

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sustainability of Higher Education in Emergencies: The Case of Turkey

Burcu Erdemir

Asst. Prof. Dr., Bahcesehir

University,

Istanbul /Türkiye

ORCID: [0000-0003-2283-157X](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2283-157X)

E-Mail:

burcuerdemir@yahoo.com

October 2023

Volume:20

Issue: Special Issue-Human
Behavior and Social Institutions

DOI: [10.26466/opusjsr.1344652](https://doi.org/10.26466/opusjsr.1344652)

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic had devastating effects on higher education systems and necessitated policymakers to take immediate measures. While this period is an opportunity to correct imperfections in higher education systems, it is also a challenge in terms of planning new policies that necessitate digitalized equipment and personnel support that increased due to the pandemic. The study aims to examine which factors of higher education learning communities can help sustain higher education institutions during and beyond emergencies. Based on a qualitative study presenting views of Turkish faculty, major findings reflect the key components of higher education learning communities. These were spotted as; 'democratic and collaborative environments that target equitable student access to education, student success, as well as faculty professional development and well-being of faculty and students and examined through the lenses of critical pedagogy and transformational theory. Apart from the suggestions of the participants for sustainability, the author also presented some immediate-to-long-term policy suggestions for higher education decision-makers that prioritize equity, accountability, and quality, and the main principles of learning communities as collaboration and democracy, all of which are also important concepts for further development of society.

Citation:

Erdemir, B (2023). Sustainability of Higher Education in Emergencies: The Case of Turkey. *OPUS- Journal of Society Research*, 20(Special Issue-Human Behavior and Social Institutions), 751-769.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Emergency Situations, Higher Education Learning Communities, Sustainability

Öz

COVID-19 pandemisinin yükseköğretim sistemlerine yıkıcı etkileri oldu ve politika yapıcıların acil önlemler almalarını gerektirdi. Bu kriz dönemi, yükseköğretim sistemindeki eksiklikleri gidermek için bir fırsat olsa da, aynı zamanda, salgın kaynaklı artış gösteren dijital ekipman temini ve personel desteğini gerektirecek yeni politikalar planlama açısından zorlayıcı bir durumdur. Bu çalışma, acil durumlarda ve acil durumların ötesinde, yükseköğretim öğrenme toplulukları prensiplerinden hangilerinin yükseköğretim kurumlarının sürdürülebilirliğine yardımcı olabileceğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türk öğretim elemanlarının görüşlerini sunan nitel çalışmadaki başlıca bulgular, yükseköğretim öğrenme topluluklarının temel bileşenlerini yansıtmaktadır. Bunlar; 'öğrencilerin eğitime adil erişimini, öğrenci başarısını, aynı zamanda öğretim elemanlarının profesyonel gelişimini ve hem öğretim elemanı hem de öğrencinin iyi oluş halini hedefleyen, demokratik ve işbirlikçi ortamlar' olarak tespit edilmiş ve eleştirel pedagoji ve dönüşümsel teori bakış açısından incelenmiştir. Katılımcıların sürdürülebilirlik için olan önerilerinin yanında yazar da kısa ve uzun vadeye yönelik yükseköğretim karar vericileri için, hakkaniyet, hesapverilebilirlik ve kalite ve öğrenme topluluklarının temel prensiplerinden olan işbirliği ve demokrasiyi önceleyen politika önerilerinde bulunmuştur ki bunların hepsi toplumun ileri gitmesi için önemli kavramlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19 Pandemisi, Olağanüstü Durumlar, Yükseköğretim Öğrenme Toplulukları, Sürdürülebilirlik

Introduction

Natural phenomena such as earthquakes or tornados have adverse consequences on a relatively limited area affecting the physical and mental health of individuals specific to that region. However, pandemics such as COVID-19 that influenced the world for about three years drag the attention to the health of the masses, their socialization, along with the unprecedented disruption of many businesses on a global scale. On the educational front, the COVID-19 pandemic led the world into a tunnel of unpredictability and frustration with months-long closures of higher education institutions (HEIs), as vital centers for education and teaching, production and dissemination of knowledge as well as service to society. Despite its burdens, the pandemic was an opportunity for many HEIs worldwide to see their weaknesses in many areas, ranging from infrastructure and teaching-learning methods to emergency leadership and inclusion of the disadvantaged. This enabled them to overcome hurdles with immediate-to-long-term measures. In this sense, HEIs shouldered an important role not only in the continuation of academic and psychological support during this emergency period.

With the increasing distance among individuals in society during the pandemic, some concepts like creativity, innovative thinking, empathy, and collaboration, the effects of which are hard to measure, almost lost ground as they can be practiced better nearby (Roose, 2020). Hence, with closures and social distancing, humanity was reminded of these kinds of concepts and feelings that can easily be found in learning communities (LCs). LCs are known for engagement with the community (Sefton-Green, 2020), collaboration (Zhao & Kuh, 2004) and democratic environments (Zmuda et al., 2004) that value equity, diversity (Nosaka & Novak, 2014) and social tolerance (Vogt, 1997). The latter values were less likely to be felt by the disadvantaged in society due to not only the mandatory transition to online education but also the already existing socio-economic gaps. As was also indicated by the International Organization for Migration, xenophobia and hate crimes led to social exclusion and well-being

deterioration (IOM, 2020) during this time. Thus, with the pandemic, not only inequalities in higher education (HE) (Farnell et al., 2021) but also inadequacies and irregularities in the education system and society intensified and became more apparent.

Despite the ongoing human-centered courses established on empathy and pedagogical problem-solving that were available to some (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020), more students were exposed to discrimination due to the digital divide (Karadağ & Yücel, 2020; UNESCO, 2020a; Young-Powell, 2020). In Turkey too, there have arisen issues such as inadequate technological equipment and access to internet, varying digital capacities of universities, setbacks in practice classes and laboratory works, and faculty distance education incompetency (TEDMEM, 2020). To resolve issues in higher education systems (HESs) globally, efforts were directed towards increasing access, maintaining equity and quality (The Global Platform, 2020), and helping with budget support and policy building (EC, 2019). In Turkey, Coronavirus Boards, distance education centers and open-access digital course material pools at universities served that purpose. However, as indicated in The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report (2020) on COVID-19, very few policies targeted sustainability in the aftermath of the pandemic. Therefore, to close this gap, through Turkish faculty perspectives and the lens of critical pedagogy and transformational theory, this study aims to examine the factors that allow for HEIs, as important intellectual and social hubs, to sustain during and beyond emergencies for the development of students and faculty by practicing the principles of LCs. The guiding research questions (RQs) are as follows: 1. *What key concepts of LCs can help sustain HEIs during and beyond emergency periods?* 2. *What policies can be developed to sustain HEIs as LCs during and beyond emergency periods?*

Critical Pedagogy and Transformational Learning Theory

The main reason for employing *critical pedagogy* in the study is to raise awareness about and solve

equity-related issues in HE that tend to increase with emergencies in society. Addressing the needs of individuals or groups who have been exposed to marginalization due to oppressive situations or policies (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015) that risk their freedom and dignity (Biesta, 1998) constitutes the study area of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, by suggesting solutions to issues in HESs through an inquiry-based approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) can help empower institutions, students, and faculty during the COVID-19 crisis. Whereas *transformative theory* takes it one-step further by allowing one to, first, examine the difficulties experienced, and then restructure their position for new ways of behaving (Mezirow, 2000).

