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## 7 **Coronavirus Disruptions to the Private Higher Education Sector in Malaysia**

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### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken the world by storm. On March 18, Malaysia was put into a countrywide lockdown, where all non-essential businesses have to close, including shutting down the campuses of institutions of higher learning. Many institutions have no choice but to go forward quickly with online modes of teaching and learning. Based on an autoethnographic research, it is concluded that private institutions faced financial challenges brought about by students' decisions to defer and/or delay their studies. The institutions also encounter challenges in the disruptions of their teaching and learning activities, including the internship program. Moving forward, private institutions need to embrace online modes of teaching and learning. Furthermore, faculty members and students should also develop resilience through enhancing their social and cultural capital.

### **Keywords**

COVID-19 Pandemic; Online Teaching and Learning; Private Higher Education in Malaysia; Resilience Building; Digital Thinking

### **Introduction**

The coronavirus (or COVID-19) outbreak has taken the world by storm. What started out as an epidemic was soon upgraded to a pandemic status on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization. The pandemic has triggered many countries to lock down their borders, and impose strict internal restrictions for all activities, businesses, and otherwise. By late March, the chief of the International Monetary Fund asserted that the global economy has entered a recession due to the pandemic, which would eventually lead to a foreseeable surge in business closures and unemployment rates. Malaysia is not spared from the impacts of the pandemic. On March 16, the Malaysian prime minister declared a sudden two-week countrywide lockdown (effective two days after) known as the Movement Control Order (MCO). Under the

MCO, all non-essential businesses have to close, including shutting down the campuses of institutions of higher learning.

Many institutions, especially private higher education institutions (PHEIs), have no choice but to go forward quickly with online modes of teaching and learning. The initial two-week closure of campuses would eventually last for seven weeks for staff members and much longer for the students. A portion of the students was allowed to return to their campuses for face-to-face classes in July and October, while the remaining students would have to continue learning online till the end of the year. This chapter seeks to detail the challenges faced by PHEIs in Malaysia during the MCO based on an autoethnographic research, given my personal involvement then as a member of the senior leadership team in a Malaysian private university college. Drawing from Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital, the chapter also attempts to envisage the crucial issues surrounding the "new normal" of Malaysia's private higher education sector post-COVID-19, specifically on how faculty members and students could develop resilience.

### **The Rise and Fall of Malaysia's Private Higher Education**

While Malaysia is a multicultural country, the society has always been divided along racial and religious lines, with Malays and Islam practices dominating almost every aspect of politics, civil service, and people's day-to-day lives (Wise, 2009). The national policies favor Malays alongside the indigenous population collectively known as Bumiputera, and higher education is no exception (Koh, 2017; Mellström, 2010). Preference of enrollment to subsidized public higher education institutions is accorded to Bumiputera, and this led to a large proportion of minority races such as the Chinese and Indians having to either seek costly higher education overseas or give up hope of ever earning a degree. This situation led to the establishment of private colleges in the 1980s, mainly by businessmen who are themselves from minority races (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). These colleges often collaborate with Australian and British universities to offer transnational offshore higher education academic programs.

Most PHEIs in Malaysia are for-profit entities without any form of government subvention. Simply put, the bulk of PHEIs' revenue comes from the fees paid by the students. In 1997, the government launched an initiative to provide loans to partially cover tuition fees of accredited higher education programs according to students' household income levels. This initiative has definitely accelerated neoliberal practices in private higher education, and the number of PHEIs grew exponentially thereafter. Furthermore, to enroll more students, it is common for PHEIs to usually have three or four intakes a year, as compared to only one intake per year by public higher education institutions. Despite so, the private higher education sector is strictly governed by the Ministry of Higher Education, and the academic programs by the

institutions are subjected to accreditations and rigorous checks by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA).

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, colleges with proven track records have been upgraded to university college status that comes with degree awarding powers. In the last 15 years, many university colleges fulfilled the requirements for further upgrade to full university status (Da Wan & Morshidi, 2018). The private higher education sector is also tasked to attract a pool of international students into the country, and brand Malaysia as a global hub for higher education. As of 2018, there are 447 PHEIs in Malaysia, which include 53 universities, 10 branch campuses of foreign universities, 37 university colleges, and 347 private colleges. These institutions enrolled over 666 thousand students, of which 131 thousand are international students (Ministry of Education, 2020). It is surmised to say that the private higher education market in Malaysia is both saturated and highly competitive.

