



# **COVID-19 and Business Schools: From Pragmatic Reactions to Strategic Solutions**

Responses of CEEMAN member schools  
in the first wave

Summary by Arnold Walravens

# **COVID-19 and Business Schools**

## **From Pragmatic Reactions to Strategic Solutions**

Still in the beginning of 2020, business schools promoted their programs and events as usual. By March, the COVID-19 outbreak changed the world for the business schools endangering also their expected revenue streams. As a consequence of trying to stop the spread of the virus by restrictive measures, the economies of countries came to a stop. Airlines grounded their aircrafts. And, even if a country (like Belarus) did not introduce strict measures, the business schools saw that their international partners' countries closed the borders and faculty and students from abroad could not come to study anymore.

As it is the CEEMAN's spirit not to think in terms of problems, but of solutions, the initiative has been taken to ask our members and partners how they coped with the implications of COVID-19. Quite a large number, 34 submissions from 20 countries, were received informing about the way the challenges of COVID-19 have been met.

In the following table, a brief presentation thereof can be found. The information is grouped under four items:

- Ad hoc decisions and solutions
- The transition to hybrid or fully online formats
- The launch of new programs and strategic initiatives
- Projects launched in relation to COVID-19

Institution	Ad hoc decisions and solutions	Online / hybrid programs	New programs (strategic initiatives)	Projects
<b>IPM Business School, Belarus</b>	Interactive defense of projects through an educational video system Minsk – Warsaw.	Built in year 2015, blended learning and CISCO - telepresence technologies allowed to run all programs now online, with interactivity between teacher and face-to-face and remote students.	"Get Smarter Project". Blended learning combined with the use of Zoom sessions.	COVID-economy by offering up-to-date socio-economic situation in Belarus during COVID-19.
<b>ABIS - The Academy of Business in Society, Belgium</b>				Toolkit for virtual communications
<b>Estonian Business School, Estonia</b>	Closing down (March 12) campuses in Tallinn and Helsinki and moving classes of 1,400 university students and 120 secondary school students to virtual studies.	In the first week of virtual lectures (March 16-22), 136 virtual lectures were held by 50 professors. Today 460+ lectures by 64 professors and 10+ guest lecturers and 1,300+ students via Canvas platform.		Establishing a support team, consisting of IT specialists and several other members of non-academic staff to help lecturers and students working online via Canvas Platform.
<b>Caucasus University, Georgia</b>		Transformation to online learning.	Webinars on relevant issues for business.	Starting online work.
<b>CBS International Business School, Germany</b>		Switching to online teaching within one week, not only BA and MA, but also all other course formats.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mailbox for students "gethelp@cbs" and a newsletter "corona updates" through social media, communication with stakeholders through "a message from your presidential board".</li> <li>• Training of internal and external colleagues.</li> <li>• Virtual open campus days.</li> </ul>

<b>Almaty Management University (AlmaU), Kazakhstan</b>		Operates with its own Alma Union system for corporate communication. Students and faculty work on Moodle and Platonis platforms. Courses are supported by Open AlmaU and AlmaU online center.	Webinars, video lectures and online streaming to set remote contacts and discussions.	
<b>Narxoz University, Kazakhstan</b>		Builds on previous experience of integrating online platforms in its online learning programs.		Study "Emergency Online" to outline and analyze the options of the faculty, identify technological and methodological challenges and experience of students with the new learning format.
<b>Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Latvia</b>	On March 12, 2020 all onsite activities were suspended.	The bachelor programs moved online in a few days, using various digital tools: google meet, Zoom, own SSE Riga e-learning platform, and Skype. Examinations were adapted to fit distance studies. EMBA program was rescheduled, master thesis defenses held remotely. Other programs moved online.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Centre for Media Studies launched an Emergency Media Support Campaign.</li> <li>• Students have undertaken a research project in the anthropology course about the social and economic consequences of the pandemic.</li> </ul>
<b>Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, Universiti Utara, Malaysia</b>		Builds on blended learning, introduced by the university in the last years.		The main issue is that not all students have access to online learning, particularly from remote areas.
<b>Kozminski University, Poland</b>		In two weeks, the university transferred over 90% of the bachelor and master programs online conducted in Polish, 98%	It took the university 48 hours to train the lecturers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Kozminski experts" initiative, videos covering</li> </ul>	

