, and institutions continue to see their doors closed to their residential student body (Rosowsky, 2020). In response to the previous, this article describes how a small educational institution serving a diverse group of urban, under-represented, and international adult students managed to successfully operate amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion provides insights on leadership initiatives that rely on emotional intelligence to maintain student retention, enrollment, and motivation, and to protect its human capital. The findings seek to provide new and enlightened perspectives that may aid challenged leaders among comparable institutions to better formulate operational responses that will help them to successfully address current and future operational crises.

Key words: *Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Higher Education, Strategic Management, COVID-19*

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Special Issue, June 2020
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1. Introduction

As expected, the year 2020 started much like any other year, with airs of hope and optimism driving the idea of a new year that promised better outcomes than the last one. For universities in the United States, January is normally the starting point of a new semester. And for the urban institution selected for this article—referred to hereinafter under the pseudonym of Urban Diverse College (UDC)—it was business as usual, too. UDC, an ethnically diverse and multicultural institution headquartered in Bronx, NY, serves a population predominated by first-generation American students, under-represented minorities, and international representatives of essentially every country around the world. And in the case of UDC, the institution is well known for its retention rate yielding to favorable ranks for its diversity and high-quality standards of education.

In January of 2020, the news in the United States began reporting that an unknown virus involving cases that were first observed in China was severely affecting public health (Munster, Koopmans, van Doremalen, van Riel, & de Wit, 2020). Most people in the U.S. paid little attention to it because the severity was unknown, and perhaps its association to cases in China did not seem as a matter affecting their immediate reality. However, in two months, the reporting of the corona virus became more persistent. And on February 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) renamed the virus, referred to as "Corona", COVID-19; a mortal acronym for Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020). Then by March 1, the state of New York reported its first case of COVID-19, and the events that followed led to unprecedented hardships (Goldstein & McKinley, 2020). As a result, on March 9 the governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, reported 142 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the state (New York State, 2020). On March 10, the president of UDC sent out an email to the entire UDC community assuring everyone the organization was monitoring reports from the Governor of New York and the WHO, and that for the time being the college would remain open. But on March 11, after Governor Cuomo announced 216 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (2020), the president of UDC sent out a mass email to the college community informing everyone that the college was closing its doors out of an abundance of caution. The email went on to say the college would suspend all courses until March 14 while the college prepared for the transition. This same course of action was followed by virtually every learning institution pivoting on a residential model of education. Sadly, this reality appears to be reshaping the future of the American higher education sector. As Rosowsky (2020) suggested, realities of the present external environment are shaping future strategic models of a post-COVID-19 backdrop of higher education.

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In light of the above, the goal driving this discussion was to examine leadership responses supporting UDC's strategic continuity of operations to counter the COVID-19 pandemic impact that has essentially locked down the American education system (Cowen, 2020). The higher education sector has never dealt with such type of crisis where institutions worldwide have closed their doors indefinitely (Cowen, 2020; Fernandes, 2020). Apart from this universal issue, some universities were better prepared than others (Gudi & Tiwari, 2020). Therefore, while this analysis is not comparative in nature, it is nevertheless designed to explore how the selected institution found itself ready and able to manage the COVID-19 dilemma. Consequently, the discussion focuses on the role of emotional intelligence in the leadership skills that UDC decision makers applied to enable the organization to preserve its instructional offerings, student retention, projected enrollment, and motivation while protecting its human capital. Dan Goleman popularized the term Emotional Intelligence as the ability to understand one's own emotions to relate to others in positive or negative manners. In the current case of UDC, emotional intelligence plays a key role in managing stress factors within its community, as suggested by Batool (2013).

2. Strategic Management

Without the need to presume clairvoyant virtues, a reasonably competent academic administrator neither envisioned the need to prepare his or her institution for the effects of a COVID-19-type of public challenge nor the global impact that followed (Boin, 2019). The organizational structure of leading institutions like UDC is as complex as any other university structure may be. The constituency of UDC is made up of faculty, students, staff, directors, and senior governance officials. UDC recently underwent reaccreditation where they performed an organization-wide self-study that coincided with strategic planning initiatives. The college developed various "what if" scenarios where it tested its capacity to respond to various emergencies. UDC determined that one of its most important core competencies was the ability to create a responsive and nurturing culture for its students. Specifically, UDC determined that no matter what incident could transpire, the most important and nonnegotiable factor needed to be student services and the deliverables that would continuously contribute to student success.

Like most universities around the world, UDC uses a learning software that aides in organizing classroom activities for both instructors and students (Aljawarneh, 2019). The system UDC uses, like many other American institutions, is Blackboard®. Blackboard is a computer-mediated distance learning (CMDL) platform that allows instructors to organize course activities such as weekly lecture outlines, learning resources, assignments, assessments, and report drop boxes (Blackboard,

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2020). This CMDL empowers students to access their courses remotely regardless of their geographical separation from the instructor and the serving institution (Rios-Collazo, 2017).

From a strategic perspective, all instructors at UDC receive training on how to use the aforementioned CMDL. Some would consider the following events as serendipitous, but rather they reflect the positive fortune of a strategically prepared organization (Kesebi, 2019). At the start of the semester in January of 2020, UDC announced that they would be adopting a new version of Blackboard that was dramatically different from previous versions. UDC insisted that both online and live classroom instructors undergo mandatory training in order to continue serving students academically and without disruption. The new version of Blackboard was radically different from and more complicated than the previous version, but UDC's leadership explained that the newer version, while more difficult for instructors to learn, was easier for students to maneuver. This customer-first strategic model was expected to bear fruit in the months to follow.