## **Main Challenges Faced by PHEIs during the Lockdown**

### ***Financial Implications***

The economic downturn brought about by the pandemic has greatly impacted the financial standing of many PHEIs, which are dependent on tuition fees to sustain and survive. Unemployment rates in Malaysia skyrocketed at 5.3% in May 2020, the highest ever since 1990 (Shanker, 2020). Amongst those who lost their jobs or had their salaries cut include parents of students pursuing higher education. Local students from lower-income families often take on part-time jobs to support their higher education. However, with the MCO in place, these students are likely to have lost a part, if not all, of their income. Due to the difficulty in paying for the hefty tuition fees, many affected students in PHEIs have no choice but to defer their studies to later semesters, and some students only intend to return to their institutions in 2021. Existing foreign students who left Malaysia during the pandemic or new international students who intend to study in Malaysia were not given the go-ahead to enter the country, resulting in some of these students unable to start a new semester with their respective PHEIs in April/May. It is expected that the total enrollment of PHEIs would drop by 37% by the end of 2020 (Chung, 2020).

The months of April and May are the peak enrollment period for most private institutions, where students complete their secondary education and are seeking to register into either pre-university or diploma programs in PHEIs. Similarly, a proportion of new students chose to delay their studies due to financial stress, particularly when government loans are not available to students in their first semester of study. Financial reasons aside, there was also a group of students who delayed/deferred their studies in April/May due to the uncertainties in teaching and learning, especially when institutions had yet to receive the go-ahead to recommence face-to-face teaching then. To a certain extent, this implies students' (and parents') skepticism towards the shift to online learning.

Given the enrollment and deferment situation, coupled with the absence of a stimulus package by the government for the private higher education sector, many PHEIs fell into severe financial devastation and cash flow problems. Even prior to the pandemic, the enrollment situation in PHEIs was already highly uneven, with many institutions falling short of their targets to break even or make a profit. According to a recent report, a 15% reduction in income would render 50% of the PHEIs financially insolvent (Hunter, 2020).

To reduce the number of deferments due to financial difficulties, many PHEIs rolled out flexible installment and payment schemes so that students could still continue with their studies. In late May, the ministry of higher education released a circular, announcing that all classes are to remain online till the end of the year (Landau, 2020). Nevertheless, a later circular was sent out in July notifying PHEIs that diploma and degree students who need to undertake practical classes could return to campus (Liew, 2020). Foreign students were also given the go-ahead to enter Malaysia subjected to a series of conditions.

### ***Disruptions to Teaching and Learning***

While MQA did not restrict the use of technology in teaching prior to the pandemic, many PHEIs have failed to fully embrace the possibilities of technology in education. While most institutions subscribe to some form of online learning management systems (LMS), the commonly used functions are often limited to the mere creation of new announcements and the sharing of learning materials with students. It should also be noted that investments in education technologies could be especially costly for PHEIs, some of which are facing continued financial difficulties due to the immense competition from within the sector. It comes as no surprise that many PHEIs stuck on to the conventional face-to-face teaching methodologies, such as lectures, tutorials, and practical sessions. Sad to say, many PHEIs were not prepared to handle online modes of teaching and learning when the MCO was implemented.

During the onset of the MCO, PHEIs were discouraged from conducting real-time online teaching as there were concerns over students' access to internet connections. Therefore, some faculty members pre-recorded lectures and made them available on the LMS, while others uploaded learning materials and engaged in informal discussions with students over messaging applications such as WhatsApp. The lack of clear directives from both the ministry and MQA on the execution of practical classes for culinary arts, hotel management, and design programs, etc. has left many PHEIs hanging. Many students in PHEIs also reflected that the asynchronous mode of teaching and learning was disengaging. Eventually, real-time synchronous online teaching was given the go-ahead by the ministry, provided that individual institutions offered support to students who faced difficulties with connectivity.

