

HAS ONLINE LEARNING CHANGED THE WAY WE STUDY? STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS DURING THE FIRST COVID-19 PERIOD AND POTENTIAL CHANGE IN THEIR LEARNING HABITS

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Abstract: At the beginning of 2020, few people could imagine that the new coronavirus, COVID-19, would impact that many aspects of our lives and change the content, structure, and teaching methods we knew before. Many language teachers (LT) worldwide who had been effectively implementing face-to-face instruction had to make an abrupt transition to online education, something they were not trained for or had experience with. The present study aims to discover whether LT successfully delivered online instruction and whether online teaching during the first online period impacted students' learning habits. Using a specifically designed questionnaire, students who study at several public universities from Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), and Türkiye (TUR) were asked to evaluate their teachers' professional adaptation and success during the first "emergency online teaching semester", and to reflect on their learning habits during this period and the changes they personally experienced. The results of the study revealed that students in the three countries approached and evaluated their teachers' pedagogical skills as appropriate for online teaching in the first COVID-19 period in remarkably similar ways. However, the impact on students' learning habits is, to a certain extent, different in these countries. The findings of the study might provide relevant input to rethink the teaching profession in terms of competencies, means of instruction, and strategies for coping with processes that affect teaching. Education will not be the same in a post-pandemic world, we must use the knowledge we have gained, and the suggestions made by our students to enhance our educational systems.

Keywords: online teaching, teachers' digital skills, COVID-19, student evaluations, learning habits

1. Introduction

In March 2020, no one knew that the COVID-19 outbreak would affect almost all aspects of our lives, and that it would have such a significant impact on education. Many language teachers (LT) around the world who had been effectively implementing face-to-face instruction had to make an abrupt transition to online education, something they were not educated about or had experience with.

It is believed that 1.6 billion students were affected by partial or complete school closures, and their teachers were faced with great challenges in their careers (Gouédard et al., 2020). Some of the technology standards for LT (Healey et al., 2011) and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) had already been established, but LT varied in their competencies of technology adoption. Their awareness, confidence, learning, creative application and adaptation to new contexts differed (Knezek & Christansen, 2008). However, because of COVID-19, LT had to change their teaching methods, materials, and classroom interactions within weeks.

During COVID-19, teaching online and engaging in sudden remote teaching presented distinctive obstacles to everyone involved in the process, from learners to teachers, parents and educational institutions. Despite engaging in techniques that would generally assist online language learning, language instructors' perceptions of remote teaching during COVID-19 were, to a certain extent, different in our three countries¹. Teachers were forced to instantly modify the curriculum, provide opportunities for engagement, and provide learning experiences in an online context and, at the same time, take into consideration learning outcomes that are important for their students. In the coming months and years, teachers will almost certainly be required to deliver remote instruction as the need for hybrid, blended and online courses is more on demand. Therefore, teachers will require tools and assistance to do so in ways that actually ensure better student results.

In order to make this transition smooth, it is necessary to study the effects of the COVID-19 period on education as it can provide helpful insight for future modifications of education. The essential question is whether language teachers were successful in adapting to the online teaching environment. Answering this question is crucial since the new developments in the organisation of education triggered the need to rethink the teaching profession in terms of competencies, means of instruction, and strategies for coping with processes that affect teaching.

The second question is: "How has this period affected students' study habits?" All students regardless of their previous preferences and field of study,

¹ Policy documents introducing and justifying the emergency online learning in the three countries were discussed in detail in Miloshevska et al. (2020).

had to switch to online learning. They also had to adapt their study habits to a lesser or greater extent. Their feedback on experienced changes in learning habits can be valuable for all parties that participate in creating education policies.

Aiming to contribute to this strand of research and following studies (Rafiee & Abbasian-Naghneh, 2021) showing that LT, students and infrastructure are all essential for the successful use of online tools, the present study strives to answer the following research questions:

(1) How do university students evaluate the pedagogical skills of their teachers during the first COVID-19 period?

(2) What positive and negative changes did students report/notice in their study habits during the first COVID-19 period?

2. Literature review of students' evaluation of teaching

Students' evaluation of teachers (SET) is a standard practice in almost all Higher Education Institutions. In many contexts, students' evaluations of teachers are required by the laws that regulate higher education institutes. In some contexts, they are one of the essential criteria that reviewers consider when promoting faculty staff to higher academic titles. Furthermore, in some countries, it is the only measure of teachers' performance as peer evaluation or self-assessment are not considered². SET has been analysed for decades - since 1920 (Addison & Stowell, 2012), and earlier studies emphasised the strong relationship between SET and teaching effectiveness (Cohen, 1981). Recent studies on the role of SET address local situations in various educational and cultural contexts and confirm that "SET as a feedback for teacher's use and a measure of students satisfaction is not problematic" (Sánchez et al. 2021: 9, see also Spooren et al., 2013; Uttl et al., 2017). Some studies indicate statistically significant correlations between SET and teaching effectiveness (Sánchez et al. 2021) but not as strong as it was claimed before (Uttl et al. 2017). Barnes and Lock (2013), in their study on student perceptions of effective foreign language teachers, point out that SET usually consists of anonymous evaluations referring to a specific course and an instructor. They further claim that "investigations that provide aggregated data into student perceptions of effective teachers" are required to provide pre-service teachers with "student perceptions in different contexts" (2013: 20). Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer (2003) focus on the reliability of SET as it is assumed that the results might be biased due to students' interest in the subject, grades, etc. However, they further claim that "the students' liking for their teachers might not be a mere bias of students' global ratings but might even be a result of good teaching and therefore should have an influence on students' global ratings" (Greimel-Fuhrmann & Geyer, 2003:

² Cf. Greenwood and Ramagli (1980)

231). Suárez et al. (2022), in their study on students' perceptions of SET and their relationship to SET scores at the Technological Indoamerica University in Ecuador, also confirmed the importance of SET and students' belief that it could improve teaching practices. Moreover, Antoci et al. (2021: 327) point out that "constructive feedback from student evaluations seems to be helpful in improving teachers' performance" as both students and teachers should strive towards the same goal, i.e. high-quality teaching environment.

