# ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

# SELECTED CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS OF EURASIA HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT

## EURIE 2022

**Message from the Editor**

We are pleased and honored to present the Selected Conference Proceedings of Eurasia Higher Education Summit EURIE 2022, which was organized as a hybrid event, virtually and in Istanbul, on March 2-4, 2022.

EURIE is an annual international education conference and exhibition, connecting the dynamic higher education sector to the world. EURIE's conference program is designed to address current issues in internationalization of higher education and key topics in higher education management. EURIE also features an exhibition for networking, academic partnership and business development.

EURIE 2022 brought together higher education institutions in Eurasia and beyond with various stakeholders, such as international university networks and associations, ministries and public sector representatives, ed-tech companies and many service providers in the higher education sector.

The virtual exhibition area provided live networking and partnership development opportunities for 114 exhibitors.

The conference took place both virtually and face-to-face on the campuses of 3 universities in Istanbul, Istanbul Aydın University, Marmara University and Yeditepe University. EURIE 2022 was attended by more than 1000 international education professionals, representing 324 organizations from 62 countries. 170 speakers in 60 sessions of plenaries, panels and roundtables shared their expertise and knowledge with the attendants.

The conference theme in 2022 was "Imagining the Future of Education", focusing on the following subthemes:
• Emerging Trends in International Student Mobility
• Global Engagement Amid Global Uncertainty
• Virtual Collaborations
• Internationalization at Home
• International Education and Sustainable Development Goals
• Educational Technologies and Online Learning

This was indeed the time to rethink and reimagine international education, as we have been forced to challenge many of our assumptions, change our modus operandi and innovate under conditions of uncertainty during the COVID-19 global pandemic. EURIE speakers brought their expertise and shared their innovative and best practices in internationalization at this transformative time. They also discussed their vision for the future directions of our sector as we move forward.

Shortly after the summit, we contacted EURIE 2022 speakers and asked them to submit an essay that captures and expands upon their presentations. 9 papers were thus submitted by 14 authors and this volume of Selected Conference Proceedings was prepared. The essays here represent the contributions from international education professionals and academics from diverse organizations located in 6 countries.

Looking at the proceedings and the conference program of EURIE 2022, we see trending topics such as digitalization of higher education, access and inclusion in international education, sustainability in higher education and international student mobility, as well as country or region-specific responses to the current challenges.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the contributors in these selected proceedings. I hope that these Proceedings will be a useful resource for the debates around transformation of international education in the post-pandemic era**.**

**Ayşe Deniz ÖZKAN**
EURIE Conference Coordinator

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# Human-Centered Internationalization for Inclusive Global Engagement

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## Introduction

Have humans been replaced by profit maximization at higher education institutions (HEIs)? If inclusive global engagement is about commitment to progressive interactions, distribution of power, multiple modernities, and mutual benefits, can HEIs truly achieve inclusive global engagement with humans at the heart of their strategies both internally and externally? What do HEI report cards demonstrate when it comes to human-centeredness?

These are the questions that led us to investigate the existing challenges of internationalization through the lenses of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Our questioning revealed that many universities fail to provide a value-added social framework in their internationalization processes. Many of their initiatives are far from genuine equity and inclusion and tend to ignore many stakeholders. Based on our observations and conversations with colleagues worldwide, we have no doubt that HEIs need a new mindset: Human-centered internationalization for inclusive global engagement.

## Higher Education and Global Engagement

Since the early 70s, education has been directly linked to and correlated with the ability to find more employment opportunities as opposed to an endower that only wealthy and upper-income individuals pursue. During the same era, it is observed that internationalization and globalization picked up their paces to push the modern education system to provide intercultural experiences to higher education students and experiences that only a diverse body of faculty and scholarly community could provide. Today universities are forced to scrutinize various modes of internationalization and how to engage with the required activities to integrate themselves into modern education platforms.

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The internationalization process, through the lenses of the education discipline, can be defined as administrative and scholarly work that is carried out by HEIs across borders to increase the dissemination of information, provide accessibility to under-represented communities, and offer its own stake and shareholders global opportunities. Literature defines this as "integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Based on this definition, it is observed that most of the internationalization attempts are failing. While some of the failures could be explained by the historically low levels of enrollment domestically and globally, a significant portion of the failure can be attributed to myopic agenda-setting by the administrators, unable to face the unprecedented threats that are not only multi-layered but also multi-directional. Aimless internationalization engagement and inefficient across-the-border initiatives cause the stretch of human resources and lead to inefficient use of financial resources. Mishandling internationalization efforts under the name of promoting equality, inclusion, and diversity have proven to be overloading and straining for HEIs while stripping students from genuinely engaging and benefiting from international and diverse programs.

One of the most prominent examples of such initiatives is international programs that heavily rely on communication technology advances. Even though their role as a supporting system during COVID-19 in the education field cannot be ignored, over-reliance on them have created significant problems. While eliminating geographical distances and enabling HEIs to continue making immense progress in internationalization, many existing strategies show deficiencies in human diversity and fail to consider the needs of individuals and communities as a whole through human and humane interactions. In short, are HEIs giving in to short-term profit-centric survivability as they look to expand their empires of partnerships and recruit more bodies than they could handle?

**Current Affairs of Internationalization and Social Value**

Many times, internationalization actors and actions are on autopilot in every step of the way. Most of their so-called "interactions" are far from inclusive and mutually enriching and reflect a one-way flow that begs the question: Is internationalization neo-colonization in disguise? Is it about power and domination? The mixed ambitions and ambiguous underlying motives

keep the integration and collaboration of multi-actor formations and lead to inefficiencies in education systems. Although Marginson (2014) indicated that "the days of neo-imperial domination of higher education [were] drawing to a close," our conversations led us to believe that despite internationalization, many universities continue with their own form of homogenization which only favors their own modernity avoiding others.

We believe that many universities approach internationalization as a one-sided street imposing their own "neo-imperial" standards. Rather than working together every step of the way to achieve long-term successes benefitting all sides, profit maximization through international relations has become the new internationalization. It is our experience that this approach has taken away inclusiveness from international education. Even when inclusiveness is expounded, it is often presented as a favor and a kind gesture to the students coming to receive education in the North. However, economic capital flows alone cannot create a just society. Internationalization should integrate Global South with its unique identity and should support *socio-cultural capital* flows.

**DEI Translated into Human-Centeredness**

Many of today's HEIs lack a sense of belonging or inclusiveness, particularly for those joining the institutions from other contexts. Many institutions, in their machine-like existence, use productivity to avoid confronting difficult emotions and cognitive biases and play the "fitting games" resulting in dehumanization (Herman & Korenich, 1977; Yagoda, 2018). Many U.S. HEIs continue to insist on western modernity being the only way. However, this identity crisis diverges HEIs instead of converging them as internationalization is intended.

A good place to start for HEIs is to bring humans back into their central vision. This requires recognizing diversity in the sense of differences as well as similarities while placing people at the center of the purpose. The concept of placing humans at the heart of an organization was first brought to the attention of businesses by Gratton (2000): "There are fundamental differences between people as an asset and the traditional assets of finance or technology" (p. xiii). Gratton proposes the three guiding principles, including creating human-centered strategies, giving people a voice, and engaging people in conversations. Giving every faculty and administrator a voice; empowering each and every student to effectively translate local

and global concepts to emerge and evolve as a "whole" person are all starting points for human-centeredness. In other words, social value creation, enables individuals to navigate in a complex social structure to improve their or their societies' current situation (Acemoglu et al., 1997) which can be achieved by supporting the "positive emotional, mental, physical and social state of being experienced by culturally diverse market actors" (Kipnis et al., 2019. p. 314).

To navigate in a complex social structure with a recipe for meaningful global engagement, we need to expand our identities and selves – changing our mindset from human beings to human becoming. Both sides, in exchange, could/should become better by employing such engagements that promote relating one to another's identity in a constructive way. Only after such means created, the internationalization of education would be consequential since it will start serving people by bringing them together. Even though this approach may seem like a one-sided value-creation due to the delayed return of the investment for HEIs, the benefits of continuous integration of human-centered internationalization resulting in inclusive experiences would provide a high return for all stake and shareholders.