For individual or social transformation, which may also mean self-improvement and learning to realize, Brown (2004) suggests that there is a need for 'self-awareness, planning, skill, support, and discourse with others' (p. 85). As not every student is skillful, planned, and aware of the coping ways of the difficulties in emergencies, some individuals may need to feel supported and communicate in safe spaces. This can best happen in democratic communities where people can easily cooperate (Mezirow, 1995). This also brings to mind the democratic nature of HE LCs as convenient places for collective action where diverse perspectives are respected with kindness and tolerance. These make up the emotive features of transformative learning (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Mezirow, 2000) that guide faculty, students and administrators to check their behaviors and language toward each other. Considering that individual transformation cannot be realized in a dysfunctional social setting (Servage, 2008, p. 68), the supportive and/or guiding role of faculty towards students during the COVID-19 period is vital. To put it briefly, where critical pedagogy casts criticism of the current social practices (Bell & Schniedewind, 1987), transformative learning theory activates the change process aligned with the spotted problems by engaging the stakeholders to form LCs with shared practices.

The COVID-19 Pandemic in the Global Higher Education System

It was first in December 2019 that the world heard about the COVID-19 coronavirus. When the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the virus as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, there had already been 114 countries affected by it with 118,000 cases and 4291 deaths (WHO, 2020a). As of October 17, 2021, these numbers reached tremendous amounts with over 240 million cases and below 4.9 million deaths (WHO, 2020b). Although all people were exposed to severe consequences of the pandemic, students experienced additional disadvantages in their academic lives. For instance, at Stanford University, problems similar in other universities had been encountered. Kubota (2021), referring to the explanations of biologists and physicists at Stanford University stated that in labs, some experiments had to be prioritized or canceled. Another point that was underlined was the attention given to equity, inclusion, empathy and compassion in terms of minimizing the effects of the pandemic especially on the most vulnerable groups. It was added that to minimize the stress and make the transition to online teaching quicker, faculty shared all the materials developed. Harvard Medical School (n.d.), on the other hand, created the Massachusetts Consortium on Pathogen Readiness (MassCPR) in 2020 March. It collaborated with many scientists and health professionals from over 17 institutions to address the immediate and long-term challenges of the pandemic. According to the European Union (EU) NESET Report, about 220 million HE students worldwide were affected by the adverse consequences of COVID-19 (Farnell et al., 2021, p. 4).

Minorities and migrants were at risk during the pandemic in terms of becoming the targets of hate speech and racism in society (FRA, 2020; IOM, 2020). Because the origin of the COVID-19 virus was China, Asian students in the United States (US) drew more attention and abuse when coughing or sneezing in closed spaces like metros or classrooms (Iwai, 2020). The EU report reveals that American low-income and working-class students, racial minorities, first-generation

students, caregivers and LGBT students were among the most vulnerable groups both academically and mentally (Farnell et al., 2021). Based on the existing literature, issues that came up during the COVID-19 pandemic in the HES worldwide are multi-dimensional and can be examined under four main areas: academic, social, financial and health-related matters.

Academically, the digital divide caused by the transition to online learning was another reason for vulnerability, not only for students but also for faculty. A Turkish study reported that out of 17,939 Turkish undergraduate students enrolled in 163 state and foundation (non-profit private) universities, one-third did not have the internet or computers/tablets at home (Karadağ & Yücel, 2020). 37% of these students found accessibility of the online education system 'poor or very poor', and 51% said faculty teaching skills were again 'poor or very poor', leading students to discontinue their education. While for faculty, less technologically equipped ones could not execute their classes (Iwai, 2020). Similarly, according to the European Student Union's survey with 17,116 students from 41 European countries, almost half (47.43%) were not happy with their academic performance due to increased workload, challenges in access to the internet, technological equipment, and poor digital skills, despite being satisfied with the quality of teaching (Doolan et al., 2021). The World Bank report (Arnhold et al., 2020) outlined challenges experienced during COVID-19 as the internet connection, its expenses, and technological equipment.

Another change students had to get used to was the new assessment methods. While the majority of faculty preferred to give assignments (84%) (Demir et al., 2020, p. 2), presentations and/or projects were the other common ways of assessment. However, some students found assessment format changes and assignments a 'nightmare', as they required different software or expensive computers (Young-Powell, 2020). Access to resources and finding a quiet place to study became other concerns of students with the closure of on-campus libraries. This is in parallel with Aristovnik et al. (2020)'s study findings where it was reported that nearly half of the university students (30,383) from 62 countries

including Turkey lacked a quiet place to study. In the same study, it was also found that some students lacked computer skills and perceived their workload to be higher than before, which they believed affected their performance.

Socially, both students and faculty had to shift to new systems of communication through digital platforms. Students changed their routines and moved to their family homes leaving their student houses or dorms behind. This also necessitated waving goodbye to in-person contact with their friends and instructors at universities and social activities. It was found that despite the significant support students received from teaching staff and public relations services at universities, the adversities they experienced during the lockdown caused them to be concerned about their future careers (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Indeed, this is valid for faculty as well since many employees became unemployed due to the pandemic-related economic crisis.

Financially, students, who, at normal times covered their expenses, had to continue working if they had not already lost their jobs during the pandemic. Data from the UK suggests that when student loans were not enough to cover the cost of living and parents could not provide financial support, half of the graduates from low socio-economic backgrounds and 46% of the considerably affluent ones had to do paid work (Montacute, 2020, p. 12). Still others asked for tuition fee refunds (Lee, 2020) or even dropped out due to feeling lonely and dissatisfied with their academic environment and social life (Farnell et al., 2021).

All of these inevitably influenced the *emotional* and *mental health* of students negatively. Some students faced 'boredom, anxiety, frustration and anger' (Farnell et al., 2021, p. 5). A Swiss study (Elmer et al., 2020) examined undergraduate students' social networks and mental health in two different cohorts; the ones who did not experience the pandemic (N=54) and those who were exposed to it (N=212). The findings indicated that students interacted and came together to study less as a result of the pandemic and they had higher levels of stress, depression, anxiety and loneliness. Adverse consequences of the pandemic influenced the human-centered approach of LCs as well,

including empathy and the power to cope with the unknown (Henriksen et al., 2018).

This huge global change that transformed face-to-face education to virtual LCs necessitated HESs to re-examine their new roles and capabilities in responding to possible future challenges by sticking to the principles of equity, accountability, and quality. More than two decades ago, Tinto (1998) suggested that much would be gained from virtual campuses as LCs of the future, provided that they were carefully planned as to whom they would serve and what to be learned from interactions. Similarly, to overcome today's post-pandemic crisis, inquiries need to be made in HE with careful planning and coordination of policymakers.

Higher Education Institutions as Learning Communities

HEIs as LCs were built based on the idea of *learning organizations* of Senge (1990) and Boyer's (1987) principles of *purposeful* (shared goals), *just* (respect for diversity), *caring* (serve each other's well-being), *open* (free expression of opinions), *disciplined* (accept responsibilities for the common good) and *celebrative* (embrace the heritage and accept change for the future) communities. Lenning and Ebbers (1999) refer to LCs as student-centered groups that focus on a *common goal*, involve *planning*, *reflection* and *faculty support* as well as *allocation of resources* to students and staff. Bringing forth many aspects of LCs as such, Astin (1985, p. 161, as cited in Shapiro & Levine, 1999) states:

Such communities can be organized along curricular lines, common career interests, avocational interests, residential living areas, and so on. These can be used to build a sense of group identity, cohesiveness, and uniqueness; to encourage continuity and the integration of diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences; and to counteract the isolation that many students feel.

