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E-learning in the coronavirus's period from the perspective of students

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Abstract: The Coronavirus epidemic in Kosovo is having consequences in all spheres of life. This reflection is especially noticeable in teaching and learning, especially at the university level, moving from the classical (traditional) form of teaching fully or partially to e-learning. The necessity of such a rapid transformation and the need to achieve the objectives of studies are being assessed by students in different ways. The subject of this research is how students evaluate this rapid transformation from traditional teaching and learning to e-learning, which was conducted in December 2020. 551 Kosovar Bachelor and Master students participated in the research. The research was done through a survey. The analysis of the results, their comparison leads us to the conclusions and recommendations, information which could serve the university institutions and state decision-making structures for the orientation of educational policies in a new era of digitalization, where e-learning is becoming a necessity even in developing countries. Where work enables us to understand that developments in the field of education, imposed by the epidemic, will be one of the forms of teaching and learning in the future and that for this we must all prepare as individuals and as a society in general.

Keywords: E-learning, teaching, learning, development, human resources.

1. Introduction

On 29.04.2020 in the World Economic Forum was published the paper “The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever”.¹ It was a warning that necessary adaptation of the education system in Kosovo as well.

The rapid spread of the coronavirus has created a new environment in the field of teaching and learning, which has changed the requirements for professors and students for high-level use of technology, in order to continue their studies through electronic platforms.

Compared to their fellow professors and students in other countries, the use of electronic platforms in Kosovo was less widespread, and online lectures and exercises were even less widespread. The epidemic situation forced educational institutions to continue their activity online. E-learning or e-learning that describes all forms of learning with digital and electronic media has started to be applied even earlier through electronic platforms such as websites of institutions, in which the applications of the University Management System were in use, E-

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/> accessed on 06.04.2021.

learning, Moodle, Kahoot, Quizlet, etc., where the lectures and exercises and other forms of communication with the student were fully or partially located, but not the direct lecturing. But online lecturing was little applied. This raised the need for both students and professors to gain and/or expand their knowledge in this field.

The willingness of Microsoft, Google and other internet giants to support educational institutions through free access to their e-learning platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, etc., has made it easier for Kosovar educational institutions to access online learning.

Access to these platforms raises the need to possess adequate IT equipment as well as a reliable internet network under the conditions of regular electric energy supply. The economic situation of many families does not offer the opportunity to meet these criteria to their students. At the same time the problem with the internet network, which is not ubiquitous or of poor quality that makes it impossible to attend lectures. The problem is exacerbated by frequent electric energy outages. These findings are also derived from the responses received from the surveyed students.

These and other problems faced by online learners in Kosovo and the region are also presented in the paper: "Online learning, 62% of students think it is not effective" published in the journal "MONITOR".²

Numerous researches have been done about online learning at the international level and numerous books have been published, where we highlight:

- Katrin Keller, Dennis Klinkhammer, & Eva-Maria Rottlaender, (2021), Digital University Teaching in Health and Social Services: Empirical findings on blended learning approaches.
- Wanda Klee, Philippe Wampfler, & Axel Krommer, (2021), Hybrid learning on the theory and practice of face-to-face and distance learning.
- David Kergel & Birte Heidkamp-Kergel, (2020), E-learning, e-didactics and digital learning.
- Britta Fischer & Anja Paul, (2020), Teaching and learning with and in digital media in sports basics: Concepts and practical examples for sports teacher training, Springer.
- Kristin Engelhardt, (2020), Internal communication with digital media, lessons from the Covid-19 crisis on the control process, employee management and communication crisis, Springer.
- Jan Marco Leimeister & Klaus David, (2019), Opportunities and challenges of digital learning methods and tools for an innovative teaching-learning concept, Springer.
- Rolff and Thünken, (2020), Digitally supported learning, ISBN 978-3-407-63187-9, Beltz Verlag, Weinheim Basel.
- Christian T. Toth, (2020), Massive open online courses in the context of personality and procrastination.
- Hedwig Rosa Griesehop & Edith Bauer, (2017), Teaching and Learning Online: Teaching and learning experiences in the context of online academic teaching.

These and other sources of information make it clear that online learning is an opportunity but also a challenge that we must overcome.

