Student and Teacher perceptions and experiences:
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Abstract: The papers in this Edition of the Journal comprise nine papers, of which three are related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, the papers address the perceptions and experiences of students and their teachers, demonstrating where the views/conceptual understandings of students and their teachers align, where they do not and where stress factors have had an impact. The papers reflect a varied range of participant countries both in terms of the authors, but perhaps more importantly the study sites (Cuba, The Czech Republic, Germany, India, Mexico, Philippines, Slovakia, Spain, and Turkey). Similarly, the programmes of study included Engineering, Mathematics, Tourism, foreign languages, social sciences, and education.

Consequently, the methodologies and methods are appropriately diverse, ranging from social network theory, mixed methods, qualitative research complex statistical analyses, evaluation scales like COPE, Hedperf, student evaluations of teaching, student engagement, and Sojkin's instrument to evaluate the influences upon first- and second-generation university students. The authors have also generated some very informative literature reviews outlining the evidence base and the related conceptual and theoretical issues in their respective fields. While some studies had small samples, their findings may have important feedback for local educational service improvement, even if generalizability could not be claimed, readers may find utility in face validity. The papers also remind us that educational research is challenging, whether in the handling of small cohorts, the complexity of the issues under study or the application of sophisticated measuring tools. None the less, evaluation, audit, practitioner research or large scale studies are all necessary activities if we are to improve our understandings of (1) ourselves as educators/ researchers; (2) our students with their motivations, interests and capabilities; (3) the system infrastructures that hinder or support the educational endeavours; and of

course, (4) the efficacy of the pedagogies for a given cohort, in a specific programme in a cultural context.

Keywords: COVID-19; teacher education; evaluation metrics; student perceptions; mixed methods.

Our first paper *'Measuring students' coping with the Brief COPE: An investigation testing different factor structures across two contexts of university education'* by Fabian Pels, Alina Schäfer-Pels, and Birte von Haaren-Mack is essentially a methodological paper to establish whether the Brief COPE scale (1997) could reliably and effectively measure the stress and coping capacities experienced by university students. The importance of having a sound reliable measure of stress and coping capacities in university students is critical so the efficacy of any interventions, designed to support students through their university experience, can be evaluated. In the background section of the paper, readers will find not only a helpful critique of various instruments used by educational psychologists to measure an individual's capacity to cope with a range of stressors, but also a summary of the adaptive and maladaptive responses to stress and their connection to health and wellbeing. At the heart of this empirical study was a focus on the implications for future research and the practical application of the Brief Cope scales.

Carver et al.[1] designed the original sixty item COPE inventory scale before adapting this to the shorter Brief COPE' questionnaire. However, as Pels et al. noted, concerns regarding the Brief COPE scale had been identified in the literature including inconsistencies in the factor structure. These were thought to be related to (1) a lack of theoretical foundation underpinning previous Brief COPE factor structures; (2) the different contexts in which the tool had been deployed; and (3) "methodological characteristics" like translation and statistical challenges. It was to address these concerns that the empirical component of the paper was designed.

The study was situated in a German Sports University with primarily first year students at bachelors or masters level (15% sample) studying sports science or physical education. The existing German language translation of the Brief Cope was deployed with 508 students. The students were invited to

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[1] Charles S. Carver, "You Want to Measure Coping but Your Protocol's Too Long: Consider the Brief COPE," *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 4, no. 1 (1997), https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327558ijbm0401_6.

Charles S. Carver, M. F. Scheier, and J. K. Weintraub, "Assessing Coping Strategies: A Theoretically Based Approach," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56, no. 2 (1989).

respond to the scale in two contexts of university education (during university lessons and outside of university lessons). The analysis of the data requires a sound statistical understanding and is well described in the paper.

The authors concluded that while some partial limitations were found regarding the psychometric item characteristics of the Brief COPE, the findings support the applicability of the situational version of the Brief COPE in research and practice from a content-related point of view. The paper details how the tool can be used to measure themes associated with stress and coping and offers recommendations concerning the tool's future use and development.