The fortnightly announcement of the MCO extension also affected the operations of the final examinations for many PHEIs, especially when April is the month for final examinations of undergraduate programs. Almost all PHEIs ended up offering alternative modes of assessments. Depending on the

nature of the courses, alternative assessments included real-time examination (examination scripts are made available on LMS) with online invigilation carried out via Google Meet or Zoom, or written assignments to be submitted by a given deadline. Students are not the only ones who are marginalized in the digital divide. Faculty members, too, face connectivity issues, such as having subscribed to lower speed and threshold internet plans at home, and/or staying in locations that have a weaker internet connection. With the campuses closed, some faculty members are also confronted with the lack of a private domestic space to teach online and some ended up not showing their faces on the screen while delivering a lecture. Apart from the issues of internet access, faculty members had to quickly adapt to online teaching within days, and in most cases, with minimal training initially. Academics who are less tech-savvy experienced a wider cultural lag and found the switch a lot more challenging.

### ***Disruptions to Internships***

In Malaysia, most PHEIs focus mainly on employment-ready programs (Cheong et al., 2018). This resulted in the lack of humanities and liberal arts undergraduate programs in private institutions. Even certain social science areas, such as sociology and geography, are at most offered as electives. The focus on employment explains why an internship is such an integral component of most homegrown diploma and degree programs in PHEIs.

On completion of their secondary education, students could apply to pre-university programs (foundation or “A” levels, etc.) or diploma programs. With a diploma qualification, some students would opt to join the workforce. Many diploma graduates would proceed to enroll in a three-year 120-credit bachelor program with exemptions up to 60 credits, depending on the equivalency of courses. Since both diploma and bachelor programs lead to employment, it is therefore common for both programs to each include an internship component in students’ final (or second last) semester of study. Simply put, students who graduate from bachelor programs via the diploma pathway are likely to have completed two separate internships.

Through a three- to a four-month internship, students could apply the theories they learn from lectures into actual work situations and at the same time, reflect on their personal capabilities in their chosen field of study (Jawabri, 2017). Knowledge aside, soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, time management, adaptability, to name a few, are equally important for interns to succeed (Patacsil & Tablatin, 2017). Moreover, internships provide opportunities for students to network and enhance their resumes with the much-needed initial work experience. Several PHEIs go as far as to conduct preparatory courses and psychometric tests on their students so that they could excel in their internships. Students aside, the providers of the internship opportunities stand to benefit from the process as well. For one, being digital natives, interns might offer innovative, out-of-the-box ideas, especially in engaging the youth segment. Full-time junior employees of companies could also develop professionally through managing interns. Last

but not least, companies could make use of their internship programs to spot potential permanent talents from the pool of interns.

Given the border restrictions alongside the economic recession, internship programs globally face the reality of being disrupted. Companies with reduced operations or financial difficulties might cut back on the number of internship places, or even cancel the provision of internships altogether. Despite the implementation of the MCO, students are not allowed to replace internships completely with other credit-bearing modules. Furthermore, students are often sent out for internships only in the later stage of their studies, for they have completed enough courses to develop the necessary knowledge and skillsets to effectively carry out their work. Unlike universities in Singapore, which allowed students to defer their internships to later semesters, PHEIs in Malaysia have limited flexibility for such postponements.

PHEIs have to identify possible alternatives to internships within the guidelines of MQA when both physical and remote modes of internships become impossible. Institutions must continue to ensure that whatever internship opportunities are left in this trying time should still adhere to students' learning outcomes and that the learning experience for the students would not be undermined. Depending on the nature of the work involved, some internships could be carried out remotely. For instance, the exponential growth of online events during the pandemic, such as business meetings, festivals, and webinars, has boosted the demand for event technologists. These digital events are likely to welcome the support of interns specializing in communication and events management. One recommendation by MQA is for PHEIs to replace internships with industry-based projects. Institutions are encouraged to work with their respective industry partners to develop suitable projects for students. Some companies have developed special projects relevant to the pandemic for interns, while others have provided opportunities for students to initiate and run their own projects by identifying gaps in the current marketplace.

### **Malaysia's Private Higher Education Sector in the Post-COVID-19 Era**

The COVID-19 pandemic is returning for the second or third waves in many countries, including Malaysia. Even if a vaccine is available in the mid or longer-term, the private higher education sector will continue to face arduous challenges. The public will generally be more conscious and cautious in participating in large group learning, and/or crossing borders for the pursuit of higher education. This section discusses the growing importance of technology in education, and how faculty members and students could develop resilience in the post-COVID-19 era.

