

"How Does Academic Administrator Manage Teaching and Learning During Crisis in a Private University? - A Conceptual Paper"

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has significantly change how education was carried out. The closure of education institution due to the spread of the virus provides various challenges to academic administrators. They were tasked with ensuring the continuity of the lessons during the pandemic. Academic administrators are required to manage the teaching and learning, they are tasked with creating the new syllabus, providing the technical support, ensuring the well being of the lecturers, and creating new ways of conducting the lessons. There are limited studies of the effect of Covid-19 towards academic administrators. Most of the studies carried out focus on students and teacher/lecturers. This conceptual paper attempts to examine how academic administrators manage teaching and learning during crisis based on the reviews of related existing literature. The paper will conclude with a proposal of recommended research on how academic administrators manage teaching and learning during crisis.

Keywords: (academic administrator, crisis, crisis management)

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary higher education landscape is increasingly characterized by its vulnerability to disruptive crises, from global pandemics and natural disasters to political instability and technological failures (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). These events pose an unprecedented challenge to the core mission of universities: the uninterrupted delivery of quality teaching and learning. While all institutions feel this pressure, private universities operate within a unique paradigm defined by intense market competition, heightened student expectations as paying clients, and significant financial precarity (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). This context makes effective academic crisis management not merely an operational concern but a critical imperative for institutional survival, reputation, and the fulfillment of its educational covenant (Temple, 2020).

Within this volatile environment, the role of the academic administrator—encompassing deans, department chairs, program directors, and academic affairs leadership—becomes profoundly complex and pivotal. These individuals are positioned at the crucial nexus between top-level strategic policy and frontline pedagogical execution (Fullan & Scott, 2014). They are tasked with the dual responsibility of interpreting and implementing institutional crisis directives while simultaneously supporting and guiding faculty and students through radical and often unsettling transitions in instructional modes (Marinoni et al., 2020). However, the specific strategies, decision-making processes, and leadership approaches employed by these administrators to steward teaching and learning through such turbulence remain underexplored in a consolidated theoretical framework (Williamson et al., 2020).

This conceptual paper seeks to address this gap by interrogating the central question: How does an academic administrator manage teaching and learning during a crisis in a private university? The paper aims to synthesize existing literature on crisis management (Coombs, 2014), adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009), educational technology integration (Hodges et al., 2020), and pedagogical continuity to construct a robust conceptual model. It will explore key themes including the rapid shift to emergency remote teaching, the preservation of academic integrity and quality assurance, the management of faculty and student wellbeing, and the strategic communication required to maintain coherence and trust. By examining the interplay of these

elements, this paper will contribute a structured framework for understanding the multifaceted role of academic administrators as agents of stability, innovation, and resilience. Ultimately, it argues that effective, proactive crisis management in teaching and learning is a defining feature of sustainable and responsive leadership in modern private higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The management of teaching and learning during a crisis is a multifaceted challenge that tests the very foundations of a university. For academic administrators in private institutions, this challenge is amplified by market pressures and the immediate need to maintain operational continuity. This literature review synthesizes existing research across several interconnected domains: the nature of crises in higher education, the distinct context of private universities, the evolution of academic leadership, pedagogical shifts during disruption, and the centrality of communication and well-being. The goal is to identify the knowledge base and critical gaps that this conceptual paper will address.

The Nature of Crisis in Higher Education

A crisis is defined as "an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (Coombs, 2014, p. 2). In higher education, crises disrupt the core activities of teaching, learning, and research. The COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent and profound example, forcing a global, involuntary experiment in "emergency remote teaching" (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020). However, crises are not monolithic; they can also include natural disasters, cyber-attacks, financial exigency, or civil unrest. What defines a educational crisis is its direct threat to instructional continuity and academic quality (Treadwell et al., 2018). The literature suggests that crises are no longer rare exceptions but recurring features of the modern educational landscape, necessitating a shift from reactive firefighting to proactive resilience planning (Boin & 't Hart, 2010).

The Private University Context: Market Pressures and Agility

Private universities operate within a distinct ecosystem that shapes their crisis response. A key characteristic is their heavy reliance on tuition revenue and private funding, making student retention and satisfaction a paramount concern (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). A crisis that disrupts the educational experience directly threatens financial stability. This creates a powerful incentive for rapid and effective action. Furthermore, private institutions are often perceived as more agile than their large public counterparts, with less bureaucratic inertia allowing for quicker decision-making (Zemsky, 2013). However, this agility can be a double-edged sword. The pressure to act quickly must be balanced against the need for thoughtful, pedagogically sound decisions. The literature indicates that in this context, crisis management is intrinsically linked to brand management and value proposition—demonstrating to students and parents that the institution can deliver on its educational promises despite adversity (Temple, 2020).