At the end, it is worth mentioning that the analysis of SET data falls into a broad trend of quality measurement in many public and private service providers, e.g. health services (Williams, 1994), telecommunications, and banking, among others. Depending on the sector, client, customer, user satisfaction is considered an indicator of quality. In all situations, non-professional recipients/users of the services evaluate the professionalism of the providers.

3. Literature review of teaching in the post-Covid era

There is a lot that we still do not know about COVID-19 and how it will affect education in the long run. What is known is that the experience we gained during this stressful period should serve as a guideline for course designers, universities and other relevant bodies in charge of national education policies. Walwyn (2020) believes that rethinking teaching practices, developing techniques that enhance learning without the need for lectures, deepening professional practice, and changing how we train teachers are all necessary. Berry (2020: 17) claims that in post COVID era, the goals should be the following:

- Every student now has access to the internet.
- Personalised education has become the standard.
- Universities and school districts pool their resources, people, and programs to improve students' college and career readiness, as well as their long-term prospects.
- At a large scale, authentic performance evaluations are being utilised to redefine accountability and change the way students and schools are measured.
- Through affinity networks and partnerships with university faculty and students, pre K-12 teachers direct their own professional learning.
- Educators and other helping professionals collaborate to solve the difficulties they encounter and to find new solutions.

These suggestions are in line with the arguments presented by Suryana et al. (2021: 68), who claim that teachers should focus on "learning media that are effective for use in distance online learning during the New Normal Post-Covid-19 era". They further argue that policymakers should coordinate all parties

involved in the teaching and learning process to modify learning activities in this Post-Covid-19 era.

4. Online learning before the pandemic in Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Türkiye³

The study does not intend to discuss the differences between e-education and distance education, but it is important to point out that very often, the terms e-education, distance education and online education are used as synonyms. However, e-learning is not necessarily used in the context of distance learning, as the tutor and students can be in the same classroom. In distance education, the tutor and students are spatially distant and use information and communication technology or some other ways of exchanging information in the educational process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of North Macedonia are former Yugoslav republics and therefore share the same history of distance education in Yugoslavia. The first steps of distance education in Yugoslavia appeared between the two world wars and were focused on acquiring general, verified education and vocational training (Pongranc, 1972). After the Second World War, the Communist Party initiated an urgent, massive education of citizens aiming to educate engineers, teachers, doctors and other professionals whose job was to rebuild the destroyed country. Various centres for distance education were established in all parts of the country and continued their activities after this emergency education period (Ogrizović, 1988).

Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, online learning was not widely present at universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although laws on higher education recognise this type of teaching. The Faculty of Information Technology, Džemal Bijedić University in Mostar, is the institution that first introduced a distance online learning system in Bosnia and Herzegovina almost twenty years ago. This institution implements its academic programs using both in-class teaching and the distance online learning system. The distance online learning system developed at this faculty can be applied to other faculties and educational institutions. It is important to highlight that from the very beginning, their system has also included video conferences to create proper synchronous lectures and seminars (Memić Fišić & Delibegović Džanić, 2020). At the University of Tuzla, before the outbreak of the pandemic, only one study program was organised as a distance learning program with synchronous teaching tools, while in other programs, this system was used as complementary to in-class teaching for individual courses or guest lectures. At the University of Bihać, a distance online learning system was also utilised as complementary in some courses.

³ Cf. Miloshevska et al. (2020)

In North Macedonia, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, online learning was not part of the country's programs offered in higher education institutions. The Law on higher education did not recognise online education as a valid model. However, the Ministry of Education and Science acknowledges the importance of using ICT tools at all levels of education and this recognition is reflected in a number of governmental attempts to modernise and digitalise education. One of the latest documents in that regard is the strategy for education 2018-2025 and the action plan⁴. Before the pandemic, a widely used distance learning tool in North Macedonia was Moodle, an open-source software that operates on different platforms and supports distance learning. Almost all higher education institutions in North Macedonia, both state and private, have been using Moodle for more than fifteen years. However, Moodle has been used to support in-class courses, not as separate distance learning courses.

Distance education before the pandemic had a long history in Türkiye. The idea was first introduced in 1927 when solutions were sought for the low literacy rate among the country's population (Alkan, 1987: 91). However, the first application started in the 1950s, when the Ministry of National Education (MONE) established the Centre for Educative Films, where educational films were produced and distributed around the county (Geray, 2007). The first example of distance education at the university level was a correspondence course initiated by the Institute of Banking and Commerce and the Faculty of Law at Ankara University. The course was organized for bank personnel (Karayalçın, 1959). The theoretical education was provided with the lecture notes in form of letters sent to the personnel. Additional practices were carried out later in coordination with the advisors from Ankara University. This system continued to grow, and in 1970 MONE first started the open High School educational programs, and in 1975, the higher education programs by correspondence.

The efforts to widen distance education in Türkiye intensified after 1980 when a new constitution was introduced, and a new authority - the Higher Education Council (HEC) – responsible for regulating all higher education in Türkiye was founded (Hatipoğlu, 2017; Hatipoğlu & Erçetin, 2016). At that time (in 1981), there were 27 universities in Türkiye, and they were able to accommodate only 5.9% of the university applicants (Şimşek, 1999). To educate a bigger number of students for a lower cost, a law was passed, allowing universities to open distance education programs. The first institution to take the initiative was Anadolu University (AU), where the distance learning Management and Economics programs were opened in 1982⁵. These programs

⁴<http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-MAK-WEB.pdf>.

⁵ <https://www.anadolu.edu.tr/en/aboutanadolu/institutional/anadolu-at-a-glance>).

have become really successful, and now, AU has three faculties with over 2 million students where all of the education is done online⁶.

To share the load of AU, in 2009, Atatürk University and Istanbul University also established distance education centers. Atatürk University launched its Distance Education Application and Research Centre⁷ with a single program which was later extended. Istanbul University started with distance education and continued with fully-fledged open education programs in the Open and Distance Education Faculty (AUZEF)⁸.

Another institution that provides web-based distance education to students around the country via its Distance Education Centre is Middle East Technical University (METU). At the university, various courses were already taught online before the pandemic. For all other courses that were not taught online, in the last 15 years, lecturers have been using METU CLASS, an LMS system developed by METU. Lecturers were required to upload course outlines and all other course materials on the platform so that all students taking the course had access to them.