		of those conducted in English and 100% of the MBA. The basic platform in use is Microsoft Teams.	<p>the impact of COVID-19 on various industries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Kozminski online for schools" to help high school students in preparing for exams</li> <li>• Online debates "business versus virus"</li> </ul>	
<b>Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland</b>	On March 10 classes were suspended. A special team was created to resolve all incoming issues.	Online education has been a challenge for both teachers and students.		<p>Response based on three principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety of students and employees</li> <li>• Quick and decisive action</li> <li>• Open and clear communication</li> <li>• For communication, a special subsection "coronavirus" was created</li> <li>• Employees helping former employees over 75 years with everyday life needs</li> <li>• A special team formed to analyze financial implications</li> </ul>
<b>University of Economics Katowice, Poland</b>	Crisis committee was formed for communication on measurements and restrictions. Ban on travel to and from countries with highest infection rates.	<p>Introducing a remote mode of teaching in four stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Availability of a platform</li> <li>2. Implementation of online courses</li> <li>3. Preparation of rules for conducting credits and exams</li> </ol>	<p>For the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize educational process on all levels and fields of study</li> <li>• Widen the use of e-learning education</li> <li>• Also in internationalization of education, including in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information of entire academic community about every stage of implementation of new solutions</li> <li>• Launch of dedicated e-mail awareness and special website section</li> </ul>

		<p>4. Introduction and implementation of online bachelor and master thesis.</p> <p>Using Google G-Suite e.g. classroom, Meet, Chat, forms for teachers, Microsoft office 365, Cisco Webex, supported by communication platforms.</p>	<p>participation of various professors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve administrative functions, eliminate unnecessary document circulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postponement of paying the tuitions fees</li> <li>• Availability of support by psychologists</li> <li>• Recording of a special song of the University Choir "to stay home and become heroes saving the world"</li> </ul>
<b>University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw (UEHS Warsaw), Poland</b>		<p>In a short time shifting all classes to the online platform, choosing MS Teams.</p> <p>Problem faced: some professors resigned when university introduced the obligation of teaching online.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An extensive communication campaign</li> <li>• Academic staff shared experience with distance learning, organizing online meetings and training</li> <li>• Informing staff about new rule of working from home</li> </ul>
<b>SGH Warsaw and Athena School of Management Mumbai, Poland/India</b>			<p>Since physical location of students is no longer relevant, these two institutions built a project cooperation program "Virtual Program - Real Results", creating teams from both universities for projects that require research</p>	
<b>IBS-Moscow, RANEP, Russia</b>	<p>All students were on March 17 informed to stay at home</p>	<p>Increasing the share of online courses from 10% to 100% in a week time, involving 750+ students and 150+ professors.</p> <p>On March 23, no professors were physically present at the campus.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A virtual crisis group was formed, consisting of program managers</li> <li>• Gathering of professors and invited specialists to select technological solution: Zoom platform was chosen</li> </ul>