From this focus on the importance of measuring stress and coping so as to be able to provide evidence based support to university students, our second paper takes us into other student experiences and perceptions that also may be associated with stress and coping, namely *'The assessment of service quality effect in higher education sector on satisfaction, suggestion, and behavioral intention of university students: The case of Turkey'* by Esen Gürbüz and Muhammet Bayraktar. Like Pels et al. (in this Edition), the authors here are investigating the applicability of a tool to a national context (Turkey). In this case, the tool is the Hedperf scale that measures service quality at universities. The construct validity of the Hedperf scale was investigated according to the student perceptions at a university in Turkey, it was found with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) that service quality dimensions were classified into four dimensions - *academic, non-academic, reputation*, and *access*. As well as investigating the Hedperf scale, the authors sought to ascertain which quality dimensions had an impact upon students' satisfaction, their intention for recommending university to potential students (suggestion), and visiting after graduation (behavioural intention). The authors provide an extensive discussion concerning the measures of quality used in Higher Education, and the relative merits of various instruments and their connection with deployment contexts and conditions.

The empirical study was conducted in one site using a face-to-face survey method and quota sampling method. 1112 questionnaires were evaluated with nearly 51% being female and across the different academic years of the programme. The results demonstrated that in the Turkish context, four dimensions were determined in the quality of the services namely, *academic, non-academic, reputation* and *access*. The finding that these dimensions have an impact on the students' intention to recommend the university to others may affect the sense of belonging positively. The authors recommend that from a marketing perspective, resources could be prioritized according to the results from analysing the respective quality dimensions.

In our next paper *'Major increases in teachers' performance evaluations: Evidence from student evaluation of teaching surveys'* by Jaime Prieto, Rocío Guede-Cid, Ana I. Cid-Cid, and Santiago Leguey, the extent to which student evaluation of teaching (SET) scores impact upon teacher performance over consecutive years was explored. The data sample comprised 13,052 teacher evaluations and 3,893 teacher observation sessions. The authors offer a fascinating summary of the literature that reveals the sometimes-contentious views held by teachers and administrators concerning the relevance and impact of student evaluations of teaching. This is a thorny issue, raising practice questions about the extent to which academic teachers should take notice of SETs when 'repeating' a course with a subsequent cohort. Prieto et al. debate the merits of different evaluation tools for their content, reliability, and validity. They also raise the issue of bias with respect to student diversity characteristics and what this may mean for data analysis and interpretation. The authors argue for more 'long-term longitudinal studies to track and analyse the ratings of the same cohort of teachers over extended periods'. Their interest was to discover which dimensions may contribute to improvements in teacher performance over time with respect to the feedback received from the SETS: in this case the ten-item tool used by the case study site in Madrid, Spain. Procedurally, this paper presents a good description of the ethical procedures followed to protect students.

This paper is helpful in that it uniquely follows through major increases in teachers' performance evaluations and their immediate impact on next year's score based on evidence from the SET surveys. The key findings are that, for teachers who taught the same course or subject for at least two years in a row, three SET survey items related to aspects of teaching methodology as those most closely related to major increases in teacher evaluations. Hence, as expected student feedback can influence teacher methodology for subsequent courses. The limitations of the study are its context specific SET tool, thus the generalisability for other university educational contexts is not demonstrated.

Another dimension of student and teacher feedback is that associated with flexible learning as our next paper highlights - *'Tourism and hospitality management faculty satisfaction towards flexible learning: A Cross-sectional survey from higher educational institutions in Central Luzon, Philippines'* by John Paul Miranda and Maria Anna D. Cruz. Although the study relates to the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings resonate for more general aspects of flexible learning. The paper offers a substantive review of the literature and the factors known to influence Faculty staff when adapting to the

implementation of flexible learning modes. The switch was required due to the pandemic and the associated Governmental drivers. The authors explored individual staff members' experience and perceived expertise with flexible learning, their personal characteristics, their degree of satisfaction with flexible learning in situ; and the institutional support available. A total of 85 Tourism, Hospitality and Management (THM) faculty across 27 different universities and colleges participated in the study.

Grounded in the data, the authors concluded that faculty staff were generally satisfied with flexible learning despite problems encountered with its delivery. Four themes emerged, namely technical issues, inability to develop student-teacher rapport, academic dishonesty, and integrity, and learning flexibility. Examples of these themes were discovered through the quantitative survey and the open text response questions. The authors noted the importance of investigating these issues longitudinally and specifically to focus upon the concerns related to student- teacher rapport and academic integrity.