Especially in the US, these qualities of LCs continue to function in specially designed classes that bring clusters of students together who study, sometimes reside together, collaborate and socialize not only in the academic context but also

in sororities and fraternities. In Turkey, rather than a specifically formed group of students, a LC can be thought of as an umbrella term to refer to naturally formed student groups at universities uniting like-minded individuals around their common interests like sports or art. Such an interaction is known to increase the academic and social success of especially low-income and minority students (Johnson et al., 2020; White et al., 2019). There are also solidarity groups that aim to solve different problems in society and/or help disadvantaged groups, fulfilling the functions of LCs on different platforms. Whether in the US or Turkey, despite some differences in defining LCs, common themes refer to a *shared vision*, *commitment*, and a *sense of unity* and *collaboration* among major stakeholders such as students and faculty.

Tinto (1998) suggests that *shared knowledge* and *shared knowing* enable students to improve socially (also in Raaper & Brown, 2020) and intellectually, which in return yields increased learning, retention (also in Zhao & Kuh, 2004) and success (Tinto, 2012). Acknowledging these benefits, Lenning and Ebbers (1999) also refer to an improvement in satisfaction with university life, academic skills, development of empathy, self-esteem, cognition, and communication. It has been found that LCs are especially effective with historically underrepresented students who are not as recognized as the majority in the HES (Kuh et al., 2006; Nosaka & Novak, 2014).

Despite their power to resist the crisis (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999), LCs need to be supported as they are susceptible to the isolating and alienating post-modern threats and the competition-oriented neoliberal tendencies that have replaced the humane values of LCs. Collaboration of students through sharing other the best techniques that worked during the pandemic (Mitchell et al., 2021) has been a good example of this needed support. In the section below, measures taken worldwide in HE are discussed with a special focus on equity and quality.

Measures to Sustain Higher Education Learning Communities Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

HEIs and governments worldwide responded to the mandatory transition to online education differently depending on their organization and resource capacities. Even the more resourceful universities experienced problems in their response time and provision of equity-based opportunities to their students. Global responses given to needs in HESs are discussed below.

The Turkish Higher Education System Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Like other countries, the Turkish government and HEIs have taken some measures to minimize the problems since the beginning of the pandemic. These measures targeted at providing support with internet technologies (IT), human resources (the number and capabilities of faculty), content (creating an online teaching material pool; opening the existing distance education materials of Anatolian, Atatürk and Istanbul Universities for the use of all), and implementation (running [synchronous](#) and asynchronous classes) (Council of Higher Education-CoHE, 2020a).

More specifically, some of the CoHE's emergency decisions and policies prioritizing the quality in HE were announced as follows: As of March 13, 2020, all HEIs, including associate degrees and undergraduate and graduate degrees, all internships and practical classes, excluding specialty graduate students in the schools of medicine, dentistry and pharmacology, would stop formal education for three weeks (CoHE, 2020b). As of June 15, 2020, universities would follow the academic calendar (CoHE, 2020c). OECD (2020, p. 20), and additional staff and research assistants would be assigned duties, do research and be trained in the new (20) and existing Distance Education Centers, only one of which would be available in both public and foundation universities. Later on, HE students were given the right to freeze their registration only for the 2019-20 spring semester (CoHE, 2020d), and offered free 6GB internet for online education (CoHE, 2020e). However, as this quota covered surfing, only on university and CoHE

websites but not the rest of the web, students could not improve their academic studies. Hence, CoHE's initiative did not benefit students fully. To support handicapped students, faculty were informed about actions to take based on the category and level of disablement (CoHE, 2020f). For graduate students at the thesis stage, a maximum two-semester-extension was given (CoHE, 2020g). Further decisions of CoHE included building a system that was designed to: (1) define the standards of online education, assessments and new programs; (2) monitor the execution of classes; (3) make process-based formative assessments; (4) encourage universities to establish online exam centers (CoHE, 2020h); (5) prioritize vaccination of students, academic and administrative staff; (6) prioritize social distancing and hygiene precautions; (7) continue with synchronized/unsynchronized online and face-to-face education; (8) keep class hours limited with no block lessons; and (9) continue working in laboratories, research centers and techno parks at campuses (CoHE, 2021).

The digital transformation of Turkish universities was discussed in the Times Higher Education (THE) and Coursera meeting in October 2020, and leaders of state and foundation universities indicated that they managed to respond to online teaching quickly (THE, 2020). The changes made included delivering the online curriculum through Zoom, having an online lab system and sending out lab test kits to students to be used at home synchronously with their professors, donating 'a limited number' of tablets and computers to students, having hybrid teaching by dividing the day into morning (hybrid), afternoon (face-to-face) and the increasingly preferred evening (online-only) classes, sharing best practices, organizing online internships in collaboration with the industry, and increasing collaborations between universities via teaching and learning centers. On the other hand, the challenges they faced were; limited access of students to digital gadgets, staff retraining, digital assessment, data security, finding data storage services, and sustaining international students in the country. Although collaborative activities of universities were suggestive of what LCs also prioritize, it should be noted that since only 13

universities (4 state as Ege, Uludağ, İstanbul Teknik, Erciyes, and 9 foundation as Bilkent, İstanbul Gelişim, Haliç, Maltepe, İstanbul Bilgi, İstanbul Medipol, MEF, İstanbul Aydın, Abdullah Gül) out of 207 in Turkey had joined this panel, the initiatives they took cannot be generalized to the Turkish HES as a whole. For instance, a study conducted with $n=8442$ faculty from state (68%) and foundation (32%) universities in Turkey revealed that 81.9% of them did not have any experience in distance education (Demir et al., 2020, p. 2), which means that most faculty were not adequately equipped and ready for online education.

In short, only Anatolian, Atatürk and İstanbul universities had already been equipped to offer distance education. This means that students, faculty, and administrative staff of the above-mentioned 13 universities and other universities that were not included in the study struggled immensely to cope with the unknown and the lack of preparation, despite their superior efforts. This reality is a warning signal for universities and the CoHE as it made clearer the already existing problems in the online education-related infrastructure of universities, the lack of human resources, and emergency leadership.

International Responses for Higher Education Systems in the Pandemic

International aid organizations put considerable effort during the COVID-19 pandemic to alleviate difficulties in all areas of life as well as HE. The Global Education Coalition, for instance, which had more than 175 members and 112 countries including Turkey as of 2021, as well as civil society, academia and the private sector, enabled the right to equitable education including gender parity, prioritized digital learning, and helped the youth to improve their employability skills and faculty with remote learning (UNESCO, 2021a, pp. 4-5). Another global initiative is the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2030 of the United Nations (UN). ESD aims to transform societies under 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusing on 'cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning' including the development of learning environments, contents

and outcomes during 2020-30 (UNESCO, 2020b). The goals stated in the ESD Member State Initiatives necessitated the transformation of learning environments by capacity building, empowerment, monitoring educators and intellectual engagement in LCs (Holmes, 2020). Likewise, stakeholder collaboration of ESD at local and global levels is similar to cooperation and collaboration among staff in LCs. Lastly, communication-bound efforts for increased mobilization of resources can be associated with the inclusive education understanding in LCs. Hence, in terms of creating a supportive learning environment for students ranging from academic to emotional needs as well as providing them with resources and investing in the professional development of educators, LCs and international organizations aim at similar goals.

