

Chapter 7

Student Challenges During COVID–19: Can Experiential Learning Be Effective Online?

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ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, internships were translated into home office modality; organizations, universities, and students faced significant challenges to which they had to adapt in a short period of time. This chapter describes the effects of COVID-19 in the experiential learning activities, specifically the case of internship programs for marketing students at an emerging market university, in order to learn about their experiences during the pandemic and incorporate the lessons in post pandemic experiences. Students and organizations were surveyed to know about their internship experiences and perceptions. Results indicate that under certain conditions, online internship experiences can be successful.

INTRODUCTION

The Labor market is highly competitive, and there is a need to provide students with practical experience and adequate skills (Edmondson, D., & Matthews, L., 2021; Cerych, L., & Frost-Smith, B., 1985; Asmara, A., & Ming-Chang, W., 2020). Latin America is home to diverse natural hazards including recurrent climate shocks earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, tropical storms, and hurricanes. For example, the smaller-scale antecedents such SARS-CoV of 2003 the H1N1 pandemic of 2009, or the Spanish Influenza (1918-1919). It seems relevant that students must be prepared to understand and overcome the effects disasters can have on academics and career paths. Building a resilient education system is compulsory for all countries.

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In the early months of the pandemic, UNESCO estimated that at least 1.3 billion children and youth were out of school and that school closures occurred in at least 138 countries (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2020). Due to COVID-19 school closures ran longer in Latin America and the Caribbean than anywhere in the world, leaving 86 million children out of classrooms (OCHA, 2021).

The pandemic covid-19 represented a challenge for education (The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, 2021) the crisis exacerbated inequality in education. The mental health crisis among young people has reached unprecedented levels. Advances in gender equality are threatened, with school closures placing an estimated 10 million more girls at risk of early marriage in the next decade and at increased risk of dropping out of school. According to Unesco, (The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, 2021) the COVID-19 crisis forced the global education community to learn some critical lessons but also highlighted that transformation and innovation are possible. Countries have an opportunity to accelerate learning and make schools more efficient, equitable, and resilient by building on investments made and lessons learned during the crisis. The faculty had to adapt their teaching practices to new technologies and distance learning. Otherwise, Companies faced important challenges taking actions such as reducing costs, looking for new opportunities, and adapting to the new context for survival.

Unesco defines the term “learning loss” as any loss of knowledge or skills and/or deceleration of or interruption to academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student’s education (The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, 2021).

The pandemic reveals that digital technologies make the world more deeply interconnected and interdependent than ever before, but also more divided. Remote and Hybrid education is here to stay (The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF (2021). School closures are not unique to COVID-19 and are likely to occur in the future as a result of climate-related natural disasters, conflicts, and public health emergencies (The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, 2021) it seems necessary to be prepared to avoid the learning loss.

The drastic changes in the learning environment and learning methods have led to student resilience (Meshram, K., Paladino, A., & Cotronei-Baird, V. S.; 2022). Remote learning requires considerable effort by a student about how much time to invest in learning (Núñez Pérez, J. C., et al., 2011), students had to improve some skills like time management, technology skills, self-learning, and self-evaluation. Also, previous research indicates that students’ growing anxiety related to remote learning (Peltier, J. W., Chennamaneni, P. R., & Barber, K. N., 2022). Students also had to deal with social distancing, social desirability, and social information in a significant way (Meshram, K., 2022) the situation of confinement during the most restrictive period of the pandemic led to situations of social isolation that caused emotional problems for the students and influenced their performance (Sáiz-Manzanares M-C, et al., 2022). Internship experiences help students integrate into the world of work in a guided way, from the Academic World to Career Paths. At the beginning of the pandemic, students were reluctant to do an internship online. Some students considered the option of delaying their plan to participate in an internship, bearing in mind that the contingency was temporary. However, over time they had to do an internship online in order not to affect their graduation process.

According to the report of the World Economic Forum (2020), the pandemic has left a displacement of the labor market and employers are making post-covid adaptations to their strategies, among which are, firstly, the acceleration of the automation of the work process (e.g. use of digital tools, video conferencing) and secondly, 80% of companies plan to provide more opportunities to work remotely. The demand from employers for remote-based work is increasing rapidly across economies, also has nearly

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