

REDPETUR: COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE

*REDPETUR (Teaching network in the field of internships in tourism studies)

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Abstract—REDPETUR is a competency-based teaching network in the field of internships in tourism studies. Its goal is to successfully address the role of these studies in society and optimize the public resources used. This Network has carried out a series of activities, thanks to the financing of the Integral Teaching Plan of the University of Malaga, which have contributed to the adaptation of training in pandemic times using information technologies (IT) such as Virtual Campus and Icaro platform (an ecosystem which connects companies, students and teachers). In addition, from a Delphi analysis this network has set the foundations for collaboration between tourism faculties sharing generated content to ensure their students gain practical experience to complete their education.

Keywords—internships, collaborative teaching networks, organizational adaptation

I. INTRODUCTION

REDPETUR was created in 2018 as a result of the first Integral Teaching Plan of the University of Malaga. The main objective of this plan was to foster quality and innovation in the teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. To this end, one line of action was aimed at promoting teaching networks [1].

The purpose of these networks was to enable teachers at the University of Malaga to disseminate and share their work and teaching experience. Only teachers highly valued in the student satisfaction survey and those committed to innovative teaching methodologies were integrated in the network.

This paper describes the organizational experience developed by REDPETUR as a teaching network in the field of internships in tourism studies in Andalusia. Tourist destinations are characterised by a diversity of stakeholders, with different interests and united by competitive and/or cooperative relationships. According to Getz & Timur [2] there are six categories of stakeholders -tourists, companies, the local community, government, special interest groups and educational institutions – and most of them can collaborate through this teaching network and specifically using IT platforms as Ícaro, an internship market place specially developed for Andalusian universities. This research looks into conditions associated with practical learning in tourism education, specifically the perception of key players in the tripartite relationship, and ultimately the adaptation of practicums programmes in a pandemic scenario.

II. REDPETUR

A. Aim of the network

Given the crucial role of practicums and internships regarding the student's employability and also its relevance as a key factor of monitoring in accreditation renewal processes of degrees, the main purpose of REDPETUR is to reflect about practical experience and explore new models that could complement their student formal classroom education. To fulfil this purpose, the network follows these specific objectives:

- a) To share teaching experiences in the subject of practicum as a basis to develop collaborative actions and implementation of new teaching techniques.
- b) To provide quality training services by optimizing the competences of students in external internships, bringing them up to date with the current needs of society.
- c) To optimize public resources through internal management processes between companies, the University and students.
- d) To promote qualified internships that support the efficiency of tourism companies and public stakeholders, as a driver for sustainable development.
- e) To stimulate the incorporation of students into the labour market as future entrepreneurs or employees.

B. Justification and members

As Klenner suggests [3], work experience in tourism studies contributes developing key sector related skills and increasing an individual's potential for future employment. It is an important part of the hospitality and tourism education experience [4]. This can be explained because one of the key benefits when practical learning is experiential it helps relate theory to practice [5].

One characteristic of the tourism studies is its multidisciplinary, because a wide range of knowledge areas are taught. This fact enriches the subjects of tourism degrees but also hinders the implementation of any coordinated teaching project.

In addition to this, in Spain there are only a few tourism faculties and most of tourism degrees are offered in faculties of Economics, Geography, Sociology... This fact can be

explained because it doesn't exist an area of knowledge of tourism within the catalogue of areas recognized by the Organic Law 6/2011 of Universities [6]. To solve this problem and enable tourism alumni to access to faculty teaching positions, REDINTUR, a Spanish inter-university network of postgraduate degrees in tourism, has requested to the Government of Spain up to three times the creation of the area of Knowledge of tourism.

Despite the mentioned difficulties there were others factors that made the creation of REDPETUR possible. First of all, Ícaro, an Internship and Employment Management Portal used by most of Andalusian Public Universities since 2005. This online platform contacts students and companies in an integral management of employment service. Moreover, all Andalusian universities share the same assessment, accreditation and monitoring programme of Bachelor's and Master's degrees through the Directorate of Evaluation and Accreditation (DEVA).

REDPETUR is integrated by teachers from the different Andalusian universities that offer tourism degrees: University of Malaga (Faculty of Tourism), University of Almeria (Faculty of Economics and Business), University of Cadiz (Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication), University of Cordoba (Faculty of Labour Sciences), University of Granada (Faculty of Economics and Business), University of Huelva (Faculty of Business and Tourism), University of Jaen (Faculty of Social and Legal Sciences) and University of Jaen (Faculty of Tourism and Finance).

C. Analysis

A qualitative research was carried in 2018 to analyse and identify the main characteristics of the practicum subject in the tourism degrees of universities belonging to REDPERTUR. To do that, Delphi was the methodology used although there is no specific universally accepted patterns for its use and management [7]. Eighteen panellists (internship coordinators) were selected and got involved in two rounds to answer the same questionnaire, which was halted due to the lack of significant difference between the results of the first and second round.

The practicum subject is compulsory in most tourism degrees, except in University of Jaen and in one of the training itineraries of the Master in Management and Planning in Tourism (University of Malaga). Furthermore, all universities offer extracurricular paid internships with a longer duration than curricular internships, which goes from 100 to 300 hours in of practical learning in tourist companies.

