



CHAPTER 2

Is Hybrid and Remote Work Here to Stay? Opportunities and Challenges in the United States and Abroad

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected all businesses worldwide, especially higher education institutions. Externally, colleges and universities around the world are dealing with the aftermath of the global pandemic, which includes travel restrictions and vaccine requirements, recruitment limitations (e.g., college fairs, summer camps), and ongoing

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hiring freezes and budget cuts (Bastedo et al., 2023; McKeown et al., 2022). Internally, postsecondary institutions are forced to adapt to changes in the environment, including changes to academic courses and program offerings, online student support services and initiatives (e.g., virtual office hours, virtual breakout rooms, virtual whiteboards, virtual lecture recordings, virtual study sessions), diverse modes of remote learning (e.g., synchronous, asynchronous, bichronous, hybrid, hyflex, flipped), recruitment of underrepresented students (e.g., low-income, rural, refugee, people of color¹) and, in most cases, international students (Berry, 2022; Chan et al., 2021).

In the United States alone, there has been a sharp decline in college enrollment and attendance, reduced perceived value of college degrees, decreased investment in public higher education, increased demand for college promise programs (i.e., free college), and the rise of test-optional examinations (SAT, ACT) becoming standard in college admissions (Chan, 2022; Fischer, 2022; Levine & Van Pelt, 2021). Furthermore, institutions of higher education are dealing with employee retention issues and challenges to filling senior leadership positions (e.g., presidents, vice presidents, provosts, deans), with more than half of university staff considering leaving their jobs according (Bichsel et al., 2022). The report by Bichsel et al. (2022) from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) concluded that 76 percent of American respondents are seeking new work opportunities because they want increased pay, 43 percent want remote work options, 32 percent are seeking flexible work schedules, and another 30 percent want a promotion or additional work responsibilities. While 63.1 percent of respondents reported working “completely or mostly on-site,” the vast majority—70.5 percent—believe that most of their work duties can be performed from a distance.

With increased demand for hybrid and fully remote work styles, most organizations understand that some form of distance work is here to stay (Watson & Spraggs, 2023). In higher education, reinventing and revitalizing hybrid and remote work requires good communication, good policies to protect faculty and staff, and regular rest (Carrell & Zemsky, 2021; Hughes, 2022). Colleges and universities must develop both remote and

¹The term People of Color refers to those who identify as one or more of the following: American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American, Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latina/o/x, or Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian.

hybrid work procedures and practices that are informed by the institution's mission and identity (Turner, 2021). For example, the outcomes and hybrid campuses around the world—where faculty and staff work remotely—can allow institutions to offer more academic programs, teach more programs for less cost, improve economic outcomes, and increase college access in rural communities (all of which can generate enrollment growth and reduce costs) (Docking & Harrington, 2022). Hybrid campuses can also help global learners have a blend of both on-campus and off-campus experiences, such as playing sports, meeting lifelong best friends, engaging with faculty mentors, and forming a bond with their community (i.e., long-term benefits) (Docking & Harrington, 2022). As our society moves toward a more hybrid and remote workforce, we believe that it is imperative for teacher-scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to begin examining the opportunities and challenges with distance or remote work in higher education.

In this volume, we illustrate how a hybrid and remote campus is not only necessarily reasonable or feasible for certain campus positions in the United States and abroad but also for institutional commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (Kezar & Posselt, 2019). Specifically, we believe that developing a remote and hybrid campus can help better support marginalized populations, students with childcare needs, people with disabilities, and refugee and migrant students in developing and transitional economies. With the ongoing Great Resignation and Great Reshuffle period, we believe that college leaders must use this time to create newer, disruption proof systems that will give faculty and staff members the freedom to manage work-life balance while remaining in compliance with labor laws. Senior administrators (e.g., presidents, provosts, deans) must weigh the needs of on-campus students against the desires of workers for flexibility and remote work (Bloom et al., 2023; Drexler, 2022). While there is still much hesitation and uncertainty after COVID-19, we firmly believe that colleges and universities positioned for success in the next decade will seize on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by prioritizing an innovative institutional culture (or mindful innovation) to remote and hybrid working conditions while simultaneously building inclusive workplace environments for all faculty and staff around the world (Lanford & Tierney, 2022; Razzetti, 2022).

THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK

The worldwide shift to remote and hybrid work has drastically changed how colleges and universities approach hiring in crisis times (Kezar, 2023; Netswera et al., 2022). Prior to the global pandemic, hiring international professors, practitioners, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows simply involved managing contracts and obtaining visas. Today, human resource professionals and faculty members have begun to accept that radical change in hiring remote and hybrid employees is and will be the “new normal.” The reality is that flexible work arrangements in higher education bring many rewards and benefits (talent, productivity, retention) to the institutional culture and enhance the quality of life for workers (satisfaction, engagement, experience) within the environment (Drexler, 2022; Glass et al., 2021; Makridis & Schloetzer, 2022).

For example, colleges and universities that flex to accommodate hybrid and remote work demands will be able to choose from among the most talented scholars in academia (e.g., distinguished professors, chair professors, full professors) (Staley & Endicott, 2023). Furthermore, there is growing evidence to suggest that educational institutions that offer flexible worktime reduction, such as four-day workweeks, can help improve human well-being, organizational performance, and environmental outcomes (Kelly et al., 2022; Schor et al., 2023). A recent study by Wels et al. (2023) found no significant adverse effects on social and mental well-being with increased hybrid and remote work. The challenge, however, is that many institutions seeking to hire renowned faculty members in the United States and abroad must comply with the specific and varied employment laws of their home countries regarding remote work. Noncompliance can carry heavy penalties for the university. For instance, if international faculty have previously taught in the United States but now teach 100 percent remotely, existing contracts will need to be converted to new contracts that adhere to local labor laws. Additionally, human resource professionals must analyze complex labor regulations in both developing and emerging market economies because top foreign faculty may be unable or unwilling to move to the United States. In other words, institutions of higher education will need to adapt to new hiring processes and procedures to eliminate compliance risks for remote work (Dyer & Shepherd, 2021).

In addition to employment law and regulation, college leaders must also deal with equitable compensation for remote and hybrid workers. For instance, the hourly support staff is harder to manage at a distance, especially in developing and transitional countries where academic corruption and mismanagement are prevalent (Denisova-Schmidt, 2020). Furthermore, calculating how many hours employees have worked remotely at under-resourced and unwealthy institutions can be a daunting task where digital, information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure may be lacking (Netswera et al., 2022). Because higher education is made up of a wide variety of employee types, departments, and sections, human resource professionals and senior leaders must develop innovative mechanisms and procedures during the Great Resignation and Great Reshuffle era to track whether responsibilities match the expected and required hours of labor.

The Great Resignation, Quiet Quitting, and Faculty and Staff Disengagement

In the post-COVID-19 period, more than half of higher education employees in the United States have indicated that they plan to leave during the Great Resignation (i.e., “Big Quit”) (Moody, 2022) and that a large number of professors are quitting their jobs due to greater rates of faculty burnout (Pope-Rauark, 2022; Salle, 2022). A report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) suggests that the Great Resignation saw a record 47.4 million Americans quit their jobs in 2021. In higher education, a report by Skyfactor Benchworks and Southern Association for College Student Affairs (SACSA) (, 2022) found that 37 percent of student affairs professionals in the United States are looking to leave their roles (i.e., quiet quitting) due to low pay, poor work-life balance regarding hybrid and remote work, and little opportunity to advance in their organization (Brown, 2022).

In general, quiet quitting is defined as “performing only what’s necessary at work without going the extra mile and looking beyond what is required” from their job description (Harter, 2022). It is a way for workers to deal with burnout, especially among younger employees in higher education. There are many reasons why faculty and staff members may quietly quit, including unfair compensation, job insecurity and reorganization, organizational leadership lacked empathy, and toxic workplace culture and politics (Jackson & Cherwin, 2022; Sull et al., 2022). In addition,

employees are leaving higher education and student affairs for increased pay, better work-life balance, and better benefits (i.e., opportunity to work hybrid or remote, childcare services) and career advancement (Alonso, 2022). Although the big quit and quiet quitting are here to stay (McClure & Fryar, 2022), we believe that faculty and staff members should be given the right to determine the conditions under which they work (in-person, hybrid, or remote), in addition to assisting them to be mindful of how their own choices affect the well-being and productivity of others (Hughes, 2022).

