

EVALUATION OF THE ONLINE LEARNING PROCESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD TOWARDS BETTER FUTURE APPROACHES OF HIGHER EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES ON THE BALKANS

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Abstract

Higher education is facing a new experience of online teaching in many countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation during 2020. Amid the lockdown, universities faced mounting pressure while switching immediately to online classes to overcome critical conditions and protect stakeholders. This study aims to evaluate the perceptions regarding remote teaching and the interaction between professors and students in some of the Balkans universities during the COVID-19 pandemic period. A total number of 327 professors who had experienced online teaching during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020 completed a survey with 24 multiple choice and other optional questions. Regarding previous online teaching experience, there was a significant difference between the Western Balkans universities included in this study ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, universities were evaluated for their future teaching approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic, and blended learning is considered a proper and safe method by the majority of professors in all universities ($p = 0.003$). When asked if they would prefer, in general, online teaching compared to face-to-face, the latter resulted in the best teaching approach ($p = 0.037$). The study found a significant relationship between professors and their students during online classes and their preferences for the ongoing online teaching approach ($p < 0.001$). A significant relationship was also found between the teaching preferences either during COVID-19 or further continuing for online teaching, and professors' specific feelings during online teaching such as attraction, monotony/annoyance, loss of concentration, feeling free and wasting time ($p \leq 0.005$). The results of this questionnaire identify the challenges that Higher Education Institutions (HEI) of the Western Balkans faced during online learning and professors' perceptions regarding best approaches. They may provide valuable insight into improving the online teaching and learning process for future critical pandemic situations.

Keywords: Higher education, Balkans, pandemic, online teaching, learning approaches.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has recently faced an unexpected situation in online learning. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) emerged at the end of December 2019 in Wuhan, China (Chahrour et al., 2020), and soon after was declared as a world pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020). Public health experts and government officials took several measures, including social distancing, wearing a mask, disinfection, self-isolation, and even quarantine asking people to work from home (Bedford et al., 2020). The isolation of many countries due to COVID-19 pandemic measures forced universities to their closure, thus influencing the teaching methodology. Faculties converted their curriculums from

face-to-face to the online environment (Gewin, 2020). Covid-19 pandemic affected more the impact of poorly resourced institutions and socially disadvantaged learners, where limited access to technology and the internet impacted on organizational response or students' ability to engage in online learning (Zhong, 2020). Many scholars questioned if higher education was prepared for the forthcoming digital era of learning (Houlden and Veletsianos, 2020). Information and communication technologies (ICT) have changed the approach of how learning materials are delivered to students at education institutions, offering continuous educational improvements through online learning services, greater information access, greater communication and cost efficiency (Memeti, Imeri and Xhaferi, 2015). E-learning platforms (sometimes called learning management systems (LMS)) were used for delivery of learning content and facilitation of learning processes, enabling the administrators and lecturers to treat enrolment data electronically, offering electronic access to course materials and carry out assessments (OECD, 2005). These server-based or cloud-based software programs contain information about users, courses and content, thus providing a place to learn and teach without depending on the time and space boundaries (Sharma et al., 2013).

The Balkan universities have an old experience in teaching, taking into consideration that different Learning Management Systems in different Universities have already been previously used (such as Google Classroom, Blackboard, Moodle, Google Sites, and others) as complementary to traditional teaching, mainly to share learning materials and also exchange experiences and knowledge that facilitate students' learning without the time and space restrictions imposed by traditional models; however, none of them has previously experienced remote teaching (Chaushi et al., 2015). The main challenge of e-learning developers to design effective e-systems which should include sophisticated and advanced functions, whilst universities faced different problems as well as missing tools during the pandemic, presenting a great challenge to them, thus leading to new models of teaching compatible with distance learning. Teaching and studying isolated at home can bring many challenges, among which the lack of motivation and the need to adopt the new habits in their learning environment, to minimize the feeling of work overload and thus a high level of stress (Händel et al., 2020).

