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International Learning Experiences in Business Courses A Presentation of Four Papers

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This special section of *JSRIUE* presents the work of business students who participated in multicultural learning experiences during the spring semester of 2022. The international approach in business courses responds to three core values of the IU East School of Business and Economics, student-centered, social responsibility, and globalization.

The first three papers correspond to the learning experience in the Business and Society course. In this experience, students wrote reflections on their discussions with peers from the Middle East and North Africa about how the pandemic changed school and work conditions from in-person to virtual settings. Discussions took place between February 14 and 26 of 2022, in the frame of the Global Circle Virtual Exchange program supported by the Stevens Initiative and sponsored by the US Department of the State and focuses on building global competence and career readiness skills for young people. Students used the course framework in their reflection to address the benefits of virtual communication, how virtual work help with employee safety, and the pro and cons of virtual class during the pandemic.

The last article is an investment report of a student group who took the Administrative Policy course. The group was formed by IU online students and students from the EAFIT University, located in Medellin, Colombia. Those students worked together for six weeks to determine the value of an international company focusing on both strategic and financial considerations. The teamwork took place between April 23 and May 2nd of 2022, in the frame of the Global Classroom initiative supported by the IU Global Office and sponsored by the IU Bloomington campus.

Global Circles Research: Hybrid Lifestyle

Stella Shellabarger

Abstract

In this paper, I will be answering the question, how has the change to hybrid lifestyles affected students' ability to learn in universities? I have gathered my data from a zoom call with the Global Circle organization and discussion posts from Global Circles. I will use the stakeholder theory and ethical reasoning to analyze my data and answer my research question.

Keywords

hybrid lifestyles, university learning, undergraduates, Global Circles, stakeholder theory, ethics, ethical reasoning, online or in-person, hybrid courses

Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether being a part of an online only or face to face university would work for you? I had the opportunity to meet with other people from all over the world and discuss the hybrid lifestyle. I had this opportunity thanks to Global Circles. I met with teachers, students, and some who were not either, but gave their valuable input as well. We talked about many different things, but our main topic and what we spent the most time on was whether schools should be all online or in person. This got a lot of conversation going and that is what I chose to write about. This paper will be about if hybrid is a good or a bad option and reasoning for both sides. Along with the data that I have found, I will be using the stakeholder theory and ethical reasoning to further analyze this data.

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory- Stakeholder theory according to the book is a “argues that corporations serve a broad public purpose: to create value for society. All companies must make a profit for their owners... In this view, corporations have multiple obligations, and all stakeholders’ interests must be taken into account” (Lawrence and Weber, p.6).

Ethics and ethical reasoning- Ethical reasoning and ethics according to the book, “Ethics is a conception of right and wrong conduct. It tells us whether our behavior is moral or immoral and deals with fundamental human relationships—how we think and behave toward others and how we want them to think and behave toward us” (Lawrence and Weber, p.95). Business ethics are “the application of general ethical ideas to business behavior. ... If dishonesty is considered to be unethical and immoral, then anyone in business who is dishonest with stakeholders—employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, or competitors—is acting unethically and immorally” (Lawrence and Weber, p. 96).

I will use the stakeholder theory, ethics, and ethical reasoning to further analyze the data that I have gathered. I will use these reasons to answer my research question about how the change to hybrid has affected the student learning in universities.

Research Design

Research question- How has the change to hybrid affected the student learning in universities?

Methodology-

This assignment was held by an organization called Global Circles. Global Circles is an organization that creates opportunities to meet and engage with other people from across the world. They have zoom meetings to discuss cultures of topics that matter globally and locally. My group’s topic was about the hybrid world. We had two zoom calls on February 18th and February 25th. Prior to these zoom calls, we had

a small assignment due every day. These assignments were all discussions posted on the discussion board on the Exchange Portal website. The discussions were brief and were preparing us for the zoom meeting. In my zoom call, I had some teachers from other parts of the world. We did not discuss what level they taught, but there were at least 4 teachers. All of them preferred to be in person rather than online. Almost everyone in my zoom agreed with this as well. There were a couple of people who did not or were for both sides. They felt like they had a better connection with the students face to face and it was more beneficial for the students, or at least that is how the teachers felt. Everybody agreed that having things online is a great tool, but not easy for everyone. There were people on my call who were not at their homes because they had no internet where they live. It is an aspect that few people think of, but it is true. Not everybody has access to good internet. Overall, most everyone felt that being in person was better for learning the material. Having access to the internet can be a good thing, but also hard for certain areas of the world.

Data

During my zoom call many topics were discussed, but the main topic that we discussed was whether people were for or against the hybrid world in schools. The main points for the people that were in favor of being online in schools were slim, but powerful. They felt like having the option to be online would keep everyone safer. If students and teachers did not have to meet in person, there would be a smaller chance of anybody getting sick. During COVID-19, everyone's biggest concern was that no one wanted to get the Coronavirus. In this circumstance, being online was the best option. The coronavirus is not over and there are many people who are still not comfortable being with other people. Another point that this side brought up was that being all online taught people to be more responsible. They had to have self-control to get online and to put in the effort. While being in person, it is easier to get stuff done, because you have a teacher watching over you and you have your peers right next to you. Being online, you could skip the lecture

videos or your homework, because no one is there to motivate you and help you step by step. Although the teachers were always willing to help, it is simply different from having them in the same room as you. Being online can help people not risk the chance of getting sick and can teach people the idea of responsibility and self-motivation.