**Conclusion**

The current state of higher education internationalization and DEI practices demonstrate significant shortcomings in the higher education administration. There is a pressing need to shift our ways from financial profit-maximization-oriented practices to social value-creation as well as human-centered progressive strategies. Only then, as HEI communities as a whole, would we be able to fully obtain benefits from internationalization. Otherwise, existing inequities would only destine to grow and lead to regressive behavior in academia as well as social circles. For that reason, we are calling educators and administrators to build policies that support human interactions and facilitate meaningful engagement among various thought streams and civilizations.

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# Greening and Environmental Sustainability:
## How Universities can Lead and Overcome Challenges to Implement This Major Transformation

Thomas ESTERMANN[1] , Luisa BUNESCU[2]

Universities are key actors in the transition towards carbon neutrality and sustainable societies. They address environmental sustainability in their research and education missions, transform their campuses into more sustainable places and reflect on institutional activities (including mobility) and procedures to become greener and more efficient.

In 2021, EUA conducted a survey[3] on greening at higher education institutions, the first ever survey on this topic conducted among universities across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond. The survey gathered evidence from over 300 universities on their different activities and approaches to greening.

Greening is understood as increasing awareness and taking concrete action towards a green, environmentally friendly, and resource-efficient university. This may address the university's mission and campus, and its members, but also entails a contribution towards its larger community and surroundings. It may or may not be part of a broader approach to address the Sustainable Development goals.

This summary focuses on the findings from a subsequent EUA publication[4] , which looked at four specific areas through which sustainability and greening can be addressed at universities, namely: funding, efficiency and effectiveness, procurement, governance and leadership.

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**Funding**

Greening and sustainability represent a financial challenge for many universities, with cost remaining the most significant factor in implementing greening measures, as confirmed by the majority of higher education institutions surveyed by EUA. In addition to already declining levels of public funding for the higher education sectors in different parts of Europe, the Covid-19 crisis has also negatively impacted university funding for the coming years, affecting the implementation of greening measures.

Investing in meaningful greening initiatives becomes particularly difficult, especially as they require upfront investment, for instance via major changes to infrastructure.

That is why, enhanced national and European funding support were perceived by the respondents to the EUA survey as among the most helpful measures for consolidating greening initiatives at universities.

While environmental sustainability has not played so far a major role in university funding models in Europe, different measures and instruments such as performance-based funding indicators or performance contracts may be considered for steering a greening agenda in higher education. As funding remains the biggest obstacle to the implementation of greening measures at universities, it is essential that public authorities and funders consider all means for providing universities with incentives and resources for going green, such as direct budget support, specific grants for greening initiatives, tax incentives, etc.

**Efficiency and effectiveness**

Even when the motivation for change is driven by climate considerations, financial benefits also play a role, often being an important incentive to turn to more environmentally friendly options. Universities are generally aware of the economic benefits of greening, with the majority of respondents to the EUA survey agreeing that their activities around greening saved some costs.

However, a time-lag needs to be considered for the financial benefits to become visible, given that efficiencies are generated over the medium to long term (rather than short term).

Developing life-cycle costing becomes essential, for instance when it comes to evaluating the advantages of building green.

Although building green is associated with higher upfront costs than conventional building, the evaluation changes when one considers the entire building life cycle. Building green leads to considerable benefits in terms of operating costs, with green buildings having lower maintenance costs, which in turn saves the institution money through reduced energy and water use. Thus, building green can be a good alternative to the high maintenance costs of historical buildings.

Sharing services and assets within the institution and with other organisations, and streamlining the use of ICT in learning and teaching and administration can lead to greater efficiency.

Efficiency, however, is not entirely about cost reduction; it is also aimed at making the best possible use of the various resources that the university has in different areas such as operational services, academic matters and strategic governance.

**Procurement**

For universities, procurement is a vast field of high strategic relevance, notably with regard to environmental sustainability. On average, Europe's public universities spend 10-15% of their annual operational budgets on purchasing goods, services and works.

That is why, purchasing goods and services that have a reduced environmental footprint throughout their life cycle has the potential to embed sustainability into the higher education institution's mission. Furthermore, the collective purchasing power of universities may create markets for products and services that benefit the environment, as well as increase the demand for sustainable jobs.

In the past years, more and more systems and institutions have been adapting their approaches to procurement, moving from the lower bidder principle to an "enhanced value" principle that accounts for social and environmental criteria. Such developments reflect that procurement moved beyond being a simple technical tool for transparent and efficient purchasing, and turned into a steering instrument for influencing the green transition in higher education.

According to the EUA survey on greening, for the majority of universities, the challenge still remains to adopt and implement a sustainable procurement process across the institution. An institution-wide strategic policy in this sense is much needed, one that would move beyond individual or departmental projects and activities around greening.

**Leadership and governance**

Leadership and governance play a central role in steering and implementing an institutional agenda that considers greening and sustainability.

The role of leadership in institutional transformation, of the sort that greening and sustainability require is vital for defining a clear approach and division of responsibilities, steering the strategic agenda and development, ensuring internal and external communication and engagement activities, and committing the necessary funds for the implementation of activities.

Knowledgeable, skilled and experienced managers and leaders are needed to lead such an institutional change. However, the challenge remains that few senior leaders have significant experience in managing large-scale institutional transformation such as the one around greening. Leadership development opportunities for top university executives are not the norm across Europe, as shown by research conducted under the EU-funded NEWLEAD project[5] , in which EUA is a partner. Not only are leadership development programmes for top university executives in short supply, but when they are offered, greening and sustainability do not feature among the topics often discussed. This was one of the reasons why the NEWLEAD focus groups on leadership development and institutional transformation that brought together university leaders, addressed greening and sustainability as standalone theme for leadership development.[6]

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5  Bunescu, L., Estermann, T. (2021), "Institutional transformation and leadership development at universities. A mapping exercise. Report from the Innovative Leadership and Change Management in Higher Education project (NEWLEAD)", European University Association, p.24 https://eua.eu/resources/publications/985:institutional-transformation-and-leadership-development-at-universities-a-mapping-exercise.html

6  Bunescu, L., Estermann, T. (2022), "Leading through disruptive transformations in higher education. Key takeaways from the NEWLEAD focus groups on leadership development and institutional transformation in higher education", European University Association, https://eua.eu/resources/publications/1037:leading-through-disruptive-transformations-in-higher-education.html

Achieving greening and sustainability at universities also requires the active participation and commitment from the university governing bodies (such as boards and senates). The selection of board members with an interest and background in sustainability matters is important in driving forward the greening and sustainability agenda.

To conclude, by engaging with learners, educators, parents and the wider community, universities play a key role for a successful transition towards greening and sustainability. To achieve this goal, universities should make greening and sustainability a top leadership priority, while moving towards green procurement in a systematic way (i.e., across the institution). Investing in efficiency mechanisms and initiatives that also have a sustainability element is key. On the other hand, policy makers need to provide resources and incentives for universities to engage in greening and sustainability activities, for instance through direct budget support, but also technical and strategic advice.

## Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities:
## Recovering, Rethinking, Redesigning Higher Education in the Post-pandemic Era

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In this paper I will be seeking answers to several interrelated questions about the current state of higher education and the projections for the near future while still dealing with the remnants of the pandemic on higher education. In the first part, which I call Experiences, I will start by summarizing the actions we have taken at Yeditepe University to respond to the emergency remote teaching in the very early days of the COVID 19 pandemic. In the Challenges part, I will discuss the emerging skills and want needs to be done in order not to leave anyone behind. And finally in the Opportunities part, I will share my views on the digital transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs) and introduction of new possibilities.

## 1) Experiences

No matter in which part of the world we were when the pandemic broke out, we went through similar phases, more or less, in the academic life: travel restrictions, lockdowns, social distancing measures, moving students to online learning almost overnight and seeking for the most suitable instructional and operational methods to ensure that the students do not miss out on the-must- learn aspects of their curriculum.