2. Literature Review

The issue of distance learning has been addressed in numerous papers, as an opportunity even before the coronavirus epidemiological crisis. E-learning since the 1990s has been

² <https://www.monitor.al/mesimi-online-62-e-studenteve-mendojne-se-nuk-eshte-efektiv/#> accessed on 06.04.2021.

attractive and gained popularity and therefore very high expectations were formulated, which have taken the expected forms since 2010 competing with traditional teaching. The advantages of e-learning are that it is at the same time a motivator for companies and institutions to implement e-learning concepts, and on the other hand, e-learning enables students to be more flexible and spatially independent of institutions (Toth, 2020).

Numerous definitions have been given about e-learning, therefore a general definition of the term e-learning is very difficult, as e-learning has many aspects and relevant definitions that vary depending on the focus. Be that as it may, one definition would be that: E-learning (from electronic learning) is a multi-plan, objective and organizational arrangement of electronic or digital media for learning, virtual learning space and blended learning - a learning model that combines computer-assisted learning (e.g. via the Internet) and traditional teaching (Arnold et al., 2011).

No matter how we define e-learning, digitally supported learning is no longer in question, but we need to find ways to do it best (Rolff & Thünken, 2020). The growing complexity of changes in the world of work affects the dynamics, as well as the content and forms of learning, teaching-learning environments. In this context, the orientation of learning towards the processes and possibilities of new information and communication technologies becomes inevitable. Modern, innovative job requirements include the willingness to continue learning, through which blended learning can play a special role (Keller et al., 2021).

We must look at e-learning as a cultural level, in that of the culture of digitalization (Klee et al., 2021). Schools and lessons primarily serve learning. This seemingly banal statement can provide orientation as a criterion for school and learning development: Many measures serve the expectations that people have of school, but do not focus on the culture of learning. This culture has also changed in the last 30 years, as there has been a change in the mainstream media: Knowledge is no longer stored primarily and compulsorily in printed books, but on the Internet. If this major media change is called digitalization, it means a process. The end of the process is called “digitalization”, its social treatment is called, according to Felix Stalder, “the culture of digitalization” (Klee et al., 2021).

In the introduction of the book “Lehren und Lernen online” (Eng. “Teaching and learning online”) (Griesehop & Bauer, 2017) it is stated that: a look is enough, whether in private or public space, in the world of work or in educational institutions, everywhere we can see that our society has changed and will continue to change as a result of digitalization. The fact that digitalization is advancing rapidly and has a role in almost all areas of human life is reflected in the relevant (online) articles that discuss various aspects and effects of digitalization. For example, under the heading “More freedom, more education, more families”³, the focus is on how the world is changing as a result of digitalization and what conclusions should be drawn from politics.

That the process of digitalization of teaching and learning has begun to include (at the initial level) the schools of South East Europe (SEE) is emphasized since 2014, where it is said that Schools in the countries of South East Europe are no longer just a building physical; are a wide array of digital resources, highly accessible from the desktop, anywhere and anytime. Teachers need to ensure that their place in the virtual world of learning is as central as in the physical world. Since then, there have been rapid developments in the field of digitalization, which in these countries are not being fully followed.

Already in both local and world media, the issue of online learning is highly controversial. It is undoubtedly pointed out that online learning requires the necessary

³ https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-11/andrea-nahles-zukunft-arbeit-weissbuch?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F accessed on 06.04.2021.

preconditions, the lack of which makes online learning difficult, and thus reduces its effect towards the achievement of teaching and learning objectives.

3. Research Methodology

Qualitative research methods were mainly used for the preparation of this paper, but based on the types of questions asked, we can say that quantitative research methods were also used. The methodology of this paper is based on the treatment of primary survey data and secondary data where local and international scientific literature, various publications and research have been used.

3.1. Research Instruments

In this study, the questionnaire was used as a research instrument. Open and closed questions were used. The survey provides information on how bachelor and master students evaluate online teaching and learning, comparing it to the classical method.

3.2. Data analysis

The data analysis was done with the GRAFSTAT program, with which the statistical and logical analyzes were done, then the results were presented in the form of tables and diagrams, and finally the interpretation of the results was done, which served us to confirm the research objectives.

3.3. Samples

Bachelor and master students are included in the survey. The sample includes 551 students of both levels and both genders divided into three age groups.