				for large group classes, Skype for small group language classes.
<b>Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO, Russia</b>		At the end of March, presented GLASSROOM - a virtual classroom on campus, allowing running the educational process online for all classes, lectures, and public talks	Online free conferences "antifragility" on weekly basis on anti-crisis measures for companies	
<b>IEDC-Bled School of Management, Slovenia</b>	Decided to defer all face-to-face executive programs to June 2020.	Executive MBA and other longer programs are offered in hybrid form, combining in-class and online participants via platform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two webinars, on Crisis Management and Next Recession, attended by 500+ participants each time.</li> <li>• Three short online seminars: Remote Team Leadership, Communication in Time of Crisis, and Strategic Management in Times of Crisis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees work remotely</li> <li>• Regular staff meetings on Zoom to learn about latest management decisions and to update each other on work and personal development</li> <li>• Contacts with clients, business partners, faculty members and alumni through video addresses</li> </ul>
<b>Gordon Institute of Business Science, South Africa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension of face-to-face teaching on March 16.</li> <li>• The school's management started to contemplate the prospective impact of COVID-19 by mid-February.</li> <li>• The school announced the ban on travel to China on March 5.</li> <li>• On March 15, a member of faculty was infected, the</li> </ul>	On March 12, preparations were made to run programs via hybrid model. A week later it was necessary to suspend face-to-face teaching and start with fully online education on Zoom.	Realizing that there will be significant implications for the school given its emphasis on classroom interaction and experiential learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On February 26, the executive team developed three scenarios, ranging from fully operational campus to a complete close of a physical campus.</li> <li>• Regular communication with employees has started daily through "Zoom at noon".</li> </ul>

	school reacted with measures, people went into self-isolation.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On March 20, the school offered to students the use of Zoom or deferring attending lectures later in the year.</li> </ul>
<b>Kyiv Mohyla Business School, Ukraine</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build on already used different options for online interaction, both for internal team meetings and part of educational programs.</li> <li>Final stage of transforming all programs into online format.</li> </ul>	Launching new programs without “offline background”	<p>Advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always switch on the camera and microphone during the lecture.</li> <li>Limit the programs to 3-4 hours per day.</li> <li>Group discussion is essential.</li> <li>Internal training for faculty and team for online study and work processes.</li> <li>Keep virtual learning environment as an essential part of the future.</li> </ul>
<b>KROK Business School, Ukraine</b>		The Moodle platform was already used earlier for distance learning. Now it was supplemented by using additional IT tools such as Zoom, MS Teams of Office365, YouTube. All programs are now online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22 on-line master classes on various topics. Facebook group “Quarantine and Crisis”</li> <li>World Creativity and Innovation Week - 15 online presentations by 15 experts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The staff of the KROK Business School began to work remotely. For effective management, weekly video staff meetings on Zoom were scheduled.</li> <li>Staff and faculty groups on Facebook messenger.</li> <li>24/7 in contact with students.</li> <li>Launching the survey “How did quarantine affect your business?”</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of relevant useful content for entrepreneurs and managers on social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Lviv Business School of Ukrainian Catholic University, Ukraine</b>		<p>Quick switch to online teaching. Faculty members have been working with Moodle platform for several years and have at least basic course format. Preparations for full online transition started in late February.</p>	<p>To change the students' mindsets from "I am a listener" to "I am the manager of my study". The classes not just for consumption of information, but for its application.</p>	<p>Collecting students' feedback. 68% are generally satisfied with the quality of online teaching and 80% of students are aware and happy about open access to Coursera.</p> <p>Problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical problems</li> <li>• Tiredness of students. Too many materials (60% feel overwhelmed).</li> <li>• 20% said they need spiritual or psychological support.</li> </ul> <p>Advice: How to balance in the new online educational reality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time: everybody needs to be engaged in personal time management.</li> <li>• Get realistic expectations.</li> <li>• Problems after long classes.</li> <li>• Mutual support of the new way of learning.</li> <li>• Teacher should improve, but can't be perfect all time.</li> </ul>
<b>MIM-Kyiv, Ukraine</b>	<p>Quarantine measures on March 12 amidst public defenses of MBA dissertations.</p>	<p>It took three days to restart activities. This was possible because of the previous</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installing full-scale Zoom conferencing software.</li> </ul>

		<p>experience with using online learning tools. It took a week longer to move classes online: 11 programs through Zoom and more programs are in the pipeline.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewing extra curriculum activities. Launch of MIM-TV to broadcast interviews with experts and practitioners.</li> <li>• Problem: The online format does not have the same vibe as face-to-face communications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business School and Programs), US</b></p>	<p>The board of directors decided on April 1 to move ACBSP conference 2020 to a virtual form. All travel was restricted, staff started working from home, transition to a fully remote work operation in mid-March.</p>	<p>Online programs and webinars on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overview of ACBSP accreditation process</li> <li>• Teaching excellence webinar series</li> </ul>		<p>A weekly visual chat "coffee and conversation" for members to ask questions about accreditation or membership benefits.</p>