This paper will explore the first wave of responses from an online survey from universities during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, to summarise the collective response and perceptions regarding online teaching in some of the Western Balkans HEI-s. An overview of the evaluation of the teaching challenges from professors, based on their real-life experiences to distance learning and their innovative and successful approaches to study, research, and adaptation to dynamic situations is presented.

1.1 The Higher Education in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans are usually referred to as the region that comprises populations of Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (Nikitović, 2019). An overview of the HEI-s in the countries represented in this survey will be given shortly below including Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (Fig. 1). Higher education in **Albania** includes 15 public and 26 nonpublic institutions (ASCAL, 2020). The University of Tirana (UT) was established in 1957 and is the biggest and oldest public university in Albania. Nowadays it counts six faculties, two institutes, and 174 study programs in all the education levels. In 1991 UT had 11 faculties, some of which were separated to create other universities; the engineering faculties have established the Polytechnic University of Tirana in 1991, whilst the faculty of medicine and faculty of medical-technical sciences have established in 2013 the University of Medicine Tirana (UMT) (Universiteti i Tiranës, 2020a). UMT is the largest public HEI for medical education in Albania. It is organized in three Faculties and 22 departments, which offer 80 study programs with various graduate and postgraduate degrees in the medical field (UMED, 2020). The HEI-s in **Kosovo** include nine public and 22 private institutions (Kosovo Accreditation Agency, 2020). The University of Pristina (UP) was established in 1970 and is the only public university in Kosovo. The pedagogical high schools and the Faculty of Teaching were incorporated in the Education Faculty. Today UP has 14 faculties and 147 study programs (Universiteti i Prishtinës, 2020). In **Montenegro**, higher education can be acquired in four universities and four faculties, where only the University of Montenegro (UM) is public (ACQAHE, 2020). UM was founded in 1974 representing the oldest HEI in Montenegro. It is

the largest and the only comprehensive HEI in the state, comprising 19 faculties and two institutes of science (University of Montenegro, 2020). **North Macedonia** has six public universities, one private-public, and 15 private HEI-s (Enic-Naric, 2020). The University of Tetovo was established in 1994 and is the biggest Albanian University in North Macedonia, open and accessible to all students, teachers, and associates. It is affirmed as a reformed higher education institution, structured into 13 faculties, 65 study programs, 115 fields of study, and three scientific research institutes (Universiteti i Tetovës, 2020). The HEI-s in **Serbia** include 206 accredited institutions and 2692 study programs (NEAQA, 2020). The University of Niš with 13 faculties is the main academic center of Eastern and Southern Serbia; the University of Arts in Belgrade is the only specialized university for art education in Serbia; whilst an Executive MBA is also offered by the CITY College in Belgrade with a degree from the University of Sheffield (City College, 2020; Study in Serbia, 2020).

