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COVID-19: Lessons Learned in the Field of Education and Human Behaviour Management

Professor Venelin Georgiev*

Abstract

Crises pose a challenge to humanity, but also open up new opportunities for its development. The statement is true for the COVID-19 crisis, which brought challenges and problems, and brought to the fore the need to resolve them and make adequate changes. This brief shows how the lack of theoretical support for decisions during a crisis leads to a deepening of the crisis situation. The main findings are in the direction of confirming the role of lessons learned as a crisis management tool.

Introduction

Undoubtedly, a major factor shaping the environment in terms of political, economic, financial and health security in 2020 has been, and continues to be the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategies and policies of countries in Europe and around the world have been undermined by a stressor in the form of coronavirus, the intensity and characteristics of which have caused crises and necessitated

the search for urgent and innovative solutions in various areas of public life, including education and human behavior management. Not all decisions taken in conditions of limited time, highly dynamic situations and low level of trust in the actions for crisis management proved to be sufficiently effective and leading to solving the problems with mastering the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, these decisions and their results have made it possible to formulate lessons learned in practice to make countries more resilient and prepared for future crises.

Lessons learned in the field of human behaviour management

In general, the analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the state of public life should be sufficient, large-scaled and comprehensive. At the same time, it is possible that attention be focused on individual areas, which allows detailing the influence of individual factors and specifying the lessons from practice. Two of the areas of social life that are significant enough to be the subject of research are human behavior management and education during a crisis.

* Venelin Georgiev is a Professor at the New Bulgarian University. All the opinions expressed in this briefing are the sole view of the author, and do not represent the position of the New Bulgarian University nor of the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA).

Effective management during a crisis is a function of several factors, among which the management of human behavior plays a significant role. On the one hand, good governance allows a chosen course of action to be pursued, and to achieve the goals of which all citizens contribute, having the model of behavior desired by crisis managers. On the other hand, weaknesses in the management of people's behavior increase the intensity of the crisis and reduce confidence in the chosen course of action.

Good management of human behavior during the COVID-19 crisis required the application of adequate behavioral motivators, structured in a three-level model. A first-level motivator is the public's awareness of the parameters of the crisis and the scenarios for overcoming it. The better informed people are and the more they trust the decisions and actions of crisis managers, the more they tend to follow the pattern of behavior they demand.

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Awareness as a motivator for behavior is characterized by the passive behavior of the managed subjects, which makes this motivator low effective. At the same level are motivators such as orders, punishments, rewards, etc. The practical application of the latter requires precise consideration of the characteristics of the subjects to whom the respective motivators are applied. Behavioral motivators, which are at the second level of the model, are

focused on building an adequate organizational culture.

The cognitive, behavioral and emotional components of organizational culture are the tools that help people understand the decisions for coping with the crisis and take an active position in implementing these decisions. At the third level of the model there are motivators oriented to the results of people's behavior, i.e. the desired pattern of behavior is achieved by focusing on the results of citizens' actions. In this case, motivators use the power of attribution theory and the balance of consequences.

Examples of insufficiently effective management of human behavior during the COVID-19 crisis include:

- When creating official information on the condition and measures to deal with the coronavirus, the preferences were focused on so-called "Good practices" rather than the use of metrics to extract and interpret data. Where metrics were used, they were not always appropriate and did not carry useful information.
- The efforts of the National Operational Headquarters at some point were subordinated to the elimination of all risks arising from the crisis situation, which is neither possible nor recommended.
- The orders issued by the National Operational Headquarters were not well considered and the validity of some of them was measured in hours, after which they were revoked. The control over the execution of the orders was not adequate enough and they did not have a desired effect on the modeling of the behavior of the persons to whom they were addressed.
- The patterns of behavior and strategies recommended by one group of experts contradicted the patterns of behavior and strategies recommended by another group of experts.

Based on the above examples, the mistakes that have been made in the management of human behavior during the COVID-19 crisis can be pointed out:

- At the first level: public awareness was not always at the necessary level, information sources often contradicted one another, and in most cases relied on aberrations rather than scientifically proven expertise. There were also cases of fake news, and even misinformation;
- At the second level: the society's need for knowledge to shape the desired behavior, remained unsatisfied in most cases. The imposed behavioral norms were often changed, which made it difficult for people to understand and follow them. The power of personal example was not used. Emotionally, the main focus was on building a sense of fear, insecurity, even panic and helplessness;
- At the third level: in practice, the use of the power of attribution and the balance of consequences was absent from the arsenal of motivators with which the crisis managers influenced people's behavior.

