

CONCEPTUAL AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS) TO THE MODEL OF TRAINING A SUCCESSFUL SPECIALIST FORMATION DURING A COVID PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

In the conditions of dynamic changes of social and economic systems and economic recession, the problems of formation of model of preparation of the successful expert are actualized. The COVID pandemic is another example of the shock impact on the market environment, which necessitates a change in the conceptual and innovative approaches of higher education institutions to the training of professionals. The purpose of the article was to supplement the neoliberal concept and approach of higher education institutions to the formation of a model for training a successful specialist in a COVID pandemic. The research methodology is based on a neoliberal approach to the management of higher education institutions in order to complement the theoretical and practical concepts of increasing the competitiveness of universities through risk management, which provides stability, flexibility and adaptability. A mixed research method was used to collect data: in 65 higher education institutions in Ukraine, Poland and Belarus online surveys has collected information on disaster management and / or business continuity planning in crisis conditions. The results prove the effectiveness of plans and strategies to overcome, counter and mitigate the risks associated with emergencies, in particular the spread of the pandemic on a global scale. The main advantages of the developed plans are forecasting of cooperation, resources and centers of responsibility that as a whole provides stability in the conditions of crisis. The determination of the management staff of higher education institutions determines the level of sustainability and efficiency of emergency planning. Involvement of all stakeholders during the pandemic, Establishing feedback has a positive effect on the effectiveness of decision-making and mitigation of the effects of the pandemic.

The theoretical value of the article is to study the neoliberal concept of free economic management in a new context through the spread of the pandemic and complement the neoliberal approach with a risk-oriented approach to management.

Keywords: Innovative teaching practice; Adaptability of HEIs; Resistance of specialists training models; Risk management of HEIs.

INTRODUCTION

In the conditions of dynamic changes of social and economic systems and economic recession, the problems of formation of model of preparation of the successful expert are actualized. The COVID pandemic is another example of the shock impact on the market environment, which necessitates a change in the conceptual and innovative approaches of higher education institutions to the training of professionals. External shocks lead to a rethinking of the role of higher education institutions and the integration of innovative teaching and university management practices that meet the new requirements of the labor market and socio-economic system. The pandemic made it possible to understand the importance of risk management and contingency planning for higher education institutions (Izumi et al., 2020). Under the widespread practice of neoliberalism to organize the activities of higher education institutions as a commercial firm on the basis of a free competitive market and corporatization, universities were not ready to manage the crisis situation (Izumi et al., 2020) related to COVID. Higher education institutions have begun training to operate in new conditions (Teixeira & Mota, 2020), which form new rules and regulations for training. Open universities and non-formal education institutions are becoming more common, increasing competition among traditional higher education institutions. For example, in Europe and North America, the number of students has decreased due to the closure of campuses (Teixeira & Mota, 2020), which has affected the social significance of classical universities.

The reduction in the number of students in particular affects the financial stability of higher education institutions (Alvarez, 2020), which are forced to cut costs.

The lack of a risk-based management system in developing higher education institutions, crisis management and management skills (stress, time, resources), especially in higher education institutions, is one of the challenges in a pandemic (Salamzadeh & Dana, 2020). New challenges of the external environment (reduction of mobility, level of international cooperation, funding) cause problems in the management and training of successful specialists in higher education institutions.

Thus, the lack of risk management in the practice of higher education institutions leads to a lack of flexibility, adaptability and resistance of higher educational institutions as a commercial structure. Changes in teaching, decision-making and information exchange have affected the effectiveness of management and training, shifting the emphasis from professional development to university maintenance and risk reduction.

The purpose of the article is to supplement the neoliberal concept by developing a conceptual-innovative risk-oriented approach of free economic zone to the formation of a model of training a successful specialist in a COVID pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education and HEIs are among the areas of society most affected by the spread of the pandemic, which requires the development of innovative approaches and management policies (Farzad et al., 2020).

The scientific literature actively discusses innovative strategies for the formation of a model of training a successful specialist in a pandemic COVID (Teixeira & Mota, 2020; Toquero, 2021), the problems of higher education management (Izumi et al., 2020), academic management and training process, new approaches to teaching methods (Abdullah et al., 2020), changing teaching processes and quality assurance factors (Ramirez, 2020; Pham &

Ho, 2020). For example, Abdullah et al. (2020) propose a process-oriented framework for addressing the sustainability of higher education institutions in a pandemic, including: “metacapability” of HEIs (knowledge, resource availability, social resources, and power/responsibility) and resilience stages (anticipation, coping and adaptation)”.

