

Pandemia and Higher Education : lessons learned?

Enrique Lopez Veloso

Director International Office

University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain)

Current situation...

"Students have an extraordinary responsibility this year because, for the first time in living memory, they have the ability to bring institutions down to bankruptcy."

Ben Nelson, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Minerva Schools at Keck Graduate Institute

Scenario

- Preliminary contingency planning began at the University just prior to the virus outbreak in March . The first draft of a series of recommendations had only just been distributed when news of the new virus was received.
- After initially allowing academics to make personal decisions about travel in late March, a ban on all University travel to Asia and a number of other destinations was imposed for the month of April. This ban was subsequently extended for all of May and gradually lifted in June as World Health Organization warnings changed
- The University's partner institution in Asia was also closed for the first two weeks in April.
- The university-wide travel bans resulted in the need for a new strategy to replace face-to-face classes

Scenario

- Given the impossibility of providing face-to-face teaching, lecturers were also required to choose one alternative delivery mode, from the following options: a PowerPoint presentation with synchronized audio track ; or a full video of lectures, consisting of lecturers 'performing' the actual lecture, shots of academics, whiteboards and slides. In addition, all lecturers were asked to choose an electronic means of communication with students from a range of options, including: a regularly monitored asynchronous, online discussion board for students to post messages; a discussion board that was monitored during a particular time-frame; and a chat session or sessions
- Additionally, when the Asian University reopened in April, optional classes were offered with local tutors who presented video tapes of the lectures, and after discussion with lecturers, added their own content and answered questions

Not talking about COVID 19

- The SARS virus first appeared in early 2003. Over the next several months, it spread to more than two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia before the outbreak was contained. By that time, there had been more than 8,000 cases worldwide and nearly 800 deaths.
- In short, it was a significant event both in terms of public health and the global economy. Strictly in economic terms, the recovery period after was somewhere between one and two years with some impacts lingering outside of that window – and that even with a relatively rapid recovery of the Chinese economy at the time.
- It took the better part of two years to see those outbound numbers recover, and SARS became an object lesson as to how a public health crisis can directly affect student mobility.

Same old song?

- Differences 2003/2020
 - We have more technology for communication: zoom, Skype, google duo, hangouts, MS Teams, whatsapp...)
 - COVID is global, SARS had more limited geographical scope. Number of infected and deaths.
 - The governments answer in the same old way (travel ban, lockdown, pouring money on the economy)
 - The universities answer in the same old way (online learning, asking more money for restructuring and adapting)
 - But the world has changed a lot....

Money, money...

On 4 May, the [Coronavirus Global Response pledging event](#) took place and mobilised the impressive amount of €7.4 billion for universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against coronavirus worldwide. The event was convened jointly by the European Union, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom.

To help reach the objectives of the Coronavirus Global Response, the European Commission is committing

- €1 billion in grants
- €400 million in guarantees on loans through reprioritisation of [Horizon 2020](#) (€1 billion)
- [RescEU](#) (€80 million)
- the [Emergency Support Instrument](#) (€150 million)
- [external instruments](#)(€170 million).

Why this is important: Universities play an important role in coronavirus related research, development and innovation and many are involved in projects including through the EU programmes such as Horizon 2020.

Economic output ...

- On 6 May, the European Commission presented its [Spring Economic Forecast for the EU and the Eurozone](#). As feared, the coronavirus pandemic is set to have an unprecedented impact on the economy and a historic recession seems unavoidable. Despite the [massive efforts taken by the EU and member states](#) to mitigate the economic impact of the confinement measures, projections foresee a contraction of the EU's economy by 7.5% for 2020 and a 6% increase in 2021. While the economic activity in all EU countries is terribly hit, recovery is expected to be uneven and with different paces. This will not only depend on the evolution of the pandemic in the different countries and regions, but also on the structure of their economies. Due to the interdependency of the economies across the EU and beyond, the development in one country is likely to have effects on others as well.