Based on the analysis of these weaknesses, the following lessons can be derived, and recommendations for the National Operational Headquarters regarding human behavior management in crisis conditions can be made:

- The approach to managing human behavior in a crisis must be sufficiently complex and appropriate to the characteristics of both the factors that caused the crisis and the actors whose behavior is to be managed;
- The behavioral motivators used must turn people from passive observers into active participants in the process of counteracting threats in the crisis situation;
- The scientific support of policies, strategies and solutions in times of crisis is without alternative and provides on the one hand efficiency and rationality of actions, and on the other hand the trust of people and their

readiness to follow the required model of behaviour.

Lessons learned in the field of education

In the field of education, the coronavirus crisis has necessitated an immediate, sufficiently radical and technology-based reform to ensure the continuity of the learning process at the various levels of the system. As an example, universities have introduced distance learning, using tools such as e-learning materials (lectures, presentations, textbooks, tests, etc.) and virtual classrooms. The lack of experience in conducting distance learning has led to some weaknesses. The most significant of them was the lack of a uniform standard for distance learning and the empowerment of teachers to choose which forms of teaching to apply. From a study conducted by the author, it is clear that those forms of distance learning that students rate as the most effective (as an example, virtual classrooms) have the lowest frequency of use by teachers. The opposite was also true (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the results of evaluating the usefulness of distance learning tools

assessment of the frequency of use by teachers (on a scale from 1 to 6)	distance learning tool	assessment of the degree of usefulness given by the students (on a scale from 1 to 6)
4,3	presentations on the lecture material, available through the distance learning platform	2,6
1,0	virtual classrooms accessible through the distance learning platform	5,4

Based on the analysis of the admitted weaknesses in the organization of distance learning in universities, the following lessons from the practice have been formulated:

- Distance learning will occupy an increasingly important place in the practical work of teachers and students, which requires continuous improvement of its effectiveness through the use of modern information and communication technologies;

- The provision of quality distance learning requires the introduction of a "gold standard" that specifies the minimum set of learning tools to be used by both teachers and students. Mandatory components of the standard are e-textbooks, virtual classrooms, e-lectures and tests available through distance learning platforms.
- Developing strategies for the integration of distance and e-learning in the general model of education and teacher training plans and facilities to ensure this integration with sufficient sustainability and success.

Conclusion

Mankind's history proves that societies periodically go through crises of different natures and intensities. Undoubtedly, they challenge our ability to deal with crisis situations, which lead to undesirable consequences. At the same time, crises open up new opportunities to increase resilience and people's readiness to meet new challenges. Lessons learned create an opportunity for self-learning. The COVID-19 crisis has created extreme situations in terms of managing human behavior and the education system, but it has also provided opportunities for formulated lessons that are useful both today and in the future.

List of further readings

[Georgiev, Venelin. *Evaluating the Utility of Distance Learning Forms during the Covid-19 Pandemic*](#) In *IT4Sec Reports.*, 2020. <https://it4sec.org/article/evaluating-utility-distance-learning-forms-during-covid-19-pandemic> <http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/it4sec.0137> ISSN 1314-5622

[Georgiev, Venelin. *How People's Behaviour Was Motivated during the Covid-19 Emergency Situation*](#) In *CSDM Views.*, 2020. <https://it4sec.org/article/how-peoples-behaviour-was-motivated-during-covid-19-emergency-situation> ISSN 1314-5622

[Georgiev, Venelin. *Levels of Cybersecurity Training and Education*](#) In *IT4Sec Reports.* Sofia: Institute of Information and Communication Technologies, 2015. <https://it4sec.org/article/levels-cybersecurity-training-and-education> <http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/it4sec.0117> ISSN 1314-5622

Georgiev Venelin. *The human factor in cybersecurity.* Sofia, Avangard, 2020



Trans European Policy Studies
Association

Rue d'Egmont 11, B-1000
Brussels, Belgium

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New Bulgarian
University

21 Montevideo Str., 1618
Sofia, Bulgaria

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