The online management of these subjects is carried out in four universities on Ícaro (<https://icaro.ual.es/>), however no virtual platform is used for tourism degree courses in Cordoba, Granada and Jaen. For its part, the University of Cadiz launched a new system that works for both curricular and extracurricular internships (gades.uca.es).

In accordance with RD 592/2014 of July 11 [8], students have an academic tutor who acts as a guide during the internship. The number of tutors to perform this task depends on the compulsory nature of the internship and the number of students enrolled, although it works in a different way in each university. Thus, in Jaen (Master's Degree in Sustainable Strategic Management of Tourism Destinations) practicum is an optional subject with only one tutor for all students; in Cádiz (Degree in Tourism) it is a compulsory subject, with 94

students enrolled and 23 academic tutors; in Seville (University Master's Degree in Tourism Management and Planning) all professors can be academic tutors. On the other hand, in Malaga, the distribution of the teaching load is made according to the number of credits taught by the area of knowledge in the degree and the Departments are the ones who assign it to the corresponding faculty.

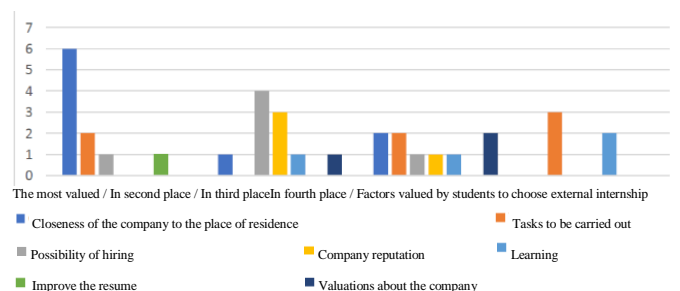
As far academic tutors are concerned, each university awards a different number of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for their tutoring activities. These activities include monitoring students, (communication via email or telephone and meetings) and evaluation (writing reports and minutes) in collaboration with company tutors (supervisors), who are in charge of mentoring and submitting an assessment report tackling the students' performance in professional practice at the company.

The Delphi analysis let identified which are the most common tools at the time of detecting possible students and companies' satisfaction gaps in professional practice. First, students can directly communicate with their academic tutors to inform about any undesirable situation in the internship. Second, students can inform directly the Vice-Dean of Internships. Finally, in some faculties there is an internship commission which keep periodical meetings with companies, academic tutors and with student's representative to discuss the perceived quality of stakeholders in a multicultural context.

Another issue addressed in the analysis is when the students have the opportunity to do their internships. Generally, there are two options: the student can promote the internship dealing the date, tasks and shifts with a company or on the contrast, the student can select a company whose internship has been already set, so there is no option no change any condition of the practicum.

Graph 1 shows, in order of importance, the factors valued by students when choosing their internships. The most valued aspect is "the proximity of the company to the place of residence" followed by "the possibilities of hiring".

Graph 1. Factors valued by students for choosing external internships.



Source: own work

D. Actions performed at University of Malaga

Based on the scenario described, REDPETUR's actions were oriented to work on common aspects, but the pandemic conditioned the actions to be undertaken. Therefore, we list them through the major framework agreements signed by the Andalusian universities:

- A. The Framework Document for the adaptation of teaching and evaluation in Andalusian universities to the exceptional situation caused by COVID-19 in the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year [9].

This document set up a common guideline for the Andalusian universities in relation to external curricular internships. The University of Malaga, through its Employability and Entrepreneurship service, held a meeting with all internships coordinators in every faculty to share the guidelines and ask them to inform all stakeholders involved in the internships. The main idea was looking for solutions to let students enrolled in the practicum subjects to finish them, especially after the decision of the Minister of Universities to adopt a non-presence teaching.

In the Faculty of Tourism of University of Malaga, after several meetings with the internship coordinators of the different degrees offered, a consensus was reached on how the development of competencies in these subjects would be carried out. The consensus was shared with teachers and students through virtual meetings. In this sense, the organization of undergraduate and graduate courses was adapted to the non-face-to-face teaching in the academic year 2019-2020, after the declaration of the state of alarm caused by the COVID-19 [10], the teaching guides were modified through their respective addenda in order to adjust them to the new situation [11] and the modification of the academic calendar was approved in the Central Board [12].

The result of the complex process of changes was published in the Virtual Campuses of the following mandatory subjects:

- Degree in Tourism: Internships in Tourism Companies and Institutions (<https://turismo.cv.uma.es/course/view.php?id=1263>).
- Master's Degree in Tourism Management and Planning: Internships in Tourism Companies and Organizations (<https://mop.cv.uma.es/course/view.php?id=11474>).
- Master's Degree in Electronic Tourism: Internships in Tourism Companies and Organizations (<https://mop.cv.uma.es/course/view.php?id=12007>).