4. Empirical Research Findings

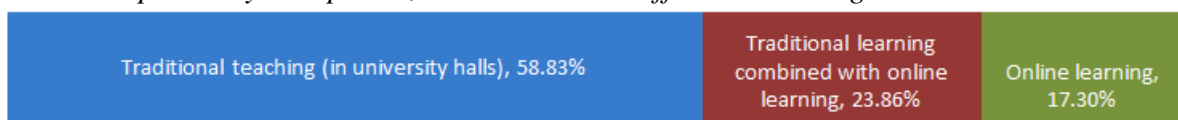
4.1. General data for surveyed students

551 students participated in the survey, of which 70.1% were female and 29.9% were male. According to the level of study 87.43% studied at the Bachelor level and 12.57% at the Master level. While according to the age group in the survey dominated the students of the age group 16-25 years old which accounted for 94.17% of the respondents, while 4.74% were in the age group 26-35 years old and 1.09% of the age group over 35 years old.

4.2. The best method of teaching according to students

Respondents in 58.83% of cases like traditional teaching, in 23.86% of cases think that the combination of traditional teaching with online is better and only 17.3% of respondents assess that online learning is the most good teaching and learning teaching. The answers given to this question are as a result of the influence of various factors that will be addressed below.

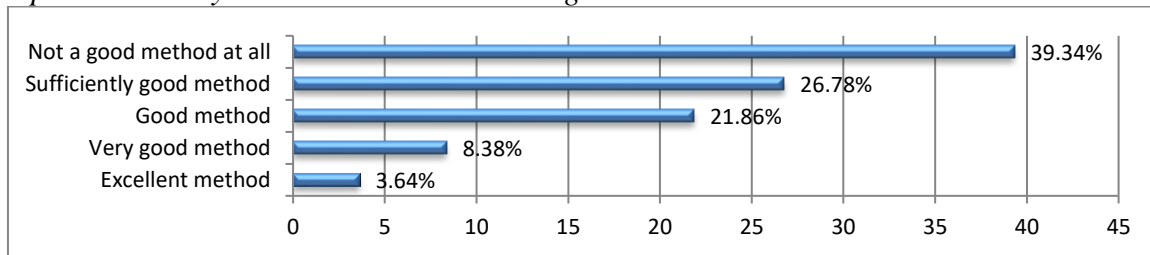
Graph 1. In your opinion, what is the most effective teaching method?



4.3. How do students evaluate online learning?

Respondents in 39.34% of cases evaluate online learning as not a good method at all. 27.78% of the respondents rate it as a sufficiently good method, while the rest of the respondents rate it as a good, very good and excellent method.

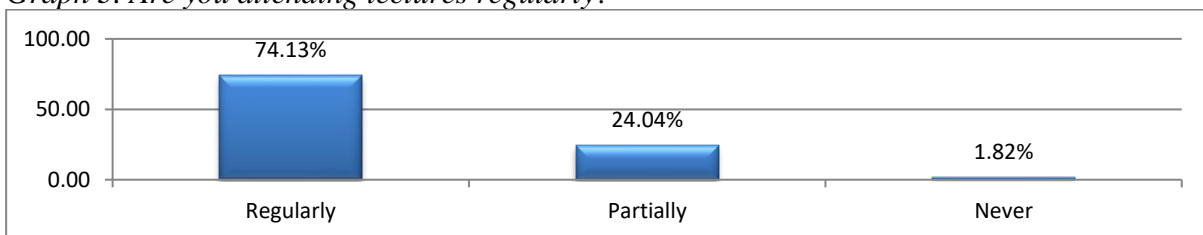
Graph 2. How do you consider online learning?



4.4. Are you attending lectures regularly?

Despite the bad opinion about online learning, aware of the need not to interrupt lectures, 74.13% of respondents regularly attend online lectures and partially attend 24.04%. Only 1.82% of respondents do not attend online lectures.