Prior to January 2020, UDC restructured its student services initiatives to support its student population more efficiently. The restructuring bridged student services with academic outcomes by encouraging student-centered teaching techniques that placed the needs of UDC's students first because the urban, multicultural, and global population comes with learning barriers such as cultural, language, and financial, and other learning barriers (Altamirano, 2019). The graduate and undergraduate schools of UDC began to approach curriculum selection with students in mind, creating more supportive environments by encouraging instructors to respond to student emails within 24 hours and expediting the grading of assignments. There was a strong emphasis on evaluating students in meaningful and transparent ways through clear and measurable pedagogy and frequently updated individual grade reports found through individual courses using the school's CMDL. In addition, UDC offered learning forums for instructors focusing on learning student values and improving teaching delivery. As Table 1 illustrates below, UDC also offers several student support programs designed to assist emotional challenges or factors affecting the emotional preparedness of its student body.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Table 1. Sample of UDC's Student Services and Support Programs

Student Need	Programmatic Description
Transportation	Free student transportation between Bronx and New Rochelle
Technical Infrastructure	Library services extending campus to off-site database access
Student Success Services	Individualized support, free tutoring, writing and research assistance
Emotional Support	Available on all campuses with added support on developing students' career-oriented skills
Experiential Transition	Team of professionals assigned to closely track and support academic progress and success of first-year students
Wellness and Health	Team of professionals from different disciplines dedicated to assist students' health habits, lifestyle choices, and practices designed to support and advance their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing
Proctored Services	Supervised examination support services for students and applicants

In March 14, UDC successfully transferred into a 100% online mode that allowed its uninterrupted continuity of courses and services. This also includes the added flexibility of continuing 100% instructor-based operations via telework. And while most resident students vacated their dormitories, those who were unable to do so (e.g. international exchange students), UDC provided safe dorm accommodations and food services. UDC also made arrangements to provide computers for those students who, for a variety of reasons, had no access to technology. Counselors and administrators were easily accessible via phone with little or no waiting time.

3. Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

In a rapidly evolving world, leaders and managers are required to apply a certain degree of emotional intelligence to cope with developing challenges in their environment (Iraj Soltani, 2014). Supporting the foregoing is Iraj et al.'s (2014) study involving a random sample of (n=130) managers who have reportedly overcome organizational crises. The data collected through surveys revealed a high statistical correlation between emotional intelligence and crisis management. Specifically, these researchers reported results showing a path analysis determined, with a 0.58 coefficient, why emotional intelligence influenced crisis management capabilities among the participating managers (p. 422). Understanding the value of emotional intelligence in a leader's response to a crisis/emergency situation is imperative because emotional intelligence can play a

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significant role in the process (Suhaimi, Marzuki, & Mustaffa, 2014). Of note too is the fact that, while emotional intelligence is not a remedy for all leadership challenges, it may act as a leadership enhancing agent that allows an experiential connection in unconventional interaction such as virtual interactive settings (Rios-Collazo, 2017).

The above appears to find alignment with UDC's responses to the puzzling COVID-19 pandemic challenge. Accompanied by a sound strategic guideline, organizational leaders at UDC began steady and deliberate guidance for all its constituents. The result of this effort was a cultural shift that placed greater emphasis on support of the student experience during the transition to a fully online educational and service platform. Specifically, the President of UDC led the way with daily telephone and email communications addressed to the entire UDC community. Senior executives at the institution ensured that business functioned as normal during these most difficult of times. Staff and faculty continued to operate from home via use of a CMDL platform that diversified their communication avenues with students and enhanced contact via video teleconference. These means empowered them to respond to students' needs affected by the emergent need to transition into a full-time online education model.

Because of the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading organizations throughout this crisis have been without standard operating procedures (Gates, 2020). Contrasting the foregoing, the President of UDC examined critical factors that needed attention as he moved forward with contingency plans. The critical factors that UDC's leadership identified were retention and enrollment of students, as well as the safety and wellness of the entire UDC community of faculty and staff.

After examining the critical factors leading to making the difficult decision of closing the college, leaders encountered several issues that threatened a smooth transition into a fully virtual operational platform. For example, a percentage of students did not have computers or access to internet service. UDC leaders made sure that students without computers were able to obtain one and be in a position to complete their semester's work. For students who could not obtain internet service, UDC managed to keep several buildings opened where students could go to campus and work in a supervised and socially distant environment that met federal, state, and locally adopted public health guidelines. The goal was to ensure that 100% of the student population had access to their course. There was also the issue of COVID-19 related trauma. UDC students received access to counseling and therapy, free of charge, as needed. Student counselors were available via phone to manage issues related to courses, academics, registration, tuition, and conflict resolution. Leaders also provided ongoing information on the COVID-19 pandemic and information on testing sites in

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the New York City and surrounding areas. The overall student response to these initiatives was overwhelmingly positive.

After the leaders of UDC addressed potential obstacles, they followed with a consistent communication campaign that played a key role in the successful guidance provided to the UDC community facing the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent communication is critical toward alleviating uncertainty in times of crisis (Sellnow, Sellnow, Helsel, Martin, & Parker, 2018). The President of UDC implemented a weekly movement of emails and phone call messages with the goal of encouraging constituents through heartfelt motivational messages and information on developments concerning the community at large. Within the information, this UDC leader further included dates of several web seminars on various health and wellness topics including information on coping with the stress of living during the COVID-19 pandemic, classes on nutrition, meditation sessions, and exercise classes such as yoga and virtual Zumba. All these meet-up sessions served toward bringing students, staff, and faculty closer together during a time when people felt the distancing effect of adopted quarantine measures (DeShano Wakeman, 2020).

Under normal circumstances, the rigours of education are clear in regards to expectations. Educational pedagogy does not often account for outside factors such as emotional distress (Colvonen, Straus, Acheson, & Gehrman, 2019). The needs of the urban, multicultural, and international students are as unique as their backgrounds (Lekwa, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua, 2018). Showing sensitivy to these factors, the leaders of UDC set forth a directive that no student would fail a course as long as he or she completed all course requirements. They also directed all instructors to work with struggling students and accept late work in good faith if students were resolved to catch up and meet academic requirements. The previous led to other successful operations that empowered most students to benefit from this calibrated opportunity to complete their semester positively. However, there were a small percentage of students who, for various reasons, could not pass or dropped a course. Those who could not pass received a grade of "I" for incomplete and were assured that, if they completed their entire course requirements, the grade would change to a passing one.

Those with traditional values often consider initiatives as previously described controversial. Educational leaders with heightened emotional intelligence understand that these are not traditional times. Leading in times of this COVID-19 pandemic is without standard (Stoller, 2020). Business as usual is a directive for failure during these uncertain times, which require leaders to push forward beyond standard operating procedures and pave new roads of operational management that emphasize emotional intelligence toward constituents.

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4. Discussion and Recommendations

The information treated in this article serves to remind everyone that it is impossible to prepare for uncertainty. The reality of COVID-19 is that it does not discriminate in its purposeful impact. Businesses in every industry, especially higher education, have and continue to experience economic distress, unwanted unemployment effects, and a hindered customer service capability (Parks, 2020). However, the idea of strategic management invites organizations to be prepared for times of crisis (Tokakis, Polychroniou, & Boustras, 2019). But as in all cases, some organizations outperform others during times of impromptu distress and hardships.

