



DO TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES NEED TO PREPARE IN THE POST-COVID PERIOD FOR IMPLEMENTING UNDERGRADUATE REMOTE TEACHING IN EMERGENCY CRISIS CONDITIONS?

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the necessity for traditional universities to prepare themselves in the contemporary post-Covid period to be able to continue delivering undergraduate education remotely and with quality during times of crisis. The study was conducted with postgraduate students who had both theoretical and practical experience with the implementation of emergency remote teaching, utilizing questionnaires and group interviews as research tools. The main findings of this research indicated the following: (a) Traditional universities, and especially those in Greece, are considered unprepared to continue delivering undergraduate education remotely and with quality in the event of serious crises; (b) the administrations of traditional universities should prioritize the preparation of their institutions by developing appropriate and detailed plans, securing the necessary technological resources and materials, and organizing essential technical support services so that undergraduate courses can continue remotely without delay during crises; (c) universities need to train their teaching staff, helping them to enrich their professional habitus not only with technological knowledge and skills but also by familiarizing them with pedagogical methods that place students at the centre of the remote educational process; and (d) finally, the administrations of these institutions must plan for both psychological support for students and teaching staff during crises and for addressing social inequalities related to the lack of necessary technological resources, which would enable students from vulnerable social backgrounds to participate in remote teaching.

Keywords: universities (traditional), emergency remote teaching, institutional habitus, organizational changes, undergraduate studies, post-Covid period

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1. Introduction

The manifestation of natural phenomena that result in destructive consequences for infrastructure and adversely affect human lives has been a persistent issue in specific regions of the world, including New Zealand and Japan, as well as parts of the United States and Mexico. Such events inevitably disrupt the operation of educational institutions, including traditional universities, impeding the continuation of in-person educational activities for certain periods (Fernandez *et al.*, 2023; Henry, 2023; Murray, 2024; Stolow *et al.*, 2022; Wang, 2024). Moreover, the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with the application of “*emergency remote teaching*” (ERT) as a global measure to ensure the continuity of education at all levels through distance learning (Bond, 2021; Iglesias-Pradas *et al.*, 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Oliveira *et al.*, 2021; Whittle *et al.*, 2020). This development received substantial academic interest, leading to an unprecedented volume of scientific research examining the application of ERT in preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. A search on Google Scholar for the terms “ERT” and “Covid-19” together brings up more than 40,000 relevant scientific papers.

As we move into the middle of the 21st century, there are still problems and risks related to both geopolitical tensions and the effects of global climate change that make it hard for human societies to work. The effects of Storm Daniel on Greece in September 2023 show how severe extreme weather can be. This event caused the deaths of people and a lot of damage to the agricultural and livestock sectors, the infrastructure in Thessaly, and the facilities of some of the University of Thessaly's Departments (Mavroulis *et al.*, 2024; Papadopoulou *et al.*, 2025; Tsinidis & Koutas, 2025; Vergou, 2023). Recent academic literature underscores escalating apprehensions regarding the capacity of traditional universities to uphold their educational missions amidst crisis situations (Alexander, 2023; Awashreh, 2025; Küçükakın *et al.*, 2024; Patel *et al.*, 2023; Sholes *et al.*, 2023).

The current study aims to investigate the viewpoints of postgraduate students concerning the imperative of equipping traditional universities to facilitate remote instruction in undergraduate programmes during times of crisis.

This article begins with theoretical observations, followed by research questions and methodology. The subsequent sections present and discuss the research findings, and the article concludes with the concluding observations section.