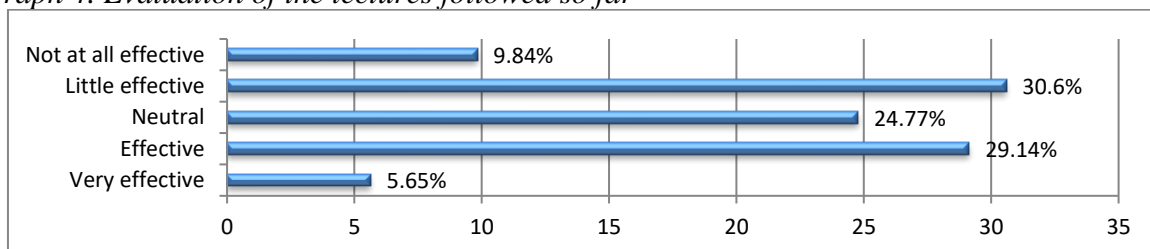
Graph 3. Are you attending lectures regularly?



4.5. How effective were the online lectures you have attended so far?

In 34.79% of cases it was assessed that online learning was effective or very effective, while in 9.84% of cases the lectures attended were not effective at all. Of the respondents, 30.6% of them estimate that the factors that affect the quality of the lecture should be improved.

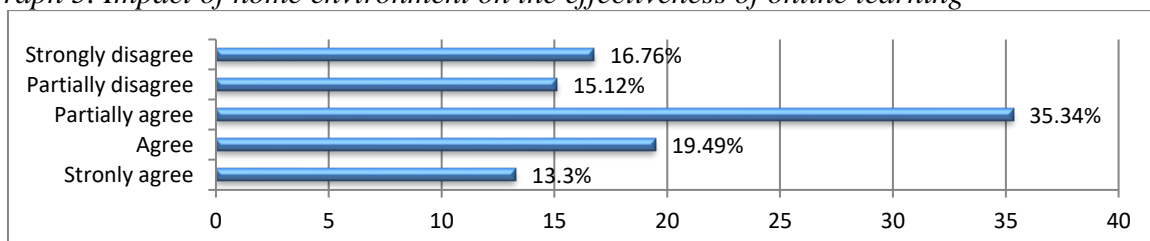
Graph 4. Evaluation of the lectures followed so far



4.6. Has the home environment affected the effectiveness of learning?

Of the respondents, 31.86% strongly or partially disagree that the home environment affects the effectiveness of online learning. Others estimate that the home environment has an impact on the effectiveness of online learning. This is based on the fact that Kosovo has a high birth rate and that the participation of new generations in the total population is high, and with this the number of family members is high, which makes it difficult to possess sufficient space for the individual, where they can develop online learning alone and without hindrance.

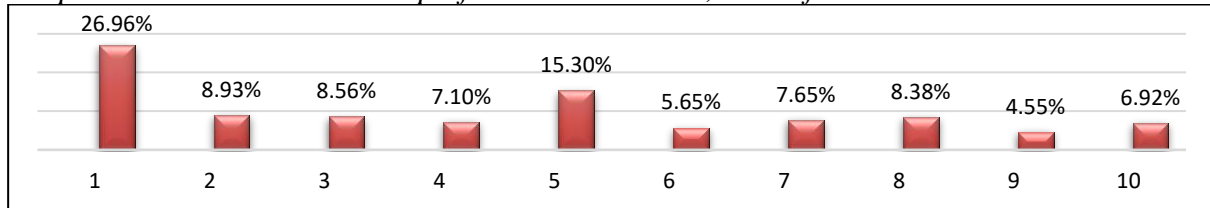
Graph 5. Impact of home environment on the effectiveness of online learning



4.7. How much are online lectures motivating you to conduct seminar, scientific or similar work?

When asked how motivated you are by online lectures to do seminar, scientific or similar work (from 1 to 10, where 1 = not at all, 10 = a lot), provided that a score of 5 means sufficient motivation to conduct papers, 48.45% of respondents have sufficient motivation to prepare papers.