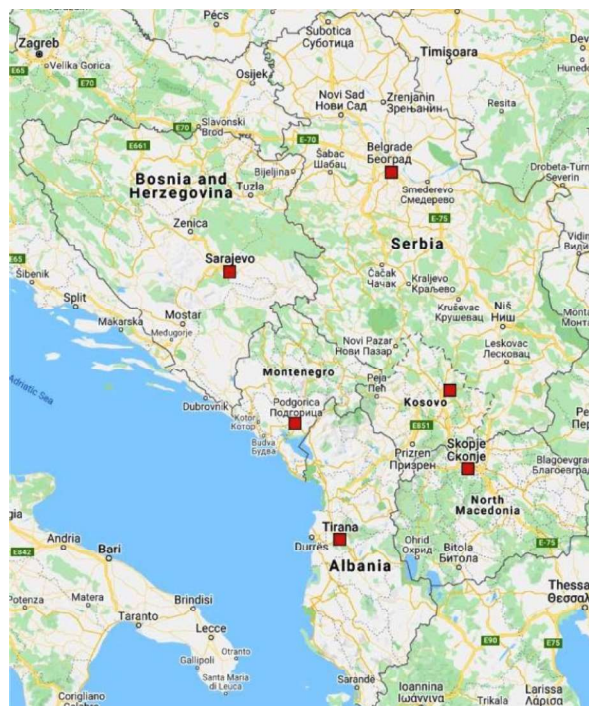


Figure 1. The map of the Western Balkans

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants and questionnaire

This manuscript yields a google form questionnaire analysis approach with careful consideration of the quality of the information source. A survey with 24 questions with multiple answers towards professors, was carried out. To give the real tableau for the universities in the Western Balkans, we must seek to use reliable sources given the general fluctuation of information regarding filling questionnaires. For this, it was provided the anonymity of participants, sending it mainly to their official and private emails. Other scarce data were gathered from online platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Responses were gathered from professors ($n = 327$) from Albania (40.1%), Kosovo (1.2%), Montenegro (1.2%), and North Macedonia (57.2%). The distribution of participants according to the age group was: 23-32 (17.1%), 33-42 (34.3%), 43-52 (27.8%), 53-62 (16.2%), and 63 years old and above (4.6%). They were involved in different online teaching classes, in the fields of arts (3.6%), engineering (9%), medical (21.7%), natural (23.5%), and social & human sciences (42.2%), and different levels of education including bachelor (83.2%), master of science (29.4%), master of education (6.4%), supervision of master (5.5%) and doctorate thesis (3.1%).

2.2 Data analysis

When we analyzed the universities by previous experience in online teaching, used equipment, or teaching preference, we considered only three universities (University of Tirana, University of Medicine Tirana, and University of Tetovo, $n = 313$) omitting other universities with underrepresented numbers; whilst for the other calculations, we analyzed all data. The sample is divided into four groups with different variables: demographics, experience and logistics, online platforms and interactivity, feelings/stress. Teaching preferences for **further online teaching** were: A. No, I would not like to use it. Face to face is the best teaching approach allowing real interactions with students; B. Yes, I would use 100% online teaching only during the COVID-19 pandemic as a safe teaching method; C. Yes, I would suggest it in alternation with face to face teaching in 50:50% ratio; D. Yes, I would like to use it all the time I have lectures. Meanwhile teaching preferences **during COVID-19 pandemic** were: A. 50% online: 50% face to face (blended learning); B. 100% face to face, but in classes with small number of students and in distance 2 from each other and without a mask; C. 100% face to face; but in classes with small number of students and in distance 2m from each other and wearing a mask; D. 100% online, but with alternation of different online teaching methods; E. 100% online, but online learning platforms gives us the possibility to directly interact and answer to students questions. The variables of each group were analyzed toward these teaching preferences using the chi-squared tests in Statistical software SPSS (version 27), and the Tableau Desktop (version 23) was used for preparing graphs and results.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographics

This questionnaire has attracted the interest of professors from public and nonpublic universities of the Western Balkans, some of which were underrepresented in numbers, nevertheless, their contributions were considered in the reporting of results. These include the Agricultural University of Tirana (0.3%), Private University (0.3%), Barleti University (0.3%), University of Elbasan (0.3%), University of Niš (0.3%), University of Shkodra (0.3%), University of Montenegro (1.2%), University of Prishtina (1.2%), University of Medicine Tirana (UMT) (12.9%), University of Tetovo (57.1%), and University of Tirana (UT) (26.1%). Among the professors who participated in the survey, most of them (51.4%) were less than 42 years old. The sample was 55.4% female and 44.6% male, with civil status mainly married (85.0%). The long old tradition of getting married at a young age and having kids (76.3%) is reflected also among the participants of this survey. Checking the variables of universities, age-groups, gender, civil status, and having kids towards teaching approaches, it showed no significant relationship with none of them, neither for online COVID-19 teaching approach nor for further online teaching ($p > 0.05$).

