

ASSESSING THE RESILIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BAHRAIN: PATH TO NEW NORMAL

OVERVIEW

With the Pandemic outbreak back in 2020, Higher Education institutions in Bahrain, faced number of challenges in ensuring education continuity, in unknown circumstances, this research timelines the responses from different perspectives, demonstrating how resilient Higher Education Sector is and proposing analytical recommendations in order to elevate from Resilience to Sustainability.

PROBLEM

The pandemic was Black Swan event when it comes to its unexpected impacts and the necessities required in order to continue practice day to day life. The massive disruption to the education system, the unclarity and the vagueness of the COVID19 as a virus, made it an actual obstacle to figure right away, the proper measurements, strategic decisions and the corrective actions in order to resume the education operations, without compromising the academic and the quality standards, in addition to maintain the resilience built and elevate it, into sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses the qualitative method to demonstrate and comprehend the responses and actions taken by Higher Education Institutions in Bahrain facing the implications of COVID19, with 12 questions derived from P. Brian Fisher (2016) framework, that comprises Resilience from (Learning, Adaptability and interconnectivity) leading towards Sustainability. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among purposive selected 7 interviewees, with different educational, academic and practical backgrounds, utilizing MAXQDA software analysing the quantitative findings of the interviews into the 3 components of Resilience.

FINDINGS

The findings deduced the resiliency of higher education sector in the Kingdom, evident in institutions efforts represented using John Kotter's Model of change:

Create: Institutions creating changes due to the COVID's urgency.

Communicate: disseminating changes throughout institutions.

Build: Establishing core committees collaborating with & following governing bodies in the Kingdom.

Enable & Generate: empower employees to generate the impact.

Form: Creating & amending policies and procedures to cater changes.

Sustain & institute: sustain impacts, tracking progress, go beyond pandemic to proactive resilience

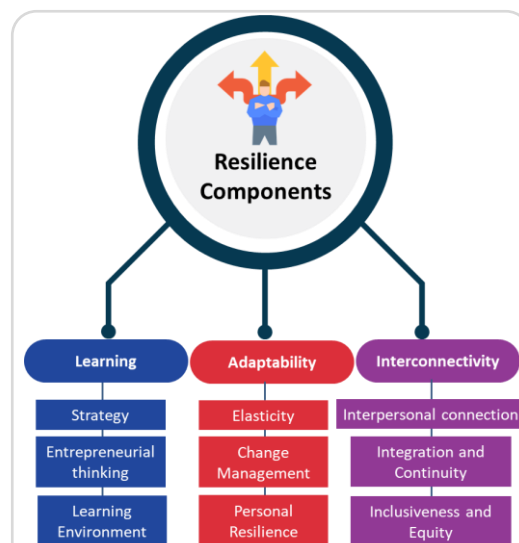
RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations to cater for the new normal involve 3 main parties:

Governing Bodies: through hosting, regulating and updating initiatives that cultivate proactive resiliency environments in higher education sector.

Institutions: Leadership plays vital role in paving the way towards resiliency and sustainability, hosting change, continuous development and innovation.

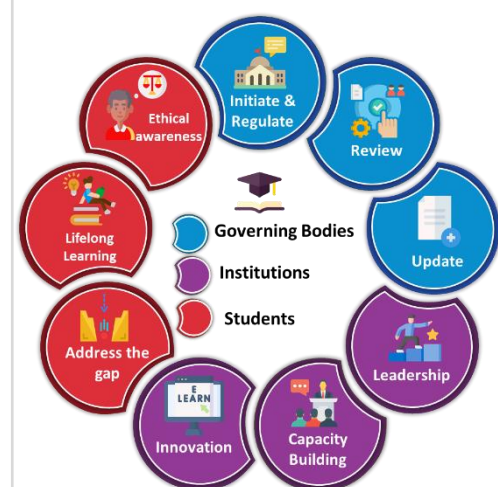
Students: The pandemic created a need to address the gap in students' perspectives towards self and lifelong learning and ethical awareness in order to build better resilience.



Resilience Thinking in Higher Education: Institutional Resilience as a Sustainability Goal (P. Brian Fisher, 2016) Framework, of which interviews questions were tackling each element of the components, in order to discover institutions attitude towards Resilience.



The findings of the interviews summarized in John Kotter's Model of Change, deducing to how resilient institutions were in ensuring the continuity of education during the pandemic.



Recommendations to progress from Resilience to Sustainability