

Expert Discussion 1. Emerging landscape in higher education – from new practices to systemic trends

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Speakers:

Hans de Wit, CIHE, Boston College
Simon Marginson, CGHE, University of Oxford
Glen Jones, OISE, University of Toronto

Moderator: Isak Froumin, HSE University

Summary of the most striking points from the speakers:

Hans de Wit

1. HEI around the globe have been *amazingly responsive to the crisis* - of course, there is a lot of problems and dissatisfaction, but at the same time we have been able to respond to that – this is an important lesson.
2. One of the things which emerged is online teaching, which we can use as a part - not as a replacement – of traditional teaching modes, and we can use the distant mode in a very effective way to keep the debate going between scholars and practitioners in HE research. Digitalization can bring a lot of things, and there is a change to make a use of digital instruments.
3. From the global perspective, *research became a much more important factor* in our society: collaboration for finding solutions for the crisis, which creates all kinds of opportunities for HEI to work globally
4. One of the most urgent challenges is *increasing inequality*, both at the system level (especially in the developing world), but also between different types of institutions, and we will have to deal with the consequences of this in future. There are some other important challenges as well: geopolitical challenges around the world call for collaboration.
5. We have seen that students, faculty, administrators not only want to learn, but also want to have a *living community of academics*. The campus life is very important, and this was realized during the pandemic – the opportunity to interact, debate etc. The life of the university as a community is much more important than we thought
6. *Neoliberal agenda in HE has its limitations* – we saw it in Australia and other countries, and now the situation for these countries becomes more risky.
7. *There is a need for global collaboration* – we cannot do things on our own in the new global context, and we can use each other's experience and research insights to mitigate the challenges of the pandemic.

Simon Marginson:

1. Overall, the pandemic *has speed up the dynamics in the world*, but only some things are going to leave a permanent mark.
2. *Global differentiation*: some HE institutions and systems came out the pandemic stronger than others.
3. Online administration, teaching and learning will leave a permanent mark. People want to go back to campus, they appreciate offline interactions, student community and university life. We will do more online learning and administrations, and we will

have more international collaborations because of the online instruments. However, the pandemic showed us very clearly how unequal digital infrastructure is in different countries.

4. *Growing importance of the student voice*, including student support for in place in higher education.
5. *Graduate outcomes* – the pandemic sharply worsened underemployment, but this is a continuation of an ongoing trend which started already before the pandemic. However, university graduates are still better off than non-graduates, due to better agency, networking and skills.
6. *Geopolitical trends*: student mobility numbers most likely most likely go back to the way it was, however, East-Asian countries will have a bigger share, not only due to their economic position but in terms of their role in the modern society, of their models and ideas – not just China, but Korea, Taiwan, Japan and others, because they were able to manage the role of the state in a sustainable way.

Glen Jones:

As Simon noted, public health responses were so different across the world. Some countries did not have to adjust so much to the new normal, while in other countries many things are still frozen, and in many countries disruption lasted longer and lasts still.

The key issues which occurred in higher education at the institutional level:

1. *We disrupted the narrative about how slowly the universities can change in terms of teaching methods, research, innovations*. HEI are quite capable of changes when they have to, and in some cases it has been remarkably successful, in others – incredibly challenging. But the narrative of a slow-moving university has been disrupted. In fact, institutions in many situations have done reasonably well compared to other types of organizations.
2. *Pandemic illuminated some of existing systemic inequities*. This includes differences in terms of access to education, technology and study space, systemic racism, the difference between the institutions (elite institutions are still doing well and were less challenges, and actually came out of this in an improved situation).
3. *Notions about organizational matters at universities were disrupted as well* – notions of online teaching, networking, knowledge mobilization, office hours and place have been disrupted. Many assumptions about the operations in universities were disrupted and proven wrong.

The key issues that need to be considered:

1. Do we need the HEI leadership? The skill set and strategy to lead the university through the post-pandemic processes is very different from what was required before. Leadership becomes incredibly important, and in order to adjust and take advantage of the opportunities, we do need leadership which can raise questions about existing practices.
2. To what extent we consider the personal in assessing the academic professional? Some issues that are discussed in this regard in academic community are increasing flexibility in faculty work, and attention to the experiences of students, faculty and staff.
3. How important is the University as place? While my colleagues pointed out that it is important, I think that the balance will shift a bit, and the notions of the physical space and physical presence are changing. The notion of a university not so much as a place but as a working space will shift.