Along with academic and student affairs employees, college students must also be given more options to engage in different modes of learning (e.g., synchronous, asynchronous, and in-person deliveries) to avoid potential burnout and fatigue (Chan et al., 2021). A national survey of parents conducted during the pandemic by Gallup and the Carnegie Corporation of New York (2021) found that nearly half of American parents wished more postsecondary options existed. Dr. Gene Block, chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles, once stated, “There are students who believe very strongly that ... ‘I should be able to look through the course catalog and decide which ones I take remotely and which ones I take in person’” (Future U, 2022). By offering more choices, college students can avoid the growing number of students who are ‘quiet quitting’ during the post-COVID-19 era. For students, quiet quitting refers to those who are only doing what is required in courses and not putting in their full or extra effort (Jackson & Cherwin, 2022). A report by Intelligent (2022) claims that one-third of U.S. college students are ‘quiet quitting’ to preserve their mental health, due in part to global pandemic burnout. The report concluded that 34 percent of U.S. college students said they do not go above and beyond what is needed and 30 percent said they just put “some” effort into the work.

To address this challenge, some institutions around the world have begun to offer fully online courses and academic programs to address ongoing enrollment cliffs and budget cuts (Turner, 2021). The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) (2022) annual data report claims that U.S. undergraduate enrollment among 18- to 20-year-olds at online colleges—which typically enroll working adults—was up 3.2 percent from the previous year. Online colleges typically offer both fully virtual and hybrid courses by allowing undergraduate students who prefer flexibility,

convenience, and autonomy (e.g., how they do their work, how they fit their schedule) for remote learning (Chan et al., 2021). As undergraduate college enrollment continues to decline, with more than 1 million fewer U.S. students enrolled in college since the fall of 2020 (NSC Research Center, 2022), many students in the Millennial and Gen Z period are now preferring online and distance education over in-person instruction. A study by Hanover Research (2022) showed that student interest in fully on-campus, face-to-face courses continues to decline, from 66 percent in 2020 to 49 percent in 2022. A follow-up study by Anthology (2022) suggests that more than one-third of college students now prefer fully online asynchronous courses (37 percent), followed by a mix of online and in-person (28 percent), fully online synchronous courses (21 percent), and fully in-person (13 percent). In other words, online learning and remote work are here to stay in the United States and abroad after COVID-19 (Chan et al., 2021). Hybrid competence and digital literacy are the newest soft skills (e.g., virtual teamwork, leveraging your brand of social media, networking online) for college graduates (Bischof, 2022). We must extend the same endless care we give to students to those entrusted to serve them on our campuses.

The Future of Work and Hybrid Learning: Flexibility and Accountability in Higher Education

We believe that the future state of remote work and hybrid learning will likely consist of a combination of both on-campus and hybrid-campus experiences. In general, a hybrid campus is defined as “a campus reimaged residential education in a tech-enabled world ... this is not only hybrid instruction, but rather a blended, immersive, and digital residential experience that fuses the online and physical worlds across campus” (Deloitte’s Center for Higher Education Excellence and Strada Education Network, 2022, p. 2). A hybrid campus not only focuses on adding online capabilities regarding academic programs and curricula but also leveraging digital technology and software that reimagines the residential experience (Selingo et al., 2021).

