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1 COVID-19 and Higher Education

Challenges and Successes during the Global Pandemic

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

Abstract

This introductory chapter identifies attempts by scholars and practitioners worldwide to analyze and present responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic by higher education institutions (HEIs). In addition to initial reactions to the crisis, there are important new insights and perspectives on how to improve higher education policy and practice in the era of COVID-19. Specifically, this chapter gives an overview of the book and draws an outline of the impacts of the pandemic on teaching and learning, institutional leadership, and the transformation of society through technology in the field of comparative and international higher education. We highlight institutional responses within national frameworks, the diverse and not always apparent roles played by HEIs that COVID-19 revealed, the existential threat the pandemic presents to many HEIs particularly in the Global South (lower-income countries), and the challenges and opportunities for new programs, policies, and systems that best utilize resources to align with national needs, institutional priorities, and student learning and well-being.

Keywords

International students, student mobility, higher education, global pandemic, higher education policy

Introduction

In this book, scholars and practitioners of international education have made an attempt to explore the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on global higher education. Specifically, this book responds to the growing need for analysis of the ways COVID-19 has impacted higher education institutions (HEIs), students, and faculty while also pointing in the direction of new insights and perspectives to improve student mobility, higher education organization and administration, and government policies and institutional practices in the era of COVID-19. The sub-theme that runs through this book concerns the changing

roles and responsibilities of HEIs in societies upended by the pandemic, and how international education leaders can respond to the new educational environment. Topics in this volume include national policies and international academic relations, international student experiences, HEIs in society, crisis and innovation, public and private university responses, and how HEIs globally found new ways to engage with students through available technology.

As HEIs around the world shut down normal operations following the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of a pandemic in March 2020, what followed varied widely based on several factors. For some, it was an urgent but fairly orderly transitional process reflecting the resource and policy environments within states that were more adept at crisis response, including having dealt with disease outbreaks before. University sectors elsewhere, particularly societies with divisions and disparities due to region, privilege, and access, faced more existential challenges. The role of technology has been especially important. To some degree technology was the common denominator for HEIs in all parts of the world, as abrupt transitions to remote teaching occurred regardless of readiness or resources (Chan et al., 2021). In some societies, particularly those with better technology, literacy and infrastructure, the pandemic allowed healthy experimentation and advances to occur including those pushed along that may have been waiting for the right moment. In other places, however, the gap in technology access and usefulness rendered higher education delivery severely curtailed.

Similarly, the way HEIs organize themselves around concepts of shared governance, faculty freedoms and privileged positions, and private vs. public sector revealed much about how organizational and structural assumptions made pre-pandemic were not able to hold up during COVID-19. Rapid and unexpected changes demanded responses that existing higher education often could not easily accomplish, such as student needs for curricular flexibilities, training in learning management systems (LMS), and stability in a markedly disrupted employment environment that impacted students' ability to remain in class. Private HEIs, whose very need was often to fill existing gaps in the equitable distribution of higher education access, suffered particularly because of tuition revenue loss, underlying their lack of state support despite recent growth.

Finally, it became clear during the pandemic that HEIs around the world hold prominent places in their societies and that, as COVID-19 forced them to close, the absence of them and the roles they had come to play meant disruptions beyond merely teaching and learning. Communities who looked to HEIs for information and resource dissemination did not always get it; societies that relied on higher education not only to educate youth but also to instill values and social norms faced uncertainty in that assumed process; students who had previously felt marginalized and discriminated against felt that intensity grow, often fueled by racist rhetoric and distrust of outsiders; and academic relations between states came under new pressure and scrutiny as the pandemic made previously strained international relations harsher and more tense, with HEIs suffering state-imposed restrictions borne of broader suspicions.