3.2 Experience and logistics

Previous online teaching experience is an important key to the quality of online learning. However, in our sample, a lack of experience is reported among professors of the Balkan universities (40.1%). Comparing different HEIs, the University of Tetovo had more previous experience in online teaching (75.0% of professors), whilst only a few professors from the University of Tirana (14.7%) and the University of Medicine Tirana (10.3%) reported previous experience ($p < 0.001$) (Fig. 2).

Nevertheless, previous online teaching experience did not influence the choice of teaching approaches ($p > 0.05$). Due to the presence of others (family members and/or friends) with whom they shared their living place (96.6%), professors had faced difficulties related to their environment and noise during online teaching (>50% for both). This is closely related to the fact that online lectures were held mainly at home (88.7%). These difficulties have influenced their preferences towards teaching approaches. Thus, the predisposal for further using online teaching by noise, was face-to-face ($p < 0.001$), as professors faced either very much (57.1%) or even somewhat (43.1%) difficulties with noise; whilst for the online COVID-19 teaching approach, the high preference for blended learning was from facing somewhat difficulties with noise (46.1%) ($p = 0.001$) (Table 1).

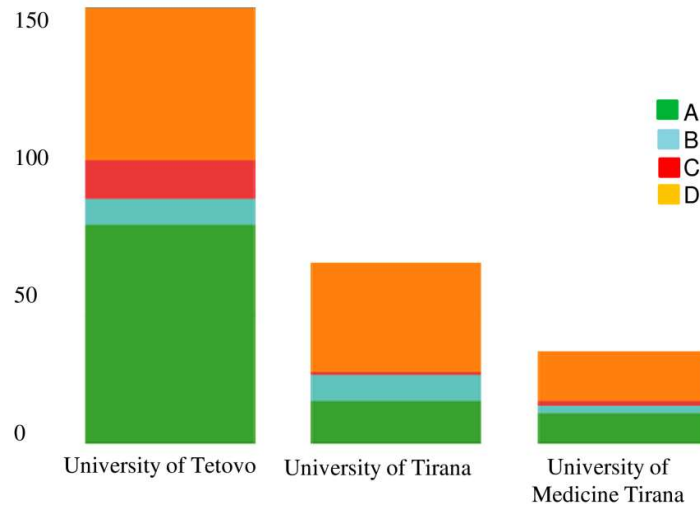


Figure 2. Predisposal of Universities by previous experience of professors given in colors (A. Yes, I had with university students; B. Yes, I had presentations of my research work in the online conferences; C. Yes, I had online private courses of different levels of education; D. No, this was the first experience ever

Table 1. Evaluation of difficulties with the following issues during online teaching: Environment, Noise and Equipment

Evaluate how much difficulties you had with the following issues:		Environment				Noise				Equipment			
		Neither	Somewhat	Very much	Total	Neither	Somewhat	Very much	Total	Neither	Somewhat	Very much	Total
<i>Would you further like to use the online teaching?</i>	A	24	71	26	121	28	73	20	121	28	76	17	121
	B	58	36	7	101	61	37	3	101	56	39	6	101
	C	34	54	10	98	32	54	12	98	36	52	10	98
	D	3	4	0	7	3	4	0	7	2	4	1	7
	Total	119	164	43	327	124	168	35	327	122	171	34	327
	Pearson Chi-Square	0.000				0.000				0.002			
<i>What approaches would you propose during the COVID-19 pandemic for teaching?</i>	A	43	76	13	132	45	77	10	132	48	72	12	132
	B	4	14	5	23	4	15	4	23	6	16	1	23
	C	17	32	15	64	18	31	15	65	14	41	9	65
	D	28	19	6	53	28	23	2	53	29	21	3	53
	E	27	24	4	55	29	22	4	55	25	21	9	55
	Total	119	165	43	327	124	168	35	327	122	171	34	327
	Pearson Chi-Square	0.002				0.001				0.012			