#### ***Embracing Technology in Education***

In his Teachers' Day speech on May 16, Malaysia's prime minister clearly mentioned that online learning would be the future, and urged teachers to

continue enhancing their online teaching capabilities. The circulars issued by the ministry of higher education reiterated the prime minister's speech and emphasized that online teaching and learning will be the new norm for higher education institutions.

For most city dwellers in Malaysia, it is almost impossible to imagine going by a day without any form of technological support. Technologies serve as extensions to the limitations of our human body (Goody, 2011; Sigwart, 2016). Yet, despite our heavy reliance on technology, the idea of pursuing higher education through online means is still frowned upon by many. E-education is often perceived as less favorable, citing concerns about the quality of teaching and learning (Fain, 2019). Regardless of the skepticisms, more universities, including top-ranked UK universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, have created e-learning platforms to offer both short courses and full academic programs. Many established universities are also putting aside resources to encourage the development of e-learning. Globally, millions of students are enrolled in some form of online degree programs, making e-education a multi-billion dollar enterprise (Valverde-Berrococo et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, the future of higher education is virtual.

The term "e-education" could be interpreted in at least two ways. First, academic programs offered by e-universities are considered a form of e-education. In Malaysia, there are only four such institutions, and none are major players in the private higher education sector. Two institutions are relatively well-known lifelong learning universities, while the other two focused more on professional business programs, such as online MBAs or DBAs. These institutions are fully capable of transferring knowledge to students. However, little has been discussed on how they develop students' emotions, values, ethics, and networks. Eventually, there would be an entire philosophy on how whole person education could be achieved through digital means.

Another type of e-education refers to the online programs offered by campus-based universities. These online programs are above and beyond the current suite of campus-based programs and could collectively be offered by one teaching unit of an institution, or managed by respective schools and departments. Such a mode of e-education is sometimes described as distance learning, although 'distance learning' does not always involve the use of digital technologies. In Malaysia, there seems to be a growing trend of online distance learning programs offered by campus-based PHEIs, especially professional business programs designed for busy working executives. PHEIs should continue in this direction and eventually, expand into a wider range of disciplines. Instead of viewing each other as competitors, PHEIs are more likely to benefit from collaborations, especially in their e-education offerings. At this stage, it might seem unthinkable that students could complete credits for different courses online from a pool of PHEIs to earn a bachelor's degree. With MQA's approval and adequate planning, this could well happen in the near future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt disrupted face-to-face classes. Yet, the sudden shift to online teaching is not all doom and gloom. Digital technologies, such as Zoom and Google Meet, are catching up to the demands of education. In the weeks and months since the implementation of the MCO, many PHEIs have arranged additional training for their faculty members to better equip them with the capabilities to adopt a range of digital learning tools. The shift has also led to increased conversations and sharing between academics and institutions on effective and creative online teaching methodologies. Months into the MCO, PHEIs are definitely better prepared for e-education and should continue to develop new competitiveness in the online sphere so as to capture a wider pool of local and international students.

Nevertheless, mastering a range of technologies for education does not necessarily translate into expertise in online teaching and learning, especially when delivery technologies evolve all the time. Furthermore, using technologies to merely mirror how faculty members would normally teach in a face-to-face environment is certainly not reflexive of an advancement. Training workshops should also revisit the methodologies in carrying out the flipped classrooms and problem-based learning (PBL) through digital platforms. PBL, for instance, can be adopted in online mission-based assignments where students are expected to be self-directed learners, equipped with the necessary skills to seek useful information online. Gamification techniques, such as the award of achievement badges, can also be incorporated into the learning process. As for internships, should there be a significant reduction in the number of placements due to the pandemic, PHEIs could redesign the program into pockets of remote practicums, whereby learning takes place through observing, rather than doing.

### ***Developing Resilience in Faculty Members and Students***

If anything, the pandemic serves as a good reminder that adversities could happen anytime and from all directions. Resilience thinking, as opposed to automatic thinking, is about identifying opportunities in times of adversities through forming new perspectives via human-centric critical and reflexive approaches (Schiraldi, 2017). Scholars have suggested the relevance of Bourdieu's theory of social and/or cultural capital in developing resilience (Gneciak & Wódz, 2020; Grenfell, 2014; Promberger et al., 2019; Wilson, 2012). Social capital refers to a person's mutual obligations and networks whereas cultural capital relates to one's culturally relevant skills, knowledge, and achievements (Bourdieu, 1986). Both social and cultural capital could be "cashed out" under certain conditions (Chiang, 2009).