Here, the focus of the article was neither comparative nor critical of any other institutions of higher learning. Instead, the preceding discussion and shared findings provided insights on identified successful practices espoused at a selected institution, which, as part of its accreditation process and a resilient interest among its leaders to find new ways to expand their support to a unique student population, empowered the institution to thrive amid the COVID-19 pandemic that has incredibly paralyzed the higher learning sector in the United States (Cowen, 2020).

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SHARE Leadership to Solve Global Problems

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a modern example of a global catastrophe that necessitated an international response. Since the world is made up of a multitude of countries, organizations, and leaders, global solutions will inevitably require leadership sharing. There is not an individual nation, organization, or leader sufficient for a universal mitigation. A collaborative approach is necessary. As with any leadership style or method, shared leadership can be done poorly or it can be done well. When it is done well, it often leads to incredible results. This paper presents a review of a collection of the literature that exists on shared leadership. This review has surfaced five elements that are crucial for effectively sharing leadership. These can be summarized into the SHARE acronym: Strengthening relationships, Having a clear structure, Addressing problems collaboratively, Releasing information, and Enlisting diverse strengths. A more robust implementation of these five features could have led to stronger shared leadership and better outcomes in the coronavirus pandemic. Fostering these attributes in the global community will undoubtedly make the world better prepared to adequately address future crises. The human toll, economic costs, and worldwide risks at stake should encourage politicians, professionals, and people of the world to SHARE leadership.

Keywords: COVID-19, Coronavirus, Pandemic, Shared leadership, and Collaborative decision-making.

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1. Introduction

In a world with nearly 200 countries, thousands of agencies, and hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels of society, any approach to the resolution of a global problem will inevitably require a collaborative endeavor. Worldwide crises do not permit the luxury of individualistic leadership; they demand the coordinated response of leaders and organizations who work together for a common, global good. Fortunately, shared approaches to leadership have been associated with many positive results, including exceptional outcomes, enhanced decision-making, complex problem solving, creative innovation, team-member fit, team synergy, organizational vitality, healthy organizational culture, individual health, and sustained growth (Herbst, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an example of an international problem that requires a unified, collaborative response. Shared leadership is a practice that can help. It has proven useful in many different areas, including crisis health situations (Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2014). There are features of shared leadership that, if implemented correctly, can dramatically improve outcomes to pandemics and other global catastrophes. There were examples of positive shared leadership during this crisis, as well as ones in which leadership could have been shared more successfully. The most fundamental elements of successful shared leadership will be the focus of this paper.

2. How to Effectively SHARE Leadership

Leadership can be shared poorly or it can be shared well. Experiencing success with this model of governance requires sharing leadership effectively. The potential of shared leadership is related to the specific ways the approach is undertaken. Important elements of successful shared leadership include relationships, structure, collaboration, information sharing, and utilizing the talents of a diversity of team members. Each will be considered in more detail below.

Strengthen relationships

Leadership is relational in nature and various new genre approaches to leadership, like emotional intelligence, LMX theory, and transformational leadership, are overtly so. Friedrich, Griffith, and Mumford (2016) explain that a "network of relationships can be viewed as collective leadership itself" (p. 315). Shared leadership is also highly relational (Wood & Dibben, 2015).

Shared leadership has been described as "a relational phenomenon whereby leadership and influence are distributed and reciprocated" (Barnett & Weidenfeller, 2016, p. 341). Unsurprisingly, Barnett and Weidenfeller (2016) have demonstrated that the strength of shared leadership in a group

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is related to the prevalence of relationships on a team (p. 341). Friedrich et al. (2016) found that team interconnectedness, trust, and cohesion were essential to leadership sharing. As team cohesion improves so can team performance (Bjornali, Knockaert, & Erikson, 2016; Danish, Aslam, Shahid, Bashir, & Tariq, 2015). This can also lead to individual team member success (Carboni & Ehrlich, 2013).

Leadership sharing requires strong relationships. Attention to relational attributes is an important antecedent of successful shared leadership. It should not be overlooked in collaborative approaches to global-scale problem solving.

Have a clear structure

How decentralized organizations structure themselves impacts their overall performance as well (Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006). Laloux (2014), Robertson (2015), and Pearce et al. (2014) have described specific shared structures in much more detail.

Laloux (2014) outlines three main structures: parallel teams, webs of individual contracting, and nested teams (p. 325). Each will be briefly considered here.

The parallel team structure is epitomized by collaboration between teams composed of team members with specific roles that are determined by the team (Laloux, 2014). Teams oversee their own planning, finances, and staffing (Laloux, 2014). Buurtzorg, a Dutch healthcare provider that employs more than 7,000 nurses, is an example of the parallel team structure (Laloux, 2014). Within this structure, teams of 10-12 nurses provide care for up to 50 patients in a given area. They are self-managed and responsible for all the aspects of their work.

Webs of individual contracting also utilize autonomous teams but handle roles differently (Laloux, 2014). Within this model, the team members themselves, not the team, decide their own roles but the team is then responsible for ensuring accountability for the responsibilities associated with those roles (Laloux, 2014). Morning Star, the world's leading tomato processing company, uses this type of structure (Laloux, 2014). Morning Star is composed of 23 teams, each made up of self-managing co-workers who all have decision-making authority, provided they consult the co-workers their decisions will impact. There is no hierarchical management whatsoever at the company.

Teams within the nested team structure operate like teams in the parallel team structure but are organized into a larger organizational network (Laloux, 2014). Holacracy is a type of nested team structure (Laloux, 2014). Zappos, which uses Holacracy, is a successful online shoe and clothing sales company (Denning, 2015; Useem, 2015). Zappos has 1500 employees with individually defined roles who work on different teams that collaborate together.

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Holacracy is a meticulously engineered shared leadership structure that has become more and more popular in recent times (Robertson, 2015). In fact, as of the time of this publication, more than 1,000 organizations are using this model of shared leadership ("Holacracy worldwide," 2020). Holacracy utilizes a roles-based approach to leadership sharing (Robertson, 2015). This is a feature that is common in decentralized structures and it will be further addressed shortly.

Pearce et al. (2014) categorize shared leadership structures into four main models. These are rotated shared leadership, integrated shared leadership, distributed shared leadership, and comprehensive shared leadership (Pearce et al., 2014). Rotated shared leadership involves transitioning leadership according to a timeframe or plan. Alcoholics Anonymous, an organization which helps members overcome addiction, uses this approach (Pearce et al., 2014). Integrated shared leadership happens when leadership is shared according to the abilities, talents, or availability of specific leaders. Southwest Airlines employs integrated shared leadership (Pearce et al., 2014). Distributed shared leadership involves allocating leadership to specific roles and spreading those "roles widely within an organization" (Pearce et al., 2014, p. xvii). Some Christian mega-churches have successfully implemented distributed models (Pearce et al., 2014). Finally, comprehensive shared leadership is an approach that involves sharing leadership broadly throughout an entire organization and "combining all of the types in a highly advanced shared influence process" (Pearce et al., 2014, p. 107). The Panda Restaurant Group and Panda Express chain have experienced success with this type of structure (Pearce et al., 2014).