Why this is important: the consequences of an economic downturn usually arrive with a little delay to the public sector, as resources get scarcer due to lower tax income and increased needs for public spending. A looming economic recession is bound to impact university funding as well. Horizon Europe program is planning to invest 100 Bn Euros in research for the period 2021-2027

Online learning? any time, anywhere, anyone

- With the rise of the Internet and mobile connectivity across the world, online universities promise increased access to higher education, particularly for marginalised groups that have not been well-served by traditional models (MOOCs)
- Regardless of the pandemic's effects, online education has been on the rise. Nearly 3.3 million college students, or 1 out of every 6, took only online classes in 2018, the last year for which the figure is available, according to Jeff Seaman, director of Bay View Analytics, which tracks online education. That was the highest percentage ever.
- COVID 19 sent 200 million students worldwide to online learning in 2 months.

Some questions about online

- There's the problem of reliable internet access. Millions of students returning to their families in rural areas [have no broadband access there](#), making online courses impossible for them. And as the wider shutdown caused by the virus cripples the economy, even households with broadband service might find it harder to afford if parents lose jobs
- Developing effective online courses is not cheap. To engage and motivate remote students, particularly those who have not studied before, or who are returning to education later in life after a long break, a substantial investment in bespoke materials and delivery methods is required.
- Frequent and meaningful interaction between students and instructors is critical to final student outcomes and satisfaction. Some online providers believe that such interaction can be provided solely online, for example through remote conferencing and more interactive digital teaching software. However it can be difficult and expensive to achieve in practice. The evidence to date suggests that, in aggregate, students still do better with faceto-face teaching, rather than online, especially first generation and adult learners.
- It appears that many employers retain a high degree of skepticism about the quality of online university education

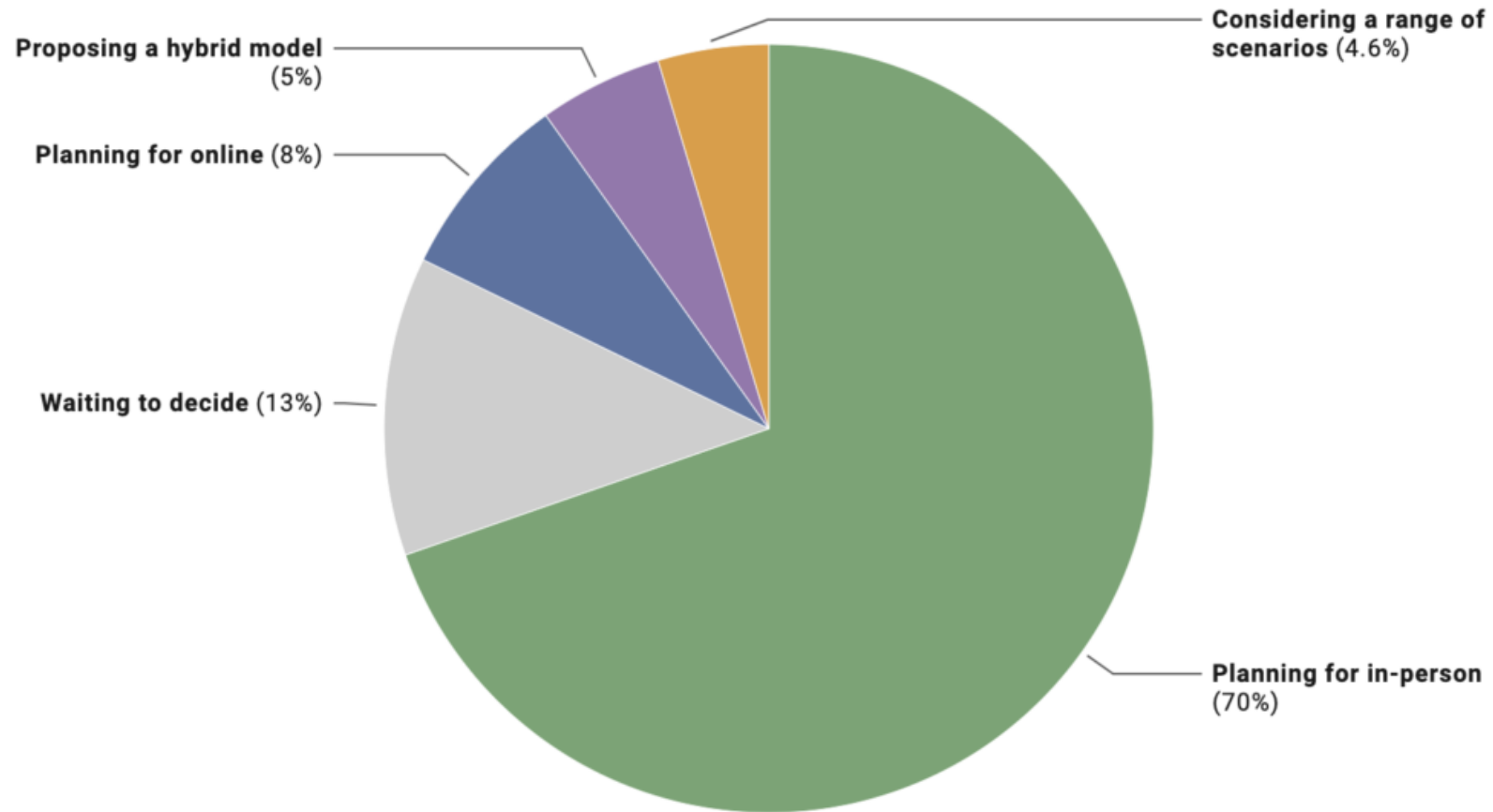
Online learning?