The private higher education sector is supported by 23,000 faculty members, of which, only 21.1% are doctoral holders, while another 52.3% are qualified at the Master's degree level (Ministry of Education, 2020). As compared to academics from public universities, faculty members in PHEIs



are somewhat subordinated. For one, public universities' academics could easily move to PHEIs, but the reverse is not as straightforward. Moreover, MQA usually appoints public universities' academics to conduct audits and reviews on PHEIs. Once again, the reverse is rare.

Given the external economic environment and the financial challenges faced by many PHEIs, the fear of being laid off lingers amongst their faculty members. Academics should seriously contemplate the outlook of the sector, and develop action plans to better prepare themselves to contribute to the post-pandemic higher education landscape. A way forward for academics in PHEIs is to upskill and/or upgrade their qualifications. While a higher qualification does not bring about guaranteed success, it enhances one's competitiveness and mobility.

All PHEIs in Malaysia subscribe to outcome-based education (OBE). Institutional and program audits conducted by MQA have mainly focused on whether the institutions fulfill their stated outcomes. This has resulted in PHEIs devoting substantial resources in instilling the OBE mentality into faculty members. Moving forward, part of the resources could be diverted to developing digital thinking amongst faculty members, so that they could critically reflect societal shifts brought about by the digital age, as well as identify and implement new teaching and learning methodologies and digital tools (Kumar et al., 2020). Academics have to become what Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells (2012) describes as "self-programmable labor", who is ready to take on new tasks and challenges in this network society.

Faculty members should explore the potential of various social media platforms, especially LinkedIn. The platform offers vast opportunities for personal branding, networking, as well as sharing of new trends in the higher education sector. It would be increasingly possible for an academic to teach remotely for a few institutions in different geographical locations (including overseas). Demand for curriculum developers for programs conducted through online distance learning is also expected to grow. Even before the pandemic, PHEIs, unlike public institutions, were not able to commit much funding for their faculty members to participate in international academic conferences. The pandemic has accelerated the acceptance of online conferences or conferences with virtual components. Academics in PHEIs should make use of this opportunity to gather insights and develop new networks through participating in these conferences.

The pandemic has also brought about a hike in unemployment rates, coupled with categorical changes in the employment market. Students who are entering the job market soon are naturally concerned about their employment prospects. Faculty members in PHEIs should walk alongside students in identifying trends and gaps in the post-COVID-19 road to recovery within their respective professional fields. Moreover, students are generally unfamiliar with the potential of online learning. Hence, PHEIs should initiate workshops to also instill digital thinking capabilities in students, so that they can make the best out of their online learning experience. This includes facilitating

online learning in ways where they could become self-directed learners and producers of digital learning content.

The main arguments so far seem to further propel private higher education towards neoliberal practices. PHEIs should bear in mind that the overemphasis on employment is a double-edged sword, resulting in the subordination of humanities and liberal arts in the curriculum of many private institutions. General education courses in PHEIs focus mainly on improving students' language competencies, communication skills, and teamwork. Students might find it hard to actualize their resilience, and any negative emotions could easily shake up their stand. This is especially true for many millennials studying in Malaysia's PHEIs, who have a better quality of life than that of their parent's generation. PHEIs should introduce courses that delve into philosophical investigations of a wide spectrum of dilemmas and failures in past and contemporary societies.

Furthermore, there should be regular windows for students to share their personal fears and worries with their lecturers and peers (including alumni). These exchanges could take place in a form of face-to-face conversations, or via digital video conferencing tools. In a nutshell, our leaders of tomorrow ought to be equipped with the right capabilities to deal with the ever-evolving globalized informational society.