After the first wave of panic washed over us, we were fast in making the necessary adjustments and putting an action plan in place at Yeditepe University. This included establishing a COVID 19 Task Force to coordinate both online and on campus operations, organizing university-wide meetings across academic and administrative staff, increasing the digital learning and teaching capacities at both the levels of infrastructure and technical support as well as keeping all communication channels open amongst many other actions. A combination of strategies has been in effect since spring 2020, and except from the intervals of mandatory lockdowns,

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we've kept our campus, including the dormitories and library open, but closely monitored the course of events. Apart from our institution's own initiatives, we also welcomed the support of online platforms like Coursera, which enabled our students to enroll in MOOCs in the hay days of the pandemic.

To start with an outline of what we have done, just like many other institutions we updated our roadmap after the first lockdown in March 2020. We started working on an emergency action plan and invested our time, energy, and finances in 3 major areas:

• Firstly, and foremostly we invested in **people**.

Our priority was keeping everybody safe; we achieved this by taking all necessary the health and safety measurements on campus, university hospitals and student dormitories, which resulted in a "safe campus" certificate[2] issued by the Turkish Standards Institute. Our psychological support center had direct contact with students and staff and conducted online training sessions for coping with the pandemic. Senior management organized university wide online meetings with staff, and faculties did the same with their own people including students.

• Secondly, we invested in improving our **infrastructure.**

We updated our learning management system and the accompanying equipment needed. Classes were equipped with cameras, mics, tablets, software, and application licenses so that both synchronous and asynchronous courses, thus teaching and learning activities ran smoothly.

• Thirdly, we invested in **extracurricular activities.**

We organized several online social and cultural events in the winter, afternoon tea parties and concerts during the spring and summer, team retreats for admin staff and leadership teams on the weekends and created a podcast library through individual and collaborative efforts of academic staff.

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2  https://yeditepe.edu.tr/en/safe-campus-certificate

## 2) Challenges

We are already amidst a transformation in our thinking, planning, designing, forecasting, developing and structuring phases regarding higher education's structure today and tomorrow. The effects of the COVID 19 pandemic are diverse and complex, and some will be with us for longer than any of us would want them to be; there will be a variety of long-term effects from mental health to waste management, as anything and everything we can think of is likely to be affected in one way or another. For higher education institutions, acknowledging it as a fact would be a good starting point. The change is not only in the operational parts of what we do, but it is also in the mindset like a cultural shift, so to say. Thus, the challenges we encounter are diverse and multifaceted.

Universities around the world need to adapt to changes in technology and their reflections on social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Digitization has become part of our daily lives, and the digital tools are our students' everyday devices. The future generation is not in the future anymore- they are here on our campuses. Therefore, as people in the leadership positions we have a big responsibility of not forgetting what universities are about whilst dealing with the challenges in the short, middle, and long terms, i.e., making faculty staff feel that they are not left alone, or assuring them that they are not incompetent in adjusting and adopting to the changes. Thus, we need to run programs for reskilling and upskilling our academic and administrative staff, keep on talking about their needs, their health and well-being, introduce new and innovative ways of learning and teaching, bring staff from different disciplines together through a series of workshops and working groups, update curricula more frequently than before, shift the culture to a more participatory one and take all these strategic steps while at the same time running regular business operations on a daily basis. Furthermore, we need to ensure that the internationalization goals in three main interrelated areas are reached: internationalization of the institution by becoming part of an international community in research, teaching and learning, and service and leadership; internationalization of staff by getting involved in international activities, having international scholars on board, staff mobility programs in place, and internationalization of (and for) students by welcoming international students and running student mobility programs and internships.

## 3) Opportunities

The opportunities brought about by the pandemic are just as multifaceted as the challenges. They vary from curriculum design to internationalization, collaborative research, professional development, adult education, hybrid working models and integration of digital tools into teaching and learning activities. Soon, in-person learning will still be favored by many, but for students who are pursuing online education options, hybrid campuses, and hybrid and hyflex programs will also be offered. Online education might be appealing for learners who must also work, who are incapable of moving outside their cities and countries but who still would like to have access to high quality education, who have care responsibilities for children and/or the elderly, who cannot afford the living costs in metropolitan areas where most of the universities are located. Yet, we must also discuss the ways of overcoming the inequalities caused by the digital divide.

Remote working opportunities will be sought after by academic and administrative staff. Hence, flexible working models will be in use as well. In addition, fully online degrees will be launched, resulting in an unforeseen impact on international students and mobility. Students will pursue virtual internship opportunities at the international level. In many areas HEIs will no longer be paying lip service but they'll be forced to make real changes such as implementing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policies and action plans. That is also related with my previous points regarding internationalization of studies, internships, and work. Thus, there are many opportunities for HEIs who are willing to grow and expand their existing limitations or conditions.

What we can offer students to be more job-ready upon graduation would be providing career planning support and networking opportunities. To list a few among many: internship tracks, agreements, and partnerships with sector; practice led post graduate degrees, supplementary and complementary certificates, micro-credentials, and COILs (Collaborative Online International Learning). Equipping students with transferable skills and lifelong learning competency skills must also be considered. These would mean encouraging students to be involved in active, participatory, investigative, collective, collaborative learning models, to take part in projects, to lead projects, to become effective listeners and excellent communicators, to engage in critical thinking, to solve problems, to be active team workers, to be creative and so on. In

short, hands-on and experiential learning  combined with theoretical and conceptual lectures and teaching how to learn are the ways to support students in becoming competitive upon graduation.

**Conclusion**

These complex issues require collaborative approaches which are entangled with different aspects of the problems. It is important to highlight the commonality of similar experiences. Collaborating on these issues would also enable us to determine the priority action areas at the global scale, which in turn would carry us further in achieving the 2030 agenda's goals and objectives. Here is what I call 7 C's I believe that will be highly significant at the global level in the process of recovering, rethinking, and redesigning HE in this new era:

1. Collecting data, and especially qualitative data, to have a better understanding of the impact of this rapid change on education,

2. Conversing with all stakeholders to bring together different perspectives, experiences, opinions, arguments, and interests,

3. Communicating with all parties involved in higher education both in operational and strategic fronts before making any decisions,

4. Collaborating rather than competing with other universities on innovation in education and research, multidisciplinary approaches, environmental sustainability, academic freedom, and academic and non-academic cooperation,[3]

5. Coordinating the professional development of constituencies of higher education,

6. Collegial leadership being favoured over a managerial style,

7. Counselling and support programs for students and staff to improve their health and well-being.

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3  Top 5 most popular answers as voted by the participants of the HE's Future at EUA Annual Conference held in 2021.

# Quality Assurance Standards for Remote Programmes in Higher Education for the Post-COVID-19 Era: The Case of Morocco

Abdelali KAAOUACHI[1]

## Abstract

Since March 2021, higher education everywhere in the world has been undergoing a shift from face-to-face to remote learning and teaching. This shift is seen as a changeover that is made in a health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a form of distance learning in an emergency situation. This form of teaching is completely different to the well-planned distance learning and teaching in a normal situation. This mode of delivery of education has been the predominant one in all institutions around the world, for the entire period of the pandemic. It is therefore necessary to question its quality, especially how to measure and evaluate it. This paper explores a case study concerning Moroccan higher education to propose renewed quality standards of remote programmes that take into account emergency situations.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, Higher Education, Quality, Quality Assurance, Remote Programmes, Standards.

## Introduction

It is about more than two years that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread around the world, with multiple variants of the coronavirus, involving radical changes in our life. Different effects unleashed by the pandemic COVID-19. Some of them are disruptive and negative, impacting many fields but there are also positive effects and some advancements.

Around the world, the measure to close institutions and universities was rolled out very quickly with the call for the intensive use of remote teaching and learning. Suddenly, higher education systems have be found in an urgent situation. The emergency remote teaching replaced the face-to-face teaching but also the well-planned remote teaching. This form of teaching is completely different to the well-planned distance learning in a normal situation (Hodges et al., 2020). This change has implications for all aspects of higher education, including quality assurance activities on programmes and institutions.

