



GUGLIELMO MARCONI  
**UNIVERSITY**  
*magazine*

MAGAZINE FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

N°4 - NOVEMBER 2020

# Academic Highlights

TRUST Baseline Research to detect lacks  
and competitive topics in Fintech Higher Education

## Glance at the **Future**

INNOVATION 4.0 Management System in SMEs  
and Business Networks

## Spotlight on Research

BLAZE project: we're halfway there!

## COVID-19 AND ONLINE EDUCATION: CURRENT SITUATION IN LATIN AMERICA

By UVirtual

Due to social distancing and lockdowns going on across the world, higher education institutions have inevitably been forced to convert traditional classroom teaching to online teaching. Not only have schools and other educational institutions had to close their doors in order to prevent the spread of the virus, but also other “non essential” services have had to put their activities on hold.

This has led to the massive cancellation of face-to-face classes in diverse educational institutions of over 190 countries so the spread of the virus may be stopped and its impact mitigated. According to the UNESCO, by mid-May 2020 over 1,200 million students of all levels of education around the world had stopped face-to-face learning, being over 160 million of these students from Latin American countries and the Caribbean.

Although some countries have decided to reopen some businesses, as of July 2020, up to 110 countries had enforced school closures, thus affecting more than 1 billion of students around the world.

Due to the temporary closure of educational institutions, including institutions of higher education, there has been a surge in the use of online learning tools. This transition to online teaching has been caused by the current global COVID-19 pandemic, and could have lasting consequences in the provision of higher education.



**FIGURE 1.** Latin America and the Caribbean - 33 countries that have suspended face-to-face classes nationwide. Students affected (by date) since early March to early August 2020. (Number of countries affected [left] and number of students affected [right]).

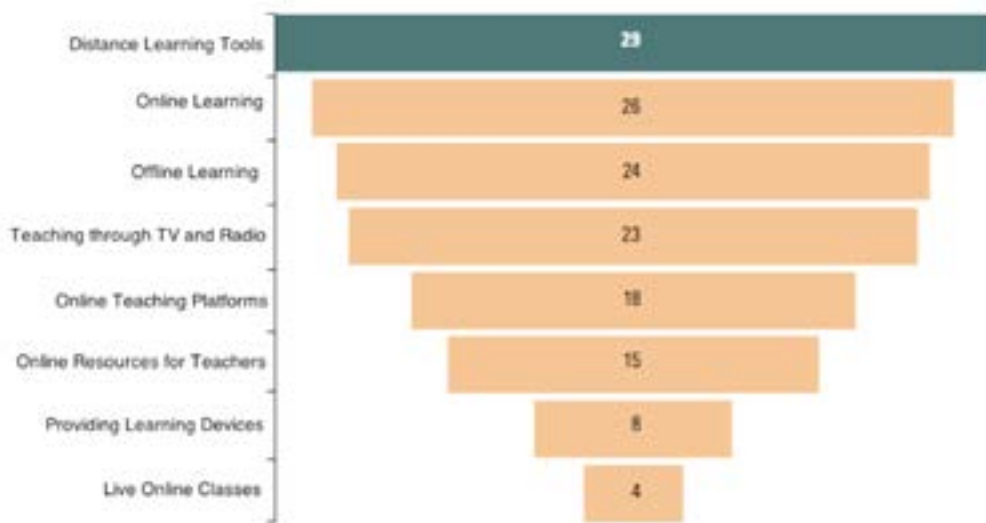
**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “How are you learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?” [Found online] <https://es.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>.

An important issue to emphasize is that unequal access to the Internet has required creative problem solving approaches from educational institutions. A quick analysis of the statements made by the main Higher Education Associations in Latin America shows how leaders of higher education institutions in these regions are calling for the adoption of remote learning and possible hybrid learning models for the upcoming post-COVID world.

Furthermore, according to a report by ORBA from ECLAC, 67% of the population of Latin America uses the Internet and more than half of the population has access to smartphones.

### Response to the Ongoing Crisis

In most countries (29 out of 33), diverse forms of distance learning provision have been implemented in order to continue to provide education services. Among these 29 countries, 26 countries implemented some form of online learning. Most online distance learning modalities highlight the use of online asynchronous teaching platforms (used in 18 countries) while only 4 countries offer live online classes (Bahamas, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama).



**FIGURE 2.** Latin America and the Caribbean (29 countries): Forms of distance learning provision in order to continue to provide education (as per number of countries).

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on the System of Information and Trends in Education in Latin America (SITEAL) "Response systematization of Latin American Educational institutions during the COVID-19 crisis?" 2020 [Found online] [https://www.siteal.iep.unesco.org/respuestas\\_educativas\\_covid\\_19](https://www.siteal.iep.unesco.org/respuestas_educativas_covid_19).

