



7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7)

Students' Forum: 11–15 May 2019 | Rectors' Conference: 12–14 May 2019

Bucharest, Romania

Higher Education Taking Action towards the Sustainable Development Goals:
Perspectives from Asia and Europe

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Digital Learning and Sustainable Development Goals: An Alternative Way for Effective and Sustainable Life Learning

“Digital learning is an alternative way to supports the global flow of knowledge in a more effective and sustainable way”

Internationalisation of higher education developed in line with a massive flow of globalization, that embodies rapid technological and informational advancement. The flow of globalization itself leading a new challenge and opportunity at the same time. In order to address the globalization in higher education, I believe that internationalisation of higher education (IoHE) is something inevitable. As Knight put it, IoHE is “...the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 11). Knight’s definition of internationalisation translated by higher education leader as a process of exchanging knowledge and culture through inbound or outbound activity. One of the problems with student mobility whether inbound or outbound activity is the financial supports. For some certain point, mobility is a high-priced activity, and somehow it wasn’t equitable. However, globalization itself is bringing up a new approach of digital learning by utilizing technological advancement. This new approach of e- learning is not only costless but also sustainable.

Affordability of Knowledge Mobility

Affordability of high-quality education is one of the primary goals of the SDGs program. I try to examine the term of ‘affordability’ in a more substantial way. Global target of SDG4 indicates that by 2030 there are an increasing number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills in order to get decent job (UNDP, 2015). In order to achieve these goals, various action has been implemented in an institutional level such as inviting international guest lecturers, international seminar or a training program. This program could be inbound or outbound activities. In my opinion, using technology could contribute in advancing knowledge mobility in a more effective way. Pedagogical content of digital learning approach could be something revolutionary in higher education teaching and

learning process. The advancement of technology in education is also affecting the process of interaction, for example enabling relationships that don't depend on the co-presence of participants (Dean, 2015, p. 239). This method will be more affordable for both institution and student to organize an intercultural exchange of knowledge.

Digital Evolution and Quality of Education

As Holmes and Gardner indicates, e-learning refers to "...the use of multimedia technologies and the internet to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchange and collaboration" (Bordbar, 2012, p. 333). According to this definition, the use of e-learning process had a positive impact on knowledge mobility with a very minimum cost. The program is also critical to create equitable education for all, as what FAO did to share their online course on SDGs indicators in 2018, the courses can be accessed freely and e-learning become a principal delivery method with almost 500.000 users of e-learning courses (FAO, 2018). Digital learning can also benefit individuals who are disadvantage by geographic, physical or social circumstances, providing them better educational opportunities via e-learning (Bordbar, 2012).

Parallel with Holmes and Gardner, Trey Traviesa also put multimedia learning experience as the future of the university and claimed that multi-channel (digital-physical) education is critical to embedding multidisciplinary curricula and moving quickly to innovate (Sawahel, 2019). In this case, I believe that there must be a transformative way regarding the global flow of knowledge. Digital learning enabling SDG4 indicators such as inclusivity of higher education, access of quality and equitable system must be applied in our educational system. The growing intention of virtual universities by government in developing country like Africa and Asia, realizing that transformation of knowledge mobility in the digital era can give new hope for some issues like massification and quality education for developing countries (Diallo, 2019). On the other hand, I admit that the use of technology in educational system has its own problems. Teacher-student relations cannot be more effective than face-to-face. But we are facing the future of quality education for all with no one left behind. I think equitable access to education is the most important point of SDG4 for a better educational system. Especially developing countries need a better solution for equitable access to education. The Virtual University of Pakistan have a vision to become technology-based university that improves access to higher education while maintaining the highest quality standards of education (Virtual University of Pakistan).

Conclusion

The rapid globalization in recent times has become a challenge, but also opened up opportunities one way or another. Education is no exception. In our hyper-connected world higher education is being pushed to transform its system to be competitive. I think we all agreed that everyone should have a better education

for a better life, but affordability of quality education is something that we cannot see for some developing countries in Asia or Africa. Besides, an equitable system is also critical in higher education system to ensure that all student have the same access to reach their potential. In this case, I believe that digital learning for lifelong learning could be an alternative, effective and sustainable way to become a solution for some of those issues. I challenge policymakers and university leaders to take this matter into account to boosting the quality of education for better educational future. Conducting multi-channel curricula in higher education or concerning the progress of virtual university, is one of possible contribution for the more sustainable education that equitable and affordable for all with no one left behind. That's why I believe that digital learning is an alternative way to supports the global flow of knowledge in a more effective and sustainable way.

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