La Velle et al. (2020) have developed a new model of digital pedagogy and are discussing new opportunities, threats to the educational environment after the pandemic. Bonk et al. (2020) formulate new paradigms of learning and assessment in higher education based on local adaptation and argue for the development of innovation in higher education, changing the role of teachers, expanding learning models and the emergence of new ideas.

Thus, a review of the literature proves the importance of integration into the model of training a successful specialist risk-oriented approach, risk management and project management, teamwork (Izumi et al., 2020; Ramirez, 2020). Neoliberalism, which has been actively used by higher education institutions over the last 30 years to ensure competitiveness (Giroux, 2002; Giroux, 2010; Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017), needs to be complemented by a new concept of university governance.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the Temporal Phases approach based on structured interviews. “The process model illustrates the temporal aspects of the phenomenon in question. Data tables are organized temporally in this method” (Salamzadeh, 2020).

This study is built on the neoliberal approach to the management of higher education institutions (Giroux, 2002; Giroux, 2010) in order to complement the theoretical and practical concepts of increasing the competitiveness of universities through risk management, which provides sustainability, flexibility and adaptability.

TABLE 1 QUESTIONS TO ASSESS THE ORGANIZATIONAL PREPAREDNESS	
Key determinant and question	Scale
Emergency management unit: Does the emergency management office exist permanently in your university?	Yes/No
Business continuity planning (BCP): Has your university had a general BCP to prepare for an emergency?	Yes/No
(a) If yes, does this BCP also target a biological hazard / pandemic?	Yes/No
(b) If yes, has the simulation exercise been conducted in advance?	Yes/No

A mixed research method combining qualitative and quantitative data was used for data collection. The research process is described below:

The first step is to understand organizational readiness and response. To this end, higher education institutions have collected information on disaster management and/or business continuity planning in crisis conditions. The operational aspects and roles of various departments for counteracting/mitigating the consequences of natural disasters and emergencies have been studied. Organizational data was collected based on specific questions on response guidelines, information exchange and decision-making in higher education

institutions on COVID-19 mitigation methods. Tables 1 and 2 list the questions, which were asked.

Data analysis was conducted at the organizational level based on the number of universities, not the number of respondents. This is because in some cases there was more than one respondent from a particular institution. In the case where several responses were received from one university, this was counted as one response only if all responses were the same. If the answers were different, the answers were not analyzed.

TABLE 2 QUESTIONS TO ASSESS THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID19	
Key determinant and question	Scale
Response guidance: Was the response guidance and instruction communicated quickly from the HQ to faculty and staff?	Yes/No
Information sharing: Was the information sharing in university open and smooth enough?	Yes/No
Decision-making: Was the decision-making process regarding change in academic activities timely?	Yes/No

The second stage of the study revealed the level of the relationship between organizational readiness and the determinants of the organizational response of higher education institutions to the pandemic. The results of the study (yes/no, coded to 1/0) were analyzed by using Speraman's correlation matrix, which was evaluated using statistical software IBM SPSS 22.0. Speraman's correlation technique was used due to the presence of nominal data on the evaluation of respondents' answers (yes/no).

TABLE 3 QUESTIONS TO ASSESS THE COVID-19 RESPONSE ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES	
Key determinant	Research question
Response activities at the organizational level	What kind of response activities were taken by your university against COVID-19? (multiple choice question)
Identified challenges at the organizational level	What kind of challenges did you find in your university's preparedness and response? (multiple choice question / top 3)
Preparedness lessons at the organizational level	Based on your experience, what kind of preparedness measures would you recommend for the University in the future? (Short text answer)
Responses activities at the personal level	What were your personal response activities against COVID-19 pandemic? (multiple choice question / top 3)
Identified challenges at the personal level	If you switched over to online teaching, what were the key challenges? (multiple choice question / top 3)
Preparedness lessons at the personal level	If you can bring one key lesson from the pandemic for your future professional preparation, what would be that? (short text answer)

In the third stage, conclusions were obtained on the readiness of higher education institutions for crisis situations and recommendations for future crisis management were

developed based on organizational and personal response measures and challenges in COVID 19. Table 3 lists the survey questions developed for the purposes identified in the third phase of the study.

