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# Tertiary (higher) education in Indonesia under pressure: innovation towards the next normal as a consequence of pandemic Covid 19.

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## ABSTRACT

Pressures of corona virus pandemic along with region geopolitics, rapid technology development of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), and IT based technology can lead to the disruption for tertiary (higher) education in Indonesia. During the pandemic, most of higher education in Indonesia have operated in an online (distance) learning method using available platform for more than one year. Consequently, it is now becoming a new normal and new pathway for many higher education institutions (HEI) in Indonesia. Higher education institutions try to adapt with the pressures especially due to corona virus pandemic for their Teaching, Research, as well as Community Service. These efforts have been done for more than one year by HEIs to adapt with the fast-changing strategic environment. Consequently, the stakeholders of HEI were getting used to the new normal of education i.e., an online class instead of in-person class. The question is for how long the online class will last, and what will the higher education will look like in the future. This is important for future preparation of HEI in order to ensure their sustainability especially when strategic environment unexpected and surprisingly change rapidly.

This paper will elaborate possible innovation initiatives in the new normal era, that will be faced after the corona virus pandemic. Before elaborating the possible future scenarios of innovation initiatives, it is important to elaborate the assessment of pressures, positive and/or negative, due to the corona virus pandemic. This paper will also elaborate the what-if scenarios in the new normal era to ensure the HEI preparedness especially related to the innovation to be focussed. This paper uses experiential and case study method to draw the conclusion.

**Keywords:** Innovation in Higher Education Institution, Corona Virus Pandemic, The New Normal, Tertiary (Higher) Education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the so-called corona virus pandemic have spread out around the world, including but not limited to Indonesia, that no one in tertiary education ever predicted before. Tertiary education since then having experience new pressures in its operation simply because nobody was allowed to do in-person activities as before. The effects of this pandemic were getting more than just disrupting the in-person activities, it naturally has also impacted to the academic operation as a whole. Tertiary education may face the survival unfortunate situation due to the corona virus pandemic. Logically in the situation like this only those that have strong financial capability can afford to continue the operation as before, the other may find ways to make the operation become efficiently as survival efforts. If not, lay-off of the people may not be hindered. Lay-off may be considered a better choice compared to

other that they have to quit the business for good as they were unable to survive from the pressures.

## 2. PRESSURES ON TERTIARY EDUCATION

Term of pressure, on tertiary education, can be seen in different meaning, it is sometimes not actually a pressure it can be in a form of threats, challenges, disturbances, shocks, or else. In this paper they are simply called as pressures. The way we give meaning on pressures reflect the way we respond to them. Although, in general, term of pressures usually viewed in negative meaning, as a consequent the pressures should be hindered. On the contrary if pressures viewed in a positive meaning or at least neutral as a consequent, the pressures will be handled appropriately as an opportunity for innovation/improvement. For the sake of improvement and innovation therefore pressures will be better to be

viewed in a neutral meaning so that they can be used as a starting point of innovation.

This paper assessed pressures as in table 1. in two conditions i.e.: (1) prior pandemic of covid, and (2) during/after the pandemic of covid.

weaknesses of online class among others are: (1) less personal interaction, (2) less two ways communication, (3) less gesture touch, (4) less media for explanation, (5) boring, (6) more tired, etc.

*2.1.2. Teaching assessment with +++ result:*

**Table 1.** The assessment of pressures in tertiary education \*

Dimensions	Prior Pandemic	During/After Pandemic
<b>ACADEMIC</b>		
1. Teaching	+++	+ or ++++
2. Research	++	+
3. Community Service	+++	+
<b>NON-ACADEMIC</b>		
1. Student Enrolment	+++	-
2. Teaching delivery	++	+
3. Financial health	+++	-

\*The assessment was done subjectively based on author experience in tertiary education

Results from the subjective assessment of the author in table 1 shows that during/after corona virus pandemic almost all dimensions were getting worst compared to prior pandemic. The teaching dimension, perhaps the one that important in tertiary education, has been assessed with less + and more ++++ result. This paper assessed the attribute of teaching among others are: (1) To transfer knowledge, (2) To inspire, (3) To build two ways communication, (4) To challenge student, (5) To build chemistry, (6) To generate enthusiasm, and (7) Etc. These are actually a personalization engagement attribute of lecturer that will differ to everybody. The assessment result of teaching dimension can be explained as follows:

**2.1. Academic**

The assessment of pressures, table 1, in term of academic includes teaching, research, and community services [1]. This paper elaborates especially on teaching as it has two contradictory assessment results. While research and community services have almost identical result.