2. Theoretical observations

The term “*emergency remote teaching*” (ERT) is associated with the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the delivery of educational activities at all levels was abruptly shifted from in-person to remote instruction (Hodges *et al.*, 2020). ERT pertains specifically to traditional educational institutions, where teachers and students ordinarily coexist and interact within a physical classroom setting. It represents a temporary and provisional

alteration of the conventional educational process, wherein instruction continues remotely through both synchronous and asynchronous methods. In this context, online platforms, supported by additional tools such as educational television, are utilized to ensure students' access to knowledge. For synchronous teaching, the educational provider selects from available teleconferencing systems, which allow real-time visibility and interaction among participants. Teachers and students can see each other on devices like tablets and laptops and communicate. Teleconferencing systems also offer features such as breakroom sessions, which facilitate collaboration among students to complete educational activities assigned by the instructor. ERT is concluded once the conditions necessitating the remote transfer of educational activities have been addressed, as the ultimate aim of traditional educational institutions is to restore in-person instruction within the physical spaces of their classrooms.

The intensification of the Covid-19 pandemic during the period 2020–2022 led to the adoption of ERT by traditional universities as well. However, although these institutions now possess experience in continuing undergraduate teaching remotely, the work of Alexander (2023) highlights a finding that raises critical concerns. This observation is particularly relevant given the current historical context, characterised by tensions and conflicts in international relations that may escalate to military confrontations or have already resulted in warfare in sensitive regions such as Ukraine and the Middle East. Specifically, Alexander's (2023) study indicates a lack of interest on the part of university administration in taking proactive measures that would ensure the continued and high-quality operation of their institutions through remote means during international crises or natural disasters. This issue pertains to the culture, or "institutional habitus," of traditional universities and is linked to the preferred modes of organization, operation, and delivery of educational processes (Koustourakis & Paizis, 2013; Reay, 1998; Thomas, 2002). This discussion gives rise to questions such as: 'To what extent are traditional universities prepared to address new emergencies that require the implementation of remote teaching?' Furthermore, what organisational interventions could be implemented at traditional universities to enable the provision of high-quality remote teaching under crisis conditions? Addressing these questions in research necessarily involves students, since the educational mission of universities is fundamentally oriented toward meeting their educational needs and supporting their understanding and mastery of scientific knowledge.

This study aims to investigate the viewpoints of postgraduate students regarding an issue related to the institutional habitus of traditional universities, particularly in relation to the assurance of ongoing remote educational provision during crises. The articulation of participants' views reflects their distinctive habitus—their acquired culture, which is shaped by successive socializations throughout their trajectories in various social fields, including the field of education (Asimaki & Koustourakis, 2014; Bourdieu, 1986, 1990; Deer, 2003). More specifically, the concept of habitus refers to the knowledge, attitudes, tastes, dispositions, and competencies of individuals, which

influence their practical preferences and choices (Asimaki & Koustourakis, 2014; Bourdieu, 1990, 2013; Norris, 2001; Wilson *et al.*, 2003).

The institutional habitus of a university is associated with its culture and its distinct identity as an educational institution. It constitutes “a complex mix” that is evident in the organisational and administrative practices applied, the pedagogical and interactive choices promoted as appropriate for educational delivery, and its advisory or supportive initiatives, which may target the entire student population or address the needs of specific groups with particular social and cultural characteristics (Koustourakis *et al.*, 2014; Reay, 1998; Reay *et al.*, 2001). The university field is a significant agent of socialization for all those involved in its activities. Thus, within the complexity of university operations, its institutional habitus inevitably influences, and to some extent shapes, the individual habitus of both faculty and students (Koustourakis *et al.*, 2010; Reay *et al.*, 2001, 2005; Thomas, 2002). Nevertheless, the institutional habitus of a university can itself be modified by the actions and cultures of both internal agents, including students, and external factors that may impact the institution’s operations and educational processes (Koustourakis & Paizis, 2013; Reay, 1998; Reay *et al.*, 2005; Thomas, 2002). Indeed, examining students’ perceptions and dispositions contributes to the revelation of the institutional complexities of higher education institutions, which may influence university functioning through the incorporation of their own distinct cultural and expressive elements into the educational context (Burk *et al.*, 2013; Reay *et al.*, 2001; Thomas, 2002). This process highlights how students’ unique backgrounds and experiences can shape the educational environment and affect overall academic outcomes.

