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## **TRENDS OF DEVELOPMENT THE LEVEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

***Annotation.** Nowadays many of higher education institutions are facing certain problems. Many universities and other high schools are struggling to keep up – financially, culturally, and in other ways. Due to that fact at the University of Latvia in the Departament of Management Scienc the research was made.*

***Key words:** higher education, trends, development*

**Introduction.** Our imperfect world is advancing relentlessly towards uncertain future scenarios, and we must try to redirect it towards sustainability, that is, towards a new way of doing things in order to improve our environment while at the same time achieving justice, social equality and economic stability. However change is impossible without learning, just as learning is impossible without change. In the text that follows, I will analyze the need for a new form of education in today's society and identify the specific challenges that higher education faces.

The research was based on method of critical analysis and mtehod of interpretation. Using these methods it is possible to get closer to understanding the tasks that the higher education system must solve.

The provided research allowed to set 6 main trends in development of higher education :

1. Hybrid teaching.
2. Internationalization under.

3. Skills over knowledge.
4. The devalued college degree.
5. More faculty casualization.
6. Reformulation of higher education.

The article discloses the sence of these trends.

#### **TREND 1. HYBRID TEACHING.**

To respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, multiple universities across the world had to transfer the bulk, and in many cases the entirety, of their course programs on line. Many or most were inadequately equipped for this move, and outcomes in the speed and smoothness of the transition as well as in the quality of the remote offering varied a great deal. As the pandemic wore on and the fate of the 2020 fall semester became increasingly shrouded in uncertainty, many institutions either planned to continue with courses carried out fully on line, or devised a mixed formula that relied on online teaching while at the same time making provisions for limited on-campus teaching, in most cases in strict conditions of physical distancing and the observance of other precautions aimed at curbing the spread of the virus.

While online courses were already a constantly increasing share of the global offering in tertiary education before the rise of the pandemic, it is likely that the mixed formula – or hybrid teaching – will remain a permanent feature of programs made available to students in many parts of the world even after the restrictions associated with the pandemic have long been lifted. «Don't kid yourself», warns the New York Times in a June 2020 article, «online lectures are here to stay».

Few studies carried out to date have revealed an overwhelming preference for online teaching on the part of learners, and many surveys actually show that students miss the direct interaction of classroom learning and the socialization with peers that have been a hallmark of higher education for centuries. Yet the share of online teaching will be even greater in the future, not necessarily because remote learning

appeals to students vastly more than the traditional version, but because of the economies of scale that institutions will soon realize can be achieved when a course can draw in thousands rather than mere dozens of students. The fact that countless institutions of higher learning worldwide will remain on shaky financial grounds for quite some time as a result of the pandemic will only serve to reinforce this trend.

## **TREND 2. INTERNATIONALIZATION UNDER THREAT.**

The dramatic drop in international students' enrollment at universities mainly in the West but also in Asia has predictably been one of the major sources of revenue loss for multiple top- and middle-tier universities. This trend combines with lower domestic enrollments reported for the academic year 2020-2021, and the losses already incurred by demands for tuition refunds from students and families that many universities have complied with for the spring semester of 2020. Even in Europe, where most universities are state-funded and tuition fees are low or nominal, programs such as Erasmus, the European Union student exchange program that has offered a learning experience at European level for countless students within the EU for decades, have been severely affected by the restrictions on travel and mobility imposed by governments to combat the pandemic.

This consequence of the Covid-19 crisis has served to underscore the vulnerability of the business model adopted by many universities because of the latter's substantial dependence on revenue from international enrollments, in particular in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom – a dependence now viewed as excessive and in need of reform.

The internationalization of higher education has nevertheless been a major feature of the sector for the past three or four decades – a feature unanimously perceived as vastly beneficial to all stakeholders by professionals and students alike. While there is little doubt that student mobility will become possible again once vaccination against Covid goes mainstream, the future of internationalization may yet

suffer from two distinct causes: in the medium term, the possibility of lingering hesitation among students potentially interested in learning abroad, and in the longer term, the devaluing impact that a growing online offering may have, in particular if it includes entire degree programs, or even multiple “unbundled” modules, made available to students worldwide by prestigious colleges and universities at a fraction of the brick-and-mortar cost.

### **TREND 3. SKILLS OVER KNOWLEDGE.**

For the past two decades and in particular since the 2008 financial and economic crisis, institutions of higher learning have been under growing pressure to focus on curricula that emphasize the acquisition of skills and competencies in demand on the labor market. For many institutions, this shift became, over time, the only option available to remain relevant in an increasingly competitive landscape.

This trend is likely to be significantly reinforced in the aftermath of the pandemic. With millions of jobs wiped away by the restrictions and lockdowns and the foreseeable progress of automation and AI across many professions that the Covid crisis will have caused, the premium on transferrable skills and competences, in particular technological, acquired through a college education will only expand. Given the growing realignment toward STEM fields at the expense of humanities and liberal arts that colleges and universities have already been carrying out over the past few decades based on the same calculus, it is likely that the time-old role of institutions of higher learning in fostering the pursuit of general knowledge and intellectual inquiry for their own sake, the mission in which the institution itself was originally grounded at its inception, will wither even further. Another source of pressure in the same direction will come from the expansion of alternative modes of post-secondary learning (see Trend 4). The only unknown is to what extent this accelerated shift will generate a wide debate within and without the higher-education

sector. If the past few years can serve as a reference, it can be feared that such a debate will remain widely muted.