## Some major observations

- COVID-19 is a global issue. The response of business schools from various parts of the world resemble each other. Mentioned mostly, but even if it is not mentioned, the health of employees and students has been the first factor of concern. The most convincing in this respect is that the schools prepared for preventive measures – GIBS, South Africa introduced restrictions before the political leadership. All institutions reacted immediately with suspending face-to-face programs and organizing remote work of staff.
- As an immediate reaction, many schools have formed teams to identify the main challenges and to propose solutions. The teams operated under various titles: support team (EBS), a Special Team (Poznan University), Crisis Team or Committee (UE Katowice, IEDC), Virtual crisis group (IBS-Moscow), Executive Team (GIBS and KROK). It is often indicated that communication has been essential in making the necessary changes.
- It is understandable that the first concern has been to transmit existing programs from exclusively face-to-face into completely or partially online. It is not clear from the responses what will happen if the COVID-19 period eventually is behind us. It is not unthinkable that institutions with Executive Education such as GIBS and IEDC will return to face-to-face, to so called high-touch, if that is possible. GIBS mentions in its responses that an outbreak of COVID-19 would have particularly significant implications for GIBS, “given the school’s emphasis on classroom interaction and entrepreneurial learning”.
- However, it is difficult to imagine that all these developments would not have an impact on the future. An important strategic signal comes from the University of Economics Katowice, making a place for the future by advising to modernize the educational process on all levels and fields, to widen the e-learning education, to internationalize the education and to make appropriate improvements and eliminate unnecessary processes and document circulation.
- COVID-19 opens also opportunities for new forms of international cooperation as SGH Warsaw and Athena School of Management, Mumbai are offering an example.
- The number of new programs is limited till now. A great number of webinars are organized by many institutions, also online conferences such as weekly “antifragility” by Skolkovo, IEDC on “crisis management” and “the next recession”. KROK issued new programs “Quarantine and crisis”, 22 masterclasses on various topics, and “World creativity and innovation week”.
- The most remarkable is the large number of projects launched, for example “a mailbox for the students gethelp@cbs” (CBS), “Emergency online” (Narxoz), Emergency Media Students (SSE). Also surveys were held on the implications of COVID-19 (e.g. LvBS, Narxoz).

- A number of initiatives have been launched to help educators to perform online (eg EBS, Narxoz, Kozminski University, UEHS, IBS, Kyiv), as often excellent face-to-face educators are not immediately excellent online in the same way.
- Some projects are worth to be mentioned by their specific character, such as an initiative at Poznan University, where employees started to help former employees over 75 with their everyday needs.

All mentioned observations can help to respond to the next crisis, although we realize that "crisis management" often gives tools for the past crisis, not the next one. However, past experiences will certainly be useful to manage the still "unknown".

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## Annex

- Thanks to Olga Veligurska for her indications of responses.

Also the following written contribution and responses are received as:

- "Marketing after the global Outbreak" by Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, <https://plekhanov.marketing/roundtable2020>
- An article of Dr. Jun Chen on "Keeping a close eye on the cash conversion cycle" about the impact of COVID-19 on small and mid-sized enterprises
- Dr. Claudio A Rivera (Riga Business School): COVID will make leaders get back to reality,
- Dr. Matevž (Matt) Rašković (University of Wellington): "We need global civic universities to tackle wicked problems"
- Marge Sassi (Estonian Business School) interviewing Marge Täks, "Facing the new normal requires redefining our existence"
- Contributions of MCI on "COVID-19, researchers at MCI discuss "risk management system" and "Information behavior in the corona crisis".

*Read all submissions at*  
[www.ceeman.org/news](http://www.ceeman.org/news) (covid-19 section)