The same teaching approaches were by the environment where for further online teaching ($p < 0.001$) professors faced either very much (60.5%) or somewhat difficulties (42.7%) thus they preferred face-to-face; whilst during COVID-19 teaching approach, they have chosen blended learning as had faced somewhat difficulties (46.1%) ($p = 0.002$). Moreover, remote learning requests the proper technical facilities which sometimes may cause difficulties during the teaching process (51.7%). There is a highly significant difference between the teaching equipment, where normal screens as laptops and

desktops resulted in being the main equipment used by universities (97.1%), and just 2.9% of university professors used cell phones or tablets ($p=0.04$). The predisposal for teaching approaches by difficulties with equipment showed that during COVID-19 professors preferred blended learning, as they faced somewhat difficulties with equipment (42.4%) ($p=0.012$), whilst for further teaching face-to-face has a high preference ($p=0.002$), as either they faced very much (50%) or somewhat difficulties (44.1%) during online teaching. Overall, blended learning had a high preference either by the environment, noise, or equipment (40.4%) in comparison with other alternatives of face-to-face and 100% online learning which were less than 19.6%. The distribution of the online classes through the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year, showed results of overload in courses and hours per week, where professors stated to have more than five courses (23.2%) and a weekly hour overload of more than 13 (9.5%). Nevertheless, none of these two variables influenced the preferences for teaching approaches ($p>0.05$).

3.3 Online platforms and Interactivity

Used worldwide as a very important means of online meetings and conferences, Google meet was mainly employed for online teaching (65.7%) followed by Google classroom (21.4%) and Zoom (8.9%). On the other hand, for the extracurricular communication, there was not observed any difference as they were mainly online consultations, where professors used either Google classroom (54.4%), either online after classes (42.2%) or emails (25.4%) and only 2.1% were face-to-face. Professors have reported that they have either used the university platform (37.9%) or a different one (34.9%) to practice and discuss with students. We checked these variables towards preferences for teaching approaches and there was no significant relationship with them ($p>0.05$). Although this was the first experience for most of the professors (40.1%), there was a somehow (62.4%) interaction with students. Professors stated that their online classes were followed by different numbers of students with the open camera, from 1-9 (27.8%) up to all the class (7%), while others were only with audio open (24.2%). The frequency of students who followed the online classes was different, ranging from 1-9 (9.2%) up to more than 60 (27.5%), as stated by professors. Neither the camera open nor the number of students who followed the online particular or all classes influenced the interactivity of professors with students ($p>0.05$). The interactivity was analyzed against future teaching approaches, and a somewhat interactivity resulted in a high rate for all teaching approaches (62.39%); where the face-to-face approach was higher either by a lack of interaction or somewhat (81.25% and 40.69%). Overall, there was a significant high difference between face-to-face (37%) and fully online teaching (2.14%) for all types of interactions ($p<0.001$). On the other side, the predisposal for online COVID-19 teaching approaches by interactions, showed to be significant, where blended learning during COVID-19 had a high preference (40.4%) as professors had somewhat interaction (45.6%) ($p<0.001$) comparing with other approaches which were less than 19.6% (Fig. 3).

