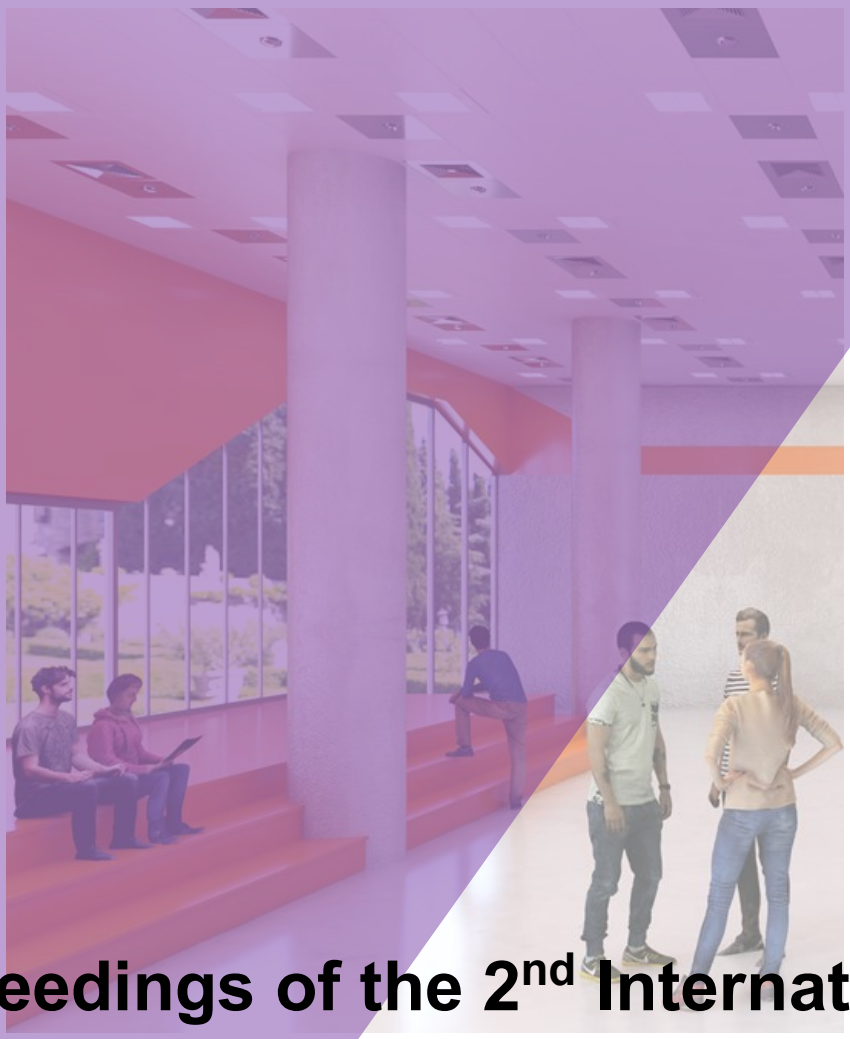

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

REINVENTING EDUCATION

VOLUME III

Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy

Edited by

The Organizing Committee the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

https://www.rivisteweb.it/issn/1129-731X

Published by: ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 – Rome, Italy

Published in Open Access

This book is digitally available at:

https://www.scuolademocratica-conference.net/proceedings-2/

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How to cite a proceeding from this Volume. APA citation system:

Author, N., Author, S., (2021). Title, in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica "Reinventing Education",* VOL. 3, *Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time,* pp-pp

ISBN 978-88-944888-9-0

Title **Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" – Reinventing Education VOLUME III Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time**

This volume contains papers presented in the 2nd International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" which took place online on 2-5 June 2021. The Conference was devoted to the needs and prospects of Reinventing Education.

The challenges posed by the contemporary world have long required a rethinking of educational concepts, policies and practices. The question about education 'for what' as well as 'how' and 'for whom' has become unavoidable and yet it largely

remained elusive due to a tenacious attachment to the ideas and routines of the past which are now far off the radical transformations required of educational systems.