In these subjects, there was intense communication with REDPETUR, putting emphasis on having a strong collaboration that could be leveraged advantageously to support students. Video-practices were deployed for the development of specific competences of the degrees. Practices 2.0 for the development of transversal competences and the additional, voluntary and free activity of developing one's own business idea in the field of tourism was offered.

B. Framework Agreement on common criteria for the adaptation of university education to the health requirements arising from the COVID-19 epidemic during the 2020-21 academic year [13].

At the beginning of the academic year 2020-2021, still in the middle of the pandemic, the Service of Employability and Entrepreneurship of the University of Malaga, created the Employability Committee of the University of Malaga, in order to supervise, control and advise the activities related to professional orientation and insertion, under the terms established by the current regulations.

In the regular meetings of the Employability Committee, essential aspects for the external internship in tourism degrees were addressed, which were transmitted to the coordinators, teachers, supervisors and students in virtual meetings. It should be emphasized that the tourism sector in Spain has been the most affected by the pandemic [14], a fact that was

especially challenging in Malaga because of its dependence on international tourism. Therefore, the number of companies available to take part in the practicum programme fell down dramatically and it was impossible for all the students to enrol in external internships. The solution was to provide online internships through the Virtual Campus in the following degrees:

- Degree in Tourism: Internships in Tourism Companies and Institutions (<https://turismo.cv.uma.es/course/view.php?id=1504>).
- Master's Degree in Tourism Management and Planning: Internships in Tourism Companies and Organizations (<https://mop.cv.uma.es/course/view.php?id=14025>).
- Master's Degree in Electronic Tourism: Internships in Tourism Companies and Organizations (<https://mop.cv.uma.es/course/view.php?id=13952>).

The contents of the Video-practices and Practices 2.0 from the previous academic year were improved and enriched. Moreover, simulation was used in education for the acquisition of specific competences of the degrees in tourism.

E. Findings

The degree of achievement of REDPETUR's objectives has been extremely affected by COVID-19, and is supported by the following evidence:

A. Regarding the optimization of public resources allocated to external curricular internship subjects, the continuous improvement plan for communication and coordination has contributed to their further optimization through the establishment of monitoring and control indicators, and the analysis of such indicators. In addition, a common rubric has been developed and agreed upon by all lectures, which is under constant revision, with the suggestions made by the academic tutors and supervisors.

B. The Faculty of Tourism of University of Malaga, with the support of REDPETUR, has faced the changing needs of society by promoting the improvement and transformation of both the official degrees offered and the institutional organization. The development of new activities and skills has been possible through the development of Video-practices and Interactive Internships (simulations).

C. The Network has encouraged good teaching practices updated to the necessary pedagogical innovations that lead to excellence in teaching in times of pandemic. The actions to be undertaken and their coordinated adaptation to the current context have been shared, ICTs have been applied for teaching improvement, the assesment system has been adapted to the context of the pandemic. Furthermore, new teaching materials adapted to the situation and the needs of the official tourism degrees have been developed in coordination with the Employability and Entrepreneurship Service.

D. REDPETUR has been a driver to stimulate and support coordination and teaching participation in the acquisition of student competences through internal and external working groups.

E. The Network is committed to external curricular internships in tourism studies, as a key factor in the students training increasing their individual potential for future employment. This commitment has been evident during the pandemic, when the network worked to make possible that all

students could finish their internships sharing knowledge to adapt practicum subjects.

This type of Network of Excellence allows greater coordination and taking the necessary steps to initiate larger projects. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that on June 4, with the attendance of 40 universities and at the initiative of the University of Malaga, the Conference of Deans of Faculties of Tourism Studies in Spain (CEDTUR) was formed, with the following aims:

- The promotion, improvement and coordination of tourism studies at the undergraduate, master's and doctoral levels in Spain.

- To promote cooperation and cohesion among tourism faculties and schools.

- To consolidate the social projection of the tourism faculties and schools among Spanish society and the public authorities.

- To promote university studies and research in the field of tourism.

- To be an interlocutor of the tourism sector and the public authorities in relation to all the regulations that might affect the university teachings in tourism, in narrow coordination with the Conference of Rectors of the Spanish Universities (CRUE).

REDPETUR could be used as a model of leveraging collaboration between tourism stakeholders and became and national teaching network in the framework of REDINTUR and CEDTUR.

III. CONCLUSIONES

As a final reflection we would like to highlight the steps taken by REDPETUR to improve the competency-based training of the external internship subjects in tourism studies. In addition, as a result of this work, countless lines of future research emerge to continue advancing in aspects that can be improved as the following ones:

- Comparative analysis of the competences that are developed in the external internship subjects of the different tourism degrees in Spain.

- Examination of possible synergies, intra and inter universities or Institutions, in the elaboration of new quality Interactive Internships (simulations).

- Training need analysis to identify new competences demanded by the sector in the new context after COVID-19.

Reflecting on the teaching of external internships at the level of degrees and stakeholders involved gives coherence and sense to the whole educational process. Moreover, collaborative work is more efficient than individual one, since sharing different points of view in which there will be encounters and disagreements that will undoubtedly enrich the

learning practice and employability of students, especially when digitalization have brought us so close and there is available funding to create this type of networks.

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