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the topic of the quality assurance standards for remote programmes in Moroccan higher education. To this end, it is a question of describing effects of the health crisis on quality assurance activities and of proposing some standards that apply in remote delivery mode.

**The Experience of Distance Higher Education during COVID-19: The Case of Morocco**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted higher education systems (UNESCO, 2020). In particular, the Moroccan higher education system has undergone several changes. Several decisions have been taken in this time of crisis: the closure of institutions and suspension of face-to-face courses on March 16, 2020; the setting up of distance learning courses to allow pedagogical continuity during the particular situation of emergency remote teaching; the possibility given to students to choice between distance learning and face-to-face teaching in small groups; the closure of the university campuses; the elaboration of a New Decree relating to distance education, in accordance with Article 33 of the framework Law 51-17.

During this health crisis, resources have been allocated for a new mode of delivery: many digital resources have been placed on websites, platforms and social media; the use of a variety of interactive platforms (Meet, Teams, Zoom, etc.); the diversification of the learning styles between synchronous and asynchronous; the diffusion of conferences and university courses in the national television channel and regional radios.

Moreover, efforts to assess learning have been made in several activities: the only focus toward teaching/learning activities without summative evaluation; the resumption of the spring 2020 exams to next September 2020; some institutions have organized remote exams; establishment of local examination centers, at provincial and regional levels, for the face-to-face examination (on teaching done in spring 2020 & autumn 2020).

The experience was marked by the mobilization and commitment of all actors to provide distance education services. Thus, the efforts of teachers and all administrative and technical staff were decisive and significant in ensuring change.

Unfortunately, the emergency shift to distance education has a variety of problems: the lack of resources and weak internet connection (for some disadvantaged students); the lack of preparation of the actors; the low use of interactive pedagogy; the lack of online assessment;

the non-existence of a quality assurance system for the remote delivery mode (Kaaouachi, 2021).

**Effects of the Health Crisis on Quality Assurance Activities**

Across the world, the pandemic COVID-19 affected quality assurance implementation. In particular, the onsite visits have shifted into a virtual mode and the accreditation durations were extended (Martin and Furiv, 2020; Brown and Salmi, 2020).

In the case of Morocco, quality assurance activities in higher education during COVID-19 concerned three main points. Firstly, there was the adoption and revision of higher education regulations. For example, new laws concerning online provision have been adopted. This is the case, for example, with the promulgation of Decree No. 2.20.474 on distance learning for the benefit of learners in education schools, vocational and higher education institutions. A second point concerns the cancellation and the postponement of quality assurance activities in the hope of conducting them in face-to-face mode after the disappearance of the coronavirus. Finally, the virtual site visits have replaced physical site visits.

**Two Reasons for Developing New Standards for Online Education**

The new situation is the form of remote teaching and learning in the emergency situation which is different from the well-planned form in a normal situation. Logically, this gives reason to a more thorough separate development of quality assurance actions for both forms of delivery.

In the case of Morocco, there are two reasons for developing new standards for remote programmes. The first reason concerns the need to accompany the existing law (Decree No. 2.20.474) on distance education with quality assurance regulations that rule on both situations (Emergency Remote Teaching & Well-planned Remote Teaching). The second reason concerns the absence of standards, in existing texts, covering delivery mode. More precisely, there are no standards covering the mode of delivery in this emergency situation. And even for the normal, well-planned situation of online education, there is little legislation covering this mode of delivery. In this sense, it is clear that the national reference framework for the evaluation and quality assurance of higher education institutions (Morocco) does not include the key words of remote education, since the words "online", "digital", "e-learning" are not mentioned in

this reference framework. While the words "virtual", "distance", "digital" have received only one citation for each in the field of design and provision of training. In conclusion, the remote mode has a marginal place in the regulatory framework.

**Urgent Appeal: Need to Add Further Quality Standards for Online and Blended Learning in both Normal and Emergency Situations**

It is an unavoidable necessity to develop standards for distance and blended learning, as the use of this type of learning will certainly accelerate in the future.

The proposed standards correspond to seven areas, namely policy, technology, design and content, student and staff support, teaching and learning strategies, assessment, security and ethics.

*Standard 1 (Policy): The institution has policy for design, development, delivery and review the remote programmes.*

*Standard 2 (Technology): The institution has an appropriate technology that support remote learning and teaching.*

*Standard 3 (Instructional Design and Programmes Contents): The institution must design the learning outcomes to suit remote delivery and to support self-learning and online collaboration, and enhance engagement. The contents must be accessible and well organized in digital platforms.*

*Standard 4 (Student and Staff Support): The institution has mechanisms to support student and staff to effectively use of technology.*

*Standard 5 (Teaching and Learning Strategies): The institution adopts effective teaching and learning strategies (for the synchronous and asynchronous modes) that use interaction techniques.*

*Standard 6 (Assessment): The institution must clearly and consistently applied methods for online examinations, while ensuring security, integrity, fairness and objectivity of assessments. it must use online proctoring tools and plagiarism checker software*

*Standards 7 (Security and Ethics): The institution must have a policy on security and intellectual property for online resources. this policy must be implemented by ethics committee.*

This list of standards is offered to higher education institutions to assess the quality of their remote programmes.

**Conclusion**

Higher education system in Morocco is in beginning phase to apply quality assurance policies and mechanisms for remote education.

Intensive use of online services during COVID-19 will be further expanded and strengthened. Therefore, there is a need of the use of new quality standards that control different services of online/hybrid mode to avoid losing the desired quality.

This is the path to explore a deep development and thoughtful implementation of quality assurance system in higher education.

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## Perspectives on the Future of Higher Education: Are We Ready for the Metaverse?

Arum PERWITASARI[1]

The current situation with the latest variant of COVID-19 remind us that the pandemic is far from over. For most international students and our higher education community, normal seems unlikely. The unlikelihood of returning to normal means we have to move forward and reimagine what our higher education could and should be. "What will higher education look like in the future?"- the very first question we need to think about.

At the same time, we have also seen the emergence of metaverse-related technology being used in higher education in the past couple years. More and more universities have jumped into the metaverse and become metaversities moving their physical campuses into 3D virtual world. As of April 2022, 10 U.S. higher education institutions have piloted metaversities teaming up with VictoryXR to provide augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) educational tools and learning options for students in the metaverse.

This article will highlight some potentials and challenges that the metaverse has to the future of higher education. Areas addressed in the article range from its potentials in increasing accessibility, students' learning and assessments experience. Some challenges of the metaverse discussed in this article include affordability, data privacy and safety concerns, and unconscious bias. While the metaverse holds immerse future possibilities, the higher education ecosystem needs to be thoughtful about its implications.

*Keywords:* metaverse, virtual reality, higher education

### Introduction

Two years after the official start of the COVID 19 pandemic, the world is still warned by the possibility of mutable variants. It brings a simple reminder to us that the world is unlikely to return to normal. With the emerging situation during the pandemic, plus the unlikelihood of us returning to a normal world, makes us question what higher education will look like in the future.

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When physical schools and colleges were shut during the pandemic, higher education institutions embraced a digital approach to work and education. Not only that, more and more universities explored the benefits of moving their physical campuses into the metaverse and associated extended-reality (XR) approaches, and becomes metaversities. In April 2022, for example, VictoryXR, a US startup which provides augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) educational contents and learning options teamed up with ten universities and created metaversities.

**The History of Metaverse**

Metaverse has become the buzzword lately. When did it first appear? It all started in 1992, when Neal Stephenson, a science fiction writer, used the metaverse concept in his novel Snow Crash. The novel also popularized the term 'avatar' as a virtual character who worked in a 3-dimensional (3D) virtual space, known as the metaverse.

What is the metaverse? Kim (2020) defines the metaverse as a digitized earth functioned as a new world expressed through digital media such as smart phones and internet. According to Duan et. al. (2021), the metaverse is a virtual world where users move around and interact with each other using avatars that they designed and represent them. This 3D based virtual reality also enables daily activities including social, economic, cultural activities to happen. In a simple word, (Kye, et. al., 2021) describes the metaverse as a virtual reality existing beyond reality.