Scenarios, reflections and practices fostering the possibility of change towards the reinvention of the educational field as a driver of more general and global changes have been centerstage topics at the Conference. Multidisciplinary approach from experts from different disciplinary communities, including sociology, pedagogy, psychology, economics, architecture, political science has brought together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate constraints and opportunities for reinventing education.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners' mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 800 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on research, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

ISBN 978-88-944888-9-0

Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time
A Premise

Papers in this third volume deals with the Covid-19 pandemic which is having an enormous impact on education systems worldwide. Policy makers, teachers, school managers, parents and students have been called to the reinvent their way of 'doing school'. At the same time, the governance of the education system and schools' organizations have been exposed to unprecedented tensions.

Within a short period of time, radical changes had to be introduced, simultaneously, at various levels of the school system. At national and regional level, there has been the need to rethink the way in which teachers are recruited, engaged and managed. National assessment and evaluation systems have been suspended or redefined in their uses by school actors The ways through which institutes were managed and organized had to be rethought, passing in a very short time through an on and off of dematerialization and hyper-normativity of time and space. Within schools, managers and teachers have been called to redefine the role of digital technologies in their didactic, as well as in their relationships with families and students. In some cases, these set of changes led to experience novel and unexpected daily proximities, in other prevailed a context characterized by distance and unsatisfactory relationships. Managers and teachers have been asked to re-invent their professionality to rethink their organizational, didactic and relational competences. Students and families, on their side, have been called to rebuild and reimagine new way of being at school, re-inventing the spaces and time of schooling and the way in which they relate among each other and with teachers.

The pandemic emergency has been a lens revealing intersections and structural tensions among various level and actors of the education system, but also allowing opportunities of changes thanks to the exogenous shock. At the same time, it must be considered that the emergency is interacting on pre-existing inequalities and contradictions. The pandemic clearly revealed the deep disparities of educational opportunities associated to students' life and housing conditions, beyond their access and uses of technological devices. Remote teaching and the enactment of an 'emergency didactic' has exacerbated learning difficulties for underprivileged students (children facing material deprivation, students with migratory background, students with special needs or disable, etc.). The interaction between the pandemic and pre-existing inequalities created different contextual conditions for actors' agency, orienting

toward different directions the pandemic's transformational potential.

Higher education systems have been affected too: in constant evolution due to constant transformations of society and changed functions of knowledge, universities have undergone a structural change along with pandemic times. Simultaneously, the growing relevance of knowledge for the economic development of the capitalistic system has profoundly affected higher education systems, characterized by the neo-liberal approach which his subject of increasing critical analysis.

However, Higher education systems are starting to be affected by other somewhat inevitable changing processes due to the evolution of knowledge and the consequent forms of its transmission. These forms have to be necessarily new both because of the availability of new instruments and the increased need to develop interpretative models of a constant and often unpredictable change. In this juncture the university might assume a renewed central role. At Higher Education System level, the growing use of digital instruments is envisaged in order to cope with the rising of the management rates of the training offer as well as to answer to the growing differentiation of user categories. A feasible consequence could be the increasing of the already pressure for the differentiation among the universities, with the related social implications.

At individual university level, it is foreseeable the demand for university involvement in tackling the problems of society and the economy will increase. And this at global, national and local level. From an organizational point of view the most significant feature is represented by the accumulation of traditional and new tasks that do not seem to be possible to manage. Whatever form the higher education systems will come to take, it remains that a central point to be clarified concerns the management of change. It will be the market that will impose its rules and the universities will organize themselves individually within the invisible enclosures that will guide their policies (with predictable growing social and territorial differences), or instead the State will choose incentive policies to direct its training system. It remains that in a condition of uncertainty and constant change the university's roles multiply and become – at least potentially – more and more central. It can therefore be argued that the university is not only called upon to respond to the demands of society but by elaborating answers and solutions to the problems it progressively affects the functioning of society.