#### **TREND 4. THE DEVALUED COLLEGE DEGREE**

The 2008 financial and economic crisis clearly had a negative impact on the public's perception of the value of a university degree, especially in the United States, where higher education most often burdens graduating students with long-lasting, sometimes barely sustainable, debt. Later studies demonstrated indeed that students who graduated around the time of the 2008 recession went on to earn less on average than their predecessors.

With the devastating consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on household revenue due to the loss of employment and given the uncertainty of the future, it is highly likely that, at least in educational systems where a college degree comes with a sizeable price tag, the prospect of investing in a four-year post-secondary learning path will elicit even greater suspiciousness among students and families, and simply cease to even be an option for countless households.

The value of a college education will be further threatened by a shift in broad societal perceptions of vocational training, which will increasingly be viewed as a beneficial alternative to higher education because of its lower costs and greater ability to quickly lead to jobs in demand on the labor market. To this must be added the growing appeal – and expanding availability – of in-company training, in which the «big tech» sector in particular is increasingly investing.

These combined factors will accelerate the development of 'unbundled' higher education, in which learners take single courses or modules (most often exclusively on line) in piecemeal fashion to get a credit or certification. According to a growing number of observers and experts, the unbundling strategy may even be the only survival path for multiple institutions of higher learning across the world in years or decades to come.

## **TREND 5. MORE FACULTY CASUALIZATION.**

Tenure and tenure-track positions were already becoming increasingly rare in the pre-pandemic world. The pressure that universities had been under for decades to look for ways to increase revenue and cut costs had led countless institutions to expand their reliance on adjunct faculty, hired on fixed and often very short-term contracts. In the first months of the pandemic, multiple universities, in particular in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, laid off tens of thousands of non-tenured faculty. It is more than likely that many will not be rehired once the crisis subsides, and that tenure-track positions will become even scarcer in the higher-education landscape of tomorrow.

Instead, as the expansion of online learning continues apace, a growing share of the teaching activity may be outsourced to external instructors who will maintain very little or no deep connection to the hiring institution other than a fixed contract. One severely adverse effect of this trend, if it indeed comes to develop, may be its impact on the ability of universities to keep conducting research at a competitive level if the teaching and researching activities are not somehow decoupled. In addition to the possible negative impact on the quality of teaching that this reinforcement of the casualization trend already under way may have, the potential separation between the teaching and researching activities that may arise will push universities to invest further efforts in the redesigning – and even reconceptualizing – of their current operating model.

It remains to be seen whether scholars and scientists who no longer have to impart their knowledge to younger generations of learners and thus become disconnected from one of the university's essential missions will be able to produce research on a par with those who still.

## **TREND 6. REFORMULATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**

**Emphasis on choice and flexibility.** In 2022 students will be looking for flexible

choices that still keep their well-being in mind. Many will expect a variety of options for online, hybrid and in-person courses. While a reasonable number of universities were prepared to move to an online learning environment when the pandemic hit, others struggled to catch up. E-Learning exposed some flaws such as equitable access to technology and course quality.

Future and current postgraduates will be looking for universities that are committed to building them up and offering flexibility in their programmes. According to a 2021 report published by Bay View Analytics, 73% of students «somewhat» (27%) or «strongly» (46%) agreed they'd like to take some of their courses in a fully-online format in the future. Additionally, for face-to-face courses, 68% of students said they'd like to see increased use of digital materials or resources.

**Sustainability as a priority.** With a climate crisis engulfing us, universities need to adapt their curriculum and shift their priorities. Their focus needs to be 100% on the environment. Reducing their carbon footprint is one trend that is likely to be a priority in 2022. Minimising air travel with more distance learning options and international guest speakers tuning in virtually could be just a few ways to address this issue.

We are also likely to see changes in curricula to start forming a sustainability mindset at the beginning of students' careers. *«2022 will be a decisive year to educate our students on the new, big challenges in a changing world, where biodiversity and preservation of the planet are henceforward the main issues. It supposes a form of radicality in the transformation of our programmes and of our research, one of the current trends in education,»* says Isabelle Huault, Dean at emlyon business school (France) for BusinessBecause.

**A leap in technology.** The ever-progressing world of technology has not left the education sector behind. Our capacity for technological advancement is constantly expanding and we might be on the verge of a big leap, which will strongly benefit higher education.

According to the National Centre for Education Statistics, by the fall of 2019, there were 7,3 million students enrolled in any distance education courses at degree-granting postsecondary institutions. With no clear end in sight for the pandemic, those numbers will likely grow by the end of 2022. Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) might find their place in higher education sooner rather than later, to make distance learning an experience closer to in-person learning.

**Focus on building soft skills.** Universities will be expected to find a way to help students develop some of the most valued skills in the workplace like problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, people management and empathy, among others.

However, the growing trend towards online education is proving challenging for teachers when it comes to enhancing their soft skills. Educators need to find a way to encourage students to work together and face-to-face in order to nurture the development of such highly sought qualities. Those who manage to find that balance between online and in-person will offer a competitive advantage in higher education, making their students more employable, thus improving their alumni success rate.

We are living in extremely turbulent and volatile times and it is never certain which trends will stay and which ones will prove temporary. But it's important to be prepared for the future of work and education as it is currently shaping up to be.

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