For example, Rize Education² offers a hybrid degree pathway in key data-driven programs such as digital marketing, public health, public administration, and data analytics. A few examples of a hybrid campus include Adrian College, Rochester University, Newberry College, Tiffin University, and Centenary University. Institutions that offer hybrid programs via Rize Education can allow campus leaders to hire hybrid faculty who are well-experienced leaders in their field. As jobs become more remote post-COVID-19, faculty and staff members will need to be more successful in both the virtual and in-person worlds. They need to manage and work with different realms across the United States and be effective in communicating with different people around the world (Ricevuto & McLaughlin, 2022). At the same time, human resource professionals must also provide employees in higher education with flexible work arrangements that can contribute to staff retention and overall job satisfaction (Tapani et al., 2022). As more campuses set up hybrid and remote work environments for employees, along with navigating employees back to campus after quarantine, college leaders must focus on developing a distributed workforce capable of collaborating with remote colleagues globally (Netswera et al., 2022). Offering employees more flexible work is not one size fits all, especially when dealing with faculty and staff sabbaticals, release time, easing workloads, and cross-campus workgroups. However, we believe that those campuses that do not reconsider their remote work practices and procedures will continue to struggle with international recruitment, retention, and employee engagement in the post-COVID-19 era.

There is no one thing that will “save” the higher education industry from the current wave of employee resignations around the world. If campuses are determined to return to normal and return to the way things were, then we need campus leaders to listen to the challenges of their workers (Carrell & Zemsky, 2021). Dr. Thomas Dickson, the assistant vice provost for undergraduate education at the University of California,

²Rize Education is a higher education company in partnership with the Lower Cost Models for Independent Colleges (LCMC) Consortium. The LCMC, formed in 2015, is pioneering an innovative course-sharing model to help private colleges and universities grow enrollment through new degree programs while streamlining and lowering institutional costs. Rize provides the LCMC with the platform that powers this collaborative model, allowing member institutions to adopt high-demand majors, minors, and certificates that are built to get students ready for careers in the fastest-growing fields.

Riverside, once said, “In the aggregate, I do not feel that remote or flexible work arrangements compromise the residential or commuter student experience at all. In most cases, flexible hours and remote options only serve to expand access for many student services areas” (McClure, 2022).

DEVELOPING REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities around the world have struggled to move their workforces fully remote or hybrid to keep their operations going (Levine & Van Pelt, 2021). On top of that challenge, a growing number of faculty and staff members are grappling with the logistics of making long-term remote and hybrid work possible in addition to recruiting and onboarding employees virtually. The shift to “work from anywhere” employment, combined with international hiring, means increased opportunities to participate in research projects and partnerships that may have been considered unrealistic or undesirable before (Deardorff et al., 2021). Remote and hybrid work options, along with intentional policies, will be crucial to ensure employee satisfaction and engagement. Examples of supportive and intentional policies include sufficient medical leave policies for parents; effective or enforced sexual harassment policy; transparent salaries (i.e., salary history); flexible work schedules; and formal mentorship and sponsorship (Bichsel et al., 2022). With ICT infrastructure expanding in higher education, campus leaders have many digital tools to use to intentionally develop equity-based work environments that focus on long-term goals and successes (Kelly & Zakrajsek, Kelly & Zakrajsek, 2020).

For example, Howard University has created a permanent telework policy for all regular full-time and part-time, nonunion, nonfaculty, and nonstudent employees. Telework allows employees to work from home or an offsite workstation for all or part of their workweek (Howard University, 2021). Likewise, at Montclair State University, eligible employees may request one or more of the following: (1) compressed schedule, (2) flex-time schedule, and (3) hybrid schedule (Montclair State University, 2021). Comparatively, the University of Iowa recently released the final report for its Future of Work@Iowa project. The project sought to “reimagine” how and where employees work after the pandemic, with a focus on

“understanding the long-term potential for remote and hybrid work, flexible schedules, and other types of work arrangements”—arrangements it collectively calls “flexible work.” Furthermore, the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Texas A&M created the campaign Behind the Scenes with Students Affairs. They describe the human-centered storytelling initiative as a short-term strategy to equip and empower their workforce at a distance. In other words, several institutions of higher education have begun to develop new policies, procedures, and practices for working remotely to survive and thrive in this new future of work (Calhoun, 2022; Hughes, 2022). Renowned American educator Jeffrey J. Selingo once emphasized that colleges and universities that flex to accommodate hybrid and remote work demands will be able to choose from among the best and brightest talent—and those who refuse to adapt will lose out (McClure, 2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To assist faculty and staff members with remote and hybrid work in higher education, we provide several *suggestive* recommendations for individuals to consider during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

