

MFS Study in Mexico – “Establishing a Digital Framework for EdTech Learning for Primary Schools in the Rural Parts of the Guanajuato Region, Mexico”

Before departure

After learning about the MFS (Minor Field Study) opportunity, we were filled with excitement and made the decision to carry out our bachelor thesis in a foreign country. However, we had not initially settled on the destination. Given our shared passion for education and strong interest in Interaction design, we were eager to base our thesis on this topic. Consequently, we began our search for a contact person actively involved in this field. Due to our late start, the process became quite stressful, as many of the people we reached out to either did not respond or refused to help. Despite the challenges, we eventually succeeded in finding an enthusiastic contact person who was eager to be part of this project, and *Mexico* became our chosen destination. Since none of us had been to Mexico before, we were filled with enthusiasm, seeing it as a chance to make a positive impact.



As Swedish passport holders, we were fortunate not to need a visa for stays of less than 180 days. There were no mandatory vaccines, but a few recommendations. However, it is important to keep in mind that certain vaccines may consist of multiple doses, so it is best not to delay checking the recommendations until the last week. Regarding the **language**, it was crucial to have prior knowledge of **Spanish** before departure since English is not widely spoken throughout Mexico in general. Fortunately, Samantha had a background in Spanish, which proved to be beneficial during our time in Mexico. On the other hand, Katie needed to familiarize herself with the basics of the Spanish language. **Tips**: YouTube videos and talking to children were valuable in the language-learning journey.

Upon arrival

Our research involved conducting interviews with primary school children and teachers in the rural areas of the *Guanajuato* region. Following a discussion with our contact person, we concluded that *León* was the ideal city for us to reside in with regards to both safety and proximity. Prior to arriving in León, we took the opportunity to visit *Tulum* and spent a few days there as we had heard a lot about it and always wanted to explore the place. Following our small ‘vacation’ in Tulum, we conducted our field study in León for a duration of 8 weeks, starting from the beginning of March and ending at the beginning of May. During this period, we got to meet our contact person, share insights, gather needed data and analyze the results.

Financials

In general, the cost of living in Mexico was considerably lower compared to Sweden. Everyday expenses such as food, Uber rides, and accommodation were notably cheaper. However, this cost difference did not apply to tourist destinations like Tulum, where prices were higher due to the tourist influx. On the other hand, the flight prices were expensive, which can be attributed to the inflation and high fuel prices during that time. Overall, the stipend was sufficient to cover the flight and rental expenses, taking into consideration that we were three people renting the same apartment. However, if you plan to explore the country and engage in various activities like we did, it is advisable to save some money beforehand.

Accommodation

Safety, security and location were crucial factors we prioritized when searching for an apartment. As mentioned before, León was preferable when it comes to these aspects. We managed to find a very nice Airbnb in a guarded residence that was quite close to the city center. In total we paid about 8000 SEK per person for the whole stay.



Project

Our project revolved around interaction design, with the primary objective of establishing a digital framework for EdTech Learning, focusing on primary schools in Mexican rural areas. The project was carried out in two schools within the Guanajuato region. One of these schools had access to digital tools in classrooms, while the other school lacked any digital resources. Throughout our stay, we conducted observation sessions and interviews with children, teachers and principals in both schools. However, this part of the project took longer than expected due to the numerous holidays the schools had, including Easter and other national holidays which was our biggest obstacle.

Since the schools were located in rural areas where options like Uber or taxis were not readily available, we had to arrange for a personal driver who stayed with us during our visits to the schools.

Country

Mexico is a country brimming with cultural richness, especially when it comes to its cuisine, festivities, and traditions.



Our Easter experience there was truly exceptional as the entire week, known as Santa Semana, was filled with different celebrations, including captivating parades and religious ceremonies, some of which we captured in the pictures. The generosity and openness of the Mexican people were truly heartwarming, as they welcomed us with genuine hospitality.

During our stay, we enjoyed a variety of tasty dishes, including the famous Tamales, Chilaquiles, Sopes and Enchiladas. Among all the delicious options, the Chorizo and Arrachera tacos stood out as our personal favorite. For an authentic taste of Mexico's unique flavors, we highly recommend trying the delightful local beverages, Pulque and Mezcal.

Our time in Mexico left us with cherished memories and a deep appreciation for the country's abundant cultural tapestry.



Leisure and social activities

As we both love to travel, we made the most of our weekends in Mexico by visiting neighboring cities like *Guanajuato city* (shown in the picture) and *San Miguel de Allende*. We also ventured to Mexico City to explore the capital's vibrant culture and landmarks.

On weekdays, our focus was on the project and completing assignments for other courses. Evenings were well-spent either wandering through the city center or visiting the shopping mall. To prioritize safety, we opted to avoid going out during nighttime hours.

Sustainability

Living sustainably in Mexico presented challenges, especially due to our reliance on Uber for transportation and the need for a personal driver to commute to and from the schools. These schools were located in remote rural areas, inaccessible by common public transport. However, we prioritized safety in making these transportation choices, ensuring a safe and protected experience during our stay.

The results of our investigation and the framework we developed primarily aimed to contribute to the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, ***Quality Education***. Additionally, our efforts also aligned with goal 10, ***Reduced Inequality***, as enhancing quality education contributes in turn to reduced inequality since education enables upward socioeconomic mobility, ensures equal opportunities and is essential to escape poverty.

Other recommendations

- Start brainstorming the project idea and actively searching for a suitable contact person well in advance to avoid all the stress and frustration we went through.
- Booking.com serves as an excellent platform for reserving taxis beforehand to and from airports
- Given Mexico's hot climate, ensuring sun protection by using sunscreen and staying well-hydrated is essential for a safe and enjoyable experience.
- Before traveling to a Spanish-speaking country, it is highly beneficial to learn and practice Spanish as much as possible. This will enhance your communication skills and make your travel experience more enjoyable and immersive.