When countries expand their Higher Education sector, one emergent issue is the extent to which more first-generation university students can be recruited and provided with access. In this next study, *Exploring the impact of generational differences on university study decisions in Slovakia* (Nikola Šabíková, Kamila Valentová, Radomír Masaryk, Aleš Neusar, and Lenka Sokolová), this topic is explored and the rationale for decision making ascertained. Access to higher education has been extended within Slovakia where university education remains free. While there is international literature concerning university uptake amongst first- and second-generation students, the authors reported scare research on decision-making about university studies among Slovak students. Consequently, there is little evidence about the main factors influencing student choices and whether family tradition plays a role in their decision-making, making it difficult to design appropriate university practices and policies. 'First generation' students is a term that is variously described in the literature, but essentially refers to those students who are the first in their families to go to university. In contrast, second generation students are those who have at least one parent who attended university and obtained a university degree.

Šabíková et al. provide an extensive and interesting literature review summarising the challenges often faced by first- and second-generation students and how their lack of awareness of the nature of university life can have unwanted effects. The authors found little information concerning ways to support these students. Their study therefore was to explore similarities and differences between first- and second-generation students, to establish

motivating factors that influence their decision making towards university as well as their information sources.

The authors drew on similar work conducted in Poland[2] where comparable experiences and university expansion took place following the 1989 withdrawal from the Soviet Union. The Sojkin instrument was translated and adapted for contemporary use in Slovakia. 357 Slovak students aged from 18 to 22 from one university participated in an on line survey. The results showed that it was significantly more important for second-generation students, whose parents had university degree experience, to continue the family tradition when deciding to study than for first-generation students. Furthermore, the internet was the most important source of information for both student groups implying that universities need to monitor the presentation impact of their web-based materials.

From Slovakia to Mexico and Cuba returning to tourism studies. The difference here is that Félix Díaz-Pompa, Nadia Vianney Hernández-Carreón, Idevis Lores-Leyva, and Olga Lidia Ortiz-Pérez look at co-operative learning and social cohesion as factors that can enhance the social competence of students (*'Cooperative learning and social cohesion: Study in the 4th year classes of tourism degree of Cuba and Mexico'*). The ability of students to be able to work collaboratively and effectively together as students and then within the employment, leisure and family networks can be enabled through appropriate pedagogies that utilise group settings and tasks. In this study, the authors drew attention to literature that demonstrated the relationship between co-operative learning that enhanced social cohesion and the subsequent improvements in academic performance, productivity, ease of working and motivation. Given the transversal nature of tourism studies, it was argued that the development of social competences skills was a necessary part of the curriculum. However, methodologically it is difficult to measure 'soft' skills like motivation, social cohesion, and collaboration with the added challenge of evaluating impact and effectiveness over time. To address these and other concerns, the authors designed their study with heterogenous groups, fourth year bachelor students from Cuba and Mexico where the tourism industries had similar features although the educational and cultural contexts differed.

Methodologically, the study drew on social network theory to compare the social cohesion of 4th year class groups of the bachelor's degree in

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[2] 'Sojkin Bogdan, Paweł Bartkowiak, and Agnieszka Skuza, "Determinants of Higher Education Choices and Student Satisfaction: The Case of Poland," *Higher Education* 63, no. 5 (May 2012): 565–81, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-011-9459-2.

Tourism in Cuba and Mexico in terms of social cohesion derived from cooperative learning strategies used in their previous years of study. The paper provides a very helpful view of how social network theory, and its analytical tools, can measure social cohesion and dynamics within educational groups. The sample sizes were relatively small with fifty-three students in total. Various student characteristics were collected, and the social networks analysed within the two sites. The data showed greater cohesion within in one site (Cuba), with other factors that inhibited co-operation (e.g., cliques) and enablers (key individuals with extensive networks). The study showed the potential for evaluating the impact of facilitative pedagogies for social cohesions and co-operation as well as revealing factors that might inhibit the social competences of students as they near graduation.