For senior administrators and faculty members:

1. *Encourage—and foster—open communication and workplace belonging.* With massive job turnover in higher education worldwide, it is critical that open communication between faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community supporters is encouraged. In addition, workplace belonging is essential in creating a positive and productive work environment (Strayhorn, 2023). During times of uncertainty, forward-thinking educational institutions are reinventing and reimagining the number of meetings they have (either remote or hybrid), with the goal of fostering intelligent communication around change (Carrell & Zemsky, 2021). If a department or school enjoys asking intentional questions about their futures at the institution, trust will be enhanced, a sense of belonging at work will be embraced, and stability will grow. A solid approach to foster this change is to perform a culture audit to better conceptualize what is hindering communication and develop new reward structures to celebrate the contributions, talents, and skills of faculty and staff.

2. *Promote rest*: Individuals who have not resigned and stayed at their institution post-COVID-19 are likely to encounter some level of anxiety and burnout, especially women (Salle, 2022). Statistically, women on average spend 4.1 hours/day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 1.7 hours/day for men (Srivastava, 2020). The global pandemic and the big quit have not only changed people's work ethic but have also exacerbated burnout dynamics for women which has resulted in a "Shecession"³ (Razzetti, 2022). During travel lockdowns and restrictions, many stakeholders were forced to move toward remote and hybrid work, which created a wide range of job duties and responsibilities in people's job descriptions. This was highlighted evidently in the landscape of higher education, where faculty and staff are dealing with higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion from the pandemic, in addition to dealing with political and social movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Stop AAPI Hate) that have promoted new job expectations and requirements since the start of the global pandemic (Kezar, 2023). As a result, many campus leaders are now required to not only maintain traditional, face-to-face interaction with students but also foster an authentic online experience for those attending from a distance (Chan et al., 2021). Hence, university presidents, provosts, and deans should encourage their faculty and staff to rest by giving them additional days off (e.g., mental wellness day) and following up with them on how they spent their time off rather than catching up on work.
3. *Reducing working hours*: The traditional 40-, 50-, or 60-hour workweek may not be sustainable for workers' mental health, especially for women (Wang et al., 2022). Instead, higher education stakeholders should consider developing an accountability system to ensure that their employees have a work-life balance. A few examples include remote work, flex time, parental leave, education benefits, and four-day workweeks (Salle, 2022). Faculty and staff must set boundaries for themselves that encourage mental health and well-being. By simply reducing the number of hours at work, one

³The term "Shecession" is likely due to the overrepresentation of women in health care, food preparation, and personal service occupations that were curtailed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; increased childcare needs; providing care for family members; and gender and income wage gap (Thoreau, 2022).

can live a stronger and sustainable work-life balance while experiencing ‘administrative joy’ in higher education (Crowley & Roberts, 2022).

4. *Other*: There are several other recommendations teacher-scholars and practitioners should consider in higher education including but not limited to increasing compensation, expanding benefits such as remote work or flexible scheduling, establishing career plan with clear paths to promotion, encouraging managers to provide high potential employees with stretch assignments, promoting warmth-competence,⁴ as well as demonstrating cultural humility and empathy.

For human resource professionals:

1. *Leverage digital transformation technologies*: Develop cost/benefit analysis based on research and understand how technologies can strengthen remote workforces within higher education culture.
 - (a) If ICT infrastructure is already in place, one must understand how to leverage that technology and software to its greatest advantage.
 - (b) If these systems are not keeping up with campus’s current needs, higher education must reevaluate the use of software and offer changes that allow accurate tracking of hours and access to the remote systems higher education needs.
2. *Develop policies and procures*: Establish remote and hybrid policies as a tool for the recruitment and retention of talent (McNaughtan et al., 2022).
 - (a) If policy is already in place, it can be used as an opportunity to expand talent searches by geography (i.e., talent magnet).
 - (b) If policy is not established, then inform upper-level management (e.g., presidents, vice presidents, provosts, deans) how it can be used to entice, recruit, and retain the best employees (Clark, 2023).
3. *Promote professional development and support*: Provide training in connection with remote and hybrid policies.