These descriptions and examples of shared leadership structures have all included, in varying degrees, a focus on roles. Roles are an important part of shared leadership (Youngs, 2014). The modern workforce has evolved to utilize the strengths and abilities of individual team members embodying specific roles and collaborative teams (Deng, Lin, Zhao, & Wang, 2015). Role differentiation can help establish effective teams (Ancona & Caldwell, 1988) and team members can approach these roles with unique personality traits, talents, skills, goals, and contributions (Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Kukenberger, Donsbach, & Alliger, 2015). Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Kukenberger, Donsbach, & Alliger (2015) summarize, "team composition serves as the foundation upon which other team factors are built, and represents a key enabling feature of teams" (p. 7).

There are different approaches to establishing team roles. Some have articulated specific team roles (Belbin, 1993; Batenburg, Walbeek, & Maur, 2013). Others envision roles as "emergent phenomena" that develop according to "situational demands, members' work histories, or the extent to which teams have rigid or loosely defined positions (if positions at all)" (Mathieu et al., 2015, p. 25).

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Shared leadership structures attempt to meet the leadership needs of an organization by dividing them up across a larger group of leaders (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). The structural element is an important feature of shared leadership and team member roles are a fundamental aspect of organizational structures. When relationships are strong and the structures are clear, problems can be addressed collaboratively.

Address problems collaboratively

Collaborative decision-making has been associated with real benefits (Petrovia & Hristov, 2016). A formal shared decision-making process can help achieve the benefits of collaborative decision-making (Bourgault, Drouin, & Hamel, 2008). Shared decision-making can lead to better results than individual decision-making but these outcomes necessitate the sharing of information among team-members (Brodbeck, Kerschreiter, Mojisch, & Schulz-Hardt, 2007; Supovitz & Tognatta, 2013). Information sharing will be discussed in more detail soon.

There are different ways to approach collaborative decision-making. Some rely on consensus (Pearce et al., 2014). Others delegate it to responsible roles but require those roles to solicit the input of team members (Laloux, 2014). Either way, collaborative teamwork can improve problem-solving and creativity (Nurmi, 1996). It does this by inviting the input of a wide variety of expertise to contribute to a solution. It can also improve accountability (Bamford-Wade & Moss, 2010). It ensures a plurality of team members can safeguard decisions from oversight and biases. Groupthink, which can be disastrous, can be magnified in hierarchy (Bénabou, 2013; Rhode, 2006). Shared decision-making is not always the easiest and not always the fastest approach to decision-making but its benefits can make the up-front costs worth it (Hong & Banerjee, 2012).

Shared leadership can lead to greater innovation (Bligh, Pearce, & Kohles, 2006; Hoch, 2013; Shipper, Manz, Nobles, & Manz, 2014; Tzabbar & Vestal, 2015). In a survey of 285 people on 95 innovative teams, Hui-ying and Jian-peng (2013) found that “shared leadership has a more significant impact on innovation performance under the condition of high task complexity.” Shared leadership can also result in increased creativity (Alanezi, 2016; Mohammed & Thomas, 2014; Pearce, 2007). Both innovation and creativity are commonplace in collaborative teamwork (Nurmi, 1996). Creativity and innovation are important attributes of collaboration and they are essential in today’s dynamic environment. The opportunities and obstacles associated with rapid global change are important reasons for emphasizing “a flat organization with little hierarchy” (Karlgaard & Malone, 2015, p. 219).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Release information

Information sharing is an important aspect of shared leadership. As stated previously, collaborative decision-making can be beneficial but its benefits depend on the sharing of information (Brodbeck, Kerschreiter, Mojisch, & Schulz-Hardt, 2007; Supovitz & Tognatta, 2013). Team members cannot adequately address problems in a collaborative way when they do not have all the information that is available.

Information sharing is important in the modern work setting (Brodbeck et al., 2007; Hollmann, Scavarda, & Thomé, 2015; McLeod, 2013; Panahifar, Heavey, Byrne, & Fazlollahtabar, 2015), but can be stifled in hierarchical contexts (Reitzig & Maciejovsky, 2015). It is integral to collaborative decision-making (Hollmann et al., 2015; Panahifar et al., 2015). This is true generally but even more so in the information age (Pearce & Manz, 2005).

Information sharing is essential to experiencing creativity in shared leadership contexts (Carmeli & Paulus, 2015; Lee, Lee, Seo, & Choi, 2015). Lee, Lee, and Seo, (2011) surveyed 249 people across 40 teams and found that "shared leadership, knowledge sharing and cognition-based trust significantly influence team creativity." Teams that share information and evaluate the information brought by different team members in systematic ways can make better decisions (McLeod, 2013) and sharing information can contribute to creative problem solving (Carmeli, Gelbard, & Reiter-Palmon, 2013). It can also improve problem solving in challenging and complex situations (Clarke, 2012). Information sharing is a characteristic that is associated with shared leadership across much of the academic literature.

Enlist diverse strengths

Diversity among team members is another feature that should be considered. Shared leadership has been "strongly associated with team performance in more diverse teams" (Hoch, 2014, p. 541). Hoch (2014) adds that shared leadership can:

> enhance the benefits inherent to diversity, such as the sharing of non-redundant and non-overlapping information. Specifically, higher levels of shared leadership may help team members draw upon their information and knowledge related to their diverse experience backgrounds, which will enhance team performance. (p. 545)

Diversity can improve performance on top management teams, but that requires cohesion among team members (Bjornali et al., 2016). Diversity can produce both positive and negative effects in teams (Nederveen, Van Knippenberg & Van Dierendonck, 2013). It is not always easy working with or successfully integrating with people who are different from oneself. Diversity can lead to

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"ambient disharmony" among team members (Chua, 2013, p. 1545). But, there can be great value in diversity. Teams that are not diverse are more likely to experience "average effectiveness," whereas diverse teams can be either "highly effective" or "highly ineffective" (Alder & Gunderson, 2008, p. 140).