Promoting lifelong learning opportunities for students in emergencies and crises to serve the goal of equity in HE has specifically been targeted since 2015 in SDG 4.3 (The Global Platform, 2020, p. 48; UNESCO, n.d.). Given the added difficulties of the pandemic, the then promises of world leaders remain to be addressed. Target 4.7 refers to the acquirement of knowledge and skills for sustainable development in education, human rights and gender equality (also in SDG 5) that encourages peace, justice, strong institutions (also in SDG 16) and cultural diversity (UNESCO 2020b, p. 57). It also serves to sustain HE beyond the pandemic and is like the democratic environments of LCs that support dialogue, diversity, solidarity and empathy (Holmes, 2020; Zmuda et al., 2004). Hence, integrating SDGs into the HES quality attainment criteria can facilitate institutional performance evaluation and support many individuals in HE and society, especially in these difficult times.

To support the implementation of SDGs by universities, specifically with knowledge development, and transformative research and education strategies, UNESCO, in cooperation with the University of Bergen, has established the [Global Independent Expert Group on the Universities and the 2030 Agenda \(EGU2030\)](#), with supporting partners as The International Science Council and the International Association of Universities (UNESCO, n.d.). Turkey, being a

member of the UN since 1945 and the latter two organizations, has been contributing to the attainment of SDGs. However, at some levels like knowledge development and transformative research, more thoroughly planned initiatives need to be taken in the Turkish HES. For instance, as has been explained in the previous paragraphs of this section, the CoHE took some measures during the pandemic in 2020 but they remained limited at the supportive level. They ranged from educating and allocating more staff and providing extra resources to be of use to students to determining some standards for assessment and health protection.

Last but not least, the European Commission (EC) (EC, 2020) plans to recuperate from the coronavirus crisis in two main ways. One is by achieving the European Education Area by 2025, supported by Europe's Recovery Plan and the Erasmus+ Program (made use of in Turkey as well), which aims at contributing to member states' education and training needs with a focus on 'quality, inclusion, gender equality, green and digital transitions, teachers, higher education' (para. 3). The other is by building a 'high quality, inclusive and accessible digital education' ecosystem through Digital Education Action Plan (2021-27) (para. 5).

Contributing to narrowing the equity gap, refugee HE students were also supported by international organizations during the pandemic. The DAFI program showed support by promoting 'social, economic and gender equality' (p. 52), and giving scholarships and career training to university students in 2020 (UNHCR, 2020). SPARK offered scholarships, internships, education, skills training and work experience to HE students in the Middle East (SPARK, n.d.). Syrian refugee students in Turkey (7,551 students in 2020) received tuition fee support for state universities and scholarships covering the pandemic period from UNHCR partnering with The Presidency for Turks and Abroad Related Communities (YTB) and partners of the Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP) (UNHCR, 2020-2021). Similarly, the Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies (RRM) provides academic opportunities for HE students affected by wars

and natural disasters and is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (The Global Platform, 2020, p. 64).

It is worth noting that Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees worldwide with 3,435,298 (March 30, 2023) since 2011 (DGMM, 2023). Out of the 395,264 Syrian refugees belonging to the 19-to-24 age group (March 16, 2023) that reside under temporary protection in Turkey (Mülteciler Derneği, 2023), 53,097 students are in registered status in HEIs as of 2021-22 academic year (CoHE, 2023). Hence, considering the additional number of students in the HES with the inclusion of refugees, the Turkish government needs to take sustainable measures to ensure quality education, as well as health and security in the country. Overall, regarding the increased use of IT during the pandemic, heightened efforts are needed to be put by policymakers including budget increases. This way, local, national and international goals can be attained aligned with the goals of HE LCs.

Methods

Built on a qualitative research design, the study aimed to explore faculty opinions and experiences about HE LCs and discuss the extent to which HEIs can be sustained beyond emergencies by prioritizing the values of LCs. Faculty, who were reached through snowball sampling, were selected considering the different backgrounds they came from to attain rich data. In snowball sampling, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality are important challenges that the researcher needs to address. To remedy this bias, participants were informed and their consent was taken. Another challenge in snowball sampling is the non-random selection of participants, which may introduce bias by lowering the representativeness of the data. This threat was tried to be overcome by including a high number of participants in the study with varying demographic characteristics.

Some criteria were considered for integrating the participants into the study. Accordingly, participants from both foundation and state universities that were in urban and rural cities in Turkey were chosen as it was thought that the

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Faculty	Nationality	Gender	Department	Work Title	Experience (Year)
P1	Turkish	M*	Educational Sciences	Asst. Prof.	9
P2	Turkish	F	Educational Sciences	PhD student; Res. Asst.	6.5
P3	Turkish	M	Physics	MA student; Instructor	5
P4	Turkish	M	Econ.& Admin. Sciences	Prof.; Dean	26
P5	Turkish	M	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Assoc. Prof.; Chair	25
P6	Turkish	F	Educational Sciences	Asst. Prof.	9
P7	Turkish	F	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Instructor (MA)	18
P8	Turkish	F	Educational Sciences	Prof.; Chair	28
P9	Turkish	F	Econ. & Admin. Sciences	Asst. Prof.; Vice Chair	22
P10	Turkish	F	Educational Sciences	PhD student; Res. Asst.	5
P11	Turkish	F	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Asst. Prof.	18
P12	Turkish	F	Educational Sciences	Asst. Prof.	8
P13	Turkish	F	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Asst. Prof.; Former Vice Chair	21
P14	Turkish	M	Engineering	Assoc. Prof.; Chair	20
P15	Turkish	M	Engineering	Asst. Prof.	6
P16	Turkish	F	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Instructor	21
P17	Turkish	F	Engl. Lang. Teaching	PhD Student; Instructor	21
P18	Turkish	F	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Instructor	20
P19	Turkish	M	Engl. Lang. Teaching	Asst. Prof.	17

experiences they had been through during the pandemic period could have been different based on the resources they were provided in different cities and university types. In addition, the

participants had varying years of experience, titles and gender, and worked in different departments (Table 1). This variety enabled the participants to approach the topics discussed during the interviews from a different angle, and

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Themes	Categories	Codes	Participants	Explanation	Research Questions
LC as a concept	Connotations of LCs	1. International quality standards	P1,P3,P6,P7,P9,P10, P11,P15,19	Lack of human, physical and financial resources;	1
	Professional Development and Commitment	2. Safe and democratic spaces for self-expression 3. Guidance and support for students 4. Skills and research quality improvement, cooperation, collaboration 5. Institutional commitment	P2,P3,P6,P13,P16, P19 P7,P10, P14 P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P11, P12,P14,P15,P19 P1,P2,P3,P6,P9,P12, P13,P14,19	safety of students and faculty. Collaboration of faculty for their own and students' development, all serving increased belongingness	
Actions for Sustainability	University Level State, University and Faculty Level	6. Transparency and solution-orientedness 7. Needs analysis and restructuring 8. Faculty-student collaborative works	P1,P8,P10,P11,P13, P17,P18 P1,P3,P6,P9,P10, P14,P15 P3,P12,P14	Problem detection and support for students and faculty in and out of emergencies. Academic and financial support for students in faculty projects prioritizing students' improvement.	2

Note. M: Male, F: Female

hence, helped the researcher to achieve rich data. Some suggestions for sample size are available in the literature that ranged from 1-2 to 30-40 (Creswell, 2012). For the present study, the interviews continued till similar answers were started to be received from the participants. In addition, not all the interviews were satisfactory in providing the needed information. Eventually, the saturation point was reached with 19 participants, which also increased the quality and reliability of the data.

