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MSc dissertation topic: Teachers' challenges of hybrid learning and assessment practices in Côte d'Ivoire and in Switzerland in the age of COVID-19.

Scholarship Report

Objective of study trip to Ivory Coast

The new educational hybrid mode could become the future of education and support learning in every country. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, universities worldwide undertook some version of the hybrid model. In this new model, the role of the qualified lecturer is critical for adapting digital technologies, as are the digital skills to improve students' competence and work successfully amid the digital revolution.

The objective of my study trip to Abidjan, Ivory Coast in February 2022, was to investigate and discuss the challenges of digital assessment in higher education in Ivory Coast during the COVID-19 crisis for my master's dissertation at the University of Oxford. The study examined digital assessments in distance higher education and explored the possibilities of implementing new ways and technologies of digital communication in the post-pandemic world, to develop practical guidelines for teachers in developing countries to assess online learners.

As part of this study trip, I distributed the questionnaire online to 50 lecturers in Abidjan, and I conducted 10 interviews with teachers. I also assisted the diplomatic delegation from UNESCO-IBE, traveling to the Ivory Coast to accompany the government in important education projects including hybrid teaching and learning.

Study trip activities' summary

My field trip to Ivory Coast took place between February 5 and February 13, 2022, by an invitation from the UNESCO International Burau of Education. This study trip allowed me to gain first-hand information on the actual post-pandemic and pandemic educational situation in the country, and to produce valuable primary sources for my dissertation at the University of Oxford.

During this trip, I conducted the interviews following my ethical approval forms, as well as I distributed the online surveys gathering 50 responses from the participants. Moreover, I have visited a few schools, to gain a perspective on the teaching environment and conditions of the youngest students. I visited a Notre Dame school, which is focused on providing education with a focus on entrepreneurial courses. I observed the students being taught about creating their businesses, managing the garden, and constructing roads and buildings in the city. I also visited an informatic room with very limited resources, interviewing the IT teacher about the content and the level of computer sciences.

Results

This study explored challenges facing teachers using hybrid learning and assessment in higher education institutions during the COVID-19 outbreak through comparative studies of the case study countries, Ivory Coast and Switzerland. The research was conducted using the data from 102 university teachers, among which 49% (50) were Ivorian and 51% (52) Swiss, who answered 54 online survey questions and conducted ten in-depth interviews with the focus group. The results revealed the discrepancies, difficulties, and barriers due to the context of the socio-economic status of a country, the Digital Divide, and the policies context. They showed the different challenges of hybrid learning. They presented the differences in perceptions of hybrid teaching between Swiss and Ivorian lecturers, arising from social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, previous knowledge about technology, the training they received, and their attitudes toward technology. Additionally, this study's results showed that the Internet penetration, infrastructure shortages and access to ICT present dramatic differences between Switzerland and Ivory Coast with connectivity representing an issue for tertiary education students from less socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds. Also, the conclusions depicted teachers' attitudes and motivations in using online teaching and adopting any technology. They illustrated the possibility of social resistance to practicing hybrid learning in the Ivory Coast. Finally, this study supported the findings of Bourn (2018) on using digital technology for teaching and learning that can foster the development of 21st-century skills, as well as those of Wise (2019), about the use of digital assessment and CBT that enables to assess a variety of skills.

Conclusion and further research

My study trip to Ivory Coast in February 2022 has been successful and very rewarding for my dissertation research at the University of Oxford, including the results of the questionnaire and the interviews with the teachers in Abidjan. Moreover, I was able to propose further research and give recommendations that were later beneficial for UNESCO-BIE. As a result, I was also invited in July 2023 to Cameroon to present my recommendations about the top challenges of hybrid assessment in the Ivory Coast during the study workshop of UNESCO-BIE in Yaoundé. In the fall of 2023, I started my PhD in Education at the University of Geneva. I will be working on Global Citizenship Education with a focus on its perspectives and assessment at a university level while continuing my scientific and humanitarian work in developing countries.