We are fully aware that each educational experience produces specific results and definitions of teaching-learning practices. The well-established model of the magister teacher, based on a one-to-many transmission of knowledge, is complemented by new configurations of teaching-learning practices. There are

teaching practices that cultivate the ambition to combine the technological innovation with the psychological and pedagogical issues. Educational technologies, such as the Interactive Whiteboard, incorporate a new grammar and pragmatic in which the emphasis is placed on the involvement and the participation of the student, as well as on a “reverse teaching”, compared to the traditional one. The diffusion of online educational platforms, based on algorithmic architectures and data-driven approaches, also draws attention to a personalized way of learning and a datafication of teaching. Digital technologies are therefore stimulating a series of transformations in the socio-material order of the class affecting the spatial and temporal configuration of teaching. At the same time, they are embedded in the complexity of the educational contexts that rework their practical and symbolic value.

In the European framework of strengthening the relations between the labour market and education, we also witness the implementation of teaching practices associated with the idea of knowledge as an economic and social investment. Recently, a large field of critical investigation has highlighted how teaching aimed at improving the employment prospects of students is deeply affecting public values in education. At the same time, different points of view in the educational field claim to postpone the transmission of skills related to the labour market to broader educational objectives of social inclusion and civic participation.

The new proxemics imposed by the current pandemic challenge traditional spatial configuration, from the arrangement of desks to the mobile use of chairs, from the forms of communication in virtual environments to the interaction in the classroom. Therefore, this is to register the need to re-elaborate the ecology of the educational practices, starting from the socio-material space of learning.

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Raising Awareness of Students' Professional Identity. An Online Internship Path for Future Educators at the University of Catania

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ABSTRACT: *The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the educational systems at all levels, demanding rapid adaptation to emergency remote learning. The closure of many educational centres and the restrictions resulting from the spread of the virus have therefore required the need to rethink internship activities. The universities are forced to switch from their pre-planned 'face-to-face' model to alternative models, mainly on-line, to allow the students to experience their future work settings and to encourage reflective thinking about the internship experience. The abstract presents an online internship proposal designed and tested by the Degree Course in Educational Sciences (L-19) of the University of Catania. The design of the activities was mainly guided by the idea of self-directed learning, aimed at raising awareness of professional identity of students, through reflective and self-guided practices. More specifically, three courses have been designed: for early childhood educators, for community educators and for prison educators. Although the professional profiles are different, each path is divided into 4 modules that aim to promote analysis, planning and reflective skills. Activities are related to knowledge of the national and regional legislation, to the analysis of case studies related to educational planning, to video analysis of educational contexts. The last module is aimed at producing graphic or video material regarding students' professional identity as educators. Through the use of the Eduflow platform, 143 students accomplished their online path from January to March 2021. The contribution presents the results of the final survey of the participants' perception of the effectiveness and functionality of the on-line module. The data allow us to detect critical issues, but also the potential of a possible self-directed path device that allows students to learn how to manage themselves in their professional development.*

KEYWORDS: *On-line Learning, Self-directed learning, Professional identity, Early childhood, Community and prison educators*

Introduction

Since March 2020 national quarantine measures forced all the Universities to move their lessons on-line. The reaction of the University of Catania, like all Italian universities, in responding to the emergency of

COVID-19, is immediate. The goal is that no student should miss classes and examinations: in a week, in the University of Catania all teaching activities continue through distance and on-line solutions.

While departments are immediately closed to faculty, technical-administrative staff, PhDs students and postdoc students cannot access to continue their research activities, undergraduate students can meet their teachers or tutors only through the online platform. All the academic activities are delivered only in 'remote' mode, while sports facilities and university canteen shut down. The plan for 'distance learning' of the University of Catania, rapidly set during March 2020, provides that classes are recorded and are available online. Guidelines are rapidly prepared for organising alternatives to on-site exams and students' graduation. Reasonable alternatives are planned to support students with special needs Virtual open days for school students are organised. All strictly online (Piazza, 2020).