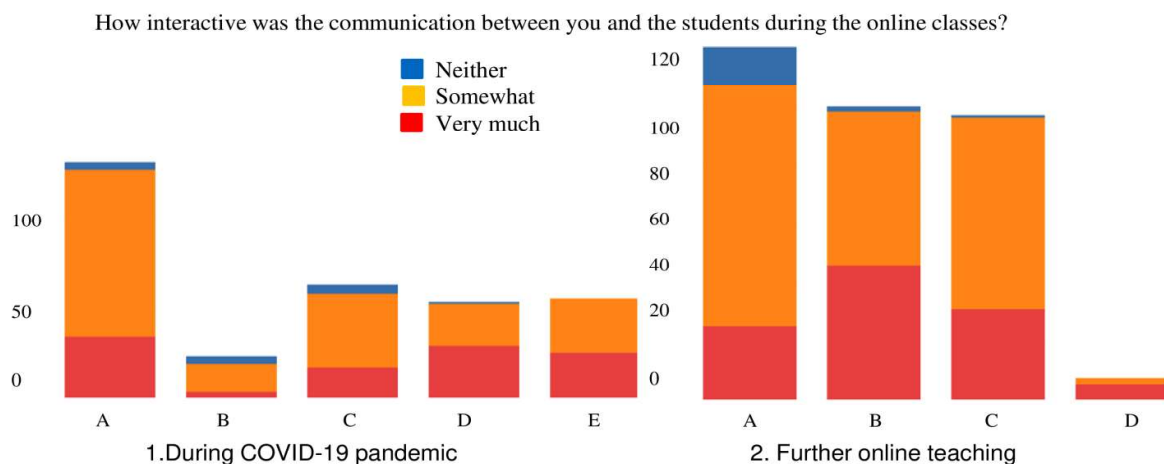


Figure 3. Predisposal for online teaching approaches during COVID-19 and for further online teaching by interactions (letters follow the methods)

3.4 Feelings/ Stress toward online teaching

An important challenge during online learning is the stress that the professors face usually. The stress is related to different feelings towards online teachings, such as attraction, loss of concentration, wasting time, monotony/annoyance, feeling free, and spending. The predisposal for further online lectures by feeling attracted, resulted in a high preference of face-to-face from professors, either by the lack of attraction (76.32%) or rarely feeling attracted (48.05%) and this was significant ($p<0.001$). The same high significance is for blended learning for the online COVID-19 teaching approach by attraction, as online teaching was rarely attractive (43.5%) ($p<0.001$). Loss of concentration during online lectures by professors have influenced the preference for further online teaching, where face-to-face was the approach selected by professors who felt either often (54.88%) or rarely (35.80%) the loss of concentration, and this is significantly proven ($p<0.001$). During online COVID-19 teaching approaches, blended learning had a high difference from the rare loss of concentration (41.4%) ($p=0.005$). The feeling of wasting time by professors during online lectures towards further online approaches, revealed a higher difference of face-to-face as a result of either feeling often like wasting time (60%) or rarely (48.78%) and the relationship was significant ($p<0.001$). The predisposal for the online COVID-19 teaching approach also resulted in a significant relationship, where blended learning was higher from either rarely feeling like wasting time (43.1%) or never (41.4%) ($p<0.001$). Monotony or annoyance are the feelings that challenge online teaching, and it was of high significance because they often created monotony/annoyance to professors (65.96%), therefore it was preferred face-to-face ($p<0.001$). Whilst during COVID-19, blended learning was the approach which had high differences as it rarely created monotony (45.1%) ($p<0.001$). Freedom is an important challenge during online lectures, which is evaluated towards further online learning, and results that face-to-face is the highly preferred approach as professors either never (48.7%) or rarely (34.31%) feel free during online lectures ($p<0.001$). The predisposal of online COVID-19 approaches by feeling free showed that blended learning is preferred by professors who felt rarely free during online lectures (45.3%) ($p=0.001$). The analyzes of the predisposal of further online teaching by these feelings, showed a high difference of face-to-face (37%) as the preferred approach in general, towards further 100% online teaching (2.14%), and overall these relationships were significant ($p<0.001$). On the other side, the predisposal of online COVID-19 teaching approach by these feelings, showed a high difference with a high preference of blended learning during a pandemic situation (40.4%) comparing with other approaches which were less than 19.6% ($p\leq 0.005$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Predisposition for teaching approaches by feelings of professors during online teaching

