

# ADAPTATION OF INTERNSHIPS TO THE ONLINE MODALITY

\* THE CASE OF THE FACULTY OF TOURISM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MÁLAGA

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**Abstract**— Since March 2020, adapting to the new context derived from COVID-19, face-to-face higher education institutions in Spain were forced to resort to distance learning and implemented different strategies to fulfill their functions. This work collects the strategies developed by the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Malaga, in the subjects of curricular internships during the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, through the resources and methodologies used. This work leads to a series of conclusions and future lines of research that are revealed in this area.

**Keywords**— *internships, ICT, educational innovation, virtual campus*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 will place us before a global health and economic crisis never before experienced. Since March 2020, face-to-face higher education institutions have been forced to resort to distance learning [1]. They had to implement different strategies to fulfill their functions, adapting to the new context [2].

This adaptation has affected and continues to directly affect the digital transformation and use of the different tools that make up the technological ecosystem and the use of Virtual Campuses, which support the teaching-learning process in universities.

Within this group of higher education institutions, neither not all the Faculties, nor the different degrees or subjects were equally affected. In this sense, among the most affected are internships in companies in the tourist sector which must be highlighted, since the inability to carry out face-to-face internships is determined by the paralysis of the sector and its slow recovery, especially in areas like Malaga, dependent on international tourism. And, even though the vaccine has been postulated as a definitive response to curb the pandemic, the COVID-19 results reveal changes in consumers [3].

In this context, the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Malaga faced the need to offer its students in the different degrees the compulsory curricular internships in tourism companies and institutions.

## II. ADAPTATION OF INTERNSHIPS TO THE ONLINE MODALITY

### A. Strategies for the 2019/20 academic year

In the academic year 2019/20, the Faculty of Tourism faced the impossibility of offering to all its enrolled students curricular internships in companies or tourist institutions. Therefore, in accordance with the guidelines approved on April 20, 2020 by the Governing Council of the University of Malaga [4], measures were adopted so that students enrolled in the undergraduate or postgraduate internships, of the second semester of the academic year, could take it as follows:

- Carrying out all the hours of practice through the online training offered for this purpose.

- Carrying out through online training the programme not done in person, after obtaining the partial exemption from the practical part of the internship.

Based on this, the content of the report to be carried out must include all the activities carried out in the fulfillment of the total computation of the credits of the course taken. That is, the activities carried out in the online training, plus the contact hours in the workplace or the activity claimed for the exemption, if applicable.

The online training given in e-learning mode through the virtual campus of UMA sought the development of competences of the students through transversal and specific competences, divided into two large blocks.

**BLOCK I.** For the development of transversal competences. This teletraining included four modules based on three basic pillars, good basic information, a variety of teaching resources and adequate planning. The objective set was that the students, in addition to "knowing", were "able to do" by reading the contents and carrying out exercises and deliverable projects:

- *Soft skills.* The objective of developing soft skills or soft skills in this module (combination of entrepreneurial, social, communication, emotional skills ...) is to empower the student to move around in the tourist environment, work well with others and perform well. Including simple elements, such as understanding a payroll, learning and joining collaborative work forces, helping to have a good work environment or

knowing how to manage resources within a company.

- *Digital Competences*. The objectives set for the module were: know the European framework of digital competences, the value of these as an enhancer of the professional profile and the level possessed, to understand the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of these skills, as well as to enable students to build their own repository of digital tools.
- *Entrepreneurial Attitude*. In this module it is intended that students increase their job growth opportunities by discovering the European framework of intrapreneurship competences in order to enhance their creativity and become an intrapreneur within an organization or company.
- *Professional Project*. The objectives of the module are: understand and assume the concept of disruption, as well as future changes in the labor market in the Post COVID-19 era, detect trends and opportunities, understand what obsolescence is at a professional level and the need for reinvention, discover possible passions or vocations as a way to shine, in order to reveal and design your own personal learning environment.

These ICT-supported modules make use of computers and the Internet to provide participants with a large number of didactic tools that make the learning experience enjoyable and innovative, easy to follow and intuitive.

Among the various formats of the resources used are: class videos in YouTube format, music playlists to help study, video pills, infographics and mind maps on Pinterest, training podcasts in Speaker, resources and gamifications, the self-assessments to certify the level of advancement and progress, as well as the deliverables to certify the training.

**BLOCK II.** This block was destined to the development of specific competences and included video-practices of different workers in the tourism sector who presented the specific problems of their own companies or fields of action. The students had to take a questionnaire, to demonstrate that they had received all the information that was provided, and a report for each of the videos presented, to deepen into the problem addressed. This was the list of video-practices that were offered to them:

- *Cybersuite Networks*. Interview with Juan Manuel Martín, CMO - Marketing Director of Cybersuite Networks.
- *Wubook*. Interview with Daniele Socal, Global Sales and Partnership at Wubook.
- *Public Tourism and Sports Company of Andalusia*. Interview with Moisés Rubiño, Head of the Department of Digital Marketing and Big Data of the Public Tourism and Sports Company of Andalusia.
- *SextaPlanta*, Digital Tourism Agency. Interview with Rocío Montes, a graduate of the Faculty and responsible for Content, Connectivity and Revenue Management at Sixth Floor.