Curricular and extracurricular internships on regional, national and international territory are suspended, as well as post degree traineeships at regional, national and international level. Internship or practicum and laboratories are allowed only if delivered online. However, because these practical activities can hardly be replaced by distance activities, the University of Catania suggests to reduce the amount of hours devoted to internship, practicum and laboratories and allow degree courses to organize them autonomously.

The University of Catania act swiftly in response to the emergency, although the Athenaeum is not used to work remotely before the quarantine. Before COVID-19, no courses were delivered online. However, the situation is not dissimilar in the rest of Italy, where among the 96 universities, only 11 are distance learning universities and only 21 traditional universities provide courses – 131 in total – which can be attended remotely. As the data from a survey conducted by CRUI (The Conference of Italian University Rectors) show, to detect the progress of the universities relating the transition to online teaching (https://www.fondazionecrui.it/primo-piano/corona-virus-strumenti-per-la-didattica-digitale/), in March 2020 88% of the courses are offered remotely. Just over a week after the university shut down, many universities move to online-only classes, testifying to the enormous effort made by the national tertiary education system to deal with the emergency.

The transition to a distance learning system can be considered an unprecedented educational experiment in Italy. Moving quickly, and without adequate preparation, to a system unknown to most, was not the best way to facilitate faculty transition for a new delivery system. Those universities that already provided distance courses before the pandemic were even able to increase the number of courses provided benefitting from it. For those universities not still ready to deliver on-line courses, their lacking in management often «resulted in 'learning by doing' approaches or attempting to imitate what would have been the face-to-

face way of proceeding, yet using distance mode» (Marinoni, van't Land, 2020, 13).

1. Re-planning internship activities

1.1. Starting from the ground up

As well as for the internship activities, the situation caused by the spread of the pandemic makes it impossible to start or complete the activities that are a significant part of professionalism of educators (activities related to observation, planning, documentation, training, meetings with the working group, meetings with the institution's teams are largely impracticable)

The Degree Course for Childhood Educators and Community Educators of the Department of educational Sciences of the University of Catania (http://www.disfor.unict.it/corsi/l-19) seeks to find solutions to remotely redesign the internship which is mandatory for students.

Our first attempt is to plan the remote activities – despite the fact that the Department had no previous experience of distance learning – trying to keep alive their value for the creation of the professional identity of the students.

Organizing the internship appears immediately complex. In the majority of Italian universities, due to the lockdown, the practicum is suspended or organized as online lecture, study cases analysis, group discussion, since it is impossible to access all the educational centres (formal and non-formal). However, this organization drastically reduces the value of the practicum as an opportunity for students to increase their knowledge of their future work settings, to engage in continual dialogue with their workplace supervisor, to share ideas, receiving formative feedback, to encourage reflective thinking about the practicum experience (Piazza, 2020).

The degree course group in charge for the internship, composed of 6 faculty and 1 staff members, then decide to identify associations in the area that have managed to continue their activities remotely. A survey is conducted on the number of educational centres (nursery schools, kindergartens, community centres for teenagers, disabled people, elderly, refugees, etc.) to verify whether they were open to the public or they were able to provide online activities. Less than 5% out of educational centres interviewed were available to organise online internship with students.

Not being able to rely on educational centres in the regional context, the working group decide to re-design activities, trying to keep alive their value for the creation of the professional identity of the students. The hypothesis of online traineeships implemented by the working group starts from the assumption that these activities should include all the standards for good quality traineeships. They must have a clear description of field experience activities; a defined and constant tutoring;

well-defined assessment tasks; the recognition of the learning path; constant cooperation and efficient communication between faculty and students Activities should also allow students to know and navigate professional contexts and be able to promote self-reflection and self-directed learning in students.

1.2. The self-directed learning path

An on-line path is created on the idea that each student is autonomous in self-directing the learning process. The creation of online courses probably does not represent a novelty in the national panorama (e.g. see Galimberti *et al.,* 2019; Premoli, 2021), but the significance lies in having created an original path in a context – the specific one of the course of study but also of the Department – which he had never experienced remote activities.