The metaverse is categorized into 4 types: augmented reality (AR), lifelogging, mirror world, and virtual reality (VR) (Smart et al, 2007; Lee, 2021). AR refers to a smart environment that utilizes location-based technologies and networks, taking for example the smartphone technology, Pokémon Go. Lifelogging refers to a technology to capture and store information about objects/people, as in Apple Watch or Samsung Health. Mirror world reflects the real world but integrated external environment information, that can be found in map-based services Google Maps/Earth. VR refers to a virtual world built with digital data, e.g. Roblox or Minecraft.

Besides the four types of the metaverse, there is Mixed Reality (MR), also called hybrid reality, where it combines the real world with the digital one and allows individuals to interact with both real and virtual world without removing their headsets. The combination of AR, VR and MR falls under an umbrella term Extended Reality (XR), also called cross reality. XR refers to all real-and-virtual environments generated by computer technology and wearables. XR is now a commonly used virtual world in education.

**The Metaverse and The Future of Higher Education**

The metaverse has immense potentials for education in general. Kye, et al (2021) claims that the potentials of the metaverse as a new education environment include (a) a space for new social communication; (b) a higher degree of freedom to create and share; (c) the provision of new experiences and high immersion through virtual world. This article explores some potentials and challenges that metaverse has, especially to the higher education field.

**Potentials of the Metaverse to Higher Education**

The metaverse can increase accessibility to education (Kye et al., 2021). For example, virtual university visits become more accessible to students from any part of the world. The metaverse enables students to participate in discussions and socialize with peers regardless of the time zone. By attending virtual university, students have the opportunity to experience a virtual form of campus life that not only helps them cut down the costs on accommodation, travel and food, but also offers them the ability to run their normal daily responsibilities.

Recent studies have shown that using XR in learning environments has increased students' learning interest and motivation to learn (Queiroz et al, 2018; Makransky, et al, 2019; Parong & Mayer, 2021). Lehikko (2021) found that the use of the metaverse in virtual learning environments increased students' self-efficacy and boosted their belief in their own capabilities. The increase interest and motivation of students are essential for a successful teaching and learning process.

Today, some higher education institutions are already exploring ways to develop the metaverse, enhancing students' learning experiences. XR helps to support technical training and skills

building especially for practices with high-cost and high-risk scenario like medical surgery (Lockets, et al, 2017; Dede et al 2017). With the metaverse, students from medical faculty were able to deliver anesthesia in a simulated operating room or performed a surgical training using a VR-based cadaver.

In terms of assessments, online testing in the metaverse is a replica of real-life tests where teachers or test providers can set up, conduct and evaluate the test. RisingMax, one of the Metaverse developer in the US, claimed that its virtual examination software allows test takers to represent themselves in the metaverse by creating their own 3D ultra-realistic avatars equipped with biometric identities. In the virtual reality world, students are able to register, select the venue and the seat for the test. The online test is conducted in a secured virtual environment backed with blockchain technology for the sake of testing security.

**Challenges of the Metaverse to Higher Education**

Even though the metaverse can increase accessibility and have some other benefits for higher education, it also provides some perils to the field. The low-cost learning using virtual cadavers which used to require a lot of space and maintenance for medical program might be a good solution. However, there are other expenses that support the virtual reality content, such as licenses, virtual construction, headsets, and the added costs and needed high investments. A metaverse license, for example, costs around $20000 to $100000 for a digital twin campus, or a headset from the Meta Quest 2 with 128GB costs $399.99. Metaversities require additional costs and time to manage and maintain large numbers of headset and other specialized equipment.

Besides the affordability issues, data privacy and safety have become one of the concerns. The metaverse, through its equipment, can track user's personal data, such as physical movement, heart rate, pupil size, eye openness and even signals of emotions (Miller et al, 2020). Such personal and sensitive information about users' habit, and their physiological characteristics can be revealed and leaked through the metaverse due its strong connection between the virtual and physical world. To this regard, the metaverse offers unprecedented opportunities on online and physical harms and fraud.

Another challenge with the use metaverse is unconscious bias – prejudices and societal stereotypes that people are not aware of. Gender, race, age, class, sexual orientation, disability, body weight and more biases are some existing inequalities that are unacknowledged and unaddressed in the physical world, and they tend to be replicated and augmented in a virtual world (Marry, 2017). On gender biases, for example, avatar creation on the metaverse offers only a choice between female and male and does not allow an option for people who are non-binary. Since the appearance of avatars on the metaverse are customizable, it is important for the metaverse to provide options for an inclusive avatar environment.

**Conclusion**

The metaverse is approaching and growing fast. Not only because of a communication campaign that makes it a buzzword, and creates huge business opportunities, but also because we are currently at the exponential growth of its technology. Metaverse growth and real-world adoption are accelerated. While the metaverse holds immerse future possibilities in improving accessibility, learning and assessment experience, it also poses some risks and security pitfalls. Thus, the higher education ecosystem needs to be thoughtful about its implications.

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# A Quantitative Study on International Student Satisfaction in a U.S. Based Intensive English Program

Ravichandran AMMIGAN[1], Adil BENTAHAR[2]

## Introduction

Intensive English programs (IEPs) provide international students with language instruction, cultural exposure, and study skills to ensure their smooth transition into universities. These programs not only equip students with the skills they need, but they also help advance internationalization, global engagement, and diversity efforts across campuses.

## Context

The changing landscape of IEPs, as well as the shift in traditional student mobility programs during the COVID-19 health crisis, has created a complex issue for institutions of higher education. It has also triggered a fundamental rethink on the standard approach to international student recruitment, retention, and engagement (Marmolejo, 2020). The United States (U.S.) has typically held the largest market share of IEP students seeking academic and technical training, with a record number of 133,335 international students enrolled in 2015 (Institute of International Education, 2021). However, by February 2020, that number had dropped significantly by 45% (West, 2020). It is therefore paramount that host universities and programs listen to and understand international students' perceptions and opinions on their educational experiences. Indeed, for them to stay competitive and for their students to succeed, IEPs have the obligation to revisit their students' preferences to establish and adjust the necessary support services and adequate institutional resources in both curricular and cocurricular environments.

A number of studies have investigated student satisfaction on campus, yet there seems to be a paucity of empirical studies addressing IEP students' experiences. While Arambewela and Hall (2009) underscored the need for institutions to develop a diversified and adaptable educational

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and non-educational quality service model to meet culturally diverse student groups on campus, Fox (2020) qualitatively investigated IEP Chinese students' experiences, with a focus on their language barriers and culture shock experiences. Likewise, other scholars (e.g., Woods et al., 2013) have reiterated the need for extending support for international students because a mere coordination of international students' first encounters with American peers, for example, can be ineffectual. Relatedly, Helms and Brakjovik (2017) included survey questions on IEP pathway programs in a study that evaluated the current state of internationalization at U.S. colleges and universities. The researchers noted that, despite a marked increase in co-curricular activities that seek to foster student engagement on campus, the emerging support structures created for international students appear to be modest and the longer-term support services that IEP students need beyond their arrival, seem to be less common.

**The Study**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the degree to which international students are satisfied with their IEP program at a mid-size four-year university in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. Using pre-existing data from the International Student Barometer (ISB) (i-graduate, 2021), we investigated associations between students' overall program experience and 67 different satisfaction variables within four dimensions of the university settings: 1) arrival, 2) learning, 3) living, and 4) support services. The ISB instrument, considered as one of the most widely used benchmarking tools for tracking the experiences of international students globally, uses a 4-point Likert scale to measure satisfaction (1=*very dissatisfied,* 2=*dissatisfied*, 3=*satisfied*, and 4=*very satisfied*).

Data was collected via an online survey in November 2017, when enrollment of IEP students at the university site was at a record-time high and ranked among the top in the nation. A total of 95 students, representing a sample of 16.3%, completed the survey. The average age of respondents was 23, and 54.7% were male students. Students held 11 different nationalities, with 61.1% coming from China and 20% from Saudi Arabia. Most of the survey participants were enrolled in a 24+ week-long program (27.4%).