The Evolving Role of the Academic Administrator

The academic administrator (e.g., Dean, Department Chair) is the critical linchpin in any institutional crisis response. Their role transforms from a traditional academic leader into what Fullan and Scott (2014) term a "change agent" exercising "adaptive leadership" (Heifetz et al., 2009). This involves:

- **Interpreting Policy:** Translating broad institutional directives into actionable plans for their specific school or department (Marinoni et al., 2020).
- **Resource Allocation:** Securing and distributing critical resources, from technology (laptops, software licenses) to professional development funds for faculty training.
- **Faculty Support:** Moving from oversight to empowerment, supporting faculty who are themselves struggling with the transition to new teaching modalities (Darby, 2020). This requires high degrees of empathy and flexibility.

The administrator must navigate the tension between enforcing necessary policy compliance and granting faculty

the autonomy to adapt their teaching practices effectively.

Pedagogical Continuity and Shift to Emergency Remote Teaching

A primary administrative focus during crisis is maintaining pedagogical continuity. The literature sharply distinguishes between well-planned online learning and the rapid, stop-gap measure of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020). ERT is characterized by the use of fully remote solutions for instruction that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face. The administrator's challenge is to facilitate this shift without equating it with a robust online education program. Key administrative responsibilities identified in the literature include:

- **Quality Assurance:** Implementing flexible but clear guidelines to maintain academic integrity and learning outcomes in a new environment (ICEF Monitor, 2020).
- **Professional Development:** Rapidly curating and deploying training on digital tools, online assessment design, and student engagement strategies (Darby, 2020).
- **Curriculum Flexibility:** Encouraging or mandating adjustments to syllabi, assignments, and assessments to be realistic and compassionate given the crisis context (Williamson et al., 2020).

Communication, Community, and Well-being

Beyond logistics and pedagogy, a crisis is a human event. A overwhelming theme in the literature is the role of communication in mitigating anxiety and building trust. Academic administrators become the "chief communicating officers" for their units (Coombs, 2014). Consistent, transparent, and compassionate communication with both faculty and students is repeatedly cited as a critical success factor (Marinoni et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a crisis can shatter the sense of academic community. Administrators are tasked with fostering new forms of connection and providing support for the mental and emotional well-being of their academic community (Lederman, 2020). This involves promoting access to counseling services, normalizing discussions about stress, and modeling a balance between productivity and self-care.

Gap in the Literature

While the existing body of research effectively documents the broad institutional responses to crises like the pandemic and explores the technical and pedagogical challenges of ERT, there is a significant gap. There is a lack of a consolidated, conceptual framework that specifically focuses on the unique integrated role of the academic administrator in a private university context. Most studies examine either faculty perspectives, student experiences, or top-level institutional strategy. The middle-level leadership—the academic deans and chairs who are responsible for the practical execution of teaching and learning continuity—remains less theorized. This review underscores the need to synthesize these disparate strands of literature to build a model that captures the multifaceted, pressure-laden, and ultimately decisive role these administrators play in steering their academic units through crisis.

Theoretical Framework

1. Crisis Management

Crisis management is the process of preventing, responding to, and recovering from crisis events that have the potential to seriously harm or disrupt a community or an organization. Crisis management includes a range of activities and activities, from crisis preparation and readiness to crisis response and recovery. Given the nature of the contemporary environment, which is impacted by the consequences of globalization and the dynamics of

the huge market, crisis management has become a popular issue among organizational managers. A crisis may appear to be more or less permanent in our environment (Rais, 2007).

Crisis management includes a range of activities and activities, from crisis preparation and readiness to crisis response and recovery. The goal of crisis management is to minimize the harm that a crisis can do to an organization, its stakeholders, and its reputation while quickly and efficiently restoring operations to normal. This feature necessitates projection and control in order to avoid the risk of upsetting the stability and equilibrium of the organization. The crisis management process, which aims to identify and analyze early warning signs of possible crises, directs an organization's actions (Mitroff and Pearson, 1993; Mitroff and Alpaslan, 2003; Paraskevas, 2006; Sahin and Ulubeyli and Kazaza, 2015).

2. Leadership

According to House et al. (2004), leadership is the ability of a person to motivate, encourage, or influence people to work toward the success and effectiveness of a business they are associated with. Blogoev and Yordanova (2015) define leadership as the ability of a person to turn concepts into reality. Another scholar, John Maxwell, asserts that leadership is only about having the ability to influence people (Maxwell, 2005). Leadership, as defined by Kruse's leadership research, is the process by which an individual can influence others to exert their utmost effort in order to accomplish the goals of the organization.