3. Research questions - Methodology

This study addresses the following research questions:

- Is it necessary, in the post-Covid period, for traditional universities to prepare for the provision of undergraduate remote teaching in emergency crisis situations? If so, how would one assess their current level of preparedness for such a purpose?
- What preparatory organizational actions need to be undertaken by traditional universities to enable the provision of remote teaching to undergraduates should this eventuality become necessary?

The research was conducted in March 2025, taking advantage of the context of seismic activity in the Cyclades region during the previous two winter months and the broader disruption experienced in the Aegean area during that time (Mavroulis *et al.*, 2025).

A combination of convenience and criterion sampling was employed (Cohen *et al.*, 2008; Mertens, 2009). Specifically, we approached postgraduate students to whom we had access and who met the following three criteria: (a) they had completed their undergraduate studies at traditional universities; (b) they resided in sensitive geographic regions affected by natural phenomena; and (c) they were familiar with the

implementation of “emergency remote teaching” (ERT), both practically and theoretically. On a practical level, their proficiency was due to their attendance at traditional universities or their employment as educators implementing ERT during the pandemic. On a theoretical level, their studies in the postgraduate module, “Open and Distance Education” at the Hellenic Open University, included an exploration of ERT in the curriculum.

The research sample consisted of 12 postgraduate students, of whom 10 were women (83.3%) and 2 were men (16.7%). The average age was 32.1 years (ranging from 24 to 43 years). All participants were graduates of Greek traditional universities, and 2 (16.7%) held a master’s degree from specific institutions. During the pandemic, 6 sample members were undergraduate students at traditional universities, and 6 worked as educators in public schools implementing ERT.

This study employed methodological triangulation by utilizing both a questionnaire and a focus group interview as methodological tools (Creswell, 2016; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Initially, the research participants completed a questionnaire containing open-ended questions, allowing them to freely express their views regarding the research questions under investigation. Subsequently, a group interview was conducted with five postgraduate students who had completed the questionnaire and were available to participate. During the focus group interview, participants were given the opportunity to elaborate further on their perspectives regarding the necessity of preparing traditional universities for the post-Covid period so that they are able to provide remote undergraduate education in times of future crises. The interview process was recorded with the participants’ consent, and the recording was destroyed upon completion of the transcription of the conversation into written form.

For data analysis, qualitative content analysis was employed, with the “sentence”, defined by the semantic characteristics of written and spoken language, serving as the unit of analysis. That is, the specific unit of analysis could consist of one or more grammatical sentences, provided they conveyed a clear and complete meaning (Koustourakis, 2014; Koustourakis & Zacharos, 2011; Krippendorff, 2018). The units of analysis of the research material were then categorized into one of the following three categories, derived from the aim and research questions of this study (Asimaki *et al.*, 2017; Krippendorff, 2018):

- Traditional universities' necessity to prepare for quality undergraduate remote teaching implementation.
- Universities' preparedness for remote undergraduate teaching in crisis conditions.
- Preparatory actions to enable quality undergraduate remote course teaching.

In the next section we will present and discuss the research results.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the research data, the following results emerged, which are presented below, organized according to the categories used for analyzing the research material.

4.1. Traditional universities' necessity to prepare for quality undergraduate remote teaching implementation

The research findings indicated that the postgraduate students in the sample agreed with the necessity for traditional universities to prepare for the immediate transition of their educational activities to remote teaching in the event of a serious crisis. As evidenced by the representative excerpts below, this particular need for institutional preparedness is regarded as imperative to safeguard the universities' credibility and reliability.

"It is a demonstration of responsibility and progress for the university, showing that it can withstand and adapt to extraordinary circumstances by using technology to deliver courses remotely across all its Departments and Schools" (Questionnaire 5 – Q.5).