We ran descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) to summarize student demographics and obtain mean satisfaction scores. Bivariate correlation analyses

were performed to determine associations between students' overall program experience and satisfaction variables within each of the dimensions of the university environment. This quantitative research was declared exempt from the requirements of human subject protection by the Institutional Review Board.

**Key Findings**

Results from this study show that IEP international students were generally satisfied with their overall program experience (M = 3.03, SD = .72). They indicated the highest level of satisfaction with the learning experience (M = 3.06, SD = .67), followed by Arrival (M = 3.06, SD = .68), Support Services (M = 3.01, SD = .56), and Living (M = 2.96, SD = .60).

However, when we explored the specific relationship between Overall Program Experience and all 67 variables of satisfaction, we found that only 24 variables (across all four dimensions of experiences) were found to be statistically correlated with students' overall experience. As summarized in Table 1, the strongest correlates were from the Learning environment, with the approachability and friendliness of program staff and teachers (r = .53, p < .01) and personal support from teachers in the classroom (r = .50, p < .01) mattering the most to students. Several aspects of Support Services were also found to be positively associated with overall experience, namely the availability of social programs and events (r = .43, p < .01) and support for visa and immigration issues (r = .40, p < .01).

*Table 1: Correlates of Overall Program Experience*

| Satisfaction Variable | Dimension | M | SD | r |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approachability and friendliness of staff and teachers | Learning | 3.4 | 0.68 | .53** |
| Access to personal support from teachers in class | Learning | 3.4 | 0.69 | .50** |
| Teaching ability of teachers | Learning | 3.4 | 0.64 | .47** |
| Fair and transparent assessment of classwork | Learning | 3.3 | 0.71 | .47** |
| Ability to understand teachers in class | Learning | 3.4 | 0.68 | .46** |
| Feedback on classwork from teachers | Learning | 3.3 | 0.74 | .46** |

| Satisfaction Variable | Dimension | M | SD | r |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social programs and events | Support | 3.1 | 0.62 | .43** |
| Learning that leads to degree program | Learning | 3.2 | 0.65 | .42** |
| Explanation of grading and assessment criteria | Learning | 3.3 | 0.69 | .41** |
| Help and support with visa and immigration issues | Support | 3.2 | 0.65 | .40** |
| Learning Management System | Learning | 3.2 | 0.65 | .39** |
| Physical library facilities | Learning | 3.2 | 0.71 | .39** |
| Online library facilities | Learning | 3.1 | 0.72 | .39** |
| Advice on finding medical or counseling services | Support | 3.1 | 0.64 | .39** |
| Advice on further study after this program | Support | 3.1 | 0.68 | .37** |
| Content of program | Learning | 3.1 | 0.75 | .36** |
| Opportunities to practice English skills in class | Learning | 3.2 | 0.83 | .36** |
| Organization and smooth running of the program | Learning | 3.1 | 0.74 | .34** |
| Studying with people across cultures | Learning | 3.1 | 0.82 | .33** |
| Co-curricular activities to learn and practice English | Learning | 3.1 | 0.81 | .32** |
| Quality of housing | Living | 3.1 | 0.7 | .31* |
| Handling of complaints and issues | Support | 3.1 | 0.65 | .31* |
| Size of classes | Learning | 3.1 | 0.85 | .30* |
| Safety and security | Living | 3.2 | 0.67 | .30* |

*Note.* **p < .01, *p < .05

## Implications

Covid-19 has accelerated the digital transformation of Higher Education. The Moroccan experiment is conducted with successes but certainly with failures and dysfunctions. The crisis must be an opportunity to take a new path of distance education, very promising that can provide solutions to certain problems, in particular that of quality degradation. Some of the elements of this path correspond to the following recommendations:

Findings from this research led to a few key implications for IEP faculty and program administrators in their efforts to support the experiences of international students both inside and outside the classroom. These considerations are outlined below:

● Incorporate remote learning into curricular activities so that IEPs can accommodate the rising numbers of students taking courses online, while still meeting the needs of the regular students on campus.

● Invest in professional development. These efforts will ultimately help instructors and academic support coordinators navigate the changing landscapes resulting from perpetual uncertainty and disrupted technology access, such as the one experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

● Ensure all co-curricular support services and activities are offered to international students not only at the beginning of their programs of study, but throughout their stay on campus.

● Collaborate with partners across campus to further support IEP faculty and staff intercultural competence. One facet of this collaboration can be by means of regular benchmarking of IEP student satisfaction levels through in-house assessments and collaborations with external providers (e.g., ISB) that inform departmental and university-wide decisions on the allocations of key resources and support services.

To conclude, at a time when the existing literature on IEP international students' satisfaction with their university experiences seems to be underdeveloped, this study helps fill this gap from a quantitative lens. While caution must be exercised in interpreting and generalizing our findings, we believe the study offers valuable insights into the preferences and perceptions of a student population, IEP international students, whose voice is often not heard in empirical literature.

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## An Overview of Integrating Syrian Refugees into Turkish Higher Education

Hakan ERGİN [1]

The recent forced displacement crisis has reached such a serious level that one person becomes a forced migrant every two seconds, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) statistics (UNHCR, 2019). This crisis, without doubt, has been escalated by the ongoing war in Syria. Since the war began in 2011 in Syria, 5,573,095 Syrians have moved to another country. 65% of them, equivalent to 3,622,486, took refuge in Türkiye, which has made it host to the largest refugee population in the world (UNHCR, 2022).

With the beginning of the war in Syria, Türkiye imposed an "open door policy" for Syrians who fled the war in their home country. This government-led policy was based upon three principles: temporary protection, non-refoulement and access to humanitarian assistance. The first principle provided Syrian refugees with an official status of "guest under temporary protection" in accordance with the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive which was passed in 2001. The second principle guaranteed that no Syrian refugees based in Türkiye would be forced to return to Syria or a third country. The third principle, on the other hand, ensured that Syrian refugees in Türkiye would be provided with humanitarian assistance by the government (Kirişçi, 2013).

Türkiye has diligently and determinedly imposed the above-mentioned exemplary open door policy. Syrian refugees have been welcomed and provided with humanitarian assistance such as accommodation, health service and education. It is reported that Türkiye has spent at least $71 billion on Syrian refugees' integration in the last decade (Eraslan, 2021).

The prolongation of the unexpected war in Syria forced Türkiye to develop several long-term policies to integrate Syrians into their post-displacement lives. A significant one of these policies was to provide them with access to higher education in Türkiye. This government-led humanitarian policy was comprised of academic and financial reforms (Ergin, de Wit & Leask, 2019).

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The first academic reform was introduced by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), a government body which coordinates higher education in Türkiye, in September 2012. The CoHE asked seven universities in the south of Türkiye to admit Syrians as special students to their programs. This reform provided Syrians with an access to universities. Nevertheless, the number of Syrians who demanded a degree-seeking status was growing. This brought the launch of another reform in October 2013. It was announced by the CoHE that Syrians who had proof of their previous academic credentials would be able to apply to universities in any regions of Türkiye. Yet, it was underlined that the ratio of Syrians in a degree-awarding department would not exceed 10% of the number of local students at the same department (The Official Gazette, 2013). Although these reforms provided a group of Syrians with access to universities and they were also provided with an intensive Turkish language learning program free of charge, the policy needed a broader language-related coverage in order to include the ones who could not achieve proficiency in Turkish language in a year. Therefore, in January 2015, the CoHE asked eight universities in the south of Türkiye to offer Arabic-taught programs (CoHE, 2015). In the following four years, the war in Syria did not come to an end and the increase in the number of Syrian refugees in Türkiye continued. This resulted in a growing demand by Syrian refugees for access to higher education in Türkiye. For this reason, the quota restriction was abolished by the CoHE in May 2019 (CoHE, 2019).