The purpose of the activity is to promote analytical skills and critical and reflective thinking, through study, personal reflection, analysis of the documentation provided and the consequent drafting of a final report.

The internship provided is divided into three different paths which correspond to the three main professional profiles that the Degree course train:

- for educators in childcare services;
- for community social educators
- for educators in prison.

Each course is organized in 4 modules and the duration of the activities is 50 hours per module.

TAB. 1. *The modules*

Module 1 *The institutional context* (50 h): it is related to the main laws and regulations for each specific educational context (infant education, social education, prison education).
Module 2 *The pedagogical and the educational project* (50 h): students learn the characteristics of the educational and pedagogical project; they are required to analyse samples of pedagogical and educational projects carried out by local associations.
Module 3 *The operational context* (50 h): Students are required to watch and analyse different videos that film moments of work within different educational structures. There is also a guided video observation of the educators' work in the nursery, kindergarten or community facilities.
Module 4 *Connecting theory and practice* (50 h): The module is based on the production of videos, power point presentations and brochures to describe roles and tasks of the educators. Trainees are asked to make a product that serves for guidance in secondary schools.

Not being able to rely on a flexible University learning platform, we used Eduflow, that is a tool to build and run different kind of learning experience online (https://www.eduflow.com/). It combines a wide range of learning activities together in a learning flow, including videos, submissions and peer reviews.

All the modules are introduced by a 'Scheda' that defines the aims of the activities of each module; the contents to be read and analyzed; the

stimulus questions; and the assessment test. Each test is always organized as a reflection on what has been learned with the aim of increasing students' awareness of the educator's professionalism.

The path ends with the Final Report, which unites and integrates the different relationships written at the end of each module. Students are required to submit a reflective diary that includes their personalized comments on the institutional context; the design of education projects; the operational context. Students are also asked to fill in a section entitled 'What have I learned', in which they highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the path taken.

Students are also asked to share their final products (PPT presentations, videos, short stories) with their colleagues in order to encourage peer evaluation At the end of the modules, the trainee is asked to fill in a questionnaire on the quality of the experience achieved. The compilation of the questionnaire is mandatory.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

From January to May 2021, 375 students of the degree course in Education started the online internship. Most of them followed the path of early childhood services (Tab. 2).

TAB. 2. *Number of students by type of path*

Path	*N*
community social educators	38
educator in prison	25
educator in childcare services	312

2.2. Instrument

At the end of the online mentorship, a self-reported exit survey was conducted through a structured online questionnaire using Google Forms. This survey was done compulsory and anonymously by each students, and informed consent was obtained.

The survey consists of both open and closed questions grouped in three parts:

- context information (gender, path followed, and number of hours)
- analysis of the internship experience
- self-assessment related to the objectives of the on-line path

The first part of the survey included questions related to gender, path followed, and number of hours.

The second set of questions involved perception of the differences between the experience of the internship in presence and at distance, a general evaluation of the path and reflections on expectations, experience and possible future developments.

The third part of the survey is a self-report assessment. Students were asked to rate as either poor, fair, good, very good or excellent the level of the objectives achieved through the distance learning path.

3. Results

The obtained data from the questionnaire was uploaded to SPSS 26 for descriptive statistical analysis.