Deep-level diversity is a term that describes psychological diversity; this is very different from surface level diversity (Price, Harrison, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). Mathieu et al. (2015) explain:

> Teams that have an optimal mix of members' knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) are better positioned to work well together and to perform effectively than are teams composed of a less-optimal combination of members. (p. 7)

Teams with deep level diversity, composed of differences in experience, abilities, education, talents, expertise, and skills, can thrive.

Sometimes different perspectives within a diverse team can lead to a level of conflict in problem solving. This can actually be a good thing. Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, and Frey (2002) explain:

> Decision-making groups in organizations are often expected to function as a 'think tank' and to perform 'reality testing' to detect the best alternative. A biased search for information supporting the group's favored alternative impairs a group's ability to fulfill these requirements. (p. 563)

Solution-oriented conflict "can have a productive impact upon the creative process" (Crossley, 2006, p. 33). Lê and Jarzabkowski (2015) explain that "conflict leads to increased scrutiny of information and, consequently, better decisions" (p. 440). In summary, "some conflict actually helps bolster and refresh organizations" (Flink, 2015).

Teams with deep level diversity are able to analyze problems from a variety of perspectives. This can contribute to synergy and performance (Rink & Ellemers, 2010). It is an important feature of successful teams but it does take time to develop (Price et al., 2002).

Shared leadership can produce tremendous benefits. Strengthening relationships, having a clear structure, addressing problems collaboratively, releasing information, and enlisting diverse strengths have all been associated with effective shared leadership. Each of these approaches could have been better utilized in the mitigation of the COVID-19 crisis.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

3. Conclusion

Five elements of successful shared leadership have been addressed. These attributes can be summarized with the SHARE acronym: Strengthening relationships, Having a clear structure, Addressing problems collaboratively, Releasing information, and Enlisting a diversity of strengths. Each will be considered in light of the coronavirus pandemic below.

Strengthening relationships is critically important. The world is a diverse place and its nations have numerous languages, complex histories, unique cultures, different needs, and occasionally conflicting objectives. Addressing global issues, like the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitates a level of collaboration that can be greatly enhanced by strengthening international relationships. Unfortunately, longstanding disagreements can prevent needed cooperation. For example, the United States offered assistance to Iran ("United States Offers Assistance to the Iranian People," 2020), but previous tensions seem to have limited the ability for these two nations to work together. A healthier relationship might have mitigated this. Stronger relationships are integral to a shared global response.

Having a clearer structure could have helped as well. Certain organizations, like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN), have provided a level of structure for the international effort. For example, the UN has been overseeing a global, science-based response to the coronavirus ("UN mobilizes global cooperation" 2020). Still, the structural element of the worldwide endeavor could have been handled better.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of addressing problems in a more collaborative way. The American travel ban on Europe was one glaring example of the need for global teamwork. On March 11, United States President Donald Trump issued a travel ban for non-American citizen travelers coming from Europe ("Homeland Security," 2020). European Union leaders were frustrated that President Trump had not consulted them first and noted that the response to the crisis required "cooperation rather than unilateral action" ("Coronavirus: EU condemns Trump travel ban," 2020). A collaborative approach could have safeguarded strategic relationships while also enabling partners to determine the best plan of action.

Information sharing, especially at the onset of the pandemic, could have been much better. Releasing information on the contagious nature of the coronavirus could have saved lives and might have helped mitigate the outbreak at an early stage. Chinese authorities had at least some evidence of potential human-to-human transmission in the first week of December. Huang et al. (2020) explain:

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> The first fatal case, who had continuous exposure to the market, was admitted to hospital because of a 7-day history of fever, cough, and dyspnoea. 5 days after illness onset, his wife, a 53-year-old woman who had no known history of exposure to the market, also presented with pneumonia and was hospitalised in the isolation ward. (p. 500)

Although more research needs to be done, upticks in hospital traffic and search engine data in Wuhan indicate that the virus may have been spreading as early as October (Okanyene, Rader, Barnoon, Goodwin, & Brownstein, 2020).

Whatever the case, at least some research seems to indicate there was evidence that the virus was spreading long before it was publicized. It is also hard to imagine that it could have taken China and the WHO anywhere from six weeks to three months to determine the contagious nature of this virus. Still, the WHO continued to advise against China travel restrictions as late as January 9th ("WHO Statement," 2020), and Wuhan health authorities continued insisting, into late January, that human-to-human transmission was not suspected ("Wuhan Municipal Health Commission," 2020). More transparent information sharing could have made a drastic impact on how the world prepared for and responded to the pandemic.

Enlisting diverse strengths has become a global response need too. The pandemic spread beyond the realm of biology and health and affected global economies, power structures, food supplies, and more. The importance of procuring a diversity of medical, scientific, economic, political, and other support is evident.

Future research should consider these five attributes of effective shared leadership. It should evaluate these in relationship to the many domains that were affected by this crisis. Leadership sharing across social, economic, scientific, and geo-political domains should be considered. Investigations like these could help nations develop and implement better protocols for sharing leadership practices on an international scale and it might help prepare them to better handle global crises.

In summary, any response to a global problem will require shared leadership. Sharing leadership well requires strengthening relationships, having a clear structure, addressing problems collaboratively, releasing information, and enlisting a diversity of strengths. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many of these issues. Promoting the competent practice of shared leadership and continuing to improve in areas of weakness will undoubtedly help prepare the world to better address future international calamities.

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Maintaining and Enhancing Students' Collaborative Learning in a Japanese EFL Higher Education Context

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Abstract

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a huge shift towards digital forms of education. Although Japan has never gone into full lockdown, students have been strictly kept at home and socially isolated from classroom learning for extended periods. Teachers were urged to create online teaching and learning resources and began to consider the most suitable technologies to teach their courses. This paper reports on a teacher's ongoing efforts to develop and deliver distance-learning English as a foreign language (EFL) courses in a higher education context. Drawing on a view that learning is social development, the researcher focuses on the concept of social presence in peer-to-peer communication that could enhance collaborative learning in a virtual classroom. Synchronous distance learning courses were developed utilising a text-messaging application and collaborative text-editing software with the aim to establish a communicative learning space. Analysis into the students' interactions in Slack workspaces – a text messaging application-indicated a variety of interpersonal, open, and cohesive communication that signalled psychological closeness in the virtual learning environment. Group discussion sessions revealed that students could feel connected to each other in the synchronous EFL courses, which demonstrated the robustness of social interaction despite physical distancing. Major difficulties lay in three areas: technology, the nature of the task, and some students' task preferences. These three areas need to be addressed when designing and delivering a distance learning course.