5. Method

This section is divided in three subsections. It discusses in detail the process of data collection and data analysis. It also provides a thorough analysis of participants in this study.

5.1. Participants

A total of 341 (130 M, 206 F, 5 not given) university students from public universities in the three countries participated in this study, B&H ($n = 109$), RNM ($n = 86$) and TUR ($n = 146$). The sample has characteristics of convenience sampling. The age range of the informants was 18-41 ($M = 21.33$; $SD = 2.44$; $Mdn = 21$). In relation to chronological age, a statistically significant difference was found in relation to the country the students come from ($MB\&H = 21.30$, $MRNM = 20.44$, $MTR = 21.88$; $F = 9.91$; $p < .001$; $\omega^2 = .05$), and the magnitude of the difference (effect size) is small. The difference arose because students from TUR were, on average, slightly older than students from B&H and RNM.

Participants from TUR and B&H were pre-service language teachers, while the participants from RNM were future information technology and computer science engineers learning English for specific purposes. Our study's higher number of female participants reflected the gender distribution at the Faculties of Education in TUR and B&H (Can Daşkın & Hatipoğlu, 2019).

⁶ <https://www.anadolu.edu.tr/en/openeducation/openeducationsystem/about>

⁷ <https://atauzem.atauni.edu.tr/s/atauzem-hakkinda>

⁸ <https://auzef.istanbul.edu.tr/tr/content/fakultemiz/hakkinda>

5.2. Data Collection

After this project obtained Ethics Approval, the data were collected in B&H, RNM and TUR using an online questionnaire in English specifically developed for this study. In B&H, the data were collected from three public Universities, in RNM from two and in TUR from six universities located in different parts of the country.

The questionnaire comprised of "Part A: Background" and "Part B: Evaluation". Part A included checkbox questions eliciting information about the participants in the study (e.g., age, gender, university year), while Part B consisted of both Likert scale and open-ended questions. The four Likert scale questions (19 items) in Part B aimed to uncover students' assessment of their instructors' computer literacy, teaching, roles and interaction skills during the emergency COVID-19 period. For this evaluation, students were asked to use the specific definitions of teachers' roles and the criteria for evaluation (see the lists in Q3 and Q4). On the other hand, the open-ended questions were designed to elicit students' evaluation of potential changes in their study habits due to the shift in the mode of education (i.e., from face-to-face to online). Students' questionnaire submissions were anonymous to secure a safe environment for the respondents. The importance of anonymity was highlighted in some previous studies where students explicitly indicated that in questionnaires that were not anonymous, they did not provide honest answers due to fear of being identified (García, 2014; Suárez et al., 2022).

5.3. Data Analysis

Responses to the questionnaires were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, utilising suitable techniques to classify and compare the different data sets. Various descriptors (e.g., frequencies, percentages, rank orders, chi-squared test, Cramer's V Correlation Coefficient) were utilised to analyse the quantitative data so that the relationships between the different examined variables could be identified. The qualitative data gathered via open-ended questions were analysed thematically, considering country and context-specific variables.

6. Results and discussion

In this section, we will discuss the responses to five questions in our questionnaire that assess teachers' pedagogical skills during the first COVID-19 period relevant to their computer literacy, online teaching skills, expected teachers' roles and also positive and negative changes in students' study habits.

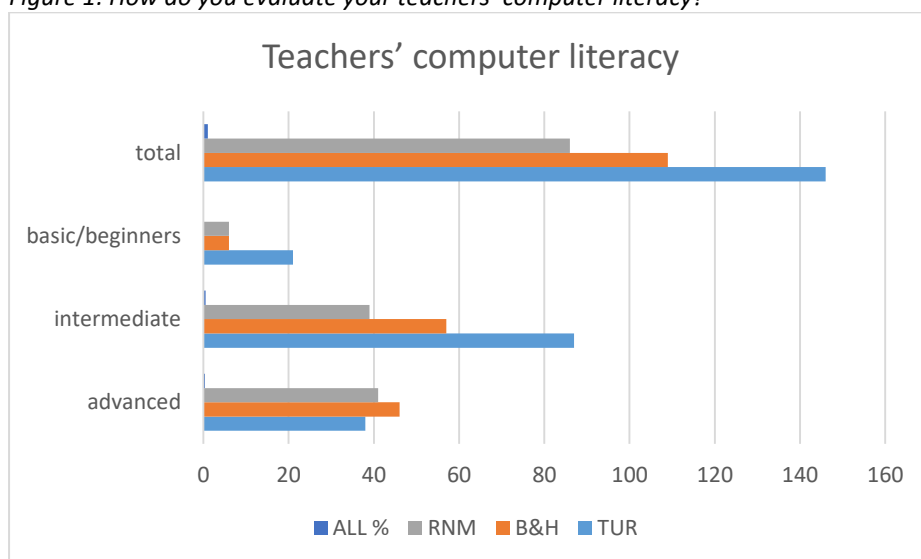
Q1. How do you evaluate your teachers' computer literacy?

Q1-related results show that, despite some numerical differences, students in the examined countries evaluated their teachers' computer literacy similarly.

Only a marginal number of students reported that the teachers' IT literacy was "at the beginner level", the frequency of "intermediate level" evaluations

among the three groups of students ranged between 39% and 87%, while the mean percentage was $M=53.67\%$, in addition on average, more than a third of the students perceived the teacher's competence as advanced (for the entire sample $M=36, 66$). At the level of the entire sample, a statistically significant ($\chi^2(4, n = 341) = 16.314, p = .002, V = .155$) preference for positive teacher evaluation was detected (Figure 1). This is an interesting finding because regardless of LT's background and/or previous knowledge, they were evaluated as competent users of the new technology required for the successful delivery of online classes by their students⁹. Teachers were forced to quickly assess, adapt and integrate different digital platforms into their teaching¹⁰. This process required simultaneous modification of English language teaching materials designed primarily for in-class use.

Figure 1: How do you evaluate your teachers' computer literacy?



Q2. How do you rate your teachers' online teaching skills?

