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# Accessibility and Inclusivity in Higher Education and The Impact of Covid-19

Implications for active citizenship and university lifelong learning

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university  
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The  
University of  
the Future  
Network  
(*UFN*)

founded in 2016

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academics and researchers from  
around the globe

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purpose of developing policies and  
strategies for the transformation of  
higher education institutions

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What the  
Covid-19  
pandemic  
triggered

happend almost overnight

many countries had to go on lockdown

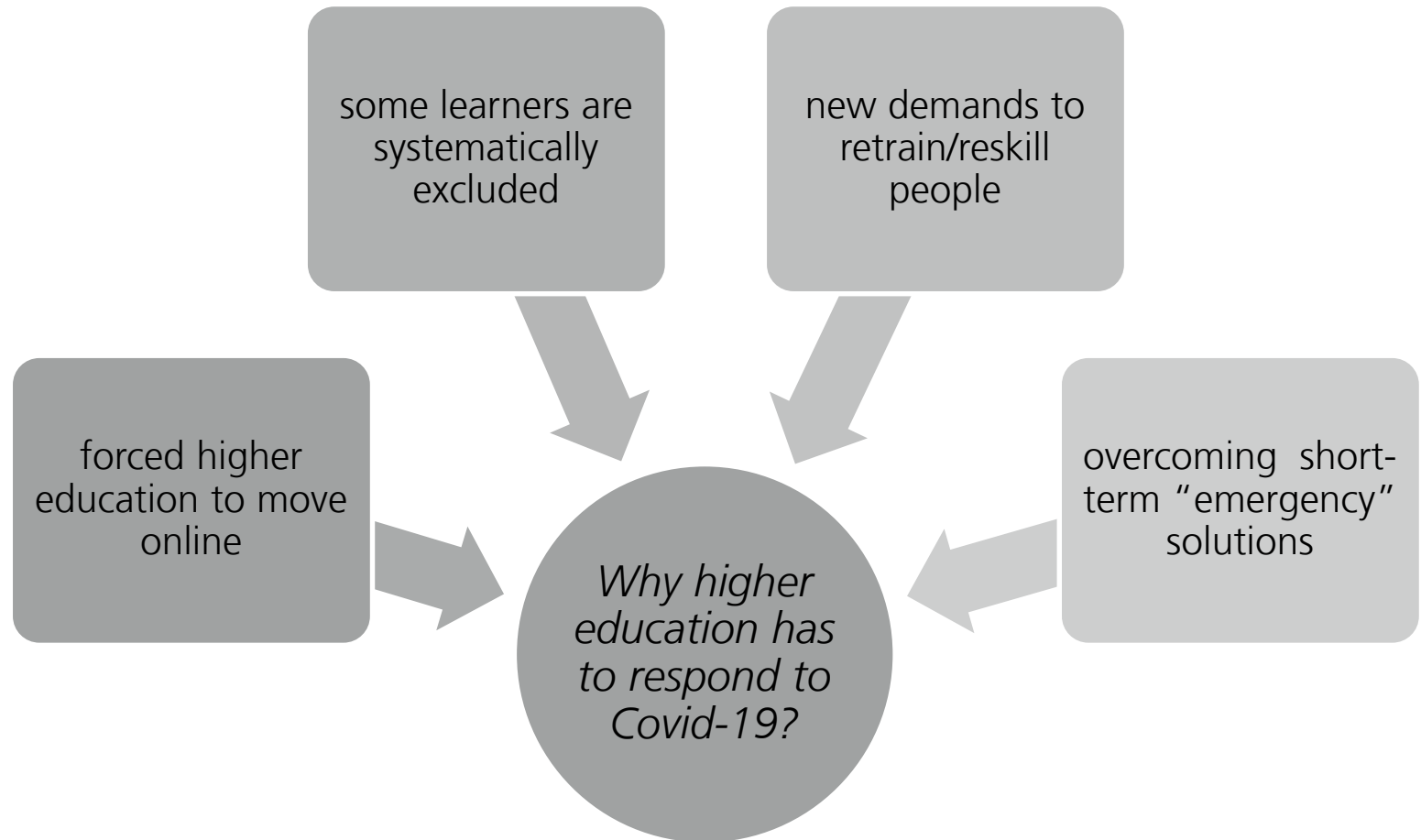
people had to work/learn from home

skills needed to take face-to-face teaching to online

lack of systems/structures in place to support digitalisation

brought to spotlight issues of inclusivity and accessibility

focused mainly on short term solutions



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Covid-19  
challenges  
higher  
education  
institutions  
to

...rethink their missions

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...redefine their roles in relation to their public  
responsibility

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...ensure accessible and inclusive learning  
opportunities

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Why to  
address issues  
of accessibility  
and inclusivity  
in the context  
of LLL

education is a fundamental human right

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education has to provide skills to respond to  
global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (International  
Commission on the Futures of Education)

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LLL ensures equitable access to life  
opportunities

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LLL includes all forms of learning (Zepke, 2017)

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Covid-19 has accelerated the need for  
education beyond formal qualifications

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Research on  
re-visions of  
teaching and  
learning in  
higher  
education

contribution to the UNESCO *Futures of Education* initiative

<https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/initiative>

(Schulte, Cendon & Makoe 2020)