3.1. Students characteristics/context information

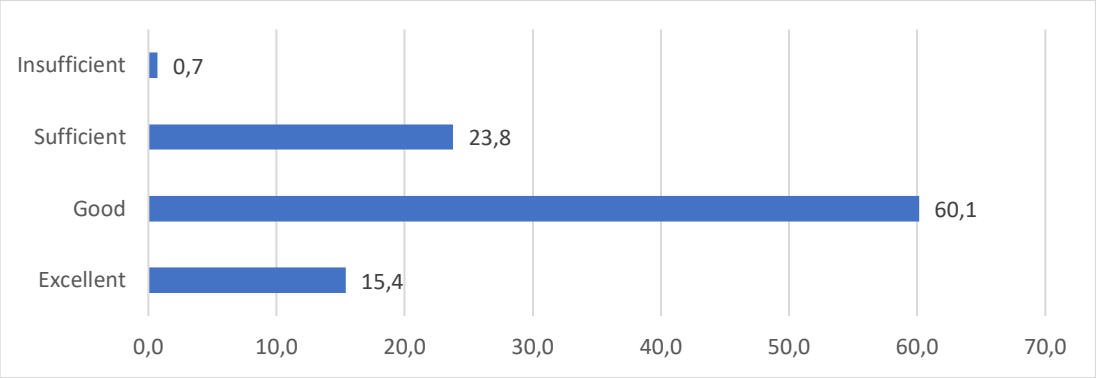
A total number of 143 students completed the path, and then answered the questionnaire. Of these, 104 (72,7%) followed the educator in childcare services path, 24 (16,8%) followed the community social educators path, and 15 students (10,5%) the educator in prison path. There was a higher proportion of females (97,2%) compared to males (2,8%).

Some documented educational experiences carried out outside the university context have been recognized to some students who therefore have completed a different number of modules, on the basis of the number of hours recognized. In particular, only 4 students (2,8%) attended only one module, 7 students (4,9%) followed two modules, 8 students (5,6%) followed three modules and the remaining 124 (86,0%) followed the entire path (4 modules).

3.2. Analysis of the internship experience

Data analysis highlights a good general evaluation of the online internship path (FIG. 1), which in most cases (87,4%) met the expectations of the students.

FIG. 1. *Overall assessment of the traineeship (%)*



The usefulness perception of the path in relation to various areas is reported in Tab. 3. Overall, many students found the path very useful, not only for the acquisition of new knowledge (62,3%, 'always' plus 'very often'), but also for the reflections requested (58,8%, 'always' plus 'very often'). As expected, fewer relapses were reported with respect to the development of skills (22,4%, 'rarely' plus 'never').

TAB. 3. *Perception of usefulness of the path in relation to the various areas (%)*

	Always	*Very Often*	*Sometimes*	*Rarely*	*Never*
knowledge acquisition	25,2	37,1	35,0	2,1	0,7
skills developed	14,7	24,5	38,5	20,3	2,1
professional identity development	22,4	24,5	39,2	12,6	1,4
interest aroused	23,8	32,2	37,1	5,6	1,4
reflections solicited	18,2	40,6	32,2	7,7	1,4

Among the most appreciated aspects about distance training, it is worth noting the possibility of conducting the internship at one's own pace (11,9%), but also the possibility of carrying out the internship also in the pandemic phase (75,5%) without interference of any other work activities (8,4%). Students also highlight the possibility of critically reflect on different aspects of educational practice and the possibility of being able to deepen different realities, for example different and geographically distant kindergartens or communities for minors, foreigners, the disabled, the elderly. Previously, during the internship experience in presence, it was possible to come into contact only with one type of service.

From the analysis of the data, the distance path is instead less appreciated for the lack of interaction with mentors (46,2%), for the commitment required in the use of digital tools (18,2%) and for the difficulty of the proposed material (9,1%). Additional aspects were added by 26.5% of the students. Trainees report the impossibility of interacting directly with the users of educational facilities, the significantly lower involvement in practical activities and the need to spend hours in front of the PC. Students also look forward to greater interaction with tutors and mentors and greater collaboration with colleagues.

Students were also asked to indicate any aspects of the online internship that they deemed useful to maintain even after the end of the emergency period. Among the traits reported there is more the desire to keep a part of the online path for aspects that are considered complementary to the experience that can be carried out in the presence. Specifically, some trainees refer to the last module for the possibility of stimulating the creativity of educators in educational contexts, others to videos of different and often distant realities, still others the same modules 1 and 2 for the possibility of addressing issues considered very useful for their professionalism.