The research was conducted through an online survey of 150 responses from more than 65 universities in Ukraine and universities with which higher education institutions of Ukraine have student exchange programs and have established cooperation (Poland, Belarus). The majority of answers (75%) were received from the Ukraine. Thus, the majority of respondents participated in the educational process in the field of higher education and/or conducted research under different types of management of higher education institutions.

RESULTS

In Figure 1 it is shown the organizational readiness, which demonstrate that 37% of respondents from the surveyed universities state the absence of a permanent/special office for crisis management (emergencies). 85% stated that higher education institutions do not have a general plan for business continuity in case of emergencies.

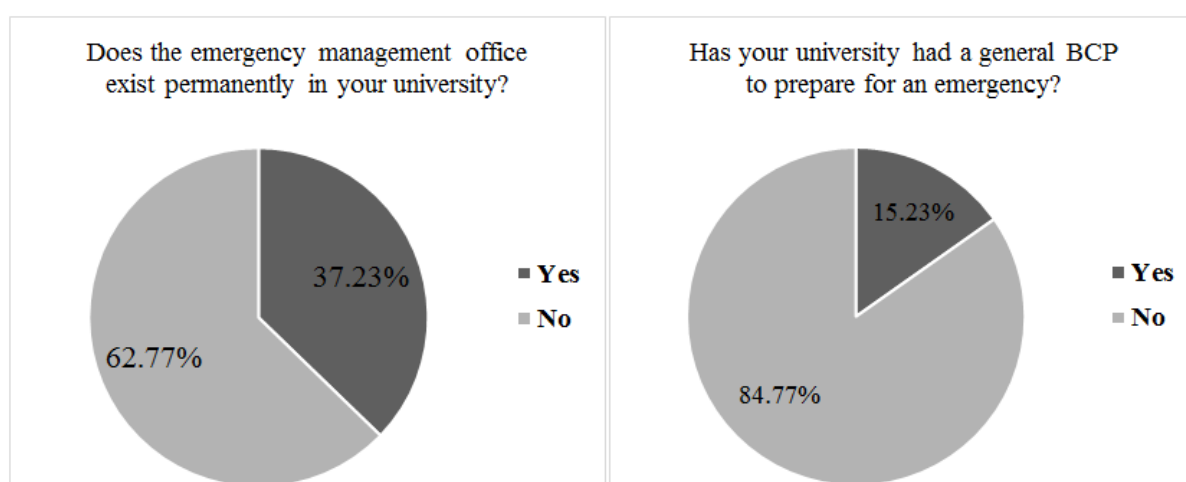


FIGURE 1

ORGANIZATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DETERMINANTS FOR THE 51 DEFINED UNIVERSITIES

In universities with a developed BCP, 65.55% of plans do not cover biohazard and pandemic risk management and 87.74% of plans do not transfer any advanced simulation training lectures or training. Thus, in Ukraine, Poland and Belarus, higher education institutions are largely unprepared for a global pandemic such as COVID-19.

Regarding the determinants of organizational response, more than 70% of respondents said that instructions, information exchange and decision-making processes were timely and open. However, 30% of respondents said that higher education institutions urgently need to improve these areas (Figure 2).