"In our area, there's a sense that something unpredictable could happen, like a major earthquake or other extreme events. How reliable can a university be nowadays if it isn't prepared and isn't planned to move all its courses online in the event of a serious crisis? Every university has a responsibility to ensure that students' academic progress isn't put at risk and that they don't lose valuable time from their studies if something unexpected happens and in-person classes must stop" (Focus group, postgraduate student 2 – F.g, p.s.2)

The necessity for traditional universities to be prepared for the immediate implementation of remote teaching in the event of a serious crisis arises for two main reasons. First, contemporary technological resources are available to effectively support such an endeavour. Second, today's students possess the requisite technological skills that enable their active participation in the remote delivery of educational activities:

"We're familiar with technology. Every day, we go online using our mobile phones to connect with our friends. If something serious happens, we can easily attend our classes remotely – as long as the universities make sure those online courses are set up right away" (F.g., p.s.5).

The above representative interview excerpt indicates that technological habitus constitutes a fundamental aspect of the personality of contemporary students, who belong to the category of digital natives (Dingli & Seychell, 2015; Mertala *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, their dispositions toward participating in remote teaching are evident, as

they seek to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of their undergraduate studies in the face of unforeseen events or circumstances.

Furthermore, the administrations of traditional universities must recognize the necessity of preparing their institutions by shaping their institutional habitus to include the immediate activation of remote teaching whenever circumstances require it (Awashreh, 2025; Reay, 1998; Reay *et al.*, 2005; Patel *et al.*, 2023; Stolow *et al.*, 2022). In this context, university leadership should develop and adapt their educational planning by taking into account significant factors of the contemporary historical moment, such as the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, the geographical and other specificities of the regions in which their institutions are located, and major events or conditions within the modern globalized environment that may affect the provision of face-to-face education.

“Universities need to learn from the Covid era that they must be prepared to move all their courses online if something serious happens. Flexibility should be a priority for universities, especially since we’re seeing so many unfortunate events—like earthquakes, disasters from fires, floods, and even the war in Ukraine...” (F.g., p.s.1).

“Covid should serve as a lesson for universities, especially those in areas prone to unexpected events. Wise universities follow the ancient saying, “prevention is better than cure.” These forward-thinking institutions have already made preparations to deliver their courses remotely, without delay, in a way that is friendly, engaging, and effective for students whenever the need arises” (Q.11).

From the final excerpt, which draws on an idea from Hippocratic thought, it emerges that the capacity for the immediate activation of remote teaching—implemented in a high-quality, student-centered manner—constitutes evidence of wisdom and prudence on the part of traditional universities.

In contrast, a lack of preparedness and foresight on the part of traditional university administrations regarding the immediate implementation of remote teaching in emergency situations is evaluated negatively by the students in the sample.

“If a university isn’t prepared to operate remotely in the event of a major crisis—like a large earthquake or a major fire—it shows a lack of seriousness and adaptability, especially in an era when we have the experience of the pandemic and so many technological tools available to safely continue courses” (Q. 7).

Finally, according to the participants in the sample, the university’s capacity to prepare for the implementation of remote teaching is regarded as the essential factor that can bridge the gap between students and their institution in the event of serious situations or incidents that render the continuation of face-to-face instruction dangerous or temporarily impossible. In such cases, as illustrated by the representative excerpts

below, students typically leave the area where the university operates and wish to continue their studies remotely and safely:

“If a major earthquake were to happen near the university, I would feel unsafe and would want to return to my hometown and my family. The university needs to be ready to make sure we can continue our studies through online learning from the safety of our homes until the dangers have passed” (Q.12).

“The university has a responsibility to create a safety net for everyone when there are risks and it’s difficult or impossible to go to your department to attend classes. Online learning helps reduce students’ anxiety and uncertainty about their studies being put on hold because something bad has happened in the area or the country where the university is located, as is happening in Ukraine today” (F.g., p.s.4).

Therefore, this study demonstrates that preparedness for the immediate implementation of remote teaching in crisis situations should be a priority for the administrations of contemporary traditional universities. In shaping the institutional habitus of these institutions—particularly concerning the design and determination of how educational activities are delivered—it is essential to take into account the realities of the current era. This era is characterized both by the occurrence of extreme natural phenomena and by geopolitical crises and tensions that impact the global system, as today’s world operates as a “global village” (Giddens & Sutton, 2020). Thus, the preparation of traditional universities for the prompt and high-quality continuation of their educational activities via remote means, in times of crisis, is a necessity. According to the perceptions of the research participants, such preparedness will ensure the sustainability, prestige, and credibility of these institutions.