Keywords: Collaborative learning, Computer-mediated learning, Distance education, Peer support, Social presence

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Background

Introduction

The unpredictable COVID-19 outbreak has brought about periods of social distancing that keep students from classroom communication. In Japan, where a new school year starts at the beginning of April, there have been a number of changes in the start dates for the 2020 school year. In late March, colleges and universities announced the postponement by a few weeks in favour of the government's policy (MEXT, 2020a). As an increasing number of clusters of infections were reported throughout Japan at the beginning of April, these institutions pushed the starting date further back and began considering distance education for the whole semester (MEXT, 2020b).

While Japan never went with a strict lockdown, the government's declaration of a state of emergency put students into educational isolation for extended periods. Most Japanese higher education institutions assume on-site face-to-face modes of delivery, which has made it extremely difficult to quickly switch to distance learning modes (MEXT, 2020c; 2020d). Students were not only physically isolated at homes but also socially isolated away from their classmates. This isolation urged English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers to explore effective ways of online teaching using synchronous videoconferencing tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams.

When designing distance learning courses, it is necessary to consider what types of communication are possible on what devices. In Japan, mobile phone users have outnumbered PC users, and this trend is more obvious among younger generations (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2019). Given the fact that a great majority of late-teens access the Internet from their phones (Cabinet Office, 2020), online course development needs to take mobile phone users into consideration. Besides real-time videoconferencing software, mobile texting has a potential as an accessible mode of communication. While text messaging tends to be considered distracting in the physical classroom environment (Chen & Yan, 2016), it can be a vital communication tool for informal peer-to-peer interaction that enables both synchronous and asynchronous communication (Wei & Wang, 2010).

This paper is a report of an ongoing exploration of the development of distance EFL courses for Japanese college students. Taking a sociocultural approach to language learning, it sees learning as human development through learners' engagement in social interaction (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015). It proposes and examines an approach to pursue collaborative and communicative classroom activities that could bring students together virtually while staying apart physically. Social presence is discussed as a key concept to consider better ways to provide students with a

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virtual but an immediate learning space. This paper intends to discuss the possibilities and difficulties of conducting a learner-centred distance-learning course that helps facilitate collaborative learning.

Literature review

Social presence has been a key concept in pursuit of effective distance education. It refers to the degree to which a person is perceived as a "real person" in the interaction and interpersonal relationships (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). This is as important as learning content because computer-mediated interaction lacks interpersonal effects in comparison with face-to-face communication. One of the frequently discussed areas is teaching presence, which can possibly facilitate students' classroom engagement. Teachers' experience and confidence with online teaching predicted higher teaching presence in synchronous distance learning (Rehn, Maor, & McConney, 2016). This account of social presence assumes synchronous lecturing and teacher-led instruction that are more teacher-centred and less student-oriented than asynchronous delivery (Murphy, Rodríguez-Manzanares, & Barbour, 2011).

Interestingly in Japan, where distance education had long been a great minority, a guideline explicitly mentions students' active involvement as one of the requirements for a distance mode of course delivery (MEXT, 2001). The guideline explains synchronous and asynchronous learning styles that can be viewed as equivalent to face-to-face classes. While the former is grouped as synchronous interactive distance education, the latter is elaborated with regard to two types of classroom communication: teacher-student interaction, and student-student interaction. This distinction indicates the importance of interpersonal communication among students along with instructional communication when designing distance learning courses in a higher education context.

In a similar vein, collaborative learning experience is also an essential element to enhance social presence in a virtual classroom. This aspect of social presence appears to be crucial, as it accommodates learners' self-efficacy and engagement in learning tasks (Blaine, 2019). In order to gain a better understanding of non-verbal online group communication, Garrison (2011: 37-39) conceptualised three categories of social interaction: interpersonal, open, and cohesive communication. Interpersonal communication involves affective responses, self-disclosure outside class, and use of humour. Open communication refers to reciprocal and respectful interaction that aims to carry on conversation and show engagement in group work. Cohesive communication involves greetings and messages that signal a sense of group commitment, which is the dynamic

state that social presence intends to achieve. These categories allow investigation into social presence in student-student classroom interaction with an aim to help establish a collaborative learning space where learners feel connected to each other (d'Alessio et al., 2019).

Previous studies that sought for students' engagement in group activities reported the effectiveness of using technology tools in enhancing group communication and collaboration. For instance, synchronous online collaborative writing could increase students' engagement in text-editing tasks, which resulted in better academic performance than students in a face-to-face learning environment (Han & Li, 2019). The use of a text-messaging application, such as Slack, can possibly facilitate students' mutual support. This easy-to-use computer-mediated communication helps to create a virtual communicative atmosphere in which students could visualise their own contribution to the group and solve a problem without a teacher's involvement (Tuhkala & Kärkkäinen, 2018; Zhang, Meng, de Pablos, & Sun, 2019).

Active engagement in online group discussion may be positively related to students' academic performance, but this requires some caution. Joksimović, Gašević, Kovanović, Riecke, and Hatala (2015) drew on Garrison's (2011) concept of social presence and revealed that some indicators of online group collaboration predicted better academic performance. This finding echoed the report of Palmer, Holt, and Bray (2008) that active participation in group discussion assignments contributed to improving the final grades. However, students who only superficially reacted to others' posts demonstrated insufficient learning outcomes, which indicated the significance of students' awareness of constructive discussion as well as instructional intervention (d'Alessio et al., 2019; Joksimović et al, 2015). Some students tend to be resistant to online collaborative activities, which could be related to their discomfort in engaging in student-led tasks that were incompatible with their expectations towards rote-learning (Kear, Jones, Holden, & Curcher, 2016).

Theoretical framework

This paper draws on a sociocultural theory that views knowledge as being co-constructed through interaction between the individuals and the society. It assumes that individuals are fundamentally social and their mental development is mediated by social interaction (Lantolf et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). In this view, students play an active role in their own learning when they socially interact and build knowledge together (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The present study explores social presence in a learning context where students are physically distant from each other (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). It specifically examines three categories of social interaction that enhance social presence in student-student communication (Garrison, 2011).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Through designing and delivering an EFL course with virtual collaborative activities, it intends to seek answers for the following research questions:

1. Are there any instances of social presence seen in students' interaction in a synchronous virtual classroom?
2. Does a group chat through a text messaging application facilitate students' collaboration?
3. What difficulties entail synchronous distance course delivery using multiple apps?

Methodology

EFL test preparation courses: The focal EFL courses started on 20 April at a national college of technology in Japan. The students' English proficiency was between beginner and intermediate levels. The EFL courses are mandatory, aiming to get the engineering-major students prepared for Japan's most popular test of English, the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). The online mode of course delivery was originally thought as tentative for a few weeks, which was then decided to continue until June. The institution is now considering to offer distance learning courses for the whole semester.