According to Yeo (2006), CEOs have a significant impact on the company's overall performance at work. Therefore, it is the leaders' responsibility to establish the conditions that enable employees to share information, learn, and strive toward accomplishing the goals. Leadership, according to Goetsch et al. (2006), is the ability of the individual to motivate and inspire those around him or her to contribute voluntarily or willingly in order to achieve the goals.

As stated earlier, leadership can be understood as the process of influencing the behavior of people and organizations that work to achieve the goal in any particular situation. Therefore, the process by which a person motivates followers to accomplish common objectives is referred to as leadership (Northouse, 2017).

- Transformational
- Transactional
- Servant
- Innovative
- Change

METHODOLOGY

The proposed study will be carried out by utilizing a qualitative method. Semi structured interview will be utilized to obtain the data. The samples for this study will be academic administrator form a local private university. The selection of private university is made because it will provide different perspective on how academic administrators manage teaching and learning during crisis. Private university operate differently than public university.

The samples from the study should be selected from experts in the field of academic administration. Clear distinction on the criteria of the samples must be outline clearly. It must be clearly stated that the samples chosen for this study will be in charge of the academic aspect of the administration not the management aspect of it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Approach

A crisis in education—whether a pandemic, natural disaster, political instability, or a localized school emergency—disrupts the core functions of teaching and learning. Effective leadership during such times is not merely an extension of good management; it requires a distinct, adaptive, and human-centric approach. The primary goal shifts from maintaining the status quo to ensuring safety, well-being, and educational continuity while building resilience. Key approaches include **Adaptive Leadership, Transformational Leadership,**

Trauma-Informed Leadership, and distributed or Teacher-Centered Leadership.

1. Adaptive Leadership

Developed by Heifetz and Laurie (1997), adaptive leadership is crucial when facing unprecedented challenges with no clear technical solutions. A crisis often presents "adaptive challenges" that require changes in values, beliefs, and behaviors.

- **Key Principles:**
 - **Distinguish Technical vs. Adaptive Problems:** A technical problem might be distributing laptops (a known solution). An adaptive challenge is addressing the profound sense of loss, anxiety, and inequity exacerbated by the crisis (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).
 - **Regulate Distress:** Leaders must create a "holding environment" where anxiety is contained enough for people to engage with the difficult work without becoming overwhelmed.
 - **Give the Work Back to the People:** Instead of providing all the answers, adaptive leaders mobilize the collective intelligence of the staff. They ask probing questions like, "How can we best support our most vulnerable students now?" fostering shared responsibility.
- **Application in Teaching & Learning:**
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders couldn't simply mandate a return to "normal." They had to guide their communities through adaptive work: rethinking assessment, embracing new technologies, and redefining student engagement in a remote or hybrid environment (Harris & Jones, 2020).

2. Transformational Leadership

Bass and Riggio (2006) define transformational leaders as those who inspire and motivate followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. In a crisis, this approach is vital for maintaining morale and a sense of purpose.

- **Key Principles (The 4 I's):**
 - **Idealized Influence:** Leading by example with integrity, transparency, and courage.
 - **Inspirational Motivation:** Articulating a clear, positive, and attainable vision for the future (e.g., "We will get through this together, and we will emerge stronger").
 - **Intellectual Stimulation:** Encouraging innovation and creativity in solving new problems related to curriculum delivery and student support.
 - **Individualized Consideration:** Acting as a mentor or coach, paying attention to the individual needs and concerns of teachers, students, and parents.
- **Application in Teaching & Learning:**

- A transformational leader during a crisis frequently communicates hope, celebrates small wins (like a teacher successfully mastering a new online tool), and acknowledges the emotional labor of the staff, thus building psychological commitment to the collective goal (Khan, 2020).

3. Distributed and Teacher-Centered Leadership

A crisis makes it impossible for a single leader to have all the answers. Distributed leadership leverages the expertise within the organization by empowering others to lead (Spillane, 2006).

- **Key Principles:**

- **Empowerment:** Delegating authority and trusting teacher-leaders to take charge of specific initiatives (e.g., a tech-savvy teacher leading professional development on digital tools).
- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Creating crisis response teams that include teachers, support staff, and even parents to inform decisions.
- **Building Capacity:** Using the crisis as an opportunity to develop leadership skills across the staff, which strengthens the organization long-term.

- **Application in Teaching & Learning:**

- Harris and Jones (2020) argue that the COVID-19 crisis underscored the need for "leadership from the middle," where teacher innovation became the engine of educational continuity. By distributing leadership, the principal ensures that solutions are practical, context-specific, and owned by those who must implement them.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper aimed at discovering the methods taken by academic administrators to handle teaching and learning during crisis. This study will provide a rare insight into how academic administrator manage teaching and learning.

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