Those in favor of being face to face in school were greater than the people who preferred to be all online. One of their main points as to why they liked to be in person to learn or teach was that they had a better connection. In my zoom, I had several teachers that were giving their input. They shared that there is something special about having a connection with the students that you are with for a whole school year. Being online, you do not really get to feel a connection with anyone, because it is all through technology. Although technology can be a wonderful tool, it is not the same as having a human connection with your students and/or teachers. Another point that got brought up was that not everyone has access to technology or the internet. Nowadays most people think that everyone has great internet service and all the latest technology, but that is not always the case. On my zoom, a woman from Egypt was at a friend's house, because at her house she does not have internet access, so she could not have joined our call. This is something that most people just look over, but it could be a big problem. If one does not have access to the internet or to good technology, how are they going to get their homework done? How are they supposed to excel in school? Everyone who was in favor of being in person rather than being all online agreed that having an online option is a great tool to have, but not the best option for everyone. It is not the best option because students and teachers cannot have a genuine connection online and not every person has access to good internet.

Data Analysis

My reflection will answer the research question, how has the change to hybrid affected the student learning in universities? Using this question and my data listed above, I have identified the stakeholders. The stakeholders here are students, professors, technology support employees,

and any other faculty at the specific university. The students are the main stakeholders in this specific scenario because they are most affected by changing into the hybrid lifestyle. As stated in the data, they can be affected either in a good or bad way. This change can either allow a student to thrive or fall behind. The other major stakeholder in the change to hybrid in universities are the professors. They may not be able to connect with any of their students if they cannot physically see them. For some teachers, this is a huge part of why they do what they do, and it is for the students. By changing to hybrid, they would also have to change a lot of their lesson plans to accommodate being online rather than face to face.

Along with those, another stakeholder is the technology support employees. These would be the people that anyone would go to if they were having technological issues. When switching to a hybrid lifestyle, this help is widely used. Without these employees, it could not run as smoothly as it does. As stated in the data, not everyone would have access to technology or even people to help if a problem was to come up. Lastly, some stakeholders would be any faculty at the university. This would vary depending on the university. These people would play a huge role if school were in person or online. These are the people who help do things around campus and make it run with no complications. Some of these people would not be as affected if school went online, because some do not see students daily anyway. On the other hand, others rely solely on having people on the campus. It just depends on the university and what the specific job is.

Next, there is no right or wrong answer as to which opinion is correct. Although, it would be unethical to condemn someone for not thinking the same way that another person may think. Along with that, it would be unethical to fail a student if they did not have access to the materials that they need to succeed. Technology or the internet would be an example of this. Some people do not have the chance to have the same materials as others.

Along with the two zoom calls I have done some other research to find more information. Johnny Ellsworth from Pomona College is required to attend an in-person class. Every day before class, he checks the local covid rates. Ellsworth, along with a lot of people, does not like the risk of potentially getting COVID-19. The text states, “So far, Ellsworth has forced himself to go to the two classes where his professors insist that he attend in person. But many days, he said, it’s hard to focus on academics when he’s thinking about the potential consequences of contracting Covid in class” (Chronicle, 2022, para. 3). Johnny’s education is important to him, so he continues to go to his classes, but it is a worry for him. It is also not just Johnny; many other students feel the same. They wish to have the option of being hybrid rather than being forced to go face to face.

On the contrary, some people think that face to face is the better option. They feel that being in person is a much better experience and just all around the better option. While being face to face, one gets to form relationships and connections with their classmates and peers. In the text it says, “They need the opportunity, they need the eye-to-eye contact, they need to be with you in classrooms’ Biden told educators and school leaders...” (Percentage, 2021, para.5). Being face to face is unlike anything else and can oftentimes be taken for granted. Learning in person can be much easier and more beneficial for some people. Every person learns differently, and every person has a right to their own opinion on whether schools should be hybrid

Conclusion

In conclusion, I learned from my data that every person will feel differently about whether the hybrid lifestyle is the best option. Although they may not have the same opinion as some of the other people, everyone was still respectful and interested to hear about how the other side thinks and feels. For the people that are for being all in person feel that being in a classroom face to face with kids is the best and easiest way to have a connection with their students. They also know that not everywhere in the world has access to technology or to the internet.

These were not their only reasoning, but the main two points that were brought up multiple times. The people that were in favor of being online felt as if this was the safest option as we are living through a worldwide pandemic. They also felt that students need to be taught how to be responsible and self-motivated in their own way. Again, these were not the main reasons, but the two that came up the most often from all the people who were in favor of being online. Overall, students who learn at universities will vary depending on whether they are face-to-face or online. Their learning will also differ depending on the student and what works best for them.

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