As higher education institutions in Latin America rushed to convert traditional teaching to online teaching, they faced at least two main limitations:

1. The disadvantages generated by unequal access to technology and the Internet.
2. Their ability to do it in such a short notice and with limited capacity.

Furthermore, these new conditions have required teachers to use platforms and virtual methodologies that they were not necessarily familiar with before. In education, teachers have had to learn the skills to implement the use of ICT in their everyday teaching practice, since only this way they can effectively provide their students with better quality education and successfully guide the development of their competencies.

For this reason, Latin American countries are looking to develop a meaningful and successful online learning experience; yet this is a process that requires time, knowledge and skill.

Online learning goes beyond having access to technology and temporary solutions; it also involves strategies to keep students and teachers committed and engaged throughout classes to promote learning, retention and proper culmination of courses.

## ONLINE EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

---

Although many government initiatives focus on providing families with immediate solutions and resources to support continued learning from home, the real challenge will be to ensure that these new digital technology solutions have a positive long-term effect and address existing inequalities successfully.

The World Bank explains some important issues in Latin America, and this list serves as a great starting point for entrepreneurs who are thinking about providing digital solutions.

For instance:

- How to improve the region's digital infrastructure for a significant increase in demand.
- How to move from providing education to providing meaningful learning experiences.
- How to better prepare educators and parents to navigate this new normal.
- How to combine online and offline learning technologies and tools.
- How to implement quality assurance according to these new circumstances.
- How to avoid dependency on a few providers.
- How to protect student privacy.

To ensure that the learning experience is also engaging and meaningful, connectivity improvements and digital knowledge should play a more important role in the path for success of online education in Latin America. There has never been a better time for businesses and educational institutions to focus on innovative solutions that help students, teachers and entire families to access educational resources regardless of where they are located.

### Conclusions

Most higher education institutions in the region have had to reinvent themselves and adhere to this new online teaching modality. Therefore, institutions have a very important role to play in shifting quickly from remote emergency teaching to a genuinely high-quality online education experience. Otherwise, they run the risk of reinforcing a stigma against online learning, and of offering lower quality education and effectiveness compared to traditional classroom teaching.

Educational institutions need to develop technological and pedagogical tools that allow them to quickly adapt to different scenarios given the current situation and uncertainty. The prior planning of possible scenarios along with the development of certain skills are critical in the near future; and more flexible and hybrid approaches to teaching and learning are to be taken into account for shaping the post- COVID-19 world.

Educational institutions must provide the entire educational community with opportunities and tools for continuous learning and promote innovation in the search for more conscious and responsible approaches to teaching. The pandemic changed education forever; this new online learning modality is here to stay, and now, all students can sit in the front row and have the teacher's full attention.



# Academic Highlights

## TRUST BASELINE RESEARCH TO DETECT LACKS AND COMPETITIVE TOPICS IN FINTECH HIGHER EDUCATION

TRUST (Financial Technology and digital innovation to modernise and develop curricula of Vietnamese and Philippines Universities) is a 3years European project started in January 2020 and co-founded by the Erasmus plus Programme, Key activity 2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education.

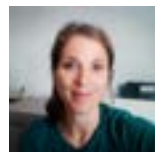
Asian universities has greatly carried on a documentary and a fieldwork researches despite of the pandemic difficult context. In fact, the Baseline Research (WP1: Mapping the current capacities of HEIs and the labour market needs of the Financial Services Industry in Vietnam and Philippines in Vietnam and the Philippines) is almost concluded. Each Asian partner found out a specific strategy to involve a satisfactory number of representatives of academia and Fintech industry in order to collect the necessary data. A snapshot of the results witnesses a strong attractiveness of Fintech Programme and distance learning methodology. At this stage, processed data will be the basis for two reports: a report of current capacities at Philippines (PH) and Vietnamese (VN) Universities, and a report of labour market needs of the Financial Services Industry in VN and PH. Through these important documents, the partners will identify the lacks, the expectations and the most competitive features of the new TRUST Master.



For further information, please visit the project website [trustproject.eu](http://trustproject.eu)

or send an email to [i.reggiani@unimarconi.it](mailto:i.reggiani@unimarconi.it)

by Ilaria Reggiani



## UVIRTUAL AND GUGLIELMO MARCONI UNIVERSITY: AN ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION.



UVirtual is an institution specialized in online education that ensures the quality of learning programs through an innovative educational model that stands out for the quality of its processes which focus on accompanying students in their path to success and achievement.