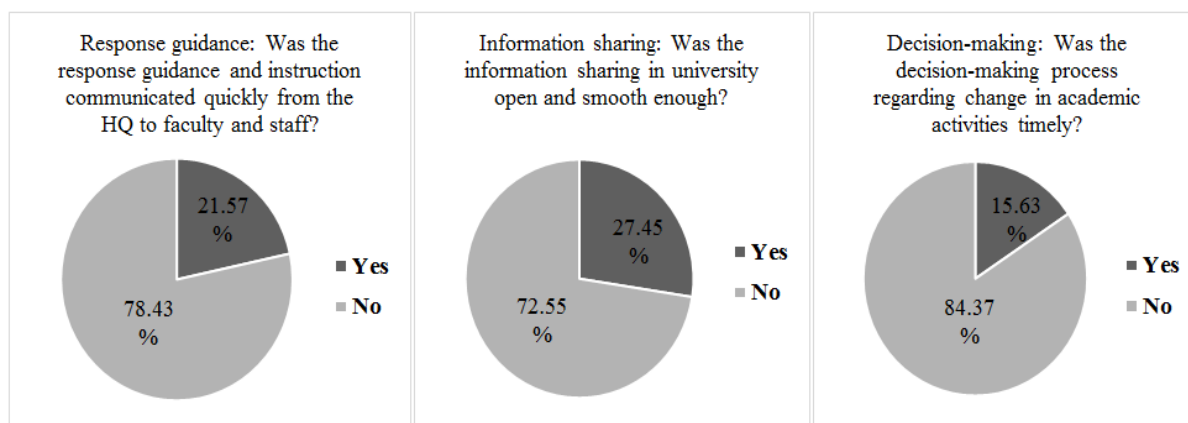


FIGURE 2

ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE DETERMINANTS FOR THE 51 DEFINED UNIVERSITIES

Respondents were asked to choose three key issues that their higher education institutions faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main problems identified were the lack of proper pandemic preparedness and improved learning processes that could increase pandemic preparedness. The study found that half of the universities that responded did not have risk management plans that correlated with the results of organizational readiness issues (Table 4).

Determinant name	Emergency management unit	Business continuity planning	Quick response guidance	Smooth information sharing	Timely decision making
Emergency management unit	1				
Business continuity planning	0.57	1			
Quick response guidance	0.27	0.34	1		
Smooth information sharing	0.21	0.47	0.53	1	
Timely decision making	0.03	0.19	0.43	0.71	1

Other issues identified in the survey included changing teaching methods to online lectures and working from home. Most higher education institutions have never operated in a

global pandemic, and the transition from personal teaching in the classroom to online teaching has become a serious problem that has created significant barriers for many higher education institutions. In particular, in the course, in which laboratory experiments and work in the studio are conducted, it was quite difficult to make changes immediately. On the other hand, it has also enabled universities to invest in the implementation of an innovative education system that can support teaching, interaction and discussion in a variety of ways and methods. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the category of "Others" the importance of strengthening Internet access for students and teachers was emphasized.

DISCUSSION

The transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning has led to transformational changes in the learning process and management of the learning process in higher education institutions for teachers, students and administrative staff. This study confirms the importance of a risk-based approach in the practice of higher education institutions and the development of business continuity plans to ensure flexibility. A survey of 200 students in India found that 74% of respondents liked to study online. The most common reason for positive perception (49%) is learning flexibility. On the other hand, the biggest disadvantage of the considered online forms of learning was the lack of a common learning environment in the context of online learning (Lall & Singh, 2020). That is why business-planning processes have suffered, because of which higher education institutions have become less flexible in management. Despite a certain increase in the flexibility of the learning process by students, De Oliveira Araujo et al. (2020) emphasizes the negative impact of COVID-19 on the mental and emotional health of all participants in the learning process, which is manifested in a reduction in the level of motivation, cohesion and interest of students and staff. Many students face anxiety and panic because of the many negative effects of the pandemic that affect the effectiveness of curricula, courses, assignments, seminars, and dissertation defense. In addition, lack of self-discipline, appropriate learning materials and learning environment are serious problems in the case of self-isolation (Bao, 2020). As a result, the development of emotional intelligence, which influences the organizational innovations of employees of organizations (Tajpour et al., 2018), should become an element of training programs and plans in the simulation of emergency situations. Most universities have no experience in dealing with a pandemic such as COVID-19, as opposed to responding to natural disasters. Thus, this is their first significant experience with changing styles, systems and methodologies of education, research and promotion of society. This sends a clear message about the need to prepare for both frequent and unfamiliar disasters, such as chemical, technological and biological disasters, which have major consequences.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of plans and strategies to address and mitigate the risks associated with emergencies, including the global spread of a pandemic. The main advantages of the developed plans are forecasting of cooperation, resources and centers of responsibility that as a whole provides stability in the conditions of crisis. The determination of the management staff of higher education institutions determines the level of sustainability and efficiency of emergency planning. Involving all stakeholders during the pandemic period, providing feedback has a positive effect on the effectiveness of decision-making and mitigation of the pandemic. Among the negative consequences was the

unwillingness of the teaching staff to move to online learning due to the lack of business continuity plans for higher education institutions as a commercialized firm. This affects the motivation and emotional state of students.

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