At the time of writing this paper, the researcher had officially taught the courses for two weeks, which corresponds with Weeks 2 and 3 (Table 1). Week 1 was a preparatory class conducted as a pilot with voluntary participation. Of a total of 94 students at age 17-19 registered to the courses, 87 synchronously participated in Week 2, and four students asynchronously joined later. Three students did not join Week 2 activities, but two of them reacted to the teacher's follow-up messages and contributed to the Week 3 class.

Distance learning course design: Multiple modes of communication tools were used to deliver the EFL courses. Although the nature of test practice lends itself to asynchronous self-study, a synchronous mode of course delivery was chosen in an attempt to provide real-time study sessions to make sure all the students were actively involved in the coursework. An emphasis was placed on collaborative learning through social interaction, in accordance with the government's guideline that encourages student-to-student communication (MEXT, 2001).

As the courses were at the very beginning of the 2020 school year, Weeks 2 and 3 consisted of several introductory tasks. These were developed to address the following elements:

1. To get students familialised with the structure of the TOEIC test
2. To develop a collaborative virtual learning environment
3. To investigate which systems and applications are useful

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Table 1 shows the contents of each class, with systems and applications used in each activity. All activities were designed to accommodate smartphone users. According to the institution's policy, Blackboard Learn was used as a rigid interface between teacher and students, which helped present coursework instructions, learning materials, and hyperlinks to resources.

Table 2: Class Contents, Systems, and Applications

Week	Class contents	Systems / Applications
1	Preparatory week	Blackboard Learn
2	Course overview	Blackboard Learn
	Group work: PPT slides editing "What is the TOEIC test?" "Why is it popular?"	Slack, PowerPoint online
	Short videoconference sessions*	Microsoft Teams*
3	Reading Section practice test	Blackboard Learn,
	Group work: Vocabulary building practice	Slack, Excel online
	Short videoconferencing sessions*	Microsoft Teams*
	Feedback	

*Not mandatory

Coursework involved individual test practice and group work through crowd-sourcing applications. Online collaboration software, such as PowerPoint slides and Excel spreadsheets, was used to enable collaborative text-editing tasks. Short videoconferencing and text-chatting sessions were conducted at the beginning and the end of each class time, which were not mandatory but open to those who were available.

To facilitate synchronous classroom communication, the course utilised Slack. This application provides a space for group discussion, in which students can work collaboratively through text-messaging and file- and photo-sharing. These workspaces were also accessible by the teacher so that she could give assistance, share upcoming issues in class, and see which students were actively contributing to the task (Zhang, et al., 2019).

Data collection and analysis: Qualitative data were collected through class observation and group discussion. Students' peer-to-peer text messaging in Slack workspaces was monitored during class and reviewed after class. There were two group discussion sessions conducted right after Week 3 classes ended, in which students voluntarily shared constructive feedback on the format of the

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

course. Each session lasted for 20 and 15 minutes, respectively. Informed consent was received from the participants as well as the institution administration.

The text messages were manually coded and analysed for themes with a focus on social presence indicated in the peer-to-peer interaction. Garrison's (2011) three categories of social presence—namely, interpersonal, open, and cohesive communication—were drawn on as a guideline to analyse the text data.

Findings

Peer interaction via Slack: A variety of indicators of social presence were observed in text messages at Slack workspaces. Students' interaction did not genuinely aim at the coursework, but rather social and communicative elements were also involved. This section reports on the students' interaction that indicated the three social presence categories: interpersonal communication that involves affective factors, open communication that is built through trust and acceptance, and cohesive communication that sustains commitment to an e-learning group (Garrison, 2011).

First, interpersonal communication was frequently seen throughout the class time. The left image in Figure 1 illustrates that the interaction began with initial greetings, which were followed by an apology "ごめんなさい (I'm sorry)" from one student who was unable to join the previous week's activity. As the group was getting ready to work, one student asked "Doesn't seem everyone is here but we're starting now??" Then another member responded with self-disclosure: "Sorry I'm late, I just woke up.", which was replied with a sense of humour "おはよう笑 (good morning, smile)". The right image in Figure 1 shows interaction between two students in a different group. One student was unable to edit an Excel file and kept telling "ごめん (sorry)" with emojis. The other was willing to help out, which response ended also with a smiling emoji, d(^w^)b.

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Figure 1: Interpersonal Communication

Second, a number of instances of open communication were seen throughout the text data (Figure 2). In the left image, one student asked about what device they were using. Once he learned most group members were using a smartphone, he voluntarily offered to work on PowerPoint slides with his PC. The image in the middle illustrates the process of group agreement, in which students clicked on a like button to other members' contributions and suggestions when they were finishing up the task. However, not all interaction reached an agreement. The third image shows interactive responses when two of them could not access the working file. They asked another student to do all the work for them, perhaps making little effort to solve the technical problem themselves. This group did not complete the task during the class time.

Special Issue, June 2020
Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication
DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

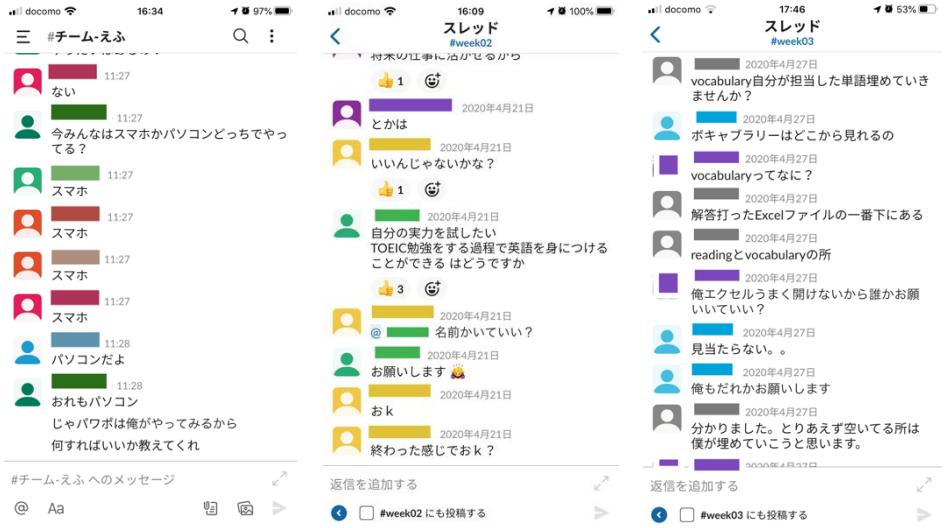

Figure 2: Open Communication

Third, cohesive communication was achieved and demonstrated in all groups, such as greetings and messages that indicated group solidarity. Students began and finished their group work with greetings. They greeted each other saying “good morning” while trying to make sure that others were in the discussion space. A sense of group commitment was also seen; for example, some students made their own group’s channel and invited their members. Images in Figure 3 illustrate interactions that signalled e-learning group cohesion. The left image shows conversation where students were helping each other in finding ways to access the group’s channel. In the right image, one student was reminding others of the time of the next videoconferencing session so that they all could gain some additional information and thus contribute to the group work.