The Human Subjects Committee approval was obtained before starting the interviews (No: 80281877-050.99). The instrument was developed by the researcher and two expert opinions from Educational Sciences were received to examine the questions after which a pilot study was conducted. Researcher-led, voluntary-basis, typical 45-minute in-depth interviews were run both face-to-face and online during 2019-2020 both before and during the pandemic, and tape-recorded with the participants' permission.

Through inductive content analysis, numerous themes and codes were obtained and then they were narrowed down into a meaningful number. To prevent ethical issues, confidentiality was achieved by using codes (P1, P2, ...) instead of the

real names of the participants, and to ensure trustworthiness, member check was done by asking the participants to approve the data or make any necessary changes. For transferability purposes, population, time and context of data collection were specified. In this study, only a part of the interview results that were relevant to the topic of the present study are presented.

Results

Turkish faculty shared their observations and lived experiences about their institutions as LCs regarding the concepts of equity, accountability, and quality, and offered suggestions for the sustainability of HE with major stakeholders as students and faculty. The data analysis, which led to the findings below, indicated two themes, four categories, and eight codes in total (Table 2).

Table 2. Themes and Codes

Theme 1: Learning Community as a Concept

The first RQ explicates the key concepts of LCs under two categories: the 'connotations of LCs' for the participants and what 'professional development and commitment' means for them (Table 2). P10 described LCs as:

An organization or a small community where individuals learn from each other and transfer knowledge, the direction of which does not always have to be from the director to the employee but also from the employee to the director or students to the faculty.

The participants described the qualities of HE LCs as having contemporary *international quality standards* in teaching and learning facilities. Some participants said that as many faculty at different levels had been purged by the government intervention, some departments were left without any instructors and/or senior faculty, and this caused complaints among students as they would be graduating without having been assigned a professor to teach their classes. This issue, they believed, affected the quality of HEIs negatively. Faculty pointed out other shortcomings in HEIs as digitalization, quality library services, conferences with invited famous key-note speakers as a motivation factor for students, students' and faculty's need-based skills, knowledge development, productivity and students' critical thinking abilities. P7 and P9 said quality needed to be attained also through faculty attitudes towards teaching, i.e. renewing themselves, adapting the course to student needs and using cutting-edge technology that they said became even more necessary with sudden transition to online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In LCs, faculty maintaining objectivity in assessments was stated to be another important aspect of quality, especially for courses with multiple sections and large student numbers. The participants said students complained about objectivity in assessments regarding certain faculty, which continued during online classes during the pandemic too (P7). Faculty wanted to feel *safe* not only through job security (P3) but also when *expressing themselves in a democratic environment* in academia and creating their course content freely (e.g. including sensitive topics for class discussions) (P2, P6).

Regarding emotional and mental well-being, it was deduced from the interviews that faculty acting as *supporting/guiding figures* for student security plays a vital role. P7 said they dealt with students having serious mental problems and drug addiction. For this reason, some faculty said that

they tried to get to know students to make them feel they were not alone, especially during the pandemic when students could not see their friends in person:

I spare my first two weeks to get to know students; where has he come from, where does he reside, what do his parents do, does he have a hobby. I do action teaching and this background information of students forms my inventory to help design my course (P7).

The interviewees pointed out that student improvement needed to go hand in hand with faculty *professional development*, i.e. *skills* and *research quality improvement*, *colleagues cooperating*, and *collaborating* on projects. Some comparably more novice faculty complained about their colleagues' uncooperative attitudes in academic work. P11, when compared to her international experiences, said: "*Turkish people work solo, don't want to share and do not trust each other. People who are this protective usually have an issue with this. I believe the more people are knowledgeable in one area, the more they get participative*". P12 explained it as:

In my university, there is almost no colleague that I can cooperate with although they come from big, reputable universities. There is no feeling of unity; maybe it is the local culture I don't know exactly why. There are a few colleagues I share and cooperate with who are from my previous university where I was a research assistant for a long time.

A minority of faculty collaborated by organizing learning days where expert speakers were invited and faculty shared best practices. They added that their directors' trustworthy, open and fair attitudes towards them were also ways for development as these approaches allowed for an increase in *institutional commitment*. Overall, the lack of trust, belongingness to the institution, and collaboration among novice faculty were among the issues in both state and foundation universities that needed to be addressed by middle and upper-level directors as well as faculty themselves.

Theme 2: Actions for Sustainability

'Actions for Sustainability' refers to the second RQ (Table 2). P1 was concerned about the sustainability of education at the university as

there was not enough faculty to teach and some divisions like the Human Subjects Committee did not exist then. As this was a provincial university, it could not offer many opportunities or facilities for development and prevented the university from being an attractive education hub. For the proper functioning of the university, 'institutionalization' was shown as a must by many participants, which, to them, necessitated being *transparent* and *solution-oriented*. Related to this, some faculty stressed that to prevent issues from building up and becoming a burden, regular, university-wide *needs analysis* be made for necessary *restructuring*. This, they said should include following international standards in teaching-learning, sparing quality time for guidance, and recruiting more faculty (because a great number of faculty had been purged due to the mass expulsion in 2016). The academic profession being measured by increasing quantification rather than quality was shown as the other reason for faculty sparing limited time for students, decreased student motivation and aspiration, and poor research and education quality. P14 exemplified this: *"Especially for graduate students, faculty should spend time with students; not treat them as workers like 'bring your thesis or article!'", but chat with them about certain topics, elicit their ideas, i.e. follow students' personal development.*" As a remedy to increase education quality, P3 suggested: *"an 'academic council' can be created made up of faculty of all levels, research assistants and alumni to especially guide students about career-orientation, proper course selection to serve their future careers, and inform students with industries in which they would work in the future"*. As a part of the restructuring, it was also suggested that universities be proactive and assume a guiding role in building university-industry cooperation. For restructuring on a minor scale, P3 added that more *faculty-student collaborations* needed to take place, like through faculty projects, where students needed to be supported financially and academically.

In summary, besides the well-intentioned initiatives of some faculty and universities, the problems in LCs in about half of the universities seemed to center around insufficient teaching-learning opportunities that could not live up to

international standards. Besides this, the lack of trust and commitment, and limited student-faculty and faculty-faculty collaboration also affected student learning, sense of belongingness and their future success, which eventually diminished prospects for sustainability in HE LCs. As for panaceas, the faculty suggested a transparent university administration making needs analysis for restructuring HEIs following the principles that correspond to those of LCs and taking initiative in industry-student connections.

Discussion

This study aimed to bring forth the distinctive qualities of HE LCs to explore the extent to which they can prevent HEIs from the draining effects of emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and transform the crisis into more effective LCs to go beyond it. This research also provided well-grounded practical implications from critical pedagogy and transformative theory perspectives, targeting worldwide stakeholders and policymakers in HE. The interview findings were obtained from 19 Turkish faculty from different cities in Turkey. By enriching the findings with a document analysis of policy reports, government briefs, survey findings and peer-reviewed journal articles, policy suggestions were offered.