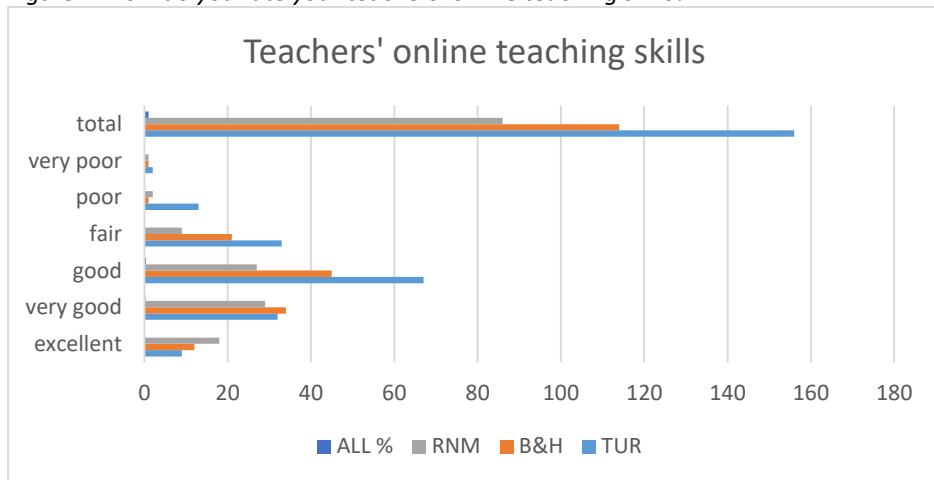
At the level of the whole sample, on average, the students positively evaluated their teachers' online teaching abilities. About two-thirds of the students rated the teachers' competence as "good" or "very good" ($M=65.73\%$),

⁹ This is in line with the study in B&H by Delibegović Džanić and Hasanspahić (2020) conducted before the outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic in which they claim that teachers who participated in their survey were highly motivated to use CALL in their classes and that "CALL could serve to all teachers as an extension of the traditional in-class work and the long-sought after opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge in a fun and authentic way".

¹⁰ Cf. Li (2021), Priyadarshini & Bhaumik (2020).

while on average every tenth evaluation belongs to the "excellent" category (Figure 2). Predominantly positive evaluations are in line with the previously registered students' perception of teacher literacy. Observed on the dimension of the entire sample, a statistically significant ($\chi^2(8, n = 341) = 29.6, p < .001, V = .203$) preference was detected as a positive evaluation of teachers' online teaching abilities. When testing, the difference in the distribution of answers was reduced in such a way that the answers "poor" and "very poor" were aggregated in order to reduce the probability of the type I error (McBurney & White, 2013; Murphy et al., 2014). It could be argued that LT were successful in online teaching because they had good computer literacy skills and applied them while teaching online. This was a very demanding task as teachers had to adapt courses designed for face-to-face teaching or blended courses to completely online ones (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

Figure 2: How do you rate your teachers' online teaching skills?



Question 3: How would you rate your teachers' roles when you compare face-to-face teaching with online teaching?

Question 3 asked participants to rate the roles LT played during the first online period and indicate the extent to which these roles differed from in-class teaching. Students were given ten categories and asked to rate the roles on a scale of 1 (completely different), 2 (somewhat different), 3 (somewhat the same) and 4 (exactly the same).

The list below shows that students, who have been provided with the specific definitions of ten teacher roles, predominantly believed that the teachers' roles in online teaching were either somewhat the same or exactly the same as the ones in face-to-face teaching:

-
- (a) A role model in the use of digital tools for learning=65.61%
 - (b) Advisor = 77.71%
 - (c) Assessor = 78.60%
 - (d) Facilitator = 74.5%
 - (e) Feedback provider = 74.4%
 - (f) Manager of class = 65.7%
 - (g) Material provider = 76.3%
 - (h) Motivator = 54.7%
 - (i) Organiser of learning = 70.1%
 - (j) Supporter = 70.7%
-

These results might lead to the conclusion that teachers successfully played the roles they typically perform in class in the new teaching environment despite the abrupt shift and lack of preparation (See Appendix A for a detailed presentation of results at the country level). The findings support a study conducted by UNICEF (2021) in RNM, which showed that 68% of the students rated positively the support they received from their teachers during the online period. The results of the study are in line with recent research on teachers' innovations in teaching (Hammond, 2022). She states that teachers around the world spearheaded efforts to link children and their families to schools online (and in other ways) during the crisis by providing access, sharing ideas with other teachers and parents, and forming partnerships. During the crisis, many teachers showed ingenuity by leading content development, facilitating capacity building as peer leaders, mentoring, and rapidly adopting and bringing about change in their classrooms.

Question 4: How would you evaluate your teachers' work during this online teaching period?

Question 4 was Likert scales with seven statements asking students to assess their teachers' performance from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The list below shows that all criteria were evaluated with "Agree" or "Strongly agree" by at least 56% of the students.

The instructors (are)

- (1) competent in online teaching (Agree & Strongly Agree= 56.3%)
 - (2) easy to reach (A&SA = 61.3%)
 - (3) effective in dealing with potential content difficulties (A&SA = 61.6%)
 - (4) encourage student participation during online classes (A&SA = 56.0%)
 - (5) regularly hold synchronous classes (A&SA = 60.7%)
 - (6) regularly send the necessary materials (A&SA = 82.4%)
 - (7) use effectively digital tools to support learning (A&SA = 65.4%)
-

The high positive evaluation of item (6) demonstrates that LT tried to compensate for the lack of face-to-face contact by regularly sending students

study materials. Also, 61.6% and 65.4% of the students stated that their teachers were effective in dealing with potential content difficulties and used the available digital tools to support students' learning (See Appendix B for a detailed presentation of results at the country level). These results parallel the findings of two reports published by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK, 2020, 2021) in TUR and by Rahić et al. (2021) in B&H¹¹. The reported students' reactions to the ad hoc online teaching and testing during the first COVID-19 period in these documents were also mainly positive. Students pointed out that their teachers rapidly accommodated/integrated into the new distance education system, and it was easier to reach them and the course materials. Jin et al. (2021:10) point out that "in a successful online learning system, the teachers' teaching evaluation and real-time response to interaction with students are indispensable elements for the success of online learning".

The results of our study are in line with a study conducted by Li et al. (2021) on online teaching practices carried out in universities during the Covid-19 epidemic in China. They pointed out that teachers' efforts were recognised and appreciated by their students as "the more sessions such as pre-class preparation, in-class discussion and quizzes, and after-class test in the teaching design, the better teaching effect can be expected" Li et al. (2021: 572).