Academic reforms were not enough on their own to enhance Syrian refugees' access to universities in Türkiye as most of them had to cope with financial hardships (Ergin, de Wit & Leask, 2019). Thus, financial reforms were a must to make this humanitarian policy more inclusive. In line with this requirement, a cabinet decision exempted Syrian refugees from paying a tuition fee to public universities in Türkiye (The Official Gazette, 2014). With this, Syrian students were not charged a tuition fee which was paid by other international students. Their tuition fee was sponsored by the Presidency for Turks and Abroad and Related Communities. In addition to this, the same government body decided to provide Syrian students with cash support beginning in December 2015 (The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, 2015).

With the above-given academic and financial reforms, the number of Syrian students in Türkiye climbed from 608 in 2011 to 53,097 in 2022 (CoHE, 2022). This rapid increase reveals that this government-led policy for providing Syrian refugees with access to higher education in

Türkiye was quite effective. However, it should be noted that due to the immensely growing number of Syrians who demand access to higher education in Türkiye, they are now expected to take an entrance test and it is not possible to exempt them from paying a tuition fee and financially support all of them from Türkiye's government funds only. Therefore, more effective collaboration and support are needed by international actors to enhance Türkiye's humanitarian policy.

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# Impact of Education Diplomacy in the Mediterranean Region

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For the last few decades, we have seen the transformation of education methods, systems and diplomacy which is the set of rules that regulate relations between countries under the globalization trends. Diversification of communication and transportation opportunities in the field of education have not only speeded up the mobility of students, faculty and researchers, but also caused the expansion of academic programs and research projects that were previously limited by geographical and political borders. Indeed, the incredible online open lectures, distance learning programs, podcasts and webcasts offered by many educational institutions make it possible to reach the world's most prestigious educational institutions from anywhere with an internet connection.

Development of social and scientific networks allowed researchers to communicate and collaborate regardless of geographic restrictions. Diplomacy has likewise undergone a change. This area, which once included interstate relations, has now expanded to include non-state actors, such as educational institutions. Education shapes our core values and thoughts, how we see the world, raising awareness about new cultures and identities that bring people from many different geographies together. Thus educational institutions can be potent in diplomatic relations.

What is the purpose of education diplomacy? 1) Ability to create a collective vision in line with common educational goals; 2) To solve complex educational problems by establishing cooperation between actors operating at regional, national and international levels in order to realize these common goals. In the case of the Mediterranean Region as a collective vision among the different peoples and states in the region, through the tools of educational diplomacy, it is possible to establish collaborations and collective action platforms in various levels and fields for the solution of the common problems.

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What are the main problems in the Mediterranean geography? The Mediterranean Region is a vast geography where great civilizations were born and intertwined. Dozens of people living around this sea, not only formed partnerships felt in every aspect of life in terms of their geographical and historical characteristics or their cultural interactions; but also they have created a "Mediterranean world" with its own unique characteristics.

The Mediterranean world, which is the extension of the continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, hosts dozens of peoples with different cultures and languages, with different beliefs and at different levels of economic and social development. The Mediterranean world with its north, south, east and west, sits on the socio-economic, socio-cultural and political fault lines of the globe. Today, the Mediterranean Region faces growing ecological, economic, social and cultural problems in the shadow of unresolved international tensions.

Looking at the macroeconomic indicators, the Mediterranean region consists of the developed economies of the North and the relatively less developed economies of the South and East. The Mediterranean world is stretched between the post-industrial North and the poverty prevailing in the South; is also the locus of various conflicts within the framework of cultural schism between East and West.

Another comprehensive question affecting the Mediterranean Region is "environmental problems affecting different regions in different ways as a result of climate change". Mediterranean Region is the second in the world in global warming and it has the highest figures in terms of water temperature. Sea level rise triggered by climate change, scarcity of potable water and extreme weather conditions affect the people of the region negatively and at different levels. Rising water levels are not only a threat to coastal cities such as Venice, but salty sea water also poses a serious threat to arable land in many areas.

40% of Mediterranean agriculture takes place in threatened coastal areas. Sea level rise also has the potential to trigger a food security problem. Obviously, climate change affects the coastal ecosystem of the Mediterranean asymmetrically. Some regions are more vulnerable to these threats than others. National climate plans cannot solve potential threats of climate change alone and regional or global problems have a cross-border impact. In this framework, every attempt to solve the problems of the Mediterranean Region affects a wide area from

the region's supply chains to food systems. In this context, strategies should be developed in tandem and in coordination to address these problems.

The changes in the environment, pressure of scarce resources and economic inequality threaten political stability. These pressures in Southern Mediterranean cause a substantial increase such as illegal human trafficing, narcotic crimes, arms trade, petroleum trade and privateering activities. Hence climate change, regional economic inequalities and political conflicts in Southern Mediterranean cause a wave of northward migration and a crisis that create humanitarian tragedies. Security problems in the Mediterranean Region have been responded to with traditional security approaches and case-by-case solutions so far. These approaches do not address underlying issues and solve the problems completely. Instead supporting the sustainable development agenda for the Mediterranean at all levels, created with the participation of the European Union and the countries of the region should be the approach. Educational diplomacy can help this process with creating dialoge, sharing of information and creating regional and international cooperation.

The problems of Mediterranean affects the northern, southern and eastern regions to different levels. Despite factors such as the diversity of geography, different levels of socio-economic development, inequality between scientific infrastructure and research capacities, it is imperative that national, regional,  and international actors come together to solve the problems of the region. Because no country or organization is strong enough to solve the problems of the Mediterranean by themselves. Therefore, through "educational diplomacy", scientific solutions should be produced for the problems encountered, and cooperation mechanisms should be generated between research and education institutions that can yield to local contexts for all regions. The purpose of educational diplomacy activities should be able to coordinate the research and data collection systems of countries, harmonize research infrastructures, skills and methods.

Through an educational diplomacy network to be established in the fields of education and research about the problems encountered by the Mediterranean region, reliable scientific evidence should be presented to the decision-makers, alternative projects and programs should be designed. This process will also increase the efficiency of policies at the region level. Problems such as overexploitation of natural resources in the region, water scarcity,

desertification, decrease of arable land, deterioration of biodiversity necessitate the collaboration that will make possible the ecological sustainability. On the other hand, the problems such as high population growth rates, increasing food demand, poverty, widespread unemployment especially among the young population, food insecurity, migration from rural to urban areas and other countries, insufficient urban infrastructure, lack of sustainable rural policies for women and youth also necessitate the development of common research and application projects.

A competent education diplomacy will provide to establish a strong and effective collaboration between the education and research infrastructures. In this context, education diplomacy is an important tool that can establish cooperation between regional, national and international institutions on the point of guaranteeing sustainability in the ecological, economic and socio-cultural fields. Education will strengthen the deciding and making right-choice capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organizations and countries for sustainable development based on science and research. In this context, education diplomacy tools can be used policy and legislating attempts and administrative regulations towards solutions to the abovementioned problems in order to strengthen the education of sustainable development. Providing encouragement of research in this field, the platforms can be formed which regional-national and international actors can share their technologies, experiences and specialties.

Through education diplomacy, the process of the sustainable development in the Mediterranean region can be supported. Research and application networks can be established for universal education and expert investigations in the fields such as alleviating poverty, security, human rights, health, democracy and governance, gender equality, cultural diversity, urbanization, economic development, production and consumption trends, environmental protection, corporate responsibility, management of natural resources, biodiversity.

An example of a regional network that facilitate education diplomacy is COPPEM, the Standing Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which has 252 current members and aims to develop common projects by bringing together the countries in the MENA region and the North Africa. The aim of COOPEM is to offer policies for scientific research, education networks and for collaborations between municipalities to make serious contributions to sustainable development in Mediterranean region.

COPPEM should support research platforms working on environment, energy and water resources problems which will deliver the latest scientific findings on the subject to international organizations and national decision makers of the countries affected by these problems. It can support exchange programs that will build bridges between specialized education and research institutions and offer support to expand the scope of existing ones. These exchange programs will also allow students to get to know different cultures and create an effect that strengthens mutual understanding.