Crisis and Opportunity for Post-Pandemic Global Higher Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught many lessons to reassess pedagogical tools and organizational resources, to re-evaluate approaches and perceptions of human organization and communication, and other lessons focused on how best to foster teaching and learning in unprecedented times of unimaginable disruption and stress. It has also provided an opportunity to test the possibility of developing new innovative tools and technologies to bridge the gap between existing and new paradigms of learning (Chan et al., 2021). For global higher education as a whole and international education, in particular, there is a need to explore new ways of virtual learning and exchange programs as well as inclusive programs and resources for post-pandemic learning. Recent surveys indicate “ever-deepening anxiety among higher education leaders about the future of international education and exchange” (Glass et al., 2021, p. 2), due to the steady decline in enrollments for some institutions and the global pandemic lockdown for over a year. This has prompted calls from policymakers and institutional thought-leaders to develop national policies to address what has become a global crisis.

However, despite the COVID-19-induced crisis in global higher education, kernels of evidence suggest that the sector is moving into a new era. The profound changes and reactions to the crisis do not mean that international education is irrevocably harmed. Rather, students, faculty, and HEIs have shown resilience, pivoting quickly and necessarily towards new models of delivery and focus, demonstrating that the sector will survive and even thrive with adaptability to these new circumstances. The ways that the sector and its stakeholders have responded to such a widespread global calamity reflect the combined wisdom and experience based on what had been built before and will guide actions towards the next growth era in global higher education.

Organization of the Book: Themes and Issues

This volume is organized into three parts. The contributors in the **first part** examine the role HEIs have played in their societies before and during COVID-19, and look to new roles beyond it. The pandemic, in some instances, altered those roles due to political constraints; in other instances, it highlighted opportunities to amplify traditional educational roles, as well as larger ones in service to society as a whole; and invariably these chapters portray global higher education as always residing within distinct policy environments. Indeed taken together, these first chapters illuminate the balanced and nuanced situation in which global higher education often finds itself, on the one hand, a conveyor of national interests and priorities while on the other hand embedded in particular communities who have needs, sometimes urgent ones, that defy overly narrow organizational definitions. Experiences of HEIs vary based on where they are located and within what

national frameworks they reside, but they have in common the expectation to fulfill vital societal functions that may not have always been associated with core higher education activities, all the while trying to fulfill their core functions of research and developing students to their fullest potential. Finally, higher education during COVID-19 was often caught in the frenzy of border closures and international entanglements between powerful states, lacking predictable cross-border educational movements and those free from rancorous and antagonistic rhetoric.

In the introductory chapter, *Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy Y. Chan* provide an overview and framing of the book and respond to the growing need for new insights and perspectives to identify and improve policies and implementation of global higher education in the era of COVID-19. In Chapter 2, *Eric W. Layman* and *Lev Nachman* present the case of Taiwan as an exemplary model for how HEIs can operate within a society organized overall to plan and execute in a predictable and stable manner despite COVID-19, and suggest that significant soft power advantages flow from this position in general, and for Taiwan in particular given its location, cultural traditions, and at this moment in history. In Chapter 3, *Kelber Tozini, Claudia Schiedeck Soares de Souza, Fernanda Leal, and Bernardo Sfredo Miorando* discuss the important societal role universities play in Brazil, in addition to traditional academic roles, and how COVID-19 altered the social fabric thereby highlighting both the recent political challenges universities face as well as the importance of outreach and service to the communities where they are located. In Chapter 4, *Li Wang* portrays the delicate and purposeful roles that universities in China have towards developing both intellectual talent and social cohesion, and how this was able to be harnessed productively during the pandemic in ways that represent both the traditions of Chinese higher education and also the values embedded in how a large nation approached this great challenge. In Chapter 5, *Joshua S. McKeown* analyzes the complex and enduring academic relationship between China and the United States that was under strain before COVID-19 and worsened during the pandemic; ways forward are discussed to preserve what is essential about the international academic exchange between the world's two largest economies while encouraging sustainable and realistic approaches to avoid an unnecessary "new Cold War" of academic decoupling.