- About a quarter of high school seniors who have already picked a college are [reconsidering where to enroll](#), a survey by the higher education research firm SimpsonScarborough reports; 20 percent say it's likely or highly likely they won't go at all.
- Online education experts say there's a big difference between classes that were designed to be digital from the beginning and what's happening now, which they describe as a product more of panic than planning. (Hetchinger report, May 2020)
- “If I wanted to take online classes, I would pay a lot less,”
- “We're paying full tuition to get an incomplete education.”

Lesson learned?

- In 1945 there were 500 universities across the globe. Today there are more than 10,000.
- For centuries, the higher education model remained relatively static and narrow—a select group of students studying a prescribed curriculum under the guidance of a learned professor or tutor
- in 2019, for the first time the world had more people over the age of 65 than under the age of five. HEIs must adapt to new customers.
- "When societies and students are interfacing with institutions and not getting what they are paying for, there is going to be a reckoning."

Tracking college intentions for programme delivery, September 2020. Source: Chronicle of Higher Education



Coming back to my first slide...

"Students have an extraordinary responsibility this year because, for the first time in living memory, they have the ability to bring institutions down to bankruptcy."

"They can vote with their feet in a way they have never been able to do before – opting to slip out of college for a year can literally shut down an institution. For the first time, the student's role is that of the determinant partner – determining what universities should be doing and which ones should have the right to serve them going forward.

Ben Nelson, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Minerva Schools at Keck Graduate Institute

“The Age of Acuarious”

“The overall position for international education is that it’s going to take a massive hit. I think that we’re looking at at least a five-year recovery period in terms of the global numbers of people who move between countries for education.”

“That the international student market will become “a **buyer’s market**” with institutions and schools competing harder for a smaller population of prospective students.”

(Simon Marginson, the director of the Centre for Global Higher Education at the University of Oxford)

“The Age of Aquarrious”

“Since students are now in a stronger position to choose how they wish to be educated, higher education institutions are going to have to pay more attention to student preferences. **The era of the student consumer has arrived**, and institutions have to become far more responsive to what they want. We cannot take student preferences for granted, and we need to invest in understanding them. When it comes to the delivery of education, **it’s no longer about us; it’s about them.**” (Gary Hepburn, Dean of the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education)

“Students will take ownership over their learning, understanding more about how they learn, what they like, and what support they need they will personalise their learning, even if the systems around them won’t.” (Andreas Schleicher, head of education at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD))

Conclusion

“Higher education institutions must "challenge their assumptions", "Unless we do that, disrupt, and are willing to take risks, as soon as conditions return to some sort of normal, we may try to become the same as we were before. **This crisis is telling us we no longer have the luxury of assuming things will be as they used to be.**" Francisco Marmolejo, QF's Education Advisor. (New schools of thought: Innovative models for delivering higher education)

Thank you very much for your attention