Environmental

Our lives are guided by the rules, regulations and societal pressures that exist in everyday activities. Teaching and learning in higher education are also shaped by these social conditions. In Australasia, this means our quality of life and how we live can be seen as a direct result of state, governmental and institutional policies. This year's environmental trends focus on how we live and learn in our institutional spaces.

Design of physical spaces

Having emerged from the pandemic, we have moved to a more dynamic work environment, where many academic institutions are rethinking their delivery practices. Institutions are revisiting the pros and cons of online exams and looking at alternative ways of delivering instruction (i.e., face-to-face, hybrid and other flexible delivery modes). For learners, this may mean attending specialised or limited sessions on campus, whilst using technology for the remainder of their studies. These potential changes in delivery practices can impact students, staff and institutions and inevitably society in different ways. Considering a reduction in physically delivered pedagogical practices means changing institutional infrastructure to support the learner experience. This also means rethinking and possibly retooling our pedagogies to leverage technology.

The need for flexible infrastructure that adjusts based on needs requires institutions to investigate how remote work may be used to administer and manage the academic services attached to teaching.

In addition to the learner experience, concerns as to how academics continue to deliver and achieve great outcomes using existing infrastructure is also important. The need for flexible infrastructure that adjusts based on needs requires institutions to investigate how remote work may be used to administer and manage the academic services attached to teaching. The possibilities of transitioning student-to-faculty interactions to a more ad-hoc delivery can have both advantages and disadvantages. Examples of likely solutions that meet these design specifications include virtual consultations, open-plan spaces and hot-desking. James Cook University (2021) and the University of South Australia (n.d.) have remote work policies, and Western Sydney University (2023) is piloting bookable, flexible workspaces for staff. Other universities are considering similar solutions, and some are pursuing them with added vigour. Still, some are still in the process of determining the value flexible workspaces, whilst others have either dismissed this approach because of union discussions. All in all, the discussion of how institutions will plan and use physical spaces in the future will continue to reflect the socio-economic status in the region, as some of these solutions work for some cost savings, but for academic work and morale, it is not yet clear if it is welcomed (Patty, 2021).

Diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives

Institutions also are considering including diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives into every aspect of their goods and services. DEI initiatives are increasingly being incorporated into student support services and pedagogical delivery. Supporting the cognitive needs of students is now reflective of today's societal norms. Unlike physical disabilities, abilities such as neurodiversity are not that obvious and may not be disclosed. To support these DEI practices, budgets for national centres to lead the charge could be a systematic way to delegate this vision.

The question of the social acceptance of diversity is answered by the support provided as a core practice by individual institutions. Most decisions on DEI practices are made after a series of consultations with those who are affected. Moving from consultation to actualisation can be difficult and sometimes less pragmatic for students and academics alike. Solutions that use a more deliberative democratic approach can create a more inclusive environment for all in the higher education sector. This extends to the tools

and islands of relevant practice when it comes to digitization of teaching and learning that are individually implemented but not supported by institutional policy or procedures. Higher education institutions such as the University of Tokyo (2022), Fiji National University (2023) and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (2023) each understand what this means for their students. As such, these institutions and others recognise the need to incorporate DEI practices into business as usual to hopefully embrace the flexibility needed to lead the field towards growth and change.

Sustainable practices and the Sustainable Development Goals

The last consideration is each institution's response to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Organisations are now looking actively at sustainability as a core part of their business without truly acknowledging what it means for business. There is a fear that if we do not say we are sustainable, our market credibility will decline. As education is moving from just being about acquiring technical skills to acquiring broader employability skills (e.g., critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving), embedding sustainability demands an analysis of our teaching practices. In weighing the value, the cost of being sustainable to invoke policies and procedures, in some instances, far outweighs the cost of being in business. The use of newer technologies, such as Internet of things and AI, to better manage the infrastructure used to keep the facilities going is a start (CDOTrends Editors, 2021). Additionally, the design of the educational offerings reflects the student demands without a keen look at the infrastructure and associated policies. Planning how institutional resources, which are not finite, are used conservatively towards long-term priorities means embarking on methods of reuse and not just appending the "co" prefix throughout institutional communications (e.g., co-design).

Concluding remarks

Student feedback on their experiences will guide how institutional leaders make decisions based on existing rules and regulations. Transformational changes trending towards how to deliver learning in physical spaces, how to accommodate DEI initiatives and the role of sustainability will guide student and institutional behaviours. Aligning these trends with current occurrences may have an impact on academics and their workloads even as we consider how students' needs and behaviours drive institutional offerings.

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