3.3. Self-assessment related to the objectives of the online path

In the last part of the questionnaire, students were asked to self-evaluate their path in relation to the degree of achievement of certain objectives. As can be seen from the data reported in Tab. 4, students considered particularly useful for the development of their professionalism the guided reflections on the videos observed (item *o*, 70,7% 'to a great extent' plus 'a lot'), the study and analysis of proposed materials (item *l*,

67,2% 'to a great extent' plus 'a lot') and material production for users of educational services (item *p*, 60,2% 'to a great extent' plus 'a lot'). Surprisingly, the contribution of the online internship path to the development of IT skills is considered to be lacking (item *b*, 30,01% 'a little' plus 'not at all').

TAB. 4. *Online internship self-assessment in relation to the achievement of specific objectives (%)*

	To a Great Extent	*A lot*	*Somewhat*	*A little*	*Not at All*	*Not applicable*
deepening and analysis of educational contexts related to the academic knowledge of the degree course	18,2	39,9	37,8	4,2	0	0
computer skills	8,4	18,9	42,7	25,9	4,2	0
analytical skills of educational projects	16,1	40,6	36,4	6,3	0,7	0
skills related to educational design and training interventions	10,5	36,4	38,5	14	0,7	0
reports drafting	9,1	26,6	39,9	21,7	2,8	0
pedagogical and contextual skills	16,8	37,1	40,6	4,9	0,7	0
educational setting applied skills	14	39,2	37,1	9,1	0,7	0
reflective analysis of the acquired knowledge	22,4	36,4	35,7	5,6	0	0
ability to use theoretical knowledge in the context of work	11,2	28	39,9	17,5	3,5	0
resolving problems that could occur in different educational contexts	10,5	28,7	36,4	18,9	5,6	0
study of the national and regional legislation	22,4	30,8	30,1	16,1	0,7	0
study and analysis of proposed materials	27,3	39,9	28	2,8	0	2,1
drafting of analysis sheets of educational projects of some structures of the territory	18,2	36,4	27,3	9,1	1,4	7,7
structured observation of video	38,5	32,2	16,8	2,1	0,7	9,8
guided reflections on the videos observed	33,6	37,1	17,5	2,1	0,7	9,1
material production	28,7	31,5	26,6	5,6	0	7,7
readings and insights	16,8	25,2	42	7,7	0	8,4

peer review	23,1	28,7	22,4	12,6	0	13,3

Finally, the students' evaluation of the online internship (Tab. 5) underlines the great contribution of the path in provide hints on how to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the internship (item *z19*, 94,4% 'strongly agree' plus 'agree'), several thoughts on peculiarity of specific professional contexts (item *z18*, 92,3% 'strongly agree' plus 'agree') and prompts on how to document educational interventions (item *z29*, 90,2% 'strongly agree' plus 'agree'). Also, students assessed positively the possibilities offered by the platform with respect to better time management (item *z11*, 84,7% 'strongly agree' plus 'agree') and self-directed learning (item *z16*, 84,6% 'strongly agree' plus 'agree'). A critical aspect is related to the possibility of imagining some possible solutions to the problems that may occur in the related educational contexts (item *z7*, 32,1% 'disagree' plus 'strongly disagree').

TAB. 5. *Student evaluation of online internship specific aspects (%)*

		Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Neither agreement nor disagreement*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
z1	the goals developed met my needs	8,4	58,7	23,8	9,1	0
z2	the objectives of the internship were fully met	13,3	44,1	27,3	13,3	2,1
z3	the contents of the internship proposal correspond to the proposed objectives	9,8	71,3	14,7	4,2	0
z4	the contents were presented clearly	28	47,6	18,2	5,6	0,7
z5	the methodologies used in the internship were adequate for the acquisition of the desired skills	14	55,9	23,1	4,9	2,1
z6	the methodologies used allowed the application of the acquired knowledge	13,3	60,1	16,8	8,4	1,4
z7	the methodologies used have allowed the resolution of real problems relating to professional practice	8,4	39,2	29,4	20,3	2,8
z8	the materials provided were helpful and provided adequate information	26,6	62,9	9,1	1,4	0
z9	the duration of the internship was adequate	15,4	55,2	18,9	9,1	1,4
z10	the duration of each module was adjusted	13,3	44,8	24,5	16,1	1,4
z11	the path allowed me to better organize my time	36,4	48,3	7	6,3	2,1