Since 2008, UVirtual and the Guglielmo Marconi University have established a strategic alliance in order to promote and support professional readiness, management of up-to-date work skills and improved execution of professionals in Latin America. The core objective of this agreement is to offer high quality education.

In the words of Arturo Lavalle, Head of the Research and Development Department of the Guglielmo Marconi University (Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi), "this alliance is aligned with our Institution's international mission aimed at the professional development of high competencies in different areas of knowledge." In UVirtual, we are committed to being the vessel for knowledge in order to achieve such goal through online education in Latin America.

by UVirtual

# Spotlight on Research

## BLAZE PROJECT: WE'RE HALFWAY THERE!

The BLAZE project (Horizon 2020) aims at developing an innovative, highly efficient and fuel-flexible small and medium-scale biomass CHP technology, consisting of a compact bubbling fluidised-bed gasifier, integrating primary sorbents and ceramic candle filters with Ni catalyst (IBFBG), high temperature fixed bed sorbents reactor and an integrated solid oxide fuel cell module (the Large Module Stack, LMS, of Solide Oxide Fuel Cell, SOFC) including a first-of-a-kind heat-driven gas recirculation. The project progress report has just been sent to the EU commission to report on the midterm results achieved at project 18<sup>o</sup> month. In detail, the following tasks were undertaken:

- biomass analysis selecting and characterize 10 samples and 5 mixtures of representative biomass wastes, tests the most representatives 2 of these samples, undertake tar catalysts and Sulphur and Chlorine compounds sorbents tests;

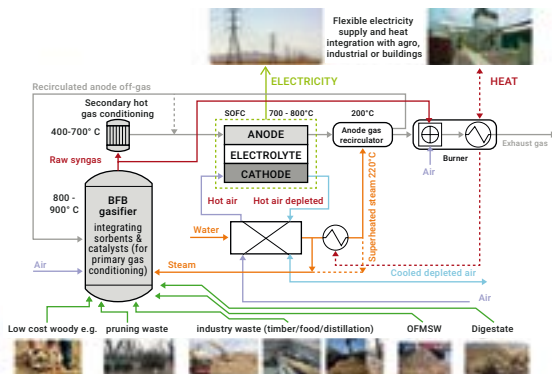


FIGURE 1. BLAZE SCHEME

- biomass analysis selecting and characterize 10 samples and 5 mixtures of representative biomass wastes, tests the most representatives 2 of these samples, undertake tar catalysts and Sulphur and Chlorine compounds sorbents tests;
- SOFC contaminants tolerance review to select bio-syngas representative tar and contaminants and button and short stacks SOFC tests;
- overall plant simulation;
- start of the pilot plant realization.

The following photos show gasification and SOFCs lab scale facilities fitted for the experimental activities.



**FIGURE 2.** University of L'Aquila catalyst and Guglielmo Marconi University sorbent test rig



**FIGURE 3.** ENEA gasification and École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne / SolidPower stack SOFC test rig

For further information, please visit the website  
<http://www.erasmusplus.it/capacity-building-for-higher-education-risultati-call-2020/>

by Susanna Correnti





## ITALIAN LANGUAGE: GET INTO IT TO LEARN IT.

Pasta, pizza and mandolino... It is the common cliché that often comes to mind when foreigners think about Italy and its language. But Italian language, and so Italian identity, has always been linked to culture, art, migrations, musicality and gesturing. It is also one of the most spoken languages in the world, not just because of its history, but also for its cultural heritage that makes people want to learn more about it, awaking in them a strong feeling of curiosity that must be filled immediately.

Through music, famous TV shows, films, books, recipes and so on, this language has always represented a connecting point among people from all over the world. Given the geographical dimension of Italy, it may come as a surprise that its language is currently the fourth most studied one in the world. This means that its strengths go beyond its weaknesses. In fact, Italian is the official language of Italy, Switzerland, San Marino, Vatican City State and Sovereign Order of Malta and the co-official language in Slovenia and Croatia, in particular in Italian-speaking areas of Istria and Dalmatia.

This makes Italian a niche language, each geographical area mentioned before, in fact, is smaller in comparison to the other countries' large territorial extensions. The power of a nation is usually measured by its political and economic leadership. We know that the importance of a country, and therefore of its language, walks hand in hand with its economic power. Even if Italia does not detain the biggest economic power, students are attracted by Italian culture and the musicality. As a consequence, the Italian language is the fourth most studied language in the world.

Last year I had an experience of teaching Italian language in Moscow . At first, the reasons that encouraged students to start learning Italian seemed a little trivial to me, but, once I fully understood the cultural reality of this country, I realized that I was wrong. In Russia the studying of Italian language is popular not only among adults or teenagers, but also among children. There are different reasons why people choose to learn it.