Students' evaluations related to the remaining four criteria in our questionnaire varied between 56% and 61.3%. The lower positive evaluations for items (1), (2), (4) and (5) show that holding regular synchronous classes, being easy to reach and encouraging students to participate during online teaching were more challenging topics for the LT in the examined countries. 56.0% of the students claimed that their teachers encouraged participation during online classes, which is a significant number in these circumstances, as it is known that securing students' participation could be challenging in traditional in-class setting (Rocca 2010). Preparation of online classes is very demanding in all circumstances, let alone in this emergency teaching period that influenced almost all aspects of our lives. Li and Zhu (2021: 567) also highlight that "the online teaching method under the epidemic is not a simple "Internet +" teaching method, but represents the Internet-based support services and innovative elements, which reshape the traditional content, structure, processes and method of teaching and learning, and transforms the existing modes of educational organisation, services and teaching".

Question 5: Has online teaching changed the way you study?"

As various practices were established at universities during the pandemic due to different university policies or technical limitations, students had both synchronous and asynchronous lectures for different subjects within their study programs. This was a new and challenging experience for all students, but at the

¹¹ Cf. Donitsa-Schmidt, S., & Ramot, R. (2020).

same time, a chance to evaluate their own preferences when it comes to these two models of teaching and also to critically self-evaluate both positive and negative changes in studying habits.

It is believed that everyone involved in education has learned a lot during the last two years. We all remember those days when we could not get our internet connection to work so we could enrol in online classes. The epidemic has served as a wake-up call for institutions in terms of how to give high-quality online education. While most universities hope to return to pre-pandemic conditions by autumn 2022, many are also considering the positive lessons that might be learned from the online teaching period. The most significant change is likely to be in the amount of online instruction offered. Most universities want to employ a “hybrid model” which combines the flexibility of online lectures with more participatory in-person activities, including seminars, workshops, laboratories.

Table 1: Negative changes in study habits

| | | TUR | | B&H | | RNM | |
|----|--------------------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| N1 | Do not study anymore | 3 | 3.8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4.2 |
| N2 | Do not study regularly anymore | 26 | 32.9 | 5 | 11.9 | 1 | 4.2 |
| N3 | Study more but cannot finish | 20 | 25.3 | 10 | 23.8 | 8 | 33.3 |
| N4 | Changed study habits | 6 | 7.6 | 6 | 14.3 | 6 | 25 |
| N5 | Medium change | 13 | 16.5 | 5 | 11.9 | 1 | 4.2 |
| N6 | Lack of motivation | 9 | 11.4 | 15 | 37.5 | 4 | 16.7 |
| N7 | Affected health | 2 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.4 | 3 | 12.5 |
| | ALL | 79 | 100 | 42 | 100 | 24 | 100 |

Universities are still considering the ratio between online and face to face classes, as the public misperception that online teaching cannot be of the same quality as the in-class one has yet to be changed. Every teacher who was forced to replace their classroom with a virtual environment will confirm that preparing and producing online teaching materials takes substantially longer than in-class lectures and is more demanding.

We strongly believe that in order to create successful online courses in the post pandemic era, course developers should take into consideration students' experiences and their voices. In the questionnaire, we asked the students to share their both positive and negative experiences related to the online teaching period and whether online teaching changed the way they learn in both positive and negative respect.

Considering the negative changes in study habits, we can see that they differ in the three countries (see Table 1). In RNM, 33.3% of students stated that they studied more during the emergency COVID-19 period, but they still struggled to complete their assignments because of the extra homework given by their instructors and/or difficulties in following online lectures and tutorials (Example 3). The fact that professors were difficult to reach during that period presented another difficulty for the students. The most mentioned negative effect of the online period for the students in TUR was the change in their study habits/patterns. The university acceptance exam system in TUR is highly competitive, especially for public universities (see Hatipoğlu, 2013). To get into the English Language Teaching Departments, students go through a battery of difficult screening exams which require planned and systematic study habits. However, one-third of the TUR students (32.9%), as the one in Example 1, stated that they did not study regularly anymore, left “everything to the last minute” and did not have the energy and motivation to do any or much work (Example 2).

Example 1: TUR Student 6

I used to study more regularly and organised. Now I just try to catch up and study messily for the next course.

Example 2: TUR Student 8

I have become so unmotivated that I leave everything to the last minute and don't have the general energy to do any work.

Example 3: RNM Student 7

I have to put a lot more effort and attention since I find it very difficult to follow the lectures/tutorials. Much harder approach

An additional one fourth (25.3%) of the TUR students, similarly to the students in RNM, complained that they could not finish the assigned work even if they studied hard (Example 4). They stated that their workload was much higher with the new mode of teaching, and they were deprived of the system that they knew well and worked well for them (i.e., being able to work closely with their lecturers) (Example 5).

Example 4: TUR Student 20

I was studying regularly, but now, it is hard for me to focus on my homework not only because it is online, but also I have more course load than before. It is hard for me to catch up with all of the courses.

Example 5: RNM Student 24

has changed a lot because if we were in class the lessons would be more understandable.

Among the students from B&H, the most frequently cited negative change was ‘the lack of motivation’ (37.5%), but as can be seen in Table 1, some of the negative changes in the study habits of students are intertwined and, in some sense, interdependent (Example 6).

Example 6: B&H Student 67

I lost motivation because I was not able to participate via video due to not having free space all the time as I live with my family or having no internet connection or any other difficulties

The lack of motivation for B&H students, for instance, also influenced their study habits in the sense that they stopped studying regularly (11.9%). What is more, the heavy workload, about which the students in the other two countries were also complaining, led to the disappointing feeling of “Study more but cannot finish” for about one-fourth (23.8%) of the students in the B&H group¹² and about a third (33%) among RNM students.