⁴The term “warmth-competence” refers to the need to balance perceived warmth (kind, welcoming, caring, empathetic) while appearing competent (direct, clear, knowledgeable, decisive) (Trezbiatowski et al., 2023).

- (a) If the policy is to be developed, provide formalized remote work and learning policies to current faculty and staff.
 - i. For faculty and staff who take advantage of remote work, policies should include provisions that they have adequate Internet and technology to complete their work, and institutions should be prepared to invest in their employees (Davis, 2022).
- (b) If the policy does not exist, then develop day-one orientations that can be used to onboard new employees with key resources necessary to be effective.

In short, we believe that university leaders must use their expertise to equip and empower a new generation of hybrid-competence, forward-thinking leaders in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Great Resignation and quiet quitting continue to proliferate, we hope that this book will remind faculty and staff of the purposes and aims of remote and hybrid work and what it means for the future of higher education. It is important to note that we are not advocating a specific formula with remote and hybrid work (because there is no one-size-fits-all model). Instead, we believe that teacher-scholars, policymakers, and practitioners around the world should begin the process of developing equity-based remote and hybrid policies to ensure that all stakeholders are served well, and institutions continue to thrive in the postpandemic era.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book provides a broad range of issues pertaining to hybrid and remote work in global higher education. The chapters selected in this book bring a diverse perspective around the world of how distance work can be leveraged to enhance employee recruitment, retention, and engagement at colleges and universities. The book is divided into three parts.

The first section of the book includes four chapters that discuss the opportunities and challenges to hybrid and remote work during and after the pandemic. In this chapter, we provide an overview of how hybrid and remote work is not only necessarily reasonable or feasible for certain campus positions in the United States and abroad but also for institutional commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. We highlight several challenges pertaining to employment law and regulation and discuss

key issues regarding faculty fatigue and burnout, quiet quitting, and staff disengagement in higher education. Finally, we offer a few recommendations for remote teacher-scholars and practitioners to consider during times of uncertainty after the COVID-19 pandemic. In Chap. 3, Tony Lee and Brianna Karasek explore the challenges faced by student affairs practitioners and the steps they have taken to overcome their struggles. The authors provide practical implications of current practices and evidence-based predictions and how hybrid and remote student affairs practitioners provide essential services and operations to support students during turbulent times. In Chap. 4, James Morgan Lewing and Lisa Bunkowski examine the role of faculty development on faculty sense of belonging utilizing support for online teaching as an example. The authors argue that episodic programs are potentially less effective in supporting faculty belonging, especially with remote employees, compared to academic development efforts. Finally, in Chap. 5, Lingfei Luan, Xiaofei Huang, Shaotang Zhu, Le Jiang, Weiyang Chen, and Sarah Ostadabbas investigate how universities and professors can ensure the quality of remote and in-person instruction. The authors interviewed 16 professors from 12 universities in the United States and China. They concluded that the traditional “visible” school-based method of instruction is turned into the “invisible” web-based mode of instruction.

The second section of the book includes five chapters that address the perceptions, policies, and practices of remote work and online learning at colleges and universities worldwide. In Chap. 6, Hastowohadi Hadi, Hafida Ruminar, Susanna Ackermann Burger, and Ahmad Mubarak examine the academic experience of faculty members teaching in online or mixed learning environments and how they perceive their developed instruction, teaching activities, and senses as remote instructors. Using a transitivity analysis, the authors found varied perceptions from hybrid teaching preparations at Indonesian higher education institutions. In Chap. 7, Belle Li, Yina Patterson, and Xiang Lu use the Chinese flagship program at Indiana University as a case study to understand efforts taken to offset the consequences of the shift to emergency remote teaching and learning. The authors propose a new blended “double-loop” model for different foreign language programs in the postpandemic era within the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education. In Chap. 8, Vincent Wiggins analyzes students’ perspectives in a flexible learning environment from a self-efficacy perspective and offers recommendations for practitioners seeking to support students’ success in a flexible learning

