

Theme: Education for sustainable development

Title: Faculty Anchored, Faculty Empowered: Building Resilient Teaching Communities through the UPLIFT Model

Students and faculty need to ensure their wellbeing in the present while at the same time preparing to play a leadership role in confronting the VUCA challenges in the future. This balance is all the more difficult to attain in conflict zones, where even a bare minimum of support and educational continuity are hard to achieve. How can we best prevent student and staff burnout? What specific knowledge, skills and values should we be fostering when faced with huge environmental volatility?

In a world increasingly shaped by VUCA forces, sustainable education practice must begin by equipping not only students, but also faculty, with the tools to sustain their own well-being while preparing to lead through disruption. Amid rising challenges such as climate change, geopolitical instability, and systemic inequality, higher education institutions must foster environments where communities of practice can thrive, even in resource-constrained or high-pressure contexts.

The **UPLIFT model** offers a structured yet adaptive framework that enables faculty to co-create supportive, resilient, and inclusive academic cultures. It centres on six interconnected steps:

- **Understand:** Surfaces shared challenges and resilience needs through bottom-up dialogue, enabling empathy and collective awareness.
- **Plan:** Co-designs responsive activities aligned with real-time wellbeing and pedagogical needs.
- **Link:** Builds networks of support within and beyond the institution, promoting peer learning and solidarity.
- **Integrate:** Embeds community-building into everyday academic practice, promoting continuity in uncertain times.
- **Flourish:** Celebrates small wins and shared achievements, reinforcing hope and collective identity.
- **Together:** Empowers co-leadership and participatory engagement, creating agency and a shared sense of purpose.

By foregrounding wellbeing, adaptability, and shared leadership, UPLIFT contributes to sustainable academic communities—where faculty are not only supported in the present but are also empowered to mentor and model resilience for students navigating futures shaped by crisis. Through micro-initiatives, peer-led storytelling, and a strong culture of belonging, the model helps prevent burnout, encourage critical reflection, and foster the values, skills, and collaboration needed to prepare the next generation of change-makers. [322 words]

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