The above findings are consistent with those of other relevant studies from the post-Covid period, which highlight the role of traditional university leadership in developing strategic plans for the remote delivery of educational activities in situations where significant events, such as the impacts of natural disasters, impede face-to-face operations. Such preparedness ensures the resilience, robustness, and maintenance of the quality of university education (Awashreh, 2025; Case & Luongo, 2025; Fernandez *et al.*, 2022; Gibbs *et al.*, 2022; McNaughtan *et al.*, 2025; Nyakoty & Goronga, 2024).

4.2. Universities' preparedness for remote undergraduate teaching in crisis conditions

The findings of the research indicate consensus among the sample members that traditional universities are not adequately prepared to deliver undergraduate programs remotely and with high quality if circumstances necessitate such a transition. This notion is illustrated by the following excerpts from focus group interviews:

“After Covid, I don’t think there’s been any organized effort by universities to prepare for a situation where lecture halls might have to close, and courses would need to be offered

remotely in a student-centered way. What are we expecting will happen then? Just like during the pandemic, most professors will probably just move their lectures from the lecture halls to a computer screen” (F.g., p.s.4).

“To be honest, we have to admit that after the pandemic, Greek universities haven’t really focused on how their courses would continue remotely if something serious were to happen. I think it was in the fall of 2021 when the government required universities to hold classes exclusively in person. Since then, university administrations haven’t really dealt with this issue” (F.g., p.s.2).

These excerpts demonstrate how the specific characteristics of the Greek context shape participants' responses. The Greek educational system is highly centralized, with the permissible modalities for educational delivery at all levels—including universities—regulated and determined centrally by the Ministry of Education (Koustourakis, 2007; Koutsampelas *et al.*, 2021). For instance, in September 2021, the Greek government enacted legislation mandating the exclusive in-person conduct of undergraduate courses at traditional universities (Decision 119847/CD6/2021). In this instance, it is evident that the influence of a significant external factor, namely the political structure, plays a decisive role in shaping the institutional habitus of traditional universities with respect to the permissible modes of undergraduate studies (Koustourakis & Paizis, 2013; Reay, 1998; Reay *et al.*, 2001, 2005; Sosa-Díaz *et al.*, 2025; Thomas, 2002).

A review of the scholarly literature reveals that many universities in various countries are unprepared to design operational strategies for functioning under crisis conditions (see: Alexander, 2023; Case & Luongo, 2025; McNaughtan *et al.*, 2025; Patel *et al.*, 2023; Sosa-Díaz *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, if a transition from face-to-face to remote instruction becomes necessary, this shift would, by necessity, take on an urgent character, raising legitimate concerns regarding the quality of outcomes resulting from such an undertaking.

4.3. Preparatory actions to enable quality undergraduate remote course teaching

In addressing the question of what interventions are necessary for traditional universities to be able to implement high-quality remote teaching, should the need arise, the following excerpts from focus group interviews are particularly illuminating:

“Universities should follow the saying, “a wise person prepares ahead of time.” Covid showed us exactly what it means to be caught unprepared” (F.g., p.s.3).

“First and foremost, universities need to develop a clear plan for remote teaching that can be quickly put into action in emergency situations” (F.g., p.s.4).

“I agree that all universities should be ready to operate remotely at any time, with action plans already developed that can be activated in emergency situations” (F.g., p.s.1).