Figure 3: Cohesive Communication

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

To summarise, the various students' interactions are categorised in Table 2. They expressed emotion, self-disclosure, and humour; kept conversation going; expressed appreciation of others; and asked for help. They joined and left the workspace with greetings, showed commitment to their group, and shared their knowledge. Their interactions in Slack surely demonstrated all three categories of social presence in the virtual EFL classroom.

Table 2: Social Presence Categories and Indicators

Category	Indicators	Instances
Interpersonal communication	Affective expression	Expressing apologies, appreciation, hesitation, empathy, and sympathy
	Self-disclosure	Presents personal life outside class, expresses vulnerability
	Humour	Responding with a sense of humour
Open communication	Continuation	Replying to others' messages
	Compliments	Complimenting others and their contribution
	Agreement	Expressing agreement with others or their contribution
	Questions	Asking questions to other students and the teacher
Cohesive communication	Salutations	Greetings, closures
	Group solidarity	Addressing the group as we, us, and our group, initiating a group's channel, keeping group members updated by sharing important issues

Note. Adapted from Garrison (2011: 38)

Group discussion sessions: Students gave constructive feedback in group discussion sessions, which covered three areas: system, class time, and communication. First, many students pointed out the complexity of using multiple systems and applications. It was revealed that quite a few of them were using only a smartphone to do all the class activities. While using Slack for group communication, they had to open, edit, and leave other applications. Some students said they had never used Blackboard Learn as a primary source of course information; some admitted difficulty in finding a new announcement.

Second, most students reacted positively to a synchronous mode of course delivery, while some preferred asynchronous offline coursework assignments. The former stated the enjoyment of real-time peer interaction. Some of them preferred to work on collaborative text-editing tasks during class time; otherwise, they would postpone and end up with not doing anything. Students who preferred an asynchronous mode claimed that they would learn more through individual work.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

Finally, text-based communication seemed to have functioned both well and poorly, according to the aims of interaction. Slack workspaces helped students facilitate group work when the task required sharing a certain amount of information, such as links, files, and screenshots. While many agreed with the advantages of text-messaging that allowed them to leave and read comments when they are available, text-based communication was often dull and slow in terms of quick decision-making.

Discussion

The findings of this research generally demonstrated psychological closeness among students, which is associated with social presence in the virtual classroom (Blaine, 2019). In response to research question 1, the text-based peer interaction showed a variety of responses that indicated the three categories of social presence (Garrison, 2011). The students' feedback implied that the synchronous text-editing tasks could facilitate collaborative learning, which helped students feel connected with their group members as real people (d'Alessio et al., 2019; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Han & Li, 2019). Students showed commitment to their groups when they socially interacted, mutually appreciated, and solved a problem without the teacher's involvement (Tuhkala & Kärkkäinen, 2018). This finding partially answered research question 2, in that group communication through a text-messaging application could generally get the students engaged in collaborative knowledge construction (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The data also implied three areas of difficulties that entailed the synchronous collaborative text-based tasks, which answered research question 3. The first area was technical issues. The use of multiple systems and applications required students, especially those who were using a smartphone, to frequently switch applications back and forth. Hyperlinks sometimes refused to work on some devices, which gave students choices to either ask for help or give up. Apart from the current urgent situation, the courses surely needed careful piloting before actual delivery. Second, text-based communication was good for project-based tasks; however, it was not suitable for tasks that needed quick decision-making. As Joksimović et al. (2015) demonstrated, tasks that assume constructive discussion could help to get students more engaged in collaborative learning activities. Finally, some students who preferred asynchronous course assignments might not feel comfortable with real-time communication-based tasks. This finding was in line with Kear et al.'s (2016) claim that some students' resistance to communicative online-learning tasks was not because of apathy but because of a disagreement between the collaborative learning tasks and their views on education. This finding could suggest a tension between traditional individual rote-learning and what

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

sociocultural theory aims to achieve by social and transformative views on education (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Lantolf et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented school closures for extended periods. Educational isolation has deprived students of access not only to physical learning environments but also to social classroom communication, where they talk, laugh, solve a problem, and study together. This paper reported on a teacher's effort to get the students socially connected with each other in a virtual classroom. While the results suggested that the synchronous course delivery mode definitely had a place in putting students together as well as in maintaining and enhancing collaborative learning, they also revealed some technical difficulties as well as pedagogical issues that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, the researcher must admit that the students' social presence empowered herself as a teacher who had also been physically isolated from classroom teaching. The virtual classroom demonstrated the robustness of social and cultural communication, while keeping physical distancing rather than social distancing.

Pedagogical implications:

This study has three implications for pedagogical practices. First, careful task-planning is specifically important so as to increase the level of social presence in a virtual classroom (Joksimović et al., 2015). It is necessary to focus not only on the contents and outcomes of a task but also the types of information the task requires students to exchange. Next, adopting some asynchronous tasks could benefit students who prefer to work individually. Showing respect for their independence in learning could possibly make them feel more involved (Murphy et al., 2011). Lastly, effective instructional intervention remains essential. Teachers would play a crucial role in scaffolding students' skills for meaningful online interaction and building a supportive learning community (d'Alessio et al., 2019; Kear et al., 2016).

Limitations and future research:

The main limitation of this study is lack of concrete data collection methods like quantitative investigation into categorised online responses, structured questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. It also did not include any data about learning outcomes. Future research could address these issues to illustrate a clearer picture of what types of interaction contribute to positive educational outcomes. It would also help to gain a more thorough understanding of how the feeling

DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom_SP_june2020

of connectedness affects learners' engagement in distance learning. In addition, this study had more or less relied on communicative classroom culture and some students' willingness to collaborate. In order to accommodate students with various learning preferences, hearing the voices of students who are unwilling to participate would be beneficial for future distance learning course development.

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