

Chapter 16

State of the Art About COVID–19's Impact on Santiago University, Cape Verde

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a critical challenge for the higher education sector worldwide. Under such a circumstance, the exploration of the capacity of this sector to adapt to such a state of uncertainty has become of huge importance. In this chapter, the authors critically reflect on the Cape Verdean teaching experience during the early COVID-19 lockdown. This is an exploratory case study based on a qualitative approach with an aim to reflect on new practices of teaching under a pandemic emergency. Based on the teaching experience of teaching in Santiago University, they explain how this university has changed from a face-to-face to an online teaching system and stress the challenges and opportunities that appear from this transition process. This chapter concludes that this strategy has become an opportunity to the university since it consistently raised the number of international students cooperating with them and also that the more adaptive and resilient approaches to online teaching were also a success.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2019, the world woke up to a new reality as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic that began in Hubei province and spread worldwide in March 2020, being considered one of the most challenging tragedies since the second world war (United Nations, 2020). WHO reported COVID-19 as a dangerous and threatening disease on January 30, 2020 while on March 1, 2020, it was declared as a pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020).

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was not limited to national borders, nor were its effects. This has led the world to severe inequalities, has affected many individuals and mainly college students as well as the education systems of many countries and disrupted the traditional education system (Doyumğaç et al., 2021).

Due to the closing of teaching sets, universities replaced traditional teaching with a remote system that started to characterize part of a new reality, requiring new pedagogy and teaching methods for teachers and, in parallel, that students could have access to remote teaching, which is reflected in the need for computers and an efficient internet network (Schleicher, 2020).

In this context, all countries had to adapt in order to find how to contain COVID-19 transmission chains. One of the areas heavily affected by pandemic was the Higher Education, as happened in Cape Verde.

In general, in order to ensure the continuity of education, despite the closure of higher education institutions, many countries have chosen to offer new technologies and offer online classes and learning system different from those offered in the classroom. However, in many cases, universities did not have the experience and time to adapt conveniently to what in many cases affected as assessments and disrupted student learning trajectories and progression (NCES, 2019).

In this paper, we focus on a case study from Santiago University in Cape Verdean to better understand what measures this University has taken in order to face and overcome the pandemic COVID-19 situation in this archipelago.

BACKGROUND

The emergence and unprecedented spread of the COVID-19 as a global pandemic has been posing substantial challenges to the practices of everyday life. There has been a surge of interest to explore the dynamics of online education across different contexts amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Rapanta et al., 2020).

Many higher education institutions worldwide, had to inevitably made urgent adjustments to cope with the pandemic situation. In order to remain competitive and to deal with arising uncertainties and changing situations, many universities as well as academics had to readapt their behaviour towards teaching. The most significant aspect was the fast transition of higher education to online provision as well as the enforced digitalisation of pedagogical approaches for both the academic community and students (Rapanta et al., 2020).

Since the beginning of 2020, we have seen a consistent increasing body of knowledge exploring the capacities and challenges of online education (Dumford & Miller, 2018) in the academic field.

Even though there are several reasons for this, being the pandemic the major one, there is no doubt that the use of up-to-date online technologies was possible due to the better power of communications technology as well as the new students' profiles who become "digital natives" (Nastaran & Hesam, 2021).

As a result of this proliferation of online teaching mostly in higher education worldwide, there has been a huge discussion about the challenges and benefits associated with this kind of teaching for both instructors and students. It has been argued that students assessing online classes may be less likely to participate in collaborative learning activities compared to their counterparts in face-to-face classes (Dumford & Miller, 2018).

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