In the **second part**, the contributors look into what became existential threats to particular higher education sectors resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on the Global South (lower-income countries). National policies impacting global higher education reveal great disparities around the world due to inequities in state funding for public institutions, the inability for private institutions to withstand COVID-induced tuition volatility, and the necessary innovations required by some HEIs in the face of the unprecedented challenge. In Chapter 6, *Caroline S. Wekullo, John O. Shiundu, James B. Ouda, and Anthony Mutevane* discuss how Kenya had demonstrated respectable economic growth and improvements in overall quality of life prior

to COVID-19; however, the pandemic revealed an incomplete and unequal path in the development of Kenyan higher education; universities' lack of distance learning and other pedagogical resources were made apparent requiring considerable investment in and development of the higher education sector going forward. In Chapter 7, *Benny Lim* analyzes the private university sector in Malaysia that, as in many developing countries, has a vital role in expanding higher education opportunities in a growing and diverse nation, but that is uniquely susceptible to tuition-driven crises as the economy faltered during the pandemic, amplifying ethnic inequalities in higher education access there. In Chapter 8, *Samuel Adeyanju, Oluwatoyin Ajilore, Oluwafemi Ogunlalu, Alex Onatunji, and Emmanuel Mogaji* outline the existential threat to many Nigerian universities as a result of COVID-19, particularly due to severe deficits in funding and capacity revealed during the outbreak's aftermath; to face this challenge, impressive innovations to lessen the worst of these hardships point to new directions for HEIs in Nigeria.

The **third part** of the book includes four chapters where contributors examine institutional policies, resources, technology priorities, and critical examinations of campus racial climate for international students moving forward in the post-pandemic world. In Chapter 9, *David Edens* and *Emily Kiresich* examined the abrupt transition to remote learning in the United States as the COVID-19 pandemic hit; faculty-student engagement was key to student satisfaction and success in the new technology-mediated environment, but the slow pace of decision-making and other cultural aspects typical of U.S. campuses hindered an optimal transition. In Chapter 10, *Xi Lin, Mingyu Huang, and Qingchuan Zhang* examine the considerable risks and uncertainties associated with implementing LMS for distance learning, and the importance of building community and support structures for students with differing abilities and comfort level with new technology. In Chapter 11, *Kim Manturuk* and *Grey Reavis* highlight implications for policy and practice that improve student learning outcomes and support more flexible pedagogy, with the goal to create more resilient learning environments in the future as faculty and students interact through new technologies. Finally, in Chapter 12, *Wu Xie* and *Musbah Shaheen* remind us that the COVID-19 pandemic did not impact all students and scholars equally and that while it may not have created campus and national problems of race and division, it tended to exacerbate and intensify those problems particularly on issues of perceived "foreignness" of some and not others.

Moving Forward

International student mobility is at the center of a growing and diversifying global higher education discourse, particularly its directions in the post-pandemic world. National and institutional leaders are worried about physical mobility since COVID-19 paused the entire world for so long, and came immediately after a period of declining growth in international education,

declining support for international trade and institutions, and in general a less liberal, more nationalistic mindset in many parts of the world. Meanwhile, the pandemic has taught great lessons to educators and students that point global higher education towards new directions in areas of policy, societal impact, and technology, as well as fair, equitable, and sustainable ways to deliver higher education that may have existed pre-pandemic but have become catalyzed as essential during it and beyond.

It is time to focus on those collaborative responses to the COVID-19 pandemic that improve new environments and initiatives for global learning; the time to focus on internationalization at home; the time to expand inclusive and equitable study abroad; the time to empower and incentivize both faculty and students in designing new international initiatives; and the time to create a humane world that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion, one that embraces the voices of underrepresented students and scholars for sustainable excellence and growth for all.

In response to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the editors and contributors in this book have identified examples from around the world that are worthy of collective reflection on best practices, brought forward a thought-provoking discussion of perspectives and initiatives for scholars and policymakers, and provided university administrators new tools and approaches that can be adopted to improve and enhance global higher education. In this book, the contributors have made an attempt to offer clarity and a new direction for the field. It is anticipated that the insights resulting from this volume will engage scholars, researchers, teachers, policymakers, and practitioners in a discussion reimagining the opportunities and frameworks to facilitate global learning, intercultural communication, and innovative international initiatives during and following COVID-19. The ultimate goal of this book is to provide a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges for internationalization, and how HEIs and tertiary education systems around the world learn from each other to address the new challenges brought on, but not necessarily created by, COVID-19. A more critical and purposeful conversation around the discourse of global higher education is urgently needed now, and this volume seeks to make an important contribution.