One of the findings of the study referred to the necessity of attaining *international quality standards* during and beyond the pandemic. For this to be realized, universities need to develop a grounded approach to improve their *research capacities* and faculty and students' *digitalized skills*. The present study findings indicated that students and faculty had difficulties adapting to the online academic environment during the pandemic. Not only the abrupt transition made this period difficult but also the psychological effect of the pandemic, inadequate quality and availability of digital equipment and quality internet access. Related to this, a study reported that faculty and students experienced hardships in online learning and assessment during the pandemic (Lassoued et al., 2020). The latter may be due to the different kinds of competencies in assessments used in face-to-face and online learning. Other studies stated dissatisfaction about the difficulty of access to

online education due to the lack of IT equipment, infrastructure, faculty online teaching skills, and being unprepared for online education (Karadağ & Yücel, 2020; TEDMEM, 2020; UNESCO, 2020a; Young-Powell, 2020). Similarly, a pandemic report from a Turkish public university stated that 23% of 2781 students could not participate in online classes, 76% of whom said the reason was either limited or lack of internet connection (Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi, 2020). In this sense, based on critical pedagogy and a change-driven approach of transformative theory, teaching and learning online environments need to be improved and bearing in mind social, cultural and economic differences among students, compensation strategies should be devised.

Improvement of LCs necessitates looking into the faculty's experiences and needs too. More than 6000 Turkish academicians' (most from provincial universities) expulsion from universities as of 2016 created a fear and censorship climate in HE (Kaya, 2018), causing values of *democracy* and *safety* in HE LCs to run down. As was observed during the interviews, this led to student dissatisfaction due to the lack of field-based faculty to teach their classes and inequity in the HES. Despite the 'violation of rights' decision of the Constitutional Court, the State of Emergency Commission denying the reinstatement of the purged faculty (Boztürk, 2021) suggested that the Turkish HES needs more time to internalize the meaning of human rights and quality education. In this context, unless more comprehensive policies are developed regarding the issues in the HES, providing (non)digital educational resources or addressing students' needs in online and face-to-face education, as were pointed out by faculty, will only be solutions to save the day.

The findings revealed that feeling *safe* was crucial for faculty and their students apart from physical, mental, financial, and social well-being. Likewise, a US study examining LCs in a medical school during the COVID-19 period found that adapting the curriculum to spare time to talk about the well-being of students and the challenges they faced helped students feel safer and reinforced the feeling of community support (Mitchell et al., 2021). Therefore, making a needs analysis at the university and state (the CoHE) level to detect

areas that make faculty and students feel unsafe can help solve their discomfort.

Whether there be possible future emergencies or not, regarding the continuation of online education, a study conducted with 8242 faculty indicated that 84.2% of faculty did not think that online education could be an alternative to face-to-face, despite its advantages (Demir et al., 2020, p. 2). This may be explained by the lack of readiness for online teaching as reflected by previous study findings. Although the same group expressed negative thoughts about online education, they (83.5%) still expected an increase in online academic facilities in the future. Despite the frustrating experiences in online education, the developments worldwide indicate the continuation of the same system together with hybrid education, signaling investments to be made in online learning tools and platforms as also suggested by the World Bank (2020).

Conclusion and Suggestions

The study explored the extent to which HE can be sustained during and beyond emergencies in society by practicing the qualities of LCs such as allowing self-expression without the fear of exclusion or labeling and encouraging collaboration, cooperation, institutional commitment and transparency. 19 Turkish faculty perspectives through one-on-one interviews were analyzed by grounding the discussions on critical pedagogy and transformational theory. Regarding the findings, policy suggestions as practical implications were offered.

The first group of findings referred to the principles of LCs from faculty perspectives. Initially, they pointed out that HE LCs were groups of faculty and directors that should update themselves with international quality standards through improved research capacities and digital skills, especially with the sudden transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other qualities of LCs for faculty were democratic spaces that allowed for self-expression, as well as the provision of guidance and support for students, especially during and in post-emergency times. Faculty also pointed out the need for more professional development through cooperation

and collaboration with their colleagues and students to serve both faculty and student needs, which only a minority of faculty did voluntarily. Directors' being trustworthy, open and fair were other vital requirements mentioned that were said to increase institutional commitment.

The second group of findings explicated faculty suggestions for actions that would help sustain HE LCs. At the university level, faculty stressed the need for transparency, solution-orientedness and university-industry cooperation. Besides, they suggested doing needs analysis for restructuring, especially with the additional issues like the ones in the area of digitalization that became more apparent with the pandemic, as well as in teaching-learning, guidance, and recruitment areas. Faculty getting into more faculty-student collaboration was also seen as a need for students' improvement.

Based on faculty perspectives, it seems that while online education may not replace face-to-face education entirely, at least in the near future, a hybrid model may be adopted on a wider scale. Therefore, effective policies referring to HE teaching-learning alternatives both within and outside of emergencies need to be devised. For more comprehensive policies, policymakers should resort to academic study findings and also get views of all stakeholder groups about how to better manage crisis times like the COVID-19 pandemic. It may be a limitation of the study that only faculty and some directors' views were resorted to but not students and administrative staff whose views could add different perspectives.

Considering the limitations of this study, future researchers who would like to examine HE LCs may choose to explore different qualities of LCs than the ones in this study. They may resort to a variety and a larger size of stakeholders in HEIs. This can be done through a mixed method approach as the deficiencies of both qualitative and quantitative studies can complement each other.

Policy Suggestions as Practical Implications for Sustainable Higher Education Beyond Emergencies

Below can be found some immediate-to-long-term policy suggestions. They refer to different areas for

HE decision makers that prioritize equity, accountability and quality, and the main principles of LCs as collaboration, cooperation, and democracy. I believe that only with the improvement of these qualities can democratic societies flourish.

Finance

Immediate to middle-term measures: Universities and the CoHE of Turkey should detect disadvantaged students, donate computers and tablets, and/or present them with financially convenient conditions to buy computers. Institutional and statewide digital investments should be increased for quality teaching-learning in general. Special agreements with internet-providing companies should also be made to design affordable internet packages for students.

Middle to long-term measures: In a possible global recession, the better-off students will have more chances of being employed or staying in education to further their academic careers while the ones from lower socio-economic backgrounds will be facing the changes in the labor market and thus, will not be able to pursue postgraduate degrees and drop out. As compensation, students-at-risk should be encouraged to do further degrees in HE with the financial support of universities, and public and private organizations. Additionally, universities should prioritize university-industry collaborations considering the economic difficulties students are experiencing; banks should postpone student loan payments, and the states should encourage social mobility and equity-based recruitments like paid internships.

Health

Immediate to middle-term measures: During the pandemic, university counseling and guidance staff should make themselves more available to meet faculty and student needs. A part of the lectures should focus on strategies to cope with stress and unpredictability, which will not only create a sense of a safe community where students raise their concerns and back one another but also help detect students with depression or anxiety in advance. Government-HEI connection should be

intensified for effective, systematic and sustainable health services.