Some study for fun or for travelling throughout Italy, others simply fall in love with its musicality. There are also people who study Italian on their own just because they want to be able to have a conversation with people from Italy and to understand them on a deeper level. Before starting the course, many of my students had already known some words or phrases. This clearly showed that curiosity and desire of learning this language were very strong.

For this reason, I had the possibility to create with them a cultural exchange from both parties. We talked, for example, about our respective celebrations: not only the religious ones since we even have different beliefs, but also about our different national celebrations and our way to celebrate them. We realized that we celebrate a similar commemoration but in a different date because of our history and therefore it has a distinct meaning. The end of the World War II had a different impact for each country that took part of it. While in Italy on 25th April we celebrate the liberation from the German invasion, in Russia on 9th May they celebrate the victory of the war that costs millions of lives therefore on that day in the main streets of every Russian city people parade while holding a photo of their loved ones that fought and died during the war. Teaching Italian cannot consist only of passive lessons or repetition of grammar rules and structures or reading.

Every student who begins to learn a foreign language has to know basic grammar but this does not imply that each lesson should be about grammar rules, it has to be a cultural exchange between both teacher and learner. The mutual interest that we had for our respective cultures, implemented an automatic exchange of different ways of thinking, ideas and opinions. The customs and beliefs of educators or learners transcend from their native country because this interactive teaching method has the purpose to implement the cultural involvement. Considering the previous example, the different way to commemorate two similar celebrations in dictated by our different political and cultural point of view. Hence, it might seem simpler to learn a new language for those who are full of curiosity or want to speak new languages in comparison to those who choose to do it for work or integration







reasons. It is always surprising and interesting at the same time to see each student's reactions and listen to their opinions about cultural topics during the different lessons that we had. Through the interactions of the learners, I was able to analyze different aspects of our culture and realize how important it is to "get into a language" in order to understand it.

For example, we talked about Italian dialects which constitute the cultural heritage of the nation. In particular, we focused on Roman dialect. For instance, we focused on how the Romans speak and how they tend to cut the final part of the verb: "to do" "fare" in Roman became "fa" that is the same monosyllable of the imperative form of the same verb "fa". This use, called "verbal nipping", led students to associate this practice with some exceptions that the language presents. Although it may seem strange, in this way we managed to consolidate some grammatical concepts that are usually a little bit complex to understand. As a result, learning a foreign language is not just a mere assimilation of lexical and grammar rules but it is also an acquisition of basic cultural knowledge.

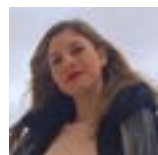
Through this mechanism, the learners are stimulated enough to achieve their goal in a firm and quiet way. While a conversation is established is possible to put into practice new grammar rule or way to read the alphabet. It is not simple for beginners to assimilate peculiar pronunciations, such as the diphthong "gn" [ɲ] or the triphthong "gli" [ʎ], since they might not exist in their native language. The only way to improve language learning is to exercise continuously. Even though Italian language basically does not present lots of differences between writing and reading in comparison to English for example, Italian use distinct linguistic register between the way of speaking and the way of writing: for these reasons it is crucial to deal with topics encouraging learner's active participation. Surely, the extroversion characterizing Italian people makes the cultural exchange easier. It is right to operate in an active, dynamic and jaunty way mirroring the personality of Italian people, instead of a very schematic system.

Studying a foreign language has to reach the point where everybody understands that every stereotype concerning a language is all about generalizing and allowing its devaluation. So, Italian language encloses the stereotypes mentioned at the beginning, but they do not represent it entirely. Italy is not just the country of pasta and pizza, but it is the country where the spoken language evocates values, love and also good food.

The Italian language means musicality that allows artists to express themselves freely. Italian indeed, offers freedom on the phraseological structure, in contrast with a lot of others languages, thanks to its Latin origin. It probably smells like pasta with ragù (bolognese) and risotto, but this contains the sense of conviviality and familiarity belonging to our country that is difficult to find everywhere in the world.

Italian language represents the art that can be found not only by travelling throughout the territory from north to south, but also in the dialects of its artists, actors, directors who bring to the stage its cultural repertory. Italian is the language trips, landscapes, a "relaxed language", without a lot of schemes, but with its exceptions. Moreover, several famous fashion brands like Dolce&Gabbana, Armani and Fendi, sophisticated perfumes like Versace and Bulgari and elegant luxury cars like Lamborghini or Tesla are named after Italian words or family names. Italian is also the language of research and discovery. It is the native idiom of lots of inhabitants of the world: as history shows, during the period of the big migrations, many Italians migrated abroad to seek their fortune. It is the language of history and passion. It is the language that reflects Italians and their way of being, thinking and working.

by Mariavittoria Paoletti



# Glance at the Future

## TRUST WEBINAR on “International Excellence in Finance and Technology Higher Education”

Within the reference of the 2nd official project meeting scheduled in November, 26th, 27th 2020, TRUST partners decided to open one session to the public, transforming such day in a public webinar focused on “International Excellence in Finance and Technology Higher Education”.

