

**MFS REPORT****Name**

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Year and term for exchange

Spring 2023 (February – April) 2023

Country for the project

Guanajuato, Mexico

Degree programme

Industrial Engineering and Management, specialisation in Computer Science

A Minor Field Study Based on Interaction Design Principles in Mexico

Before departure

One of the things that attracted me to KTH was the opportunity to study abroad. Ever since attending a lunch seminar about Minor Field Studies, I've known that it is something I want to do! We decided early that we wanted to do our thesis research within the field of interaction design. We then decided that we wanted to focus on the school environment and educational tools. For a while, we had a tough time finding a suitable project and we thought that we would not reach the set deadline for the project plan. But one week before the deadline we found an organization in Mexico that was interested in being a part of our project and in late February we flew to Mexico to start our field studies.

I think I went into this adventure with no expectations really, I was ready for anything and everything. In preparation for this trip, I decided to brush up on my Spanish skills and I took the B1 course in Spanish at KTH the term before leaving. I would recommend anyone doing an MFS to learn a bit of the local languages (if you have the opportunity) since that can simplify the day-to-day activities. We did not need to apply for a visa which made the preparations for this trip fairly straightforward and there were no mandatory vaccinations, however I decided to take "dukoral" before the trip.

Upon arrival

We decided to arrive in Mexico about one week before the start of our project. In the first week, we decided to have a "mini vacation" in Tulum before heading to Leon, Guanajuato where we were conducting our project. We conducted our project for a bit more than eight weeks. However, we did not have access to the schools for two weeks because of Easter Break. The main part of the planning was done by us with the support of our contact person. The first week in Guanajuato was used to plan, decide, and get in contact with the chosen primary schools for our field study. Everyone was so helpful and eager and accommodating to us which made us feel so welcome!

Financials

The stipend fully covered the housing and flight costs! I would say that it generally is cheaper in Mexico compared to Sweden, but it also depends on which city you are in and the specific activities. For instance, in Tulum, which is a known tourist destination, I would say that the price levels are similar, if not even higher compared to Sweden. In Leon, Guanajuato where we were stationed, I would say the price levels are lower than Sweden's. I would say that the price of groceries was similar, however, transportation costs and restaurant visits tended to be cheaper. A tip would be to have some money saved up for unexpected situations and emergencies, such as hospital visits, etc.

Accommodation

Since our contact person did not live in Leon, Guanajuato, we had to solve the housing situation independently. Since Leon is not the most touristy place, the supply of different apartments was not the greatest. When looking for apartments we tried to look at three-bedroom apartments which limited the supply even more. Eventually, we found something that we were all happy with, which was located close to a shopping center we could walk to by foot and not too far away from the city center.

Looking back at the accommodation, I am very happy that we had a three-bedroom apartment since it allowed us to have our own bedrooms and own space. And at the same time, there were a lot of impressions during the day, especially from the school visits and it was nice to just have a space where you could breathe and just take it all in.

Project

Our project was titled “*Establishing a Digital Framework for EdTech Learning for Primary Schools in the Rural Parts of the Guanajuato Region, Mexico*”. Our project would not have come to reality without the help of the organization we collaborated with. The organization we collaborated with does many amazing things in their mission to give children access to quality education around the world. One way they are doing this is by providing tablets to schools in need of them. The tablets had different educational programs installed on them. Our project analyses the applications from a user-centered perspective with the help of user tests with students from two primary schools, one which has access to the tablets provided by the foundation and another which did not. The findings from the user tests and interviews with different personnel at the different primary schools allowed us to create this bachelor's thesis!

Our days varied, we either worked from home analyzing the data and preparing for user tests and interviews etc. But the days we visited the schools, we were at the schools from 8 o'clock until noon since their school days end at that time. During the school visits, we visited their classes, did the user tests, conducted the interviews but most importantly had fun jumping ropes and playing football with the children during their breaks. Since both schools were in the rural parts of Leon, we needed to have a private driver who could drive us there and our contact person helped us set it up. Our contact person has been so supportive throughout this whole process and without her help, none of this would have been possible.

Country

I had never been to Mexico before this, so obviously I did not know what to expect. Mexico is a big country with a rich history and very diverse in so many ways. Just traveling between different cities, I had the opportunity to experience and see so many different new things. Everyone we met was so friendly and eager to hear about our project. We had the privilege to meet some amazing people who have become friends for life and they made this whole adventure even better than I could have imagined.

I would say that there were some culture shocks (both expected and unexpected) when we first arrived, but I feel like I could manage through them and still have an amazing trip. I remember the first days on the trip, feeling exhausted because my brain had been going on full speed all day speaking Spanish with everyone in the schools, which was a shock for the system at first but towards the end it came a lot more naturally!

Leisure and social activities

During our free time, we indulged in the culture. We were mainly stationed in Leon, Guanajuato which is not known for having a lot of other international. In Leon, we for instance went and watched the local football team twice which was so fun! We also decided to travel to Mexico City, Guanajuato City, and San Miguel de Allende and every location offered something new and unique. In Mexico City, we explored different museums such as *Chapultepec* and *Soumaya* but also indulged in the locals' favorite “*lucha libre*” which is some kind of wrestling. We were also in Guanajuato City during Easter, referred to as *Semana Samanta* and we had the opportunity to witness how they celebrate that holiday. We had the opportunity to do so many different activities and fun things during our free time and I recommend anyone doing a field trip to use this opportunity and explore everything to the fullest since you do not know when you will receive the opportunity to travel again.

Sustainability

We tried to live as sustainably as possible. However, I would say that you are very dependent on a car in Mexico. As mentioned, before we needed to take a cab to the schools when we visited because of the far distance and because of them being in rural areas where busses were not as accessible. When traveling within the country we used buses and whenever we had the opportunity, we tried to ride using public transport.

Our project mainly targeted the following sustainable development goals: *Goal 4 – Quality Education and Goal 10 – Reduced Inequality*.

Other recommendations and observations

I am happy I took the opportunity and did a Minor Field Study. If you are doubting whether you should apply or not, JUST DO IT! It was an incredible opportunity and I learned so much about myself at the time but also about other cultures.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at:

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