That is, as evidenced by other studies as well (Awashreh, 2025; Case & Luongo, 2025; Hill, 2022), the factors of prevention and preparedness are of critical importance for traditional universities as they seek to adapt to challenging circumstances, drawing on the experience gained from implementing Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) during the pandemic. In this regard, the responsibility lies with university administrations, who are called upon to integrate the option of undergraduate remote education into the institutional culture of their universities (Fernandez *et al.*, 2022; Henry, 2023; McNaughtan *et al.*, 2025; Nyakoty & Goronga, 2024). The following excerpts from the research data are particularly revealing:

“The ability of traditional universities to provide high-quality and effective distance education is directly linked to how well their administrations can manage crises. They need to make a strong effort to ensure that, with proper preparation, the educational process can continue smoothly online without interruption” (Q.10).

“Comprehensive educational plans and emergency protocols need to be developed that are tailored to each specific university. These plans should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of professors, students, and support staff during emergency situations” (Q.2).

Therefore, the provision for high-quality undergraduate remote teaching needs to become an integral component of the institutional habitus of contemporary universities (Koustourakis & Paizis, 2013; Nyakoty & Goronga, 2024; Sosa-Diaz *et al.*, 2025).

Furthermore, responses from five members of the sample (representing 41.7%) indicate that university administrations should anticipate and permit the implementation of a hybrid mode for certain undergraduate courses. In this scenario, a portion of these courses could be delivered remotely, both synchronously and asynchronously, enabling both instructors and students to become familiar with remote teaching and learning practices, should the need arise.

“It’s essential to implement blended learning from the start of the semester, so that students become familiar with remote teaching tools and are always prepared” (Q.5).

“Mixed learning methods should be implemented, combining in-person teaching with remote education. The more professors incorporate technological tools into their teaching, the more familiar both they and their students become with these tools. This way, both sides will be prepared in case there is a need for urgent remote learning” (F.g., p.s.1).

The preparation of universities for the provision of remote teaching during periods of crisis, as also indicated by other related studies (Bojović *et al.*, 2020; Case & Luongo, 2025; González Ruiz *et al.*, 2025), is closely linked to the acquisition,

development, and operation of the necessary technological infrastructures for this purpose. Specifically:

“The university should purchase and install videoconferencing software and equipment so that live remote teaching can be offered to a large number of students at the same time. The applications chosen by the university should also be easily accessible and user-friendly for both professors and students” (Q.4).

“The university needs to ensure its technological readiness, which means having a range of both live and on-demand remote teaching applications that are continuously updated by a technical support team. The goal is to maintain an ongoing connection between instructors and students at all times” (Q.9).

Should a serious crisis arise that necessitates the transition to remote teaching, real-time technological support for both instructors and students is essential in order to resolve technical issues that may hinder their participation in remote educational activities:

“It is essential for universities to have educational and technical support units in place to ensure the smooth operation of digital platforms” (Q.8).

“Prompt technical support for both instructors and students is very important to address any issues that may arise with remote teaching applications” (Q.3).

Additionally, the participants in the sample argue that universities should also provide for the psychosocial support of both students and teaching staff by teams of specialized professionals. This effort is necessary because, as indicated by other studies (Cespedes, 2024; Küçükakın *et al.*, 2024; McNaughtan *et al.*, 2025), any form of crisis generates anxiety and negatively affects the emotional and psychological well-being of those involved in the educational process:

“Distance education should be a collaborative effort involving professionals from various fields, such as psychologists, sociologists, and counselors, since students’ emotional well-being is affected and the psychological impacts can last long after any crisis has peaked” (F.g., p.s.1).

“Collaboration with mental health professionals is essential so they can provide support to students, as crisis situations create uncertainty and can negatively affect the emotional well-being of everyone involved in distance learning” (Q.4).

For the effective implementation of high-quality remote teaching in traditional universities, it is essential that the institutions themselves take initiative and offer

appropriate training programmes to their teaching staff, with the aim of updating and enhancing their technological knowledge and skills:

“It’s necessary for professors to receive regular in-service training in remote education so they can improve, deepen, and expand their knowledge in this area” (Q.2).

“For remote teaching to be successful, instructors themselves need to have both the technical knowledge and the skills to use technology effectively. It’s up to the university to provide this training through workshops and online courses” (F.g., p.s.3).