Apart from the negative changes in the students’ study behavior, we would like to draw attention to certain positive aspects of online teaching and learning that might serve as guidelines to higher education institutions, course developers, and individual teachers. The results of our questionnaire are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Positive changes in study habits

| POSITIVE CHANGES IN STUDY HABITS | | TUR | | B&H | | RNM | |
|----------------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| N1 | Autonomous learner | 40 | 63.5 | 30 | 44.8 | 3 | 16.7 |
| N2 | New Learning styles | 5 | 7.9 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 16.7 |
| N3 | Better use of technology and online resources | 9 | 14.3 | 11 | 16.4 | 2 | 11.1 |
| N4 | High-quality learning | 8 | 12.7 | 7 | 10.4 | 9 | 50 |
| N5 | I have become more hardworking | 1 | 1.6 | 19 | 28.4 | 1 | 5.6 |
| | ALL | 63 | 100 | 67 | 100 | 18 | 100 |

Comparing the results in the three countries shows that 63.5% of TUR students think online teaching made them more autonomous learners (Example 7). This was the most frequently mentioned positive change in the B&H group as well (44.8%).

¹² Cf. Marchand, G.C.; Gutierrez, A.P. (2012).

Example 7: TUR Student 55

I wasn't good at studying on my own before but online learning helped me develop as an autonomous learner.

This means that the new learning and teaching setting 'forced' students in TUR and B&H to become more self-dependent, as they had to prepare their own course notes, use web tools and their computers more effectively, and research individually the topics of their interest (Example 8). It seems that all this led to the development of more efficient study patterns.

Example 8: B&H Student 20

I spend more time using the computer and internet in order to define some things more, everything that we received is in writing form that I read on my computer.

The number of students who responded to this open-ended question in RNM is slightly lower (16.7% of all participating students), and within this group, the highest number of students 50% claimed that the positive change they noticed in their studying behaviour is high-quality learning. This high-quality learning excluded potential distractors of various kinds (e.g., their physical environment where the learning process is taking place, but also colleagues who might potentially interrupt the process). Not having to commute every day and lose precious time in public transport certainly contributed to positive changes in the students' study behaviour (Examples 9 and 10).

Example 9 RNM student 16

I have more free time since I can organize my time more freely. I also don't have to commute every day to school and I save time on that too. When recorded lecturers were available I can rewind the classes and learn at my own pace, which can be whatever pace I choose and I am really happy about that.

Example 10 B&H student 60

More time at the home to relax and easier to study.

The results of our study are in accordance with the findings reported by Maican and Cocoradă (2021), in their research on online foreign language learning in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Maican and Cocoradă (2021) found that the online approach made language instruction and learning more flexible and individualised. In some instances, it also led to higher attendance and engagement, especially if authentic materials were used. The researcher also claimed that the active and pleasurable learning of foreign languages through blended systems that may be adaptively used in potentially

difficult situations in the future to encourage language competency is the foundation of long-term online foreign language learning. Therefore, they suggest that teachers should enhance cross-cutting competencies, such as students' ability to reflect on their own learning process, inspire positive activating emotions, and improve their wellbeing and resilience to discomfort in learning contexts, in order to promote sustainable learning.

7. Conclusions

The study results show important similarities in how LT in B&H, RNM and TUR are perceived and evaluated by their students and significant positive and negative changes in students' study habits because of the shift from face-to-face to online learning.

Students' assessments of LT's computer literacy and online teaching abilities were mostly positive in the studied countries. This is a significant 'positive result' for the teachers in B&H, RNM and TUR, keeping in mind that they were 'forced' to assess, adapt and integrate different digital platforms in their teaching almost overnight. The results also indicate that they successfully modified and, in some instances, completely changed the English language teaching materials designed primarily for in-class use and their teaching methods.

Students' evaluations revealed that they thought that the teachers' roles basically remained the same as in face-to-face teaching, which certainly was not an easy task to accomplish. Retaining the same roles in the new teaching environment despite the abrupt shift and lack of preparation certainly shows B&H, RNM and TUR teachers' ingenuity by leading content development, facilitating capacity building as peer leaders, mentoring, and rapidly adopting and bringing about change in their classrooms. LT tried to promote their students' learning despite the hardships of the COVID-19 crisis by being accessible and regularly preparing high-quality materials that they shared with their students.

By contrast, holding regular synchronous classes, managing content difficulties, or encouraging student participation during online teaching were topics that LT were slightly less successful in in the examined countries. One has to be aware of the fact that during the 'emergency online teaching period', teachers had to work from home, using the private resources that they had at their disposal, while at the same time trying hard to keep the same standard of teaching they had in their classrooms prior to the pandemic¹³.

The online teaching period has undoubtedly changed our students' study habits both positively and negatively. It is important to point out that during this emergency online teaching period, all aspects of private and public lives were

¹³ Cf. Miloshevska et al. (2020), Zhang et al. (2020)

seriously disturbed, which contributed to the difficulties that students experienced. For the bulk of them, this was their first experience with online learning. This new environment reduced their motivation because they felt that they did not have the safety net of the system they had grown up with and within which they were successful. It looks as if some students were caught in a vicious circle. Their regular study patterns changed, and they started to lag behind the demanding schedule, which, in turn, led to a lack of motivation and energy to complete their daily tasks. This build-up of work overtime brought the feeling that they were working more but were achieving less. The problems listed by the students here can be prevented if instructors “avoid unclear or incomplete expectations, projects, grading, policies, activity schedule, and so on. The instructor must build in sufficient support, directions, and guidelines for the online learner” (Dunlap, 2005: 19).

There are also many positive aspects of online teaching and learning that might serve as guidelines to higher education institutions, course developers, but also individual teachers. The students became more independent, learned to work on their research individually and developed new learning strategies. Working closely with students who say they developed in that respect and using their experience may help both the following cohorts of students and instructors build useful and safe online teaching environments.

Both teachers and students aim for a successful learning experience in a variety of situations, and teachers should also promote and support students’ adaptive behaviour. The ability to adapt to different conditions will be an asset in their future careers. We strongly believe that education in the post pandemic world will not be the same as prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the lessons we learned and feedback we received from our students must be utilized to improve the education system.