It is well accepted that the development of critical thinking is a key aim of higher education both as a generic competence for all students, but also specifically within the subject areas, where skills are required to critically analyse and reflect within each discipline. In their paper '*Understanding critical thinking: A comparative analysis between university students' and teachers' conception',* María José Bezanilla, Héctor Galindo-Domínguez, Lucía Campo, Donna Fernández-Nogueira, and Manuel Poblete Ruiz sought to understand whether students and teachers held similar understandings concerning the nature of critical thinking. Their paper presents the various interpretations of the concept from the literature which is, as they say, a 'complex and multidimensional concept'. Fostering the skills of critical thinking presumes an understanding of the concept, but as their study showed from the empirical work, there were differences between the student perceptions and those of their teachers. 263 Spanish Education university students (from the social sciences) formed the convenience sample for the study spread between different subject areas and years of study. The results were compared with a previous study of the authors where the perspectives of teachers had been elicited. Building on the university teacher study, a questionnaire was administered where the students were asked to rank the top three items that best represented their understanding of the concept of critical thinking. The students favoured from highest to lowest order, reasoning/arguing, questioning/asking oneself and then analysing / organizing.

Following their statistical analysis and dividing the teacher group into those from the social sciences (like the students) and those from other subjects, it was found that students' and teachers' perception about critical thinking was different. Teachers believed that analyzing/organizing, reasoning/arguing, and taking a position/taking decision were the three most

important categories. In contrast, students' places reasoning/arguing; then questioning/asking oneself, and then analyzing/organizing. The authors presented a well-argued account of the limitations of their study that was honest and transparent (for example the representativeness of the sample, the theoretical issue of developing the categories for comparison from, the inductive work with the teachers).

Our final two papers address aspects of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely massive open online courses (India) and contingency online learning (Czech Republic). While the areas of investigation cover aspects of teacher and/or student experiences, the foci are different, namely professional development, student engagement and mathematical concept acquisition respectively. Furthermore, the studies also noted whether the issues that emerged were specifically related to the pandemic, to the pedagogies employed, or to other socio -economic factors.

The first is a comparative case study of two universities in India: Suman Kalyan Panja, Atanu Banerjee, Kamal Krishna De, and Ajay Kumar Singh (*The attitude of students and teachers towards MOOC usage for their academic and professional development: A comparative study of two case study sites)*. While massive open online courses (MOOC) were in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, their use expanded during the pandemic. The authors were interested in student and teacher attitudes towards MOOC usage, specifically for professional development purposes. A self-designed survey with Likert type questions and free text responses was used with content validity checked by an expert group. This was administered to the students and teachers in neighbouring university case study sites with sample sizes for site one and two as follows: students 112 and 52, teachers 48 and 45.

The results indicated that for some statements there were no significant differences between institutions and students and their teachers. However, there were some demographic influences upon the data, namely the degree of engagement of older teachers and females. Similar findings have been found in earlier literature. Many respondents had no previous experience with MOOCs and this was reflected in the data, but especially the qualitative data. There were variations between some groups with a strong reported positive attitude of the CSS1 faculties. It was also evident that the Government of India policies and initiatives in this area noted by the authors appeared to have had some influence. Without the qualitative component of the research, it would have been difficult to explain some of the quantitative data and a few apparent anomalies.

This next study from Katerina Dvorakova, Jaroslav Emmer, Renata Janktova, and Katerina Klementova investigated university students'

engagement in remote foreign language classes during the COVID-19 lockdown (*The influence of remote learning environment and use of technology on university students' behavioural engagement in contingency online learning)*. While online learning had been introduced in the Czech higher education system, it was not as well developed as other countries like the United Kingdom. Hence, when the pandemic required a transition to online learning, the authors were interested in the extent to which the use of technical equipment and the remote physical environment influenced students' engagement. They chose these two aspects of engagement based on emergent feedback from students and, second, that the university had little control (or none) over the students' home environment. As the authors noted, they sought to understand the complexity of the contingency online learning experience of their students. From their anecdotal reports from students, the authors were able to obtain a detailed insight into their world when continency online learning became a necessity. What emerged from the study was that the factor that most impacted upon students was their home working space. The use of web cams within the sessions proved contentious and aligned with other research findings where privacy, self-consciousness, and disclosure of socio-economic status led to feelings of discomfort and influenced engagement. The authors provide a very detailed and discursive account literature review that extended into their findings which were contrasted with those in the literature. The qualitative data was rich and detailed and showed the benefits of small scale in depth qualitative research in context.

While the hope is that such a pandemic would not re-occur, the learning from their and other studies can be applied by others when such transitions become a necessity.

These brief summaries of the forthcoming papers highlight that where there is an inappropriate lack of alignment between teacher and student conceptions of an issue, there can be negative implications for student education and teacher satisfaction.