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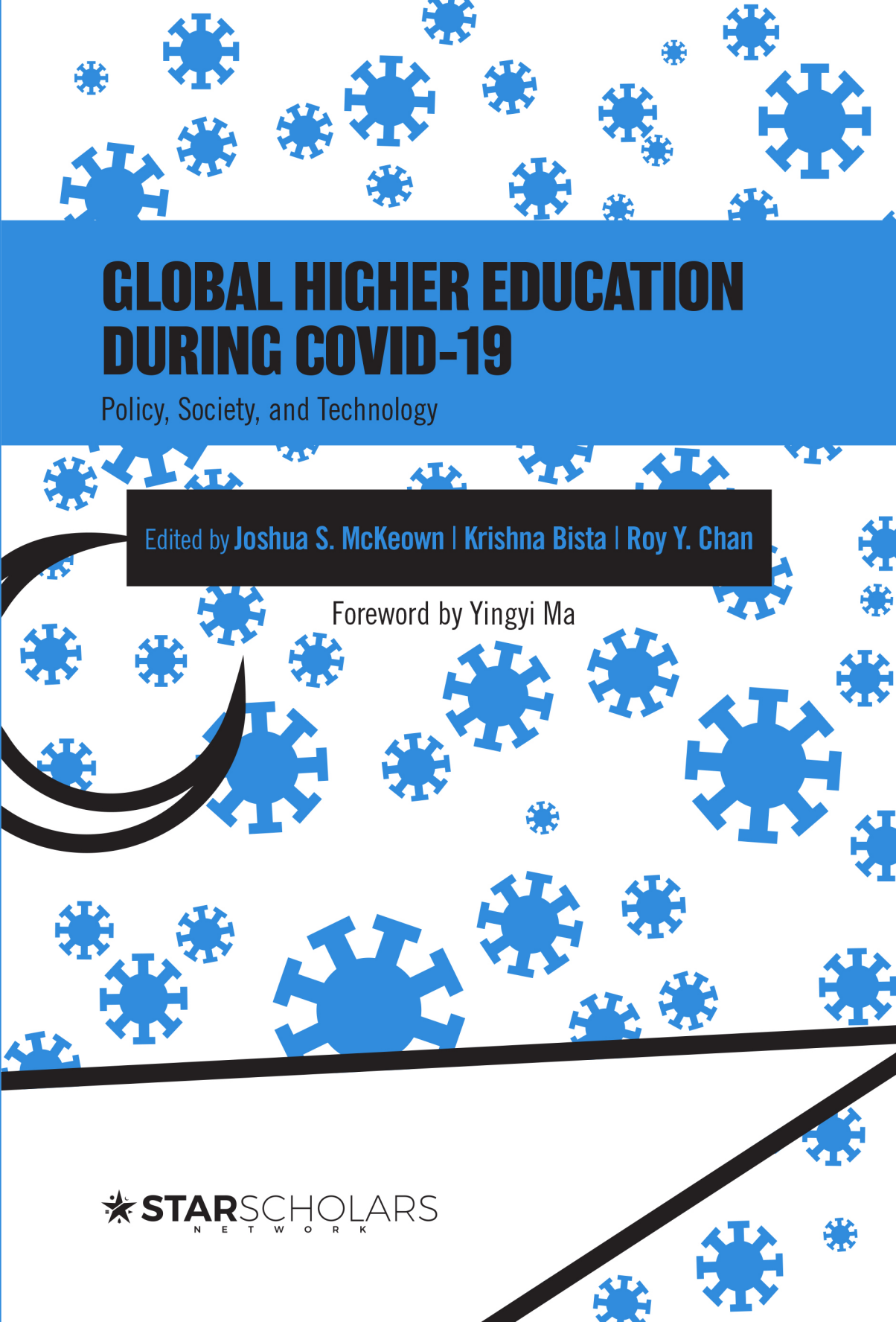
Bios

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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

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.

Joshua S. McKeown, PhD, is Associate Provost for International Education & Programs at SUNY Oswego and International Education Leadership Fellow at the University at Albany, USA.

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Policy, Society, and Technology

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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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