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3 focus groups in May and June 2020 with  
11 experts of UFN

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focussed on “Knowledge Production,  
Access and Governance” and “Citizenship  
and Participation”

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- blended and online learning approach
- personalisation of learning
- collaboration across universities and institutions

Visionary paths



- crisis as accelerator for digital change
- chance to rethink higher education

Opportunities



- digital literacy skills for learning
- online teaching competencies
- infrastructural barriers
- resistance to change
- students' expectations and engagement

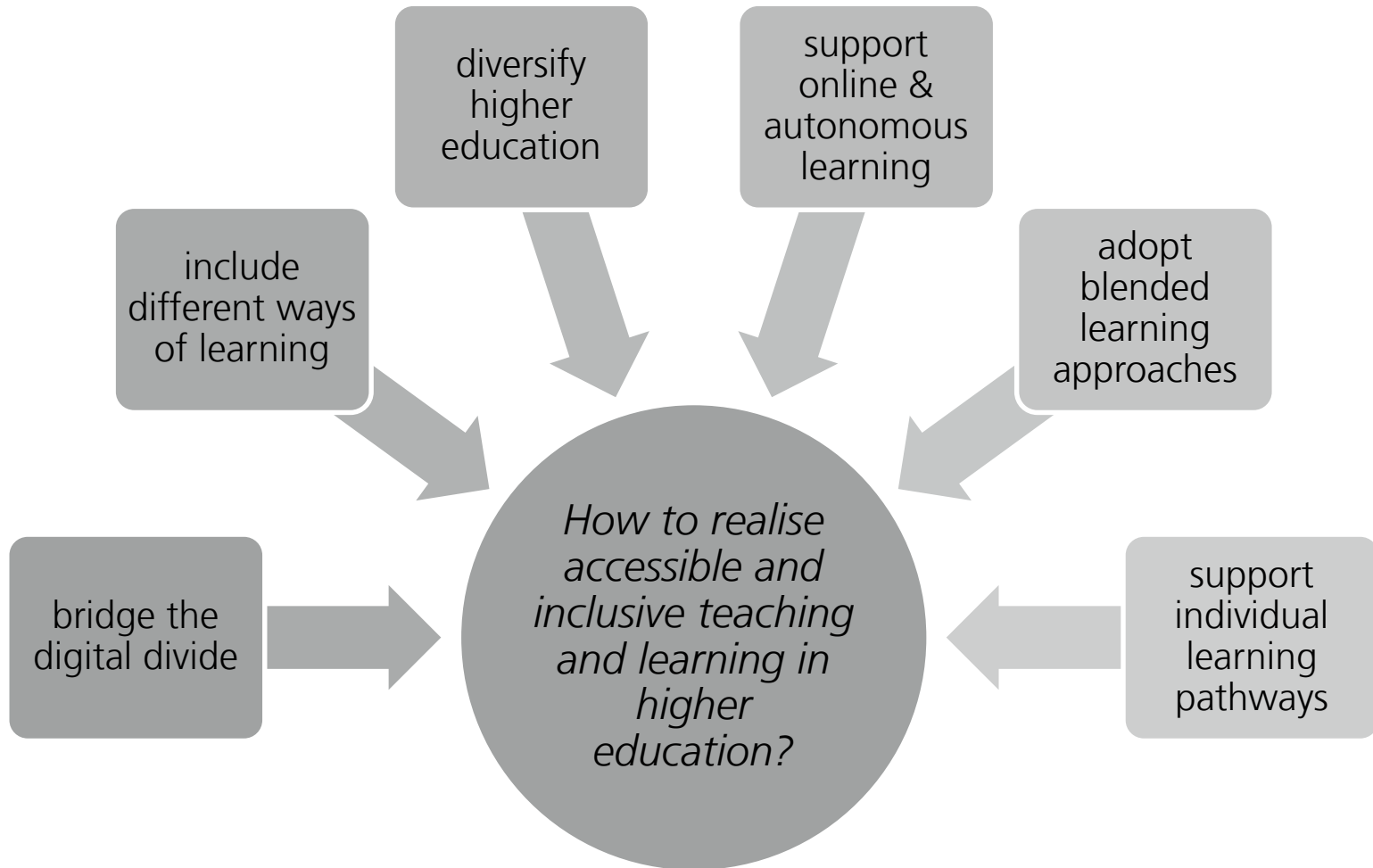
## Challenges



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## Implications for active citizenship and ULLL

bridging social and digital divide is key to ensure participation and active citizenship

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enable students to choose individual learning pathways as opportunity to foster social justice and civil engagement

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support individuals with flexible learning opportunities to be self-adaptive and resilient in the face of disruptive changes and uncertainty

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## Conclusions

university lifelong learning is key to provide new competencies that are needed

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visions needed how to adapt changes to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for all

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viable policies and strategies are needed to deal with changes for aspired futures

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## Sources

- International Commission on the Futures of Education (2020). *Visioning and Framing the Futures of Education*. Paris, UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/sites/default/files/2020-03/Outcome%20Document%20First%20Meeting%20of%20International%20Commission%20on%20the%20Futures%20of%20Education.pdf>
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