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The impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education and Educational Technology – Part 2. Learning During the Pandemic: The Student Experience and new Ways of Teaching

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This second thematic issue presents further research on university pedagogy and digital technology in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first issue (Karsenti et al., 2020) reported on the rapid and mostly compulsory transition to remote learning modes along with the many inherent challenges (Dufossé, 2020; Verchier, & Lison, 2020). This second series of articles shifts the accent to the student experience and the new teaching methods and devices that university teachers have adopted.

After eight months of the pandemic and numerous studies on its impacts on university teaching and learning, the consequences of this unprecedented state of affairs are only partly understood. More specifically, we need to know more about how students have experienced it. This second thematic issue brings together the work of researchers from around the world in an attempt to comprehend the effects on learning. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how students are coping with the changes, a topic that has captured much research interest. For example, some authors explore pedagogical aspects of the new educational reality (see Aucejo et al., 2020; Gelles et al., 2020; Olum et al., 2020), including learning and the development of competencies; academic success; and dropout or loss of academic motivation. Others examine more personal and emotional facets such as anxiety, increased screen time, and changing socialization habits (Cantù, 2020; Fatonia et al., 2020; Sunasee, 2020).

Harshbarger and Vu offer some perspectives on preservice teachers and the use of interactive, hands-on virtual programs. Girardet pursues this direction in a report on students' collaborative learning practices. In a case study, Gremion and colleagues reveal the extent to which students have transformed their work and collaboration habits. Drawing on the PETTaL model (Mukherjee, 2013), Biémar and collaborators cast a critical eye on engagement factors in adult education. Based on diverse student experiences during the pandemic, Marie-Laure Six believes that the pandemic will generate new prospects for implementing ICT into education. Two



experiments conducted in Senegal, by Sow and Diongue and by Agbanglanon and Adjanohoun, illustrate the different contexts and realities of students according to their geographic situations. The pedagogical reflection by Paquelin and Tendeng sheds light on the role of personal learning environments (PLEs) and social proximity during the pandemic. Felder and colleagues characterize PLEs in terms of their model of learning styles. In a field survey, Mercier draws a timely portrait of the material, pedagogical, and emotional needs of students in France. A rather positive outlook emerges from Njengoué Ngamaleu's study of Cameroonian students, who appear to remain committed to achieving academic success despite the ongoing pandemic. Leyrit's study paints a somewhat gloomier picture in which students are highly stressed and significantly demotivated. Chemsî and colleagues propose distance learning as an effective solution for learning continuity in Morocco. In Benin, Alladatin and collaborators gather the perceptions of students who are coping with extraordinary institutional measures along with a host of day-to-day constraints. In another corner of the world, Weiss et al. detect a similar dissatisfaction in teachers in training in Martinique. In Madagascar, the social and financial situation of students constituted the main obstacle to efficient distance learning, as shown in the study by Ratompomalala and Razafimbelo. Finally, Raby and her colleagues present some empirical findings on the portfolio as a useful training assessment tool in the context of COVID-19-mandated distance learning.

It is widely held that teaching and learning must be learner-centered, and this applies to university education as well (see Karsenti, 2001). In this second part of the thematic issue, we wanted to spotlight the student experience and the learning methods at their disposal. This collection of studies points the way to solutions for helping students learn. Alone in front of their screens, navigating through a surreal universe, they can seize the vast potential of digital technology to pursue their education, build their competencies, and remain fully engaged in learning.

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