- *Nh Group*. Interview with Agustín Collazo, Hotel Manager at Nh Hotel Group.
- *Torremolinos Town Council Tourism Area*. Interview with Raquel Aragón, Coordinator of Institutional Relations and the Tourism Area in the City Council.
- *Explore Malaga*. Interview with Javier Herrera, former student of the Faculty and co-founder of the guided tours company Explora Málaga.
- *AEDAV (Business Association of Travel Agencies)*. Interview with Sergio García, president of AEDAV Andalucía and director of Viajes Saldumar de Marbella.

#### *B. Strategies for the 2020/21 academic year*

In the 2020/21 academic year, the Faculty of Tourism once again faced the insecurity of offering to all its enrolled students internships in companies or tourist institutions. In this course, the options of doing face-to-face or online internships in tourist companies or institutions coexisted with the on-line curricular internships offered by the Faculty.

The length of the online internships offered in the previous academic year by the Faculty was reduced and a new block was added:

#### **BLOCK I.** Transversal training (Practices 2.0).

- *Soft skills*.
- *Digital Competences*.
- *Entrepreneurial Attitude*.
- *Professional Project*.

#### **BLOCK II.** Specific video-practical training.

- *Cybersuite Networks*.
- *Wubook*.
- *Public Tourism and Sports Company of Andalusia*.
- *SextaPlanta*.
- *Nh Group*.
- *Torremolinos Town Council Tourism Area*.
- *Explora Málaga*.
- *AEDAV*.

**BLOCK III.** Interactive specific training. Through different virtual practical cases, the necessary knowledge and skills were obtained in real situations for each position proposed. In each situation the avatar in the first person and in a practical way had to demonstrate adequate guidelines for the different situations represented, interacting with clients, co-workers or even higher-level managers, as would be done in real contexts. Every situation or scenario was different for every job. The responses to each action have different consequences. So, through a programme of diversified actions, the students were allowed to know and react to different situations posed in a satisfactory way.

- *Accommodation Module:*
  - Profile: Head of Reservations.

- Profile: Head of Reception.
  - Profile: General Manager.
  - Profile: Hotel manager.
  - Profile: Sales Manager.
  - Profile: Public Relations.
  - Profile: Head of Administration.
  - Profile: Accommodation manager.
- *Intermediation Module:*
- Profile: Management of intermediation companies.
  - Profile: Professional Congress Organizer (OPC).
  - Profile: Head of Reservations (Booking).
  - Profile: Head of Contracting.
  - Profile: Product Quality Manager.
  - Profile: Product Manager.

The active training methodology used was made up of:

1.- Learning by doing. This method is based on practice, on learning by doing, developing skills and knowledge in the real context of application. In online learning, this methodology may seem complicated, however, it can be easily worked through multiple scenarios and simulations where students can learn by following the basic structure of learning by doing. The structure is as follows: 1st.-The person performs an action or series of actions. 2nd.- These actions have a series of consequences. 3º.- The person observes the consequences of her actions. 4th.- Reflection and understanding of the derived consequences.

2.- Gamification: Gamification is a learning technique based on the use of dynamic mechanics and game components in non-playful environments, such as training. The gamifiable elements that can be included in a training action are many and varied. In this case, the name, avatar creation, scores, merits, rewards and levels were chosen.

3.- Diversified course (non-linear): This course breaks with the traditional structure of e-learning training, since the contents are structured in a diversified way. In the course the students can choose the order of certain activities to carry out and their reactions to the different dialogues. Each choice made modifies the way in which the information is presented, since it is the student who selects what to see and when. All the dialogue presented in the course provides the student with several response options, depending on which one he chooses, a series of positive or negative consequences will be presented. This does not mean that the student avoids parts of the course, since the options are created so that the entire syllabus can be navigated.

4.- Storytelling: Storytelling is defined as the ability to tell stories with enough depth and nuances to connect with whoever receives the story and to awaken emotions and feelings.

The teaching staff will participate in the interactive activities, as if they were a student, and the implementation of the improvements that emanate from this course will be aimed

at successfully facing the role of these studies in society and optimizing the public resources used.

### III. CONCLUSIONES

The pandemic has created many challenges, the intensification of the use of ICTs [5], the increase in telework [6-7], the paralysis and transformation of the tourism sector [8], the transition to remote teaching [9]... and, as a result, the rethinking of university education.

This challenge has forced higher education institutions to use more and more technological tools and increase the use of Virtual Campus. Proof of this adaptation is the case that we show of the curricular internships in the degrees of the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Malaga.

In this sense, future lines of research will have to be aimed at evaluating the perceptions of the different agents of this teaching-learning process [10-11] in order to assess the efficiency of these adaptations and their impact on the professional future of the students [12-16].

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