Research: Seven priorities for higher education in Indonesia post-pandemic

September 5 2023, by Danielle Logan-Fleming, Chris Campbell, David Bruce Porter and Hazel Jones

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COVID-19 radically shifted the way we work and learn. It presented an opportunity for institutions to rethink the future of higher education.

Our work through the [Contextualizing Horizon project](#) with the Australasian Society of Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) uncovered some powerful trends in Asia Pacific, including Indonesia, to help us prepare and plan for what awaits the higher education sector just beyond the horizon.

Seven post-pandemic priorities

Even before the pandemic, [political and financial pressures](#) motivated institutions to look at alternative models of learning, such as short certification courses from an accredited university (microcredentials), to both expand access to education and generate revenue.

The pandemic also forced universities to address long-standing issues around mental health disparities and digital accessibility, which became more widespread during the pandemic.

These trends reveal a shift in the sector and, consequently, an understanding that for higher education to stay relevant, institutions must revisit models of learning and the very design of the university experience.

In light of these changes, our project identified seven technology and practice priorities for higher education in the Asia Pacific region.

1. Redefining pedagogical practices

Panelists questioned long-standing practices including exams and lectures and their continued relevance in the modern educational context.

Student-centered approaches, rather than teacher-centric approaches, for instance, are quickly becoming the norm. For example, the Australia-

based [Transforming Exams project](#) aims to enable authentic experiences, empowering learners by using discipline-specific computerized e-tools during campus-based exams.

[One study](#) suggests that active learning approaches and authentic assessments lead to a more engaging student learning environment, promote employability and improve [student learning](#).

To accommodate this, it is likely that the [role of campus spaces will evolve](#). Learners may take advantage of opportunities to gather on campus and face-to-face settings—but also leverage social technologies to enable them to learn through networks, and sharing and collaboration, via online communities.

Indonesian and other Australasian institutions will also need to consider ways of building staff capabilities and confidence in these practices and adopt policy and guidelines around their use to help ensure widespread adoption.

2. Self-care and well-being for staff and students

Throughout the pandemic, both learners and institutional staff experienced frequent lockdowns, social isolation and various economic impacts, which can contribute to [mental and emotional stress](#).

We highlighted issues around workload and burnout for staff. Students, on the other hand, reported experiencing isolation during long-distance learning. This is important for the future as we need to ensure workload returns to pre-pandemic amounts, particularly for staff.

3. Blended models of learning

Blended learning comprises a variety of delivery options, including hybrid or dual delivery learning that mixes online and offline approaches.

New ways of delivering learning opportunities, including live streaming and facilitating online a combination of real-time, flexibly timed, and self-paced activities, have emerged as important competencies for teachers.

Across the world, there has also been discussion on how to improve students' experience with blended learning. In Indonesia, universities are continuing to try these models in various ways.

Co-production of knowledge and experience was the aim of a project in Toba, North Sumatra, Indonesia where adaptive e-learning brought students and lecturers together as a part of a design team to improve learning and marketing performance across the institution.

4. Educational technology infrastructure

As institutions have increasingly incorporated digital technologies, educational technology infrastructure has become a complex ecosystem of equipment, connectivity and applications to support university teaching, administration and research.

Supporting these ecosystems requires investment from universities, not just in terms of equipment and networks but also ensuring the security and support to use these services.

Supporting staff and learners in navigating the ecosystems requires careful consideration in their design and forward thinking regarding how to sustain them into the future.

The [University of Technology Sydney Central building](#) in Australia is an example of this approach.

The facility, designed with learning at its core, features high-capacity learning spaces that enable collaboration and audiovisual capabilities to support learner interaction and teacher facilitation in a variety of blended formats.

5. Accessible content and digital equity

Goal 4 of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)](#) is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Institutions can contribute to this goal through the application of [Universal Design for Learning principles](#) that ensure contents are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and those in financial distress.

Another important aspect is digital equity, defined by the [International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)](#) as "making sure students have equal access to technology, like devices, software and the internet, and that they have trained educators to help them navigate those tools."

Indonesia, however, currently has [slow internet speeds](#) compared to other countries globally, and in 2022, [nearly 50% of adults](#) out of the 275 million population, had no access to internet.

Solving these kinds of connectivity challenges should be an important consideration for governments and institutions in Indonesia.

6. Co-design of higher education

As a practice, co-design brings together industry, teaching staff and learners to redesign learning activities or whole courses.

Co-design methods and philosophies can potentially enable the sector to co-create institutional structures, pathways and supports that address challenges and transform institutions in ways that more equitably represents the needs of organizations, staff, and learners.

One such initiative is the [Co-Design year at the Fulbright University Vietnam](), which engages students in the development of various aspects of the university environment and experience.

7. Microcredentials

Microcredentials may include non-credit bearing courses, short courses and professional learning and industry education.

For example, Australia's RMIT University has developed and curated [a bank of more than 150 career-ready short courses and credentials](), including a number of credentials developed in partnership with industry.

Despite existing policy and infrastructure shortcomings at both the national and institutional levels, the increased diversity of microcredential offerings by local and [international providers]() can help Indonesia accelerate its post pandemic economic recovery by meeting the [increased demand]() for both vocational training and tertiary study abroad opportunities.

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