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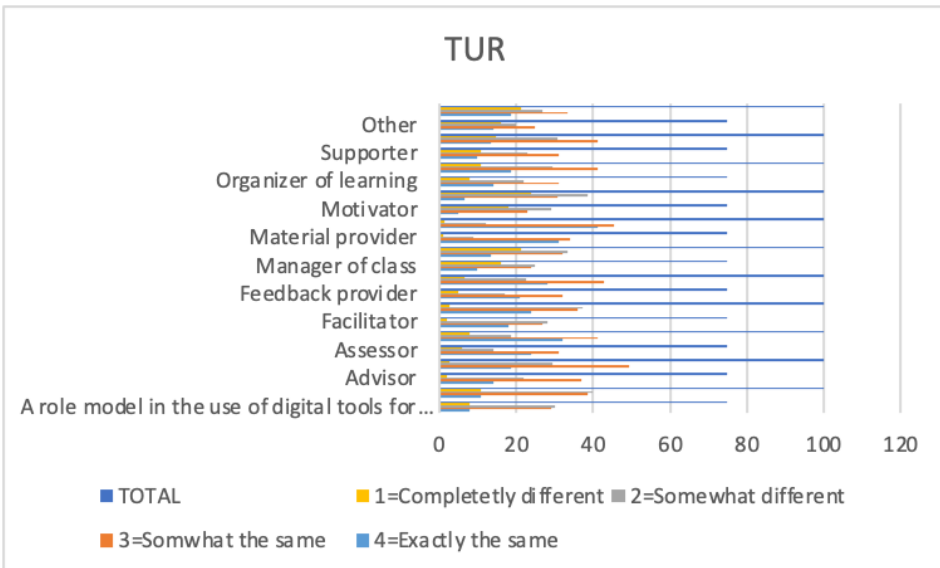
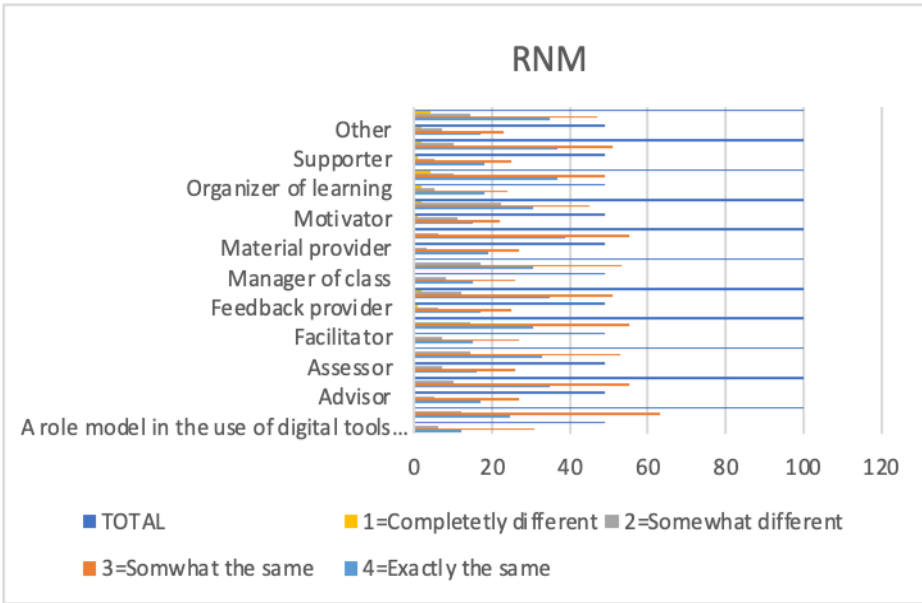
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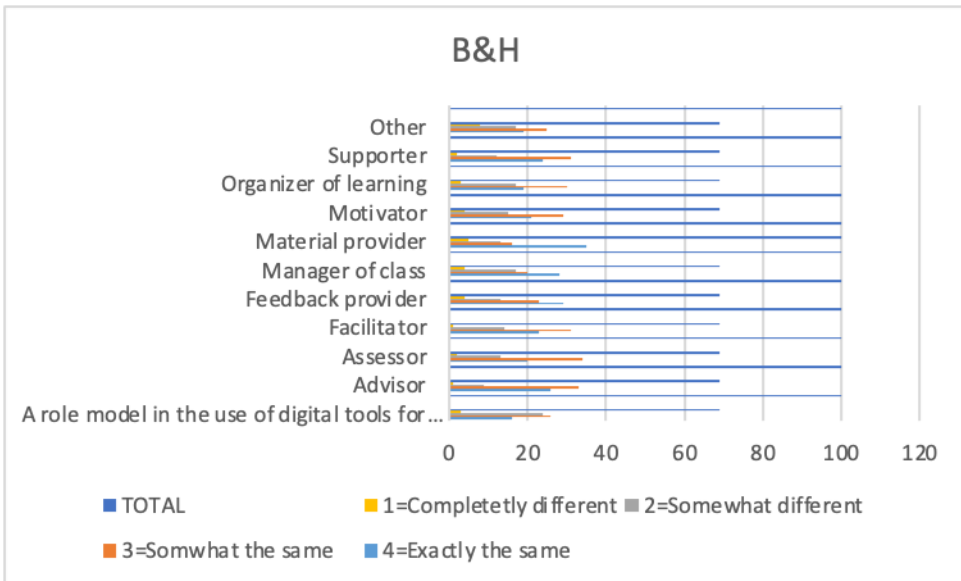
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APPENDIX A

