

Special Issue on the International and Comparative Impact of COVID-19 on Institutions of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Since late 2019, the spread of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic has stymied all spheres of our world, particularly world education systems. Decreased and shifting patterns in international student mobility, interrupted learning, school closures, staff shortages, and loss of instructional time only begins to scratch the surface of the numerous challenges experienced during the pandemic (Mok, Xiong, Ke, & Cheung, 2021; Kuhfeld, Soland, Lewis & Mortan, 2022). Globally, the virus has taken the lives of more than 6.2 million people (WHO, 2022). Today, countries around the world are still experiencing new surges in COVID-19 cases with new variants threatening an endemic health crisis. At present, China's zero COVID-19 policy has meant that 327.9 million people in the nation are affected by the lockdown (Cheng, 2022). Since its onset, people all over the world have grappled with severe health and economic setbacks, supply-chain woes, job loss, education disruptions and rising costs. As a result of these compounded challenges, the field of higher education has experienced several setbacks. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center records a decline in undergraduate enrollment across every institution sector (2022). This decline is larger in Hispanic, Black and Native American populations. This finding is particularly worrisome as it is projected to widen the racial earnings gap (Zerbino, 2021). Furthermore, despite funding supports from the American Rescue Plan, universities are operating on tighter budgets (Ossola, 2021).

The swift rollout of vaccines to protect against severe COVID-19 has also highlighted global health disparities. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that vaccine equity is the solution to ending the pandemic, however, poor allocation by

countries and companies that control the global supply of vaccines has meant that only 15.9% of people from low income countries have received at least one dose of the vaccine (WHO, 2022; Ritchie et al., 2022) . The disproportional distribution despite ample supply of vaccines has prolonged the road to pandemic recovery. As we enter the endemic phase of the COVID-19 with ports and borders around the world opening for travel, epidemiologists and other scientists warn against complacency and the spread of the false narrative that viruses eventually become more benign. They urge that in fact governments, policymakers and public-health systems need to monitor the viral evolution of COVID-19 as it enters the endemic stage to become more widespread and potentially even more virulent.

Given the multilayered and evolving complexity of COVID-19, the *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (JCIHE) presents a two part special issue covering a wide range of challenges faced by education leaders, students, faculty and staff since the pandemic. The overarching goal of this special issue is to document the compounded problems faced thus far and potential solutions generated during COVID-19 from a comparative and global perspective. We believe that the key takeaways from this issue will serve to inform more robust and inclusive policy articulation to mitigate current and future COVID-19 related challenges that also builds a more resilient global higher education landscape.

In Part I of this special issue, we proudly present a diverse group of global scholars who provide research that examines COVID-19 related data from Turkey, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, South Korea, China and the United States. Inci Yilmazli Trout and Fatih Yildirim’s “Teaching experiences of faculty members in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic: A Photovoice study,” explores the experiences of higher education faculty teaching remotely in two Turkish universities. Rian R. Djita, Bich Thi Ngoc Tran, Nguyet Thi Minh Nguyen, and Budi Wibawanta’s “The Impacts of The COVID-19 Pandemic On First-Generation, Low-Income And Rural Students In Indonesia And Vietnam: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study,” investigates students’ wellbeing, financial hardships, access to technology, and educational satisfaction across a selection of Indonesian and Vietnamese universities. Nuchelle L. Chance, Tricia M. Farwell, and Joanne Hessmiller’s “Exploring Scholarly Productivity, Supports, and Challenges of Multinational, Women Graduate Students During a Global Pandemic,” documents the challenges experienced by women graduate students as they transitioned to online/remote learning and how they navigated their shifting roles and responsibilities. Amanda B. Pascale, Suzanne Ehrlich, and Kristen K. Hicks-Roof’s “The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on MotherScholars: A Comparative Case Study of United States and Australian Higher Education Women Faculty Role Strain,” uses an interpretive comparative case study design to examine the experiences of MotherScholars - women faculty with children, in the United States and Australia. Sowmya Ghosh and Lindsay DeMartino’s “Global Universities’ Leadership during COVID-19: Synergistic Knowledge Production to Mitigate an Endemic Crisis” provides a comparative lens to demonstrate the strategies used by world university leaders and researchers to generate new knowledge to help mitigate and respond in times of crisis. Tony Lee and Yanjie Cheng’s “International Recruitment: China Recruiters’ Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic” qualitatively documents the complexities of recruiting students and potential

new norms and stressors faced by international recruiters. Yabin Tang and Maureen A. Flint's "Buffering or Perpetuating: The perceived role of academic institutions in Chinese international doctoral students' double pandemics experiences in the United States" examine the social-political-institutional spheres to study the the dual pandemic impact experienced by Chinese doctoral students wherein they navigate a world with ongoing and exacerbated discriminations against Asians as well as the pandemic. And Heidi Fischer and Melissa Whatley's "Pandemic Repercussions: The Future of International Education at US Community Colleges" highlights the financial toll the pandemic has had on community college international education programs and what that indicates for future international student recruitment.

While COVID-19 has revealed the volatility of global markets and the fragility of our world, it has also shed light on global resilience in times of crisis. While latest reports show that international student enrollment in the U.S. has stabilized, experts warn that issues of access will persist particularly given that financial aid for international students is largely limited (Moody, 2021). The collection of articles in this issue examine the critical issues that students, faculty and staff within international higher education experience as a result of the pandemic years. In doing so, the authors highlight the social and economic inequalities and inequities in education and the compounded challenges that people around the world have experienced since the pandemic. We thank the many contributors for making this special issue possible. We are humbled to note that this issue has received the highest number of submissions in the history of the journal. We look forward to presenting part II of this special issue later this year.

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