During the webinar, the project was presented with a specific attention to the core outcomes: the findings of the Vietnamese and Philippines researches, the new forerunning Master in FinTech, the modernisation of the existing masters and the Asian academic staff training.

With reference to the programme:

Ilaria Reggiani, project manager, TRUST Coordinator of G. Marconi University, presented TRUST International venture to excel in FinTech Higher Education; Delia B. Senoro, PhD, Director and Professor, Office of International Linkages for Research and Development, Mapua University, Philippines, presented the Current Capacities of Higher Educational Institutions and the Labour Market Needs of the Financial Services Industry in the Philippines;

Pham Xuan Hung, PhD Director, Office of Research and International Cooperation, College of Economics, Hue University, Vietnam, presented Current Capacities of Higher Educational Institutions and the Labour Market Needs of the Financial Services Industry in Vietnam;

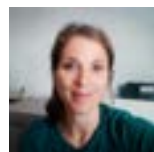
Gaia Roselli Cecconi, Head of Marketing and Innovation, Deus Technology, presented FinTech & Banking Market Trend in Europe;

Finally Jove I. Tapiador, Co-Founder and past Chairman of Fintech Philippines Association, presented Southeast Asian Fintechs, a Post-Pandemic Recovery; The Webinar was attended by professors, students and representatives from Fintech Industry sector; over 70 attendees joined the event.

For further information, please send an email to [i.reggiani@unimarconi.it](mailto:i.reggiani@unimarconi.it)



by Ilaria Reggiani



## INNOVATION 4.0 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN SMEs AND BUSINESS NETWORKS

---



**fabbrica<sup>®</sup>  
intelligente**

Guglielmo Marconi University continues its commitment on issues related to Industry 4.0 and innovation management by participating, in collaboration with Cluster Fabbrica Intelligente and Assinrete, in the definition of Prassi di Riferimento UNI, Pre-Standard, aimed at creating a functional organizational model to SMEs and Business Networks in the innovation management process of the Impresa 4.0 environment.

Le prassi di riferimento (UNI / PdR) are the documents that introduce technical requirements or sectorial application models of technical standards, elaborated on the basis of a rapid sharing process restricted to authors only (maximum 8 months from the approval of the request), verified the absence of norms or drafts of studies on the same subject; they constitute a type of national guideline that goes in the desired direction of transferring innovation and preparing development contexts for future standardization activities, providing a timely response to changing markets.

To be able to successfully address the new innovation paradigms, SMEs and Business Networks must necessarily change their mentality from a limited vision to individual technologies to the one that integrates the latter into the organization's production processes in a systemic way. Hence the project PdR "Impresa 4.0 - Guidelines for the management of innovation in SMEs and Business Networks" which, integrating the aspects of digital transformation with the principles of innovation management, and at the same time enhancing SMEs and the network model represents a unicum in the panorama of Italian and European standardization.

The document will be developed in a consistent manner with the indications of the OSLO 2018 Manual on innovation and with the contents of the Law of 27 December 2019, n. 160 "State budget for the financial year 2020 and multi-year budget for the three-year period 2020-2022" (paragraphs 198 to 209) which provides for the redefinition of the discipline of tax incentives connected to the "National Plan Impresa 4.0" and the decree implementation of the Transition Plan 4.0 in which the management of innovation is transversal to the objectives of digital innovation.

The meeting for the establishment of the technical committee, held On October 23, was composed of experts from the three proposing bodies, in which the roadmap for the development and distribution of the activities to be undertaken was defined. Guglielmo Marconi University is aware of having to make its own contribution to tackling the current crisis, not only by transferring the skills necessary to deal with the post-pandemic scenario but also by promoting actions aimed at relaunching the national productive system. The definition of this PdR represents a fundamental initiative in this direction.

by **Arturo Lavallo**

(Translated by *Darina Chesheva*)



**GMU Magazine** has been released with the contribution of all academic staff and partners around the world, if you wish to contribute highlighting any important news in accordance with the line of the release, please do not hesitate to contact us sending an email to [i.reggiani@unimarconi.it](mailto:i.reggiani@unimarconi.it)