Moreover, the professional development of instructors at traditional universities, alongside efforts to enhance their habitus with contemporary digital knowledge and skills (Asimaki & Koustourakis, 2014; Bourdieu, 1986, 1990), should also contribute to enriching it with the principles of a "pedagogical literacy" characterized by a student-centered orientation. This is necessary for instructors to move beyond traditional lecture-based teaching and, by leveraging the potential of modern digital tools, to implement instructional practices that actively engage students in the educational process:

“When training instructors, universities should focus on the tools they can use to promote learning, how to create clear and understandable materials and present them in digital form, how to develop activities from a variety of sources to make the course content engaging, and how to encourage and motivate students to actively participate in remote classes” (Q. 11).

The preceding excerpt suggests that the institutional habitus of traditional universities should contribute to the development of the professional habitus of their faculty, enabling them to deliver high-quality distance education to their students when necessary (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990; Koustourakis & Paizis, 2013; Reay *et al.*, 2001, 2005; Thomas, 2002). Indeed, the professional habitus of instructors tasked with delivering their undergraduate courses remotely must incorporate the fundamental principles of open distance learning. Specifically, for the effective implementation of quality remote teaching, it is essential for instructors to activate their knowledge, dispositions, and skills (Asimaki & Koustourakis, 2013; Bourdieu, 1990, 2013) in order to recontextualize the educational material of their undergraduate courses, introducing elements of multimodality. This aims to make the material more engaging and comprehensible, facilitating student access within their available time and space. Furthermore, instructors, by utilizing available digital tools, must possess the ability to select appropriate teaching methods and techniques that promote collaborative and autonomous learning, placing students at the centre of the educational process (Juárez-Díaz & Ojeda-Ruiz, 2021; Muir *et al.*, 2022; van Dorresteijn *et al.*, 2024). These findings are consistent with those of other studies that underscore the necessity for universities to provide professional development programmes focused on the use of modern digital media and tools, as well

as the implementation of alternative teaching models in distance education, with the aim of improving and advancing the professional competencies of their teaching staff (Case & Luongo, 2025; González Ruiz *et al.*, 2025; Hill, 2022; McNaughtan *et al.*, 2025; Türker, 2024).

Furthermore, a portion of the sample (four students, representing 33.3%) highlighted the need for traditional universities to address social inequalities related to the ownership and use of essential technological devices and materials, which would enable students from vulnerable social groups to participate in remote teaching during periods of crisis. Specifically, they call for the free provision of necessary software to students, which must be activated and used for the implementation of distance educational activities. Additionally, they request that students from disadvantaged social groups be provided either with free tablets or interest-free loans to facilitate their acquisition of such devices.

“Universities must ensure educational equity during emergencies. This means providing students with free and uninterrupted internet access, as well as supplying computers or tablets to support those who are financially disadvantaged” (Q.6).

“An essential solution is for the university to provide free software and, for students facing financial difficulties, technological equipment such as laptops or tablets. Another option is to offer interest-free or low-cost loans to students so they can purchase these devices” (Q.7).

This finding is linked to the need to address the digital divide, which involves tackling social inequalities related to the ownership of the necessary technological devices and materials that would enable all students to participate in the remote delivery of educational activities during periods of crisis (Hargittai, 2003; Korupp & Szydlik, 2005; Van Dijk, 2006). Thus, it appears that, since the habitus of contemporary students encompasses the requisite knowledge and skills for using modern technology (Dingli & Seychell, 2015; Mertala *et al.*, 2024), when they have access to appropriate technological resources, they are expected to be able to participate actively in the implementation of high-quality remote teaching, which presupposes their active engagement.

5. Concluding observations

This study aims to explore the perspectives of postgraduate students, who possess both theoretical and practical experience in the application of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), regarding the necessity for traditional universities to prepare for the remote and high-quality continuation of undergraduate studies in the event of future crises.