*2.1.1. Teaching assessment with + result:*

Due to corona virus pandemic almost all higher education institutions (HEI) around the world have shifted from in-person class to online class. Regardless how good the quality, there is no choice for them other than shifting to online class. The purpose is simply to ensure the continuity of the teaching while minimizing the risk. The hope is to return to normal in-person class once the corona virus pandemic is over. In-reality, after more than one year there is no sign that the pandemic will be over soon, consequently the online class is now become the new normal of teaching. According to the subjective assessment from the author, the quality of online class is low compared to in-person class so that the on-line class needs an innovation to improve its quality. The probable

The positive assessment of online class is that by using the available technology than the exposure can become borderless so that the lecturer with world-class quality can be sourced from anywhere around the world with reasonable cost compared to traditional teaching [2]. Consequently, student experienced teaching delivered by world-class lecturer that they never experienced before during the normal situation. Furthermore, by online teaching student is now able to choose universities with respected brand name around the world to enrol with cost far less compared to normal situation. For universities, they are now able to attract students around the world more easily using available technology [5]. This assessment leads to positive judgment on teaching with online class.

**2.2. Non-Academic**

The assessment of pressures, table 1, in term of non-academic includes: (1) student enrolment, (2) teaching delivery, and (3) financial health. This paper focuses especially on enrolment and financial as it has two negative identical result. Due to the negative results of the assessment therefore this paper categorizes them as critical threats to be further analysed as follows.

**3. THE THREATS**

The reality of corona virus pandemic is that tertiary education in Indonesia have to find ways to sustain themselves with similar quality or less acceptable quality. Another reality is that tertiary educations have to find ways due to the pressures of the pandemic that lead to threats, among others the most important are: (1) financial difficulties, and (2) enrolment difficulties. If they are unable to counter these threats then it is not surprisingly will end up with, in the worst case is out of the business. The overview of these threats is explained below:

### 3.1. Threats of financial difficulties

The threats of financial difficulties can be caused by imbalance between revenue and expenses. The corona virus pandemic on the one hand has impacted directly to revenue generated by the organizations simply due to inability to make revenue initiatives by programs that gather people. The only way for the organization to generate revenue in this situation is by online initiatives, and this is not easy. On the other hand, organizations have to cover all expenses and costs related to the operation of education. The situation getting worst because enrolment drops considerably by any reasons. One factor that give more pressure to the situation is probably due to new-normal competition among higher education institution. Today, it is very sad to see huge campus building with no people activities for more than one year and not sure when it will be back to normal again.

### 3.2. Threats of enrolment difficulties

The threats of enrolment difficulties are actually not a new issue in higher education institution (HEI) nowadays. The difficulties involve many aspects in enrolment management such as subject of study, quality, course delivery, competition, marketing, branding, pricing, and etc. These difficulties are getting worse due to the corona virus pandemic in which almost all HEIs around the world offer similar method of teaching i.e., online-learning. Online-learning is actually not a new method of learning as the so-called virtual universities has been in practice to offer degree level programmes [3]. There is no choice, of course, other than going online. So, what make the different between one institution to other if they are all going online?. One may think on the software platform, the quality of the platform, the lecturer quality, the courses relevance or what. If we ask to the lecturers to judge then they may have different opinion to students.

author indicated that lecturer quality still the most important aspect follows by quality and usability of the platform. No enthusiasm and boring teaching delivery are perhaps the worst online teaching method and that is not easy to handle. Consequently, as every organization use similar online teaching method than the un-interesting teaching delivery will lead to enrolment difficulties. On the contrary, those who can innovate the online-teaching as expected by students will get more credits.

## 4. CONCEPT OF INNOVATION TO COUNTER THE THREATS

In order to ensure sustainability of the organization, therefore the form of threats especially those considered critical must be countered attack with innovation. Logically, to be able to control the situation the magnitude of effort and energy to counter attack the threats must be higher than the threats themselves. Figure 1 indicates four areas of innovation that are considered important to counter attack the threats among others are: (1) Enrolment, (2) Teaching/ Academic, (3) Income Generating, and (4) Lecturer [4]. Innovation on these four areas must be addressed to ensure the two critical threats i.e.: (1) enrolment difficulties, and (2) financial difficulties are handled accordingly to ensure continuation of HEI operation throughout the uncertain time of corona virus pandemic. There must be two considerations on the innovation scenario related to the uncertain time of corona virus pandemic i.e.: (1) the pandemic will be over, and (2) the pandemic will not be over. The most difficult situation is considered no. 2 that the pandemic will not be over, at least for couple of years. Therefore, innovation in the four areas must be addressed to define a next normal way considering that the education will always be online or at least blended.