## **Conclusion**

Institutions of higher learning, universities or otherwise, have reacted and responded to a myriad of changes in the last hundreds of years. The belief is that they will continue to evolve with new adversities and challenges in the years to come. In Malaysia, PHEIs have contributed substantially to providing education opportunities to many Malaysians, especially the ethnic minority. They have also positioned Malaysia as an international higher education hub. Yet, the sector is also more affected by the pandemic than its public counterpart. PHEIs must recognize that disruption is not necessarily a bad thing, especially since societies and human behaviors in the digital age have constantly been impacted by disruptive technologies. In fact, disruptions necessitate a rethinking of how the higher education sector should evolve in the near future. Online modes of learning are here to stay—faculty members and students alike have to internalize digital thinking and to develop resilience through enhancing their social and cultural capital.

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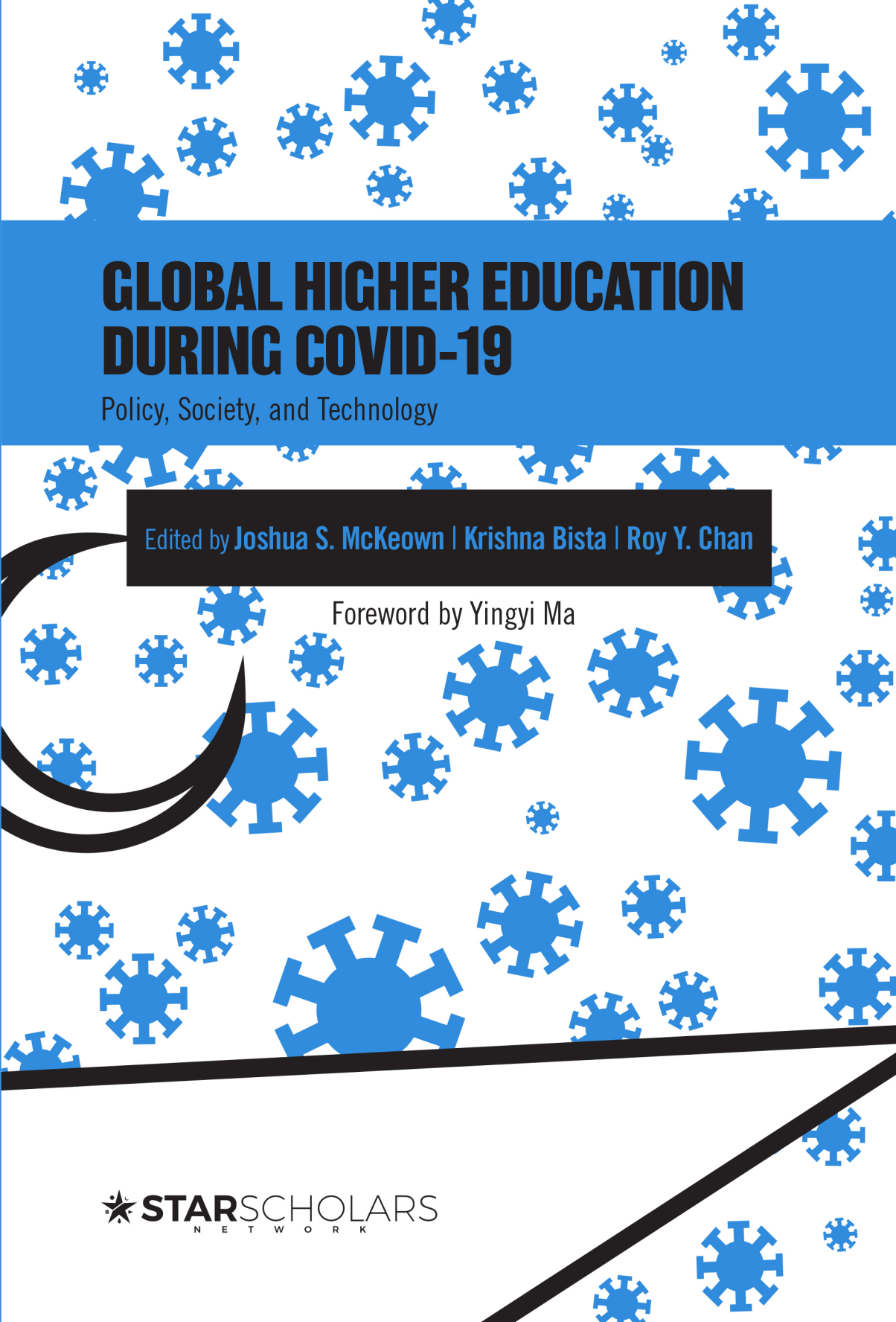
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## **Bio**