While online teaching I felt like:		Feeling free			Loss of concentration			Monotony/ Annoyance			Attraction			Wasting time			Total per each
		Often	Rarely	Never	Often	Rarely	Never	Often	Rarely	Never	Often	Rarely	Never	Often	Rarely	Never	
Further online teaching	A	18	47	56	45	58	18	62	39	20	18	74	29	21	60	40	121
	B	33	36	32	16	49	36	14	52	35	70	27	4	9	25	67	101
	C	20	51	27	21	52	25	18	69	11	42	51	5	5	36	57	98
	D	4	3	0	45	58	18	0	4	3	5	2	0	0	2	5	7
	Total	75	137	115	82	162	83	94	164	69	135	154	38	35	123	169	327
Pearson Chi-Square		0.001			0.000			0.000			0.000			0.000			
During COVID-19 pandemic	A	42	28	62	35	30	67	22	36	74	14	51	67	70	9	53	132
	B	10	1	12	1	11	11	3	14	6	5	2	16	3	4	16	23
	C	34	9	21	10	22	32	8	31	25	15	10	39	25	13	26	64
	D	16	20	17	15	9	29	14	8	31	2	37	14	37	6	10	53
	E	13	17	25	22	10	23	22	5	28	2	35	18	34	3	18	55
	Total	115	75	137	83	82	162	69	94	164	38	135	154	169	35	123	327
Pearson Chi-Square		0.001			0.005			0.000			0.000			0.000			

Spending which are claimed to have a high difference during face-to-face and online learning showed to not influence the preferences towards teaching approaches ($p>0.01$).

3. DISCUSSION

This study on the Western Balkans (WB) was carried out to give a real picture of the situation of higher education towards addressing the challenges of online learning approaches. Demographic variables (gender, age-groups, civil status, having kids) did not influence the preferences for teaching approaches. Scarce numbers have shown a lack of collaboration in the Balkan universities using the formal networking, vice-versa the informal networking, or use of personal contacts for getting things done has a regular occurrence in the region (Efendic and Ledeneva, 2020). The numbers showed a cooperative behavior of young employees reflecting a friendlier attitude towards participation in online survey-based studies. The high rate of married employees with kids (64.0%) is an indicator of the fertility rates, which in the Balkan countries such as Albania and North Macedonia have an aging index lower than one (Galjak, 2016). Besides, an observed high rate of females employees is an indicator of either the raised awareness for females education, whilst previously there was a high rate of illiteracy among girls, which had reflected the widespread phenomenon of early school dropout; or due to mass emigration of males (Bartlett, 2007).

Previous experience of the staff is an important challenge to universities in the situation where worldwide, the majority of higher institutions have already begun preparing plans for transitioning to online teaching to their students, although this is not new for some universities which had previously trained their staff to use online learning platforms either as the only delivery mode or as an add-on to face-to-face teaching (Lim, 2020). Yet, not all universities possess the resources or academic capabilities, or even the capacity to transition to online delivery (Leung and Sharma, 2020). Few higher education institutions offered online delivery before COVID-19 such as the University of Tetovo in our survey, and most of them were not prepared for the transition. This delayed the start of the spring semester for almost a month in many universities (Universiteti i Tiranës, 2020b), however,

there were also excellent case studies where the university staff worked online from home one day after the suspended face-to-face teaching (University of Passau, 2020). Further, the ongoing physical social isolation impacts the academic workforce that traditionally is up in front of the classroom (Cappelletti, 2020), nevertheless, the previous experience did not influence the teaching approach preferences. Various approaches to remote education during the pandemic have shown that the apparent encountered obstacles can be turned into opportunities. Nevertheless, technical challenges for students and staff should be addressed (Samueli et al., 2020). Furthermore, switching to work and study from home due to the isolation, made computers and IT equipment at home in high demand from other family members too. Thus, online teaching from home is going to be a difficult task for universities (Dill et al., 2020) regarding equipment too, which showed significance also in our study for the Balkans. On the other hand, online learning is a real challenge to practicals and labs, medicine, music, and art courses, which cannot be taught online. The quality of online education is a critical issue, and with the transition to online for universities, the attention has now turned towards the quality of the learning experience (Qu, 2020). The teaching load, with a high number of courses for one semester (more than five) and hours per week, is a question mark on the quality of teaching. The legislation of the HEI doesn't allow more than three semestrial courses per academic year per each professor distributed either in two semesters or in two annual courses and one semestrial or even in three annual courses (Ministria e Arsimit, Sportit dhe Rinisë 2018, Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës, 2018). Nevertheless, this course's overload may be either a result of teaching the same course in different departments and even faculties or universities, either having different class-groups within the same department or even leaving the teaching courses as an overload in only one semester, although in all possible scenarios it goes beyond the HEI legislation.