z12	the tutor was helpful in resolving doubts	27,3	46,2	23,1	2,8	0,7
z13	communication with the tutor was smooth	29,4	45,5	18,9	4,9	1,4
z14	the structure of the platform was clear, logical and well organized	28	51,7	13,3	7	0
z15	I was able to easily access the platform for carrying out the activities	39,9	49	7	3,5	0,7
z16	the resources offered on the platform allowed for adequate self-learning	25,2	59,4	14	1,4	0
z17	what learned in the internship could be easily applied in professional practice	21	51,7	22,4	3,5	1,4
z18	the internship path provided me with several ideas and hints on professional contexts in which to apply my knowledge	30,1	62,2	7	0,7	0
z19	I intend to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the internship	39,9	54,5	5,6	0	0
z20	the internship has contributed to my professional development	25,9	55,9	15,4	2,1	0,7
z21	the path offered me the opportunity to learn how to manage an educational context	12,6	51	27,3	7	2,1
z22	the path offered me the opportunity to improve my ability to analyse an educational design	12,6	73,4	13,3	0	0,7
z23	the path helped me to foresee the possible problems that can occur in an educational context	14	62,2	18,9	4,2	0,7
z24	the path allowed me to use the technology properly	19,6	56,6	15,4	7	1,4
z26	it bored me	44,8	2,8	16,8	35,7	0
z27	got me involved in difficult tasks	2,1	16,8	30,8	30,8	19,6
z28	the path allowed me to effectively use digital technologies to improve my professionalism	16,8	52,4	19,6	9,1	2,1
z29	I have acquired ideas on how to document one's own educational action;	15,4	74,8	7	2,1	0,7
z30	I have acquired useful	12,6	72,7	12,6	1,4	0,7

	skills for the design of educational actions					
z31	the path allowed me to foreshadow possible obstacles and problems in educational contexts	11,2	71,3	14,7	2,8	0
z32	the path allowed me to think about the preparation of adequate intervention strategies	10,5	70,6	15,4	2,8	0,7

Conclusion

The considerations on the path achieved can be traced back to two dimensions, relating to the results of the path and the role of the degree course.

The results of the online course successfully record that around 150 students have completed their internship at a time when it would have been impossible to do it in person. While the proposed activities cannot fully replace the internship in the presence, however some activities – especially the video analysis – allow the students to know different geographical contexts and different educational practices. This would obviously have been impossible, if done in person. Furthermore, as recognized by the students themselves, not all learning contents would have been acquired in the face-to-face internship, such as the knowledge of national and regional laws and regulations, or the acquisition of the correct observation methodology.

The aspects to be reviewed concern the students' unfamiliarity in managing online learning, which would have required more constant tutoring in guiding them through the different steps of the path. Another element reported by the students as limiting was the lack of acquisition of practical skills (except with regard to the practice of observation or the creation of information products).

Finally, the recourse to the practice of cheating among some students, who often avoided the most demanding tasks by copying the work of others, is penalizing. The students were obviously sanctioned, but the question of whether and to what extent the students perceive the training path as useful for their professional growth remains open.

As for the role of the university, the impact of COVID-19 positively affected the degree course, that was able to react more promptly to the crisis and profit from new opportunities offered by the critical situation. Our experience shows that the pandemic gave faculty 'a better understanding of our current education systems' vulnerabilities and shortcomings' (Kandri, 2020); at the same time, according to what has also been highlighted by other national (Agrati, Vinci, 2020; Del Gobbo, Pellegrini, De Maria, 2020; Premoli *et al.,* 2021) and international researches (Kim, 2020), it gave the degree course the chance to re-thing educational practices and find new ways of planning activities for

students. This confirms the importance of higher education for society, that can offer a valid contribution in the crisis debates (Marinoni, de Wit, 2020), helping to minimize the severe risk of growing inequality through greater attention to the design of educational activities, responding to training needs of students.

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