The analysis and discussion of the data from this study allow us to respond to the research questions posed as follows:

- The research participants consider university preparedness—undertaken as the responsibility of university administrations—to be essential for enabling the

remote delivery of undergraduate education in the event of serious future circumstances. Such planning is viewed as a means to ensure the sustainability, prestige, and credibility of traditional universities. Moreover, this preparedness emerges as a necessity, given that the contemporary globalized world is confronted with unpredictable and complex risks and crises that can, at any moment, disrupt the normal functioning of the societies in which traditional universities operate.

- The findings of this study specifically capture the situation of Greek universities, as the responses of the participants are linked to the unique characteristics of the Greek educational context. They indicate a lack of readiness among Greek universities to promptly and effectively transition to high-quality remote delivery of educational activities, should the need arise. In the current post-Covid period, the institutional habitus of these institutions remains exclusively oriented toward in-person undergraduate instruction in university lecture halls. This orientation results from regulatory measures introduced by the Ministry of Education, which, through binding and enforceable directives, have shaped the institutional habitus of traditional Greek universities. Consequently, this process has contributed to the lack of proactive planning by university administrations for the implementation of high-quality undergraduate remote teaching in the event of serious future crises.
- The preparatory actions of traditional universities that will ensure the implementation of high-quality remote teaching in times of crisis are, first and foremost, linked to decisions by their administrations to incorporate into their institutional habitus the acceptance of remote teaching at the undergraduate level. To this end, three key steps are required. First, the development of detailed plans outlining the procedures for each university's transition to remote operation when necessary. Second, the provision for the hybrid delivery of certain current undergraduate courses, whereby part of the educational activities in these courses could take place remotely, both synchronously and asynchronously, to familiarize both students and instructors with this mode of instruction. Third, universities need to provide their teaching staff with professional development in two interconnected directions, aiming to shape their professional habitus. Specifically, the first direction should focus on enhancing instructors' technological knowledge and skills, equipping them with practical competencies needed for the effective use of modern digital tools in distance education. The second direction should aim to foster a "pedagogical literacy" with a student-centered orientation, familiarizing instructors with teaching methods and techniques that engage students and place them at the centre of the remote educational process.
- The preparation of traditional universities for the implementation of remote teaching is associated with the acquisition and operation of the necessary technical infrastructure, such as user-friendly platforms and videoconferencing systems that enable real-time group collaboration among students. Furthermore, it is essential to organize the universities' technical support services so that they can

effectively assist both instructors and students during the delivery of remote educational activities.

- Finally, the research findings indicated that university administrations must ensure, on the one hand, that their institutions are staffed with teams of specialist professionals dedicated to providing psychological support to students and teaching staff during crises when anxiety and psychological issues are intensified. On the other hand, they should also address support mechanisms for students from vulnerable social groups, either by providing free technological devices, such as tablets, or by facilitating their acquisition through loans to enable their participation in remote educational activities. This is especially important given that contemporary students are digital natives. Thus, it is the responsibility of university administrations to anticipate and address the digital divide, focusing on ensuring access to the necessary software and hardware that will allow students from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds to participate fully and seamlessly in remote teaching.

Although our research findings are not generalizable, they are nevertheless interesting and revealing in two respects. First, they reflect the prevailing trend within Greek traditional universities during the current post-Covid period. Second, they contribute to contemporary scholarly debate regarding the necessity of preparing traditional universities to effectively respond to a renewed, abrupt shift to remote undergraduate education prompted by unpredictable factors of the modern era, such as unforeseen natural phenomena and serious geopolitical crises and tensions.

In concluding this study, it would be of interest to investigate the perspectives of university community members regarding the impact of globally significant events—such as the war in Iran—on the operations of their institutions. Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to explore their views on the potential for hybrid operations in traditional universities, or even the remote delivery of educational activities for socio-economic reasons, particularly when the consequences of a serious geopolitical crisis intensify and negatively affect students and their families from a socio-economic standpoint. Finally, it would be valuable to examine approaches to developing distance pedagogical and instructional processes aimed at achieving high-quality, student-centered educational provision in traditional universities under crisis conditions.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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