The creation of tools to support the regional mobility of researchers, educators and students will undoubtedly contribute to the solution of the above-mentioned regional problems in the Mediterranean. Such mobility programs should not only be evaluated in terms of personal development or professional development. One of the most important outputs of such programs is cultural interaction and knowledge transfer. The creation of regional-international research teams that explore our common problems will not only serve to bring together people from different cultures and countries. In addition, there are benefits to be obtained from the work of these teams to weaken of some of the political tensions prevailing in our region, especially building trust.

Education diplomacy provides numerous opportunities in terms of presenting information, even the latest data and scientific results on the problems of the Mediterranean region, which we have mentioned above, to international decision makers. As you know, the priority of science, especially in terms of sustainable development problems, has been accepted in the Agenda 21 program by international organizations such as the United Nations. In this context, it has been recommended that the sustainable development policies and strategies of the United Nations and other international institutions be based on science and know-how technologies.

During the 20th century, science and education gradually became international activities. Especially the problems that have arisen in the last 50 years are such that no country can solve them alone. Therefore, it is necessary to intensify the interaction of education and research at the regional and global level. Since the establishment of the United Nations system, mechanisms have been established that incorporate science into decision-making processes. Indeed, today, engineering, medicine, health services, as well as research in these fields of humanities are activities that are central to the solution of many social and political problems

faced by the states of the region. If we want to make a real and lasting impact in our region, we must intensify our educational diplomacy activities in these areas.

Education provides us with platforms will enable the next generation to be well educated on issues that are critical to the future of human beings, such as sustainable development, peace and human rights. Diplomacy offers numerous skills for the careful communication of ideas between different cultures and nations and effective use of knowledge in its essence. Educational diplomacy is a dynamic and powerful tool that will positively impact our world. In this respect, we should stand behind every initiative that will develop education and research regionally and strengthen the international dimension of these activities.

# Leading Internationalization of Higher Education in Canada:
# A Snapshot Introduction

Larissa BEZO[1] , Sonja KNUTSON[2]

Who are the leaders shaping internationalization of higher education (IHE) in Canada today? The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) surveyed membership in the fall of 2021 and the results provide a snapshot in time of the characteristics and responsibilities of Canada's internationalization leadership – a snapshot taken eighteen months into navigating the global pandemic. The results were presented at EURIE 2022 by CBIE in collaboration with Memorial University.

## Respondent Characteristics

Survey respondents identified as the leader of internationalization in their sector, from across the country and diversity of institutional type and size. They are closely split in terms of gender identification, with no leaders identified as non-binary, but a majority being part of equity deserving groups. The vast majority hold a graduate level degree and are more than 45 years old. Two thirds had been in the position five years or less, and in most cases they had a predecessor in the same position. Prior to becoming a leader of internationalization, almost two thirds had occupied an administrative position at an education institution.There was a huge range of diversity in the job titles and reporting structures.

## A Mandate to Transform the Institution?

Respondents were asked about whether they had been given a responsbility to transform the institution. The results showed 87% of respondents are tasked with a transformational mandate, though only a slight majority were actually resourced to do so. The respondents identified lack of: faculty support,  a culture of change, , and overall resourcing and staff support as the primary challenges they faced, in order of frequency. When asked about challenges to their operational mandate, leaders identified resources (budget and staff) as well as lack of overall support by the rest of the institution. Finally, about half identified the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals as being part of their mandate at their instituion.

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**Leadership Priorities**

The following represents the list, in order of priority, of leadership across Canada:

1. Leading internationalization
2. International student recruitment and enrolment management
3. Future of internationalizaiton
4. International strategic partnerships
5. Strategic planning
6. Navigating geo-political complexity
7. Risk management
8. Decolonizing international education
9. Ethics of internationalizaiton

This ranking of issues was of great interest to the authors, as many of our collegial conversations in Canada do address the topics of decolonization and ethical internationalization. It is possible that Canadian leaders feel comfortable they "know enough" regarding those topics and from the ranking we note the issues that they feel are most important are their leadership role, and how to recruit and retain international students.

**Discussion of Emerging Issues**

The characteristics of internationalization leaders show a major difference when compared to academic leadership overall in Canada. Cukier et al (2021) found only 13.3% of Canadian academic leadership are racialized people, compared with 23.3% of the overall population of Canada. The CBIE survey showed 28% of respondents identifying as racialized. This finding is quite striking, and may be explained by Cukier et al's 2021 finding that 22.2% of racialized senior leaders in Canada had a title with "equity", "diversity", or "international" in the title.

One area that is not well-studied in Canada is the number of academic leaders who do not identify as either male or female. We note that the CBIE data shows 53% male and 47% female leadership. This is a strong showing of gender parity but interestingly, even though non-binary was an option for respondents, none selected the option. Future research should seek to understand why no internationalization leaders identify as non-binary across the country.

Another emerging issue from the data show that leadership in our field is aging, and while Canada does not have a mandatory retirement age, we do need to be considering succession planning. Further research into how institutions are prioritizing the preparation of the next generation of internationalization leadership is key to how Canada as a whole will advance IHE in the future. From a strategic human resources planning perspective within institutions, this is a critical consideration given that almost two thirds of internationalization leaders previously occupied an administrative position at an education institution (either their current institution or a different one).

A further issue is the lack of alignment in titles and reporting structures which shows that many institutions are still not sure how IHE leadership should be placed within the institution. The respondents were provided with a list of titles such as Director, Executive Director, Dean, Associate Vice President, Vice President, Vice Provost. All those titles were selected with 19% selecting the option "other". This means that nearly one in five respondents had a unique, different title than the list provided. In terms of reporting, respondents identified their direct supervisor as the President, Provost, Vice Provost and Vice President Research, with more than one third indicating a different reporting structure than the above, and in some instances, a dual reporting relationship existed at the senior level which further complicated the role. One area of future research could examine the differences that a leader reporting to a Provost or President, compared to a Vice-Provost will have in terms of access to transformative decision-making ability. Through a debrief on the survey that CBIE hosted with Canadian internationalization leaders in late fall 2021, it was noted by several leaders that they are increasingly engaging with equity and diversity leads within their institutions in advancing their transformational mandates.

An area for further research would be an exploration of the key institutional leadership relationships (both formal and informal) that internationalization leaders cultivate within their institutions and that are identified as critical by them for successfully advancing their transformational mandates. This research could help to shed light on the extent to which organizational/structural design within an institution meaningfully impacts upon the transformational mandate of leaders.

Linked to the above-noted research are important considerations of resourcing and support related to mandates to transform institutions. Whether a leader is resourced and supported to transform the institution is an area for further research, especially at this time in Canada when there is a major institutional focus on trauma-informed transformation and righting past wrongs for Indigenous peoples and equity deserving populations. With such great change occurring on campuses across the country, is the change that internationalization can deliver something to which institutions are fully committed? The data seems to suggest that while leaders have been engaged to transform the insitution, resourcing is inconsistent and needs to be considered from a longer-term perspective in order for transformation to be impactful and sustainable.

The final issue is how leaders have listed their priorities – with their own work of leading as well as international student recruitment and enrolment in the top two. This finding may be reflective of the particular point in time that the survey was administered. Further research is needed to understand whether the respondents' reported priority ranking is reflective of their lived experience at present and reflective of the daily challenges and complexities associated with navigating the global pandemic and the concomitant pressures arising from fiscal constraint – hence the priorities of leading internationalization and international student recruitment and enrolment. Will similar priority rankings be reported by internationalization leaders in a post-pandemic reality?

**Conclusion**

This snapshot in time of the characteristics of Canadian leaders of internationalization has helped us better understand who is leading IHE across the country, how they are resourced and what their top concerns are. The authors hope that it will guide Canadian scholars in the field to further research into the context of internationalization leadership in Canada to deepen our understanding of the issues highlighted. We also see value in comparing the reported inputs of leaders of internationalization across jurisdictions, thus providing a comparative lens and and enhancing our overall understanding of global leadership of internationalization.

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