Figure 1 Concept of innovation to counter the threats.

Anyway, these are considerable factors that lead to the success of enrolment. The subjective assessment of the

## 5. DISCUSSION

This paper has identified at least five areas of innovation to counter attack the critical threats. The possible innovation initiatives among others can be described on the table 2. Although many references can be

**Table 2.** Possible innovation initiatives

No.	Area of Innovation	As-is (Existing practice)	To-be (Area of possible innovation)
1	Enrolment	Enrolment has been done for high school students prior or after their graduation with traditional method in three stages: (1) Selection based on student academic achievement, (2) Selection based on entrance test, and (3) Selection based on ability to pay the tuition fee. For selection based on enrolment test the acceptance following procedure of a. registration (with or without) discount, b. Entrance test (Basic courses like mathematics etc. by paper or computer-based test), c. Acceptance based on criteria of entrance test score.	Enrolment should be better done in two schemes: (1) Using existing traditional method, and (2) New method of enrolment. The enrolment can be done both off- and on-line system.  Improvement on the existing traditional method of entrance test is that the students can take the test instead of only one time, they are allowed to do it in three times, and the best score of them will be used in the selection process.  For the new method of enrolment, the process will not be based merely on entrance test but most importantly be based on track record both academic and non-academic of the student. Therefore, in this case criteria of selection should be based on: (a) Personal/self-description, (b) Statement of purpose, (c) References, and (d) Life achievement. This innovation provides opportunity for active students who have character, and determination rather than pure academic excellent only.
2	Teaching/ Academic	Traditional method of online teaching was done using available platform that still lack of personal touch. Teaching must be done in 14 times of meeting. Assessment will be done after the 14 times class meeting has been fulfilled.	Define active teaching using any digital method that can boost excitement both for lecturer and student. Teaching quality should not be assessed by how many times the class has been done. But how understand the student about the topic. Other innovation can also be done for the purpose of improving under-standing of the topic.
3	Income Generating	The only major source of income from student enrolment/intake.	Higher education institution must be able to capitalize the knowledge both tacit and explicit from lecturers as the primary asset of the institution. In this case, it is important that institution selects leaders with entrepreneurial sense who are capable of exploiting academic knowledge into a sound business whether in a form of education, research, or community service.
4	Lecturer	The major role of lecturer in existing practice is to perform the teaching, research, and community service. In this practice, all lecturer performing these roles in their respected fields regardless their background, talent, and exposure experience.	To be able to counter the critical threats, lecturers as the main primary asset of the organization should broaden their role beyond the traditional one. Especially for an entrepreneurial role on the respected field of knowledge. At the end lecturers should also bear responsibility for the sustainability of the organization.

found in related to enrolment or marketing in online market is still onshore [5], [6].

## 6. CONCLUSION

During and after the hard time of corona virus pandemic, organization operational sustainability must be fought with all resources and strengths in especially to counter attack the identified critical threats of financial and enrolment difficulties. To do so, this paper suggested possible innovation initiatives in the areas of enrolment, teaching/academic, income generating, and lecturer. Even though, the concept of innovation and its initiatives has not yet fully tested in the real-life environment, at least this will give foresight to any higher education institution. The concept of innovation and its initiatives itself defined base on the insight and hindsight of the author during his long years of exposure experience role in managing and leading higher education institution.

Thanks to the threats due to corona virus pandemic that trigger the innovation initiative in which will become a new opportunity to shape tertiary education in the future. It is expected that the hard time of corona virus pandemic will improve the maturity of tertiary education so that it become resilient toward possible future shocks and stresses.

Finally, it is ensured that no problems cannot be solved as long as we eagerly and focus to find possible solutions. Tertiary education as a back bone institution for young generation to learn and forge themselves in the preparation of their future role must be sustained whatsoever. There is only continuous innovation that will make any organizations resilient to shocks and stresses and ensure their sustainability due to any possible change of strategic environment.

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