environment. In Chap. 9, Beatrice Y.Y. Dang, Hei-hang Hayes Tang, and Joanna W.Y. Yeung explore how a sudden shift from physical classrooms to online learning provides opportunities for students to practice self-directed learning (SDL) skills. The study seeks to examine how and to what extent online learning fostered SDL at Hong Kong teaching-focused higher education institutions, especially the digital transformation of teaching and learning in post-COVID times. Last, in Chap. 10, Sanfeng Miao examines how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor force is not gender-neutral. The author concludes that women academics are more likely to be in contingent positions in academia and take on more teaching and administrative work, thereby exacerbating structural gender inequality in the academic profession.

The third and final section of the book includes five chapters that address specific case studies of lessons learned from hybrid and remote work around the world. In Chap. 11, Charl Wolhuter and Susan Greyling share what can be learned from distance and hybrid forms of higher education and how the experience can be used to improve higher education in the postpandemic world. Using South Africa as a country case study, the authors believe that ongoing collaborations with divisions and structures need to take place to ensure alignment with overall institutional policies regarding remote and distance learning. In Chap. 12, M. Sion Collier-Murayama explores how virtual exchange programs and hybrid online/offline study abroad programs (programs that combine traditional study abroad with online learning) have come to increasing prominence in the COVID-19 era. The author describes and reflects on lessons learned from Terps to Tohoku, a University of Maryland hybrid short-term study abroad program, and offers several insights for practitioners seeking to work in virtual exchange programs from a distance. In Chap. 13, Thir Bahadur Khadka and Bhola Nath Acharya analyze faculty, staff, and students' digital readiness and preparation in higher education. Using Nepal as a country case study, the authors implementing adequate policies based on national priorities could help Nepalese universities to have adequate digital readiness and future educational preparedness essential for academic excellence. In Chap. 14, Ourania Katsara discusses the complexity of cultural identity in Egypt by using the Dell Hymes SPEAKING model as a tool to raise intercultural competence and communication from a distance. In Chap. 15, Soraya Yrigoyen Fajardo, Magna Guerrero, and Giovanna Vassallo explore the relationship between attitudes toward gamification and motivation perceived by mathematics remedial students.

Using Peru as a country case study, the authors believe that helping college students improve their motivation toward mathematics is significant to overcome negative attitudes toward the subject, especially when teaching and learning from a distance. Finally, in Chap. 16, Anh Ngoc Quynh Phan, Ha Hai Nguyen, and Thuy Thanh Nguyen investigate ten Vietnamese millennial university teachers' self-perceptions of their own graduate transition to work. The authors found that millennial university teachers were challenged by the reality of classroom teaching practices compared with what they were trained during their teacher education and pedagogical training programs. The authors argue for the need for professional development and support to help millennial teachers become more aware of the teaching profession in higher education.

In summary, we believe that the 17 chapters found in this timely volume will empower educators, administrators, practitioners, policymakers, and families with new ideas, principles, and advice that they can apply during this academic year and beyond. A few guiding questions in this book are as follows:

1. How can hybrid or remote work accelerate current academic programs, policies, or initiatives while tackling an unaddressed priority (e.g., access, gender equality, mental health, recruitment) in higher education?
2. What academic programs and services (e.g., virtual office hours, virtual breakout rooms, virtual whiteboards, virtual lecture recordings, virtual study sessions) can you offer hybrid or remote that can create equitable opportunities for your graduates?
3. What do liberal arts skills (i.e., twenty-first-century skills) look like in a hybrid or remote environment?
4. How do we balance the various interests in evaluating hybrid or remote work accommodation requests?
5. How can we turn the Great Resignation and Great Reshuffle period into an extraordinary opportunity for faculty and staff to realize a better tomorrow in higher education?

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