Academia

Immediate to middle-term measures: HEIs should adopt a flexible approach for course deliveries in terms of adopting interdisciplinary and modern curricula, and increased use of technology. Quality standards in assessments and integrity in learning need to be maintained, by supporting the latter via online protocols. In parallel with the collaboration and cooperation element of LCs, faculty-student, peer-to-peer contact in and out of the classroom should be increased, and active participation in learning should be encouraged. Diverse student talents should be detected by faculty and those students should be given chances of improvement via scientific faculty projects.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Immediate to middle-term measures: Equity, quality and well-being-based strategies should be developed by state and university authorities for an inclusive academic climate. These may include identifying students at risk to remedy inequalities (UNESCO IESALC, 2020), providing quiet and hygienically safe study spaces for students, and adding anti-discrimination measures to university policies. A foreseeable risk to be addressed is the non-renewal of registration, especially by disadvantaged and international students. This anticipated risk is supported by survey findings of Studyportals (2020) that 40% of potential international students changed their plans about studying abroad due to the pandemic; 50% thought of postponing enrollment to the following year, 42% enrolling in an online program, 21% not going abroad and 11% not studying at all.

Administration and Coordination

Immediate to middle-term measures: Support centers made up of high-tech specialists and educational scientists can be built at universities to address teaching and assessment needs of faculty, student

and faculty IT-related needs/issues, help improve their digital capabilities, detect data security gaps, and manage ongoing campus facilities like the laboratories and needs in practical classes. Intra-university communication channels can be fostered for more collaboration. Universities, as large LCs, can purposefully create smaller communities to enhance their learning, encourage socializing, and focus on learning outcomes as they have the power to transform HEIs.

References

- Aristovnik, A., Keržič, D., Ravšelj, D., Tomaževič, N., & Umek, L. (2020). Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the life of higher education students: A global perspective. *Sustainability*, 12, 8438. DOI:10.3390/su12208438
- Arnhold, N., Brajkovic, L., Nikolaev, D., & Zavalina, P. (2020). *Tertiary education and COVID-19: Impact and mitigation strategies in Europe and Central Asia*. World Bank. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341781394>
- Baran, E., & AlZoubi, D. (2020). Human-centered design as a frame for transition to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 28(2), 365-372. <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/216077>
- Bell, L., & Schniedewind, N. (1987). Reflective minds/intentional hearts: Joining humanistic education and critical theory for liberating education. *Journal of Education*, 169(2), 55-77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748716900205>
- Biesta, G. (1998). Say you want a revolution. Suggestions for the impossible future of critical pedagogy. *Educational Theory*, 48(4), 499-510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1998.00499.x>
- Boyer, E. L. (1987). *College: The undergraduate experience in America*. Harper & Row.
- Boztürk, B. (2021). Barış akademisyenleri görevlerine dönemedi: AYM tartışması. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://p.dw.com/p/42buE>
- Bradley-Levine, J., & Carr, K.A. (2015). Critical theory and Catholic social teaching: A research framework for Catholic schools. *Journal of*

- Catholic Education*, 18(2), 27–43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.1802032015>
- Brown, K. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(1), 77-108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03259147>
- Clark, M. C., & Wilson, A. L. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(2), 75-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848191041002002>
- CoHE. (2020a). Press briefing on distance education. (March 18, 2020). Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://covid19.yok.gov.tr/alinan-kararlar>
- CoHE. (2020b). Coronavirus (Covid 19) briefing note: 1. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/coronavirus_bilgilendirme_1.aspx
- CoHE. (2020c). 15 Haziran 2020 tarihi itibariyle üniversitelerde akademik takvime dönülmesi kararına ilişkin açıklama (05.05.2020). Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/akademik-takvime-donulmesine-iliskin-aciklama.aspx>
- CoHE (2020d). YÖK'ten üniversite öğrencileri için kayıt dondurma ve erteleme hakkı (01.04.2020). Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/erteleme-ve-kayit-dondurma-hakki.aspx>
- CoHE. (2020e). 6GB internet quota in support of online education for university students. (29.4.2020). Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/ogrencilere-egitime-destek-kotasi.aspx>
- CoHE. (2020f). Engelli öğrencilerin uzaktan eğitimde yaşadığı sıkıntılara yönelik YÖK harekete geçti. (07.05.2020). Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/engelli-ogrenciler-icinuzaktanegitim.aspx>
- CoHE. (2020g). YÖK'ten tez aşamasındaki lisansüstü öğrencilerine ek süre hakkı (10.06.2020). Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/lisansustu-ek-sure-hakki.aspx>
- CoHE. (2020h). YÖK'ten küresel salgın ile mücadele sürecinde yeni düzenlemeler - II (04.06.2020). Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2020/kuresel-salgin-surecinde-yapisal-duzenlemeler-2.aspx>
- CoHE. (2021). 2021-2022 eğitim öğretim yılı salgınla mücadelede tedbir ve uygulamalar değerlendirme toplantısı İstanbul'da gerçekleştirildi (21.9.2021) Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2021/yok-baskani-ozvar-istanbul-daki-universitelerin-rektorleri-ile-bir-araya-geldi.aspx>
- CoHE. (2023). Syrian refugee student numbers in the CoHE in 2021-22. Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Demir, Ö., Toprak, M., Yıldız, S., Demir Z., Bakan Kalaycıoğlu, D., Güç, A., Uğur, Z., Eyerci, C., Toprak, A., Yıldız, Ö., & Çelikkaya, R. (2020). *İzolasyon döneminin Türkiye'deki akademisyenler üzerindeki etkileri: Araştırma genel raporu*. Ankara: Türkiye. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <http://omer-demir.net/pubs/izolasyon-doneminin-turkiyedeki-akademisyenler-uzerine-etkileri/>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- DGMM. (2023). *Temporary protection*. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>
- Doolan, K., Barada, V., Burić, I., Krolo, K., & Tonković, Ž. (2021). *Student life during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown: Europe-wide insights*. European Students' Union. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/0010-ESU-SIderalCovid19_WEB.pdf
- EC. (2019). DG ECHO thematic policy document no 10. Education in emergencies in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations. European civil protection and humanitarian aid operations. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/eie_in_humanitarian_assistance.pdf

- EC. (2020). Achieving a European education area by 2025 and resetting education and training for the digital age. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/e%20n/ip_20_1743
- Elmer, T., Mepham, K., & Stadfeld, C. (2020). Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students' social networks and mental health before and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland. *PLoS ONE*, 15(7): e0236337. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0236337>
- Farnell, T., Skledar Matijević, A., & Šćukanec Schmidt, N. (2021). *The impact of COVID-19 on higher education: A review of emerging evidence*. NESET report, Executive summary. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. DOI: 10.2766/916313.
- FRA. (2020). *Coronavirus pandemic in the EU-Fundamental rights implications*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-april-1>
- Harvard Medical School. (n.d.). [Massachusetts Consortium on Pathogen Readiness](https://masscpr.hms.harvard.edu/about-us). Retrieved September 28, from <https://masscpr.hms.harvard.edu/about-us>
- Henriksen, D., Gretter, S., & Richardson, C. (2018). Design thinking and the practicing teacher: Addressing problems of practice in teacher education. *Teaching Education*, 1(21), 209–229. DOI.10.1080/10476210.2018.1531841
- Holmes, K. (2020). *Sustaining learning communities through and beyond COVID-19*. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/holmes-sustaining-learning-communities-COVID-19>
- IOM. (2020). *Countering xenophobia and stigma to foster social cohesion in the Covid 19 response and recovery*. UN Migration Covid-19 Response Issue Brief Retrieved November 9, 2021, from https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/countering_xenophobia_and_stigma_130720.pdf
- Iwai, Y. (2020). Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: What do we gain and what do we lose when classrooms go virtual? *Scientific American*. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/online-learning-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic/>
- Johnson, M. D., Sprowles, A. E., Goldenburg, K. R., Margell S. T., & Castellino, L. (2020). Effect of a place-based learning community on belonging, persistence, and equity gaps for first-year STEM students. *Innovative Higher Education*, 45, 509–531. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09519-5>
- Karadağ, E., & Yücel, C. (2020). Yeni tip koronavirus pandemisi döneminde üniversitelerde uzaktan eğitim: Lisans öğrencileri kapsamında bir değerlendirme çalışması. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi*, 10(2), 181–192. DOI:10.2399/yod.20.730688
- Kaya, M. (2018). Turkey's purge of critical academia. *Middle East Report*, 288. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://merip.org/2018/12/turkeys-purge-of-critical-academia/>
- Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi. (2020). Kriz döneminde farklı bir yönetim yaklaşımı. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.ahievran.edu.tr/arsiv-haberler/5908-aydep-koordinatordugutarafindan-uzaktan-egitimde-yapilancalismalar-rapor-haline-getirildi>
- Kubota, T. (January 13, 2021). Lab life at Stanford during the Covid-19 pandemic. Stanford News. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from <https://news.stanford.edu/2021/01/13/research-covid-19-pandemic/#:~:text=Embracing%20new%20tools%20and%20resources,virtual%20and%20in-person%20experimentation.>
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2006). *What matters to student success: A review of the literature*. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) Commissioned Paper. Retrieved November 1, 2021, from http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/kuh_team_report.pdf
- Lassoued, Z., Alhendawi, M., & Bashitialshaer, R. (2020). An exploratory study of the obstacles for achieving quality in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education Sciences*, 10(9), 232. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10090232>
- Lee, K. (2020). *Coronavirus: Universities are shifting classes online – but it's not as easy as it sounds*.