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# GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Policy, Society, and Technology

Edited by **Joshua S. McKeown** | **Krishna Bista** | **Roy Y. Chan**

Foreword by Yingyi Ma

 **STAR**SCHOLARS  
NET W O R K

## Praises for this volume

COVID-19 pandemic and digital innovation are making unprecedented disruption to the global higher education landscape. These disruptions have increased academic discussion on how to reimagine the future of higher education after post-COVID 19. Thus, the book, *Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* problematized these realities from a global policy context with policy recommendations on issues of racial justice, funding, technology among others. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the editors: *Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy T. Chan* for this excellent publication.

*Dr. KS Adeyemo, Senior Lecturer, University of Pretoria,  
South Africa*

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is a highly recommended resource for higher education institution policymakers and educators around the globe. Not only does this book provide invaluable insights from higher education institution policymakers, educators, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also offers useful suggestions on dealing with possible challenges and seeking opportunities in future higher education.

*Dr. Misty So-Sum Wai-Cook, Centre for English Language  
Studies, National University of Singapore*

It's a timely book reporting the most recent responses of international higher education across the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides providing the theoretical contributions, the book also offers practical implications for stakeholders, including policymakers, education managers and practitioners, international students, and parents.

*Dr. Hiep Pham, Director, Center for Research and Practice on  
Education, Phu Xuan University, Vietnam*

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is timely and relevant providing a critically engaged reflective account of geographically diverse higher education institutions' response and practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. This book illuminates some of the current

impediments to higher education internationalization within the context of COVID-19 and provides insights into shared learning experiences that address new challenges to internationalisation imposed by the pandemic. A must read for international higher education specialists, practitioners, scholars and researchers.

*Dr. Tasmeeera Singh, Advisor, International Office,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

A worldwide phenomenon: Strategies and inspiration to address the challenges and opportunities for the new normal in the field of global higher education. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

*Dr. Daisy Kee Mui Hung, Associate Professor,  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

The movement of people across borders furthered the spread of Covid-19. This inevitably impacted international higher education, which although not reducible to student mobility is its primary form. *Global Higher Education during COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is therefore a timely edited collection that begins to unpack the multifaceted impact the pandemic has had on higher education worldwide. It adds to the growing conversation on reimagining higher education. The collection will be valuable to current and future scholars of higher education, offering an important snapshot of policy and practice during the pandemic.

*Dr. Will Brehm, Lecturer of Education and International  
Development, UCL Institute of Education, UK*

With the COVID-19 crisis having upended higher education around the world, this timely book provides a deep and much-needed analysis of the roles and responsibilities of universities going forward. It sheds light not only on the shared challenges countries have faced, but also reveals how the impact of the pandemic has varied in important ways across countries.

*Dr. Rajika Bhandari, Author/Advisor,  
STAR Scholar Network, USA*

Case studies provide valuable baseline information for practitioners of higher education as the world begins to emerge from the pandemic. A must-read for those looking to understand how various regions reacted, and how institutional systems changed their models to survive.

*Dr. L. Amber Brugnoli, Assoc Vice-President and  
Executive Director for Global Affairs  
West Virginia University, USA*

This book presents a comprehensive and rigorous worldwide account of Covid-19 impact, challenges and new opportunities. It stands out as a ground-breaking valuable companion for all those involved in the future of internationalization in higher education.

*Dr. Elena de Prada Creo, Vice Dean for International Affairs  
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Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and  
Technology

*Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy Y. Chan*

# **Global Higher Education During COVID-19**

## **Policy, Society, and Technology**

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* explores the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) for institutions of higher education worldwide. Specifically, this book responds to the growing need for new insights and perspectives to improve higher education policy and practice in the era of COVID-19. The sub-theme that runs through this book concerns the changing roles and responsibilities of higher education leaders and the demand to rethink global higher education post-COVID. Topics in this book include: international student experiences, pedagogical innovations through technology, challenges to existing organizational cultures and societal roles, international academic relations, and shifting national policy implications for global higher education.