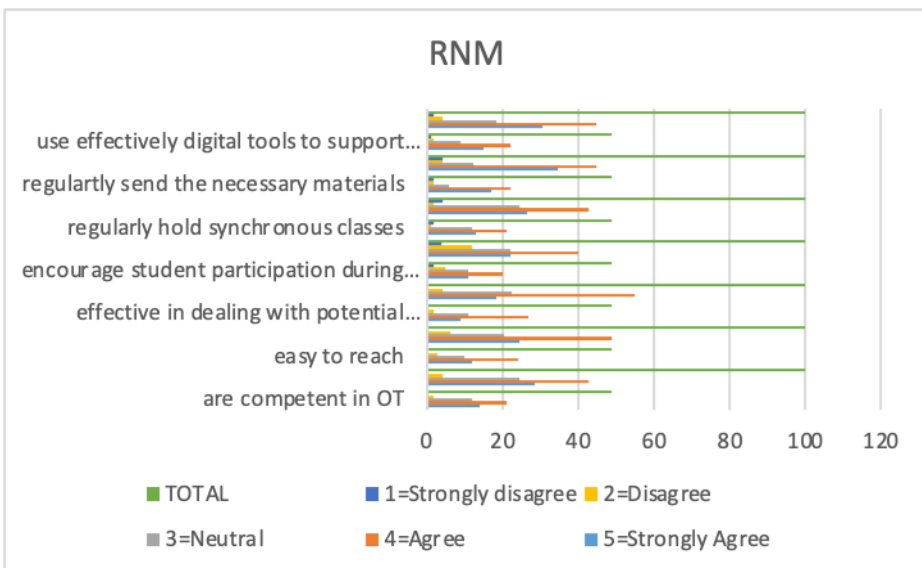
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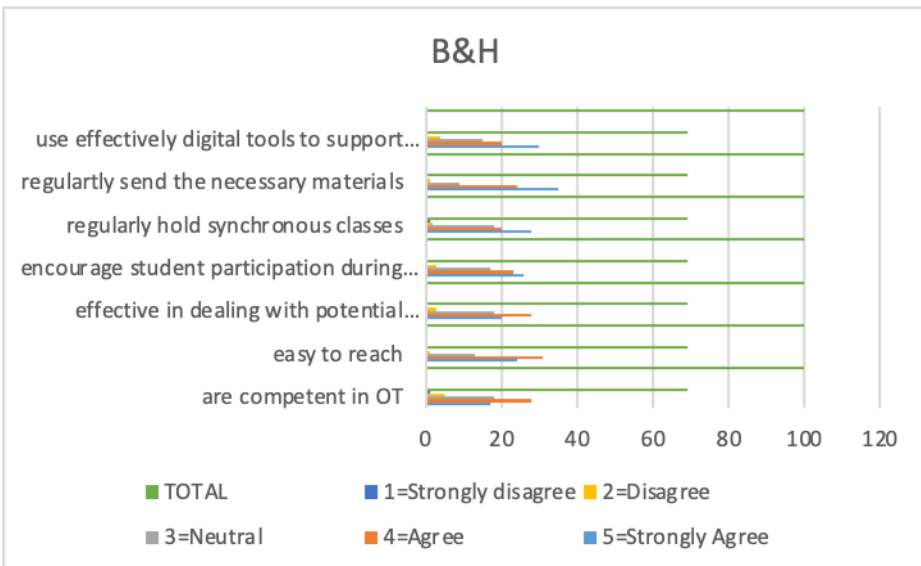
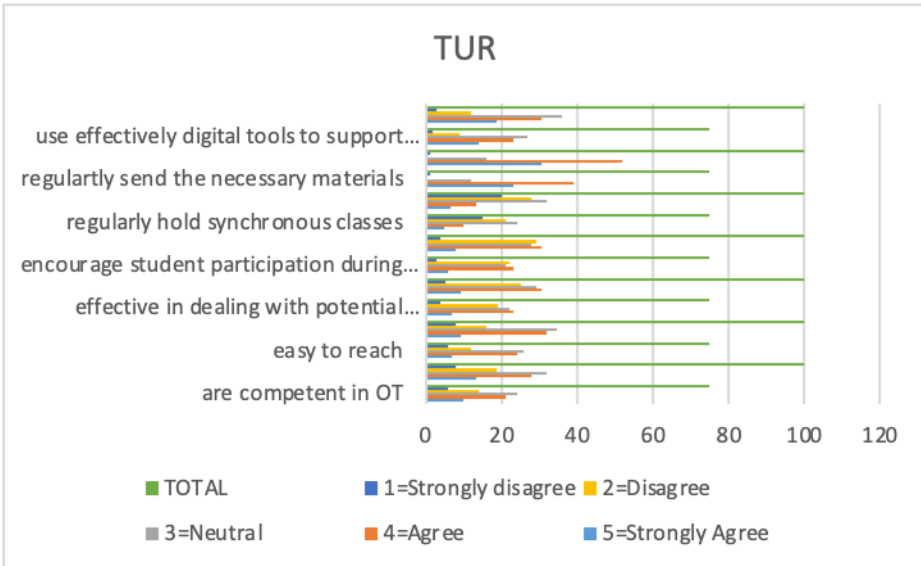




APPENDIX B

Student evaluation of teachers' work during the online teaching period





**DA LI JE ONLINE UČENJE PROMIJENILO NAČIN UČENJA? STUDENTSKA EVALUACIJA
PEDAGOŠKIH VJEŠTINA NASTAVNIKA TIJEKOM PRVOG KOVID-19 RAZDOBLJA I
POTENCIJALNE PROMJENE NJIHOVIH NAVIKA UČENJA**

Početakom 2020. godine teško je bilo zamisliti da će novi soj koronavirusa utjecati na mnoge aspekte naših života i promijeniti sadržaj, strukturu i metode podučavanja koje smo ranije poznavali. Mnogi nastavnici jezika diljem svijeta morali su napraviti nagli prijelaz na online podučavanje, nešto za što nisu bili obučeni niti su imali iskustva.

Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj pokazati da li su nastavnici uspješno izvodili online nastavu i da li je online podučavanje tijekom prvog adhoc online razdoblja utjecalo na navike učenja studenata. Pomoću posebno dizajniranog upitnika studenti sa nekoliko javnih univerziteta iz Bosne i Hercegovine, Republike Sjeverne Makedonije i Republike Turske su trebali procijeniti profesionalnu prilagođenost i uspjeh svojih nastavnika tijekom prvog semestra online nastave, te razmotriti vlastite navike učenja tijekom ovog razdoblja i promjenama koje su osobno doživjeli.

Rezultati studije otkrili su da su studenti u tri zemlje procijenili pedagoške vještine svojih nastavnika kao prikladne za online poučavanje u prvom razdoblju KOVID-19 na nevjerojatno sličan način. Međutim, utjecaj na navike učenja učenika u tim je zemljama u određenoj mjeri različit. Nalazi studije mogli bi pružiti relevantne informacije za ponovno promišljanje nastavničke profesije u smislu kompetencija, načina poučavanja i strategija za suočavanje s procesima koji utječu na poučavanje. Obrazovanje neće biti isto u svijetu nakon pandemije, moramo koristiti znanje koje smo stekli i prijedloge naših studenata kako bismo unaprijedili naše obrazovne sisteme.

Ključne riječi: online nastava, digitalne vještine nastavnika, KOVID-19, evaluacije studenata, navike učenja