- The Conversation. Retrieved October 23, 2021, from <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-universities-are-shifting-classes-online-but-its-not-as-easy-as-it-sounds-133030>
- Lenning, O. T., & Ebbers, L. H. (1999). *The powerful potential of learning communities: Improving education for the future*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 26(6). The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development.
- Mezirow, J. (1995). Transformation theory of adult learning. In M. Welton (Ed.), *In defense of the lifeworld: Critical perspectives on adult learning* (pp.37-90). State University of New York Press.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3–33). Jossey-Bass.
- [Mitchell, A. K.](#), [Mork, A. L.](#), [Hall, J.](#), & [Bayer, C. R.](#) (2021). Navigating COVID-19 through diverse student learning communities: importance and lessons learned. *Health Education*, ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HE-01-2021-0012>
- Montacute, R. (2020). Social mobility and covid-19: Implications of the Covid-19 crisis for educational inequality. Retrieved October 10, 2021, from <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-and-Social-Mobility-1.pdf>
- Mültəciler Derneği. (2023). Türkiye'deki Suriyeli sayısı Mart 2023. <https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/>
- Nosaka, T., & Novak, H. (2014). Against the odds: The impact of the key communities at Colorado State University on retention and graduation for historically underrepresented students. *Learning Communities Research and Practice*, 2(2), Article 3.
- OECD. (2020). *Lessons for education from Covid-19: A policymaker's handbook for more resilient systems*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/>
- Raaper, R., & Brown, C. (2020). The Covid-19 pandemic and the dissolution of the university campus: Implications for students support practice. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 5(3/4), 343-349. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-06-2020-0032>
- Roose, K. (2020). Sorry, but working from home is overrated. *The New York Times*. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/technology/working-from-home.html>
- Sefton-Green, J. (2020). COVID-19 shows the flawed ways societies use education to address inequality. *UNESCO Futures of Education Ideas LAB*. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/sefton-green-flawed-ways-societies-use-education-address-inequality>
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Doubleday/Currency.
- Servage, L. (2008). Critical and transformative practices in professional learning communities. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(1), 63-77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23479031>
- Shapiro, N. S., & Levine, J. H. (1999). *Creating learning communities: A practical guide to winning support, organizing for change, and implementing programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- SPARK (n.d.). *Higher education services*. Retrieved October 31, 2021, from <https://spark.ngo/programme/higher-education-services-hes/>
- Studyportals. (2020). 36% of students consider changing their academic plans due to COVID-19. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from <https://studyportals.com/press-releases/36-of-students-consider-changing-their-academic-plans-due-to-covid-19/>
- TEDMEM. (2020). Covid-19 sürecinde eğitim. Uzaktan öğrenme, sorunlar ve çözüm önerileri. Türk Eğitim Derneği.
- THE. (2020, October). *How Turkey's universities are mastering digital transformation*. THE World University Rankings. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/hub/coursera/p/how-turkeys-universities-are-mastering-digital-transformation>
- The Global Platform. (2020). *Higher education in emergencies: On the road to 2030*. Retrieved

- November 4, 2021, from <https://www.globalplatformforsyrianstudents.org/index.php/news-room/higher-education-in-emergencies-on-the-road-to-2030-is-now-available>
- Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2), 167-177. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/30046>
- Tinto, V. (2012). Moving from theory to action: A model of institutional action for student success. In Seidman, A. (Ed.). (2012). *College student retention: Formula for student success* (2nd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- UNESCO. (2020a). Startling digital divides in distance learning emerge. Retrieved October 6, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/news/startling-digital-divides-distance-learning-emerge>
- UNESCO. (2020b). Education for sustainable development: A roadmap. Retrieved October 6, 2021, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>
- UNESCO IESALC. (2020). *COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. Impact analysis, policy responses and recommendations*. UNESCO IESALC. Retrieved on November 10, 2021, from <https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/publicaciones-2/>
- UNESCO. (2021a). *Supporting learning recovery one year into Covid-19: The global education coalition in action*. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376061>
- UNESCO. (n.d.). Higher education and the sustainable development goals. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/themes/higher-education/sdgs>
- UNHCR (2020). *DAFI annual report 2020: Aiming higher*. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/6177e5204/dafi-annual-report-2020.html>
- UNHCR. (2020-21). *Turkey country chapter 2021-2022. 3RP regional refugee resilience plan 2018-19*. <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>
- Vogt, W. P. (1997). *Tolerance and education: Learning to live with diversity and difference*. Sage.
- White, M., Legg, E., Foroughi, B., & Rose, J. (2019). Constructing past, present, and future communities: Exploring the experiences of community among last-dollar scholarship students. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 47(4), 805-818. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22154>
- WHO. (2020a). WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>
- WHO. (2020b). Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 19 October 2021. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---19-october-2021#:~:text=Download%20\(2.3%20MB\)-,Overview,as%20those%20reported%20last%20week's](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---19-october-2021#:~:text=Download%20(2.3%20MB)-,Overview,as%20those%20reported%20last%20week's)
- WHO. (2021). [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Dashboard](https://covid19.who.int/). Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://covid19.who.int/>
- World Bank. (2020). *The COVID-19 Crisis response: Supporting tertiary education for continuity, adaptation, and innovation*. World Bank. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/621991586463915490/>
- Young-Powell, A. (2020). It's a nightmare: How coronavirus is wreaking havoc on students' exams. *The Guardian*. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/mar/25/its-a-nightmare-how-coronavirus-is-wreaking-havoc-on-students-exams>
- Zhao, C. & Kuh, G. (2004). Adding value: Learning communities and student engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 45, 115-138. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:RIHE.0000015692.88534.de>
- Zmuda, A., Kuklis, R., & Kline, E. (2004). *Transforming schools: Creating a culture of continuous improvement*. ASCD