With the increasing threat of COVID-19 on all aspects of the global economy and workforce, this book serves as an opportunity for teacher-scholars, policymakers, and university administrators to reconsider and reimagine their work and the role of higher education in a global context. The ultimate goal of this book is to provide a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges brought by COVID-19 and how tertiary education systems around the world learn from each other to address them.

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# **Global Higher Education During COVID-19**

Policy, Society, and Technology

**Editors**

**Joshua S. McKeown**

**Krishna Bista**

**Roy Y. Chan**



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In memory of those who lost their lives during the COVID-19 global pandemic (as of August 2021):

**4.38 Million**

And to the 204 million heroes worldwide who recovered from the disease.



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# Foreword

*Yingyi Ma*

COVID-19 is upending daily life, and its impact on global higher education (HE) is seismic. How to understand the impacts and improve policy and practice in the field of international HE during and post-COVID? Colleges and universities around the world are wondering about the above questions, and this book has provided a much-needed discussion for those questions.

The editors of this book have done a tremendous job in assembling a wide range of in-depth studies, both in terms of substantive topics and geographic regions. The topics range from the role of HE in society, crisis and innovation through technology in HE, international student experiences navigating the pandemic, national policies, international academic relations, public and private university responses, and the innovative engagement efforts of global HE institutions. Despite the expansive topics, various articles share the theme of exploring the traditional and changing roles of HE in society. Part I presents a few studies grounded in diverse national contexts that show how HE operates and adapts to society changed by the pandemic.

I commend the editors for their efforts to include a wide variety of contexts of HE institutions in different countries. While the impacts of COVID-19 on HE may be uncertain, what is certain is the increasing inequality among countries in dealing with the pandemic due to the unequal access to resources, technologies, and public health management. Part II in this book, in particular, focuses on the Global South (lower-income countries). The studies have shown the devastating impact on HE in countries of the global south due to the faltering economy during the pandemic as well as the incredible resilience of faculty and students in these countries to lessen the hardship through impressive innovations.

Technology-powered online education has been the quintessential innovation of 21st-century HE. Technology is liberating as much as limiting. COVID-19 has forced global HE to confront, leverage, and manage the power of technology to engage with students, experiment, and explore new pedagogy. The editors of this book have presented a wide range of empirically based studies in different HE settings to show that technology is indeed the double-edged sword, and it is incumbent on global HE leaders and educators to figure out innovative ways to use technology well, while fully recognizing and managing its limitations. Part III has been devoted to this theme.

This book is for anyone who is interested in HE in the global world, including but not limited to scholars, teachers, administrators, and students, and for any concerned citizens to reimagine and redesign the global HE in a new era.

## **Bio**

**Yingyi Ma** is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Asian/Asian American Studies. She is the Provost Faculty Fellow on internationalization at Syracuse University (New York), carrying the term between 2020 and 2022, where she leads and supports culturally responsive pedagogy and programs for international education and partnership. She received her Ph.D. in sociology from Johns Hopkins University in 2007. Ma's research addresses education and migration in the U.S. and China and she has published about 30 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, in addition to books. She is the author of *Ambitious and Anxious: How Chinese College Students Succeed and Struggle in American Higher Education* (Columbia University Press, 2021). This book has won multiple awards from the Comparative and International Education Association and has been featured in national and international news media such as *The Washington Post* and *Times Higher Education*. She is the co-editor of *Understanding International Students from Asia in American Universities: Learning and Living Globalization* (2017), which has won the honorable mention of the Best Book Award from the Comparative and International Education Association's Study Abroad and International Students Section.

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We would also like to acknowledge the help of all the scholars who were involved in this project and, more specifically, to the authors and reviewers that took part in the review process. Without their support, this book would not have become a reality. At Morgan State University, Dr. Bista would like to thank his colleagues for their encouragement and support including graduate students and graduate assistants in the Department of Advanced Studies, Leadership and Policy. At Lee University, Dr. Chan would like to thank his Ed.D. students for their comments and feedback in this project.

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“Global Higher Education during COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology is a timely edited collection that begins to unpack the multifaceted impact the pandemic has had on higher education worldwide. It adds to the growing conversation on reimagining higher education.”

—**Dr. Will Brehm**

*UCL Institute of Education, UK*

“This book is a highly recommended resource for higher education institution policymakers and educators around the globe.”

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