Trying to reproduce face-to-face teaching does not seem the appropriate approach to remote instruction. According to Schlesselman (2020), professors should rather focus on creating quality online courses assisted by suitable technological tools that fulfill the requirements of the specific field of study. Many universities have taken steps to offer online platforms to carry out their teaching online during the campus closure. On the other hand, some faculties had the possibility to decide which platform to use, even some professors have taken this decision independently. Thus, almost one-third of the WBs' university staff used the university platform, whilst others decided on a different one or both options. Some of the platforms for e-learning were Moodle, Microsoft Class Notes, Microsoft Teams, and Google classroom software (The British University in Cairo, 2020; Universiteti i Tiranës, 2020c), Blackboard, email, skype, google drive, and Zoom (American University in Cairo, 2020; The University of Hong Kong, 2020), Webex (University of Turin, 2020). Some universities had already used these tools before, but the crisis has accelerated the plans to use them extensively; meanwhile, for some others, these platforms were totally unknown before the crisis. An analysis of the online platforms used in higher education among different nations revealed that developing countries used low technology solutions such as narrated PowerPoint presentations and freeware such as Skype, Google Classroom, Moodle, and Facebook, minimizing the impact on learning to students; whilst developed countries were initially focused to the transitioning to the online environment, and now their focus is on online pedagogy (Crawford et al., 2020). Google Meet is used by 2/3rd of professors for online teaching among the WBs' universities of our study, followed by Google classroom for online teaching and extracurricular communication), and less Zoom. Recently, an introduction to Teams is offered for the academic year 2020-2021 (Universiteti i Tiranës, 2020d). Moreover, creating flexible, meaningful, and measurable learning objectives is very important to assess students' achievements (Schlesselman, 2020), where interactivity is the key leading to this, based on the communication among professors and students during online classes. The lack of communication may put a question mark on the online teaching quality, but none of the variables we analyzed in this survey, influenced the interaction of professors with students. There was a significant relationship of the predisposal for teaching approaches by this interactivity, and it is found a high difference of face-to-face during normal situations, and blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic for all the analyzed interactions ($p < 0.001$). The high interactivity of professors and students during full online teaching only during COVID-19 pandemic (42.99%) offering online support to students, is very important to increase the attention of students to understand and follow lectures, making it easier to teaching too, seeing that this worldwide rapid increase of infected cases country by country has

created a sense of uncertainty and anxiety about what will happen, causing a tremendously high level of stress both for the university staff and students, and raised their concerns about their families' wellbeing (Kafka, 2020, Zhai and Du, 2020). The influence of stress and feelings of professors during online classes on the predisposal for teaching approaches, resulted in a high difference of either feeling rarely or even very much in stress regarding attraction, loss of attraction, wasting time, feeling free, and monotony or annoyance during online teaching ($p \leq 0.005$). Therefore, lecturers should balance online teaching and self-learning of students while planning and designing the teaching process (Bao, 2020; Händel et al., 2020).

Additionally, our findings regarding the influence of many challenges toward the teaching approaches suggest that universities should support efficient communication during online learning to ensure a physically, psychologically, and economically safe future for the young generation.

4. CONCLUSION

With the continuity of online learning as a mode toward breaking the transmission chain of the corona virus COVID-19, universities have to implement several measures to increase the online teaching quality via training their teaching staff and offering appropriate teaching equipment. Students and staff have to build supportive communication offering online platforms for better interaction with regular information about their courses, to make the learning-rich and effective. Improving the difficulties from the environment, noise, and equipment, would further help in less stress and increase attraction, concentration, freedom, and more useful time during online lectures. The future teaching era at universities during pandemic situations is going to embrace the online platforms via blended learning, meanwhile, in normal situation, a face-to-face is the best teaching approach.

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