Graph 6. Current motivation to perform more seminar, scientific or similar work

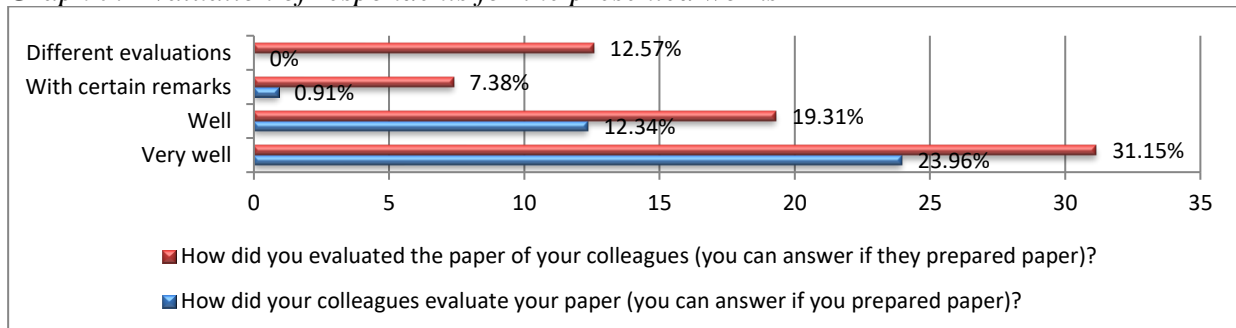


To the questions whether you and your colleagues have presented online papers of the above nature, and how they have been evaluated, the answers were as follows:

- I have presented 37.34% paper, I am preparing 30.78% and I have not presented 31.88%.
- My friends presented papers (the answer is also for students who did not participate in the survey, but their papers were followed by respondents) was the answer in 70.86% of cases, in 23.86% of cases was no and 5.28% of respondents had no response.

The following presentation shows how the respondents' papers were evaluated and how the respondents evaluated the papers of their colleagues:

Graph 7: Evaluation of respondents for the presented works

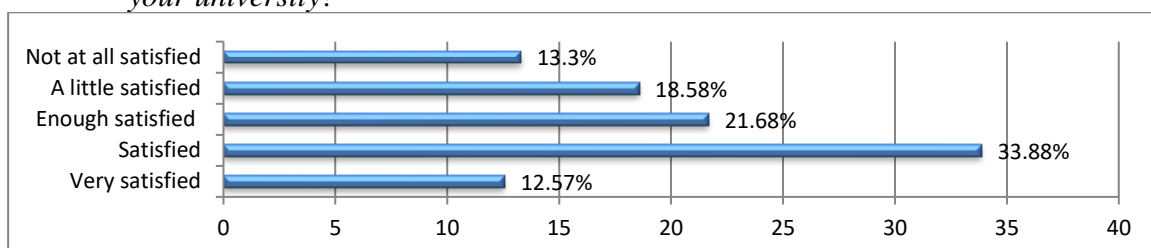


Since individual papers show individual value, from the data obtained we notice that the papers presented on online platforms have been evaluated mostly very well and well, but there is room for improvement.

4.8. Access through online University Management System to online learning

Students are satisfied with the access through the University Management System to online learning in 68.12% of cases, 18.58% are partially satisfied, while 13.3% of respondents are not at all satisfied. This is especially noticeable in cases when the presence evidenced on the platform is greater in number than the evidence of participants in lectures evidenced by the University Management System.

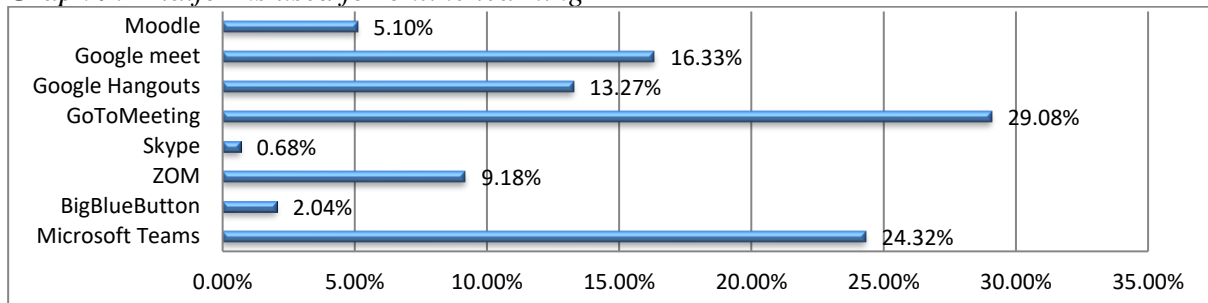
Graph 8. How satisfied are you with your access to the University Management System at your university?



4.9. Platforms used for online learning

Numerous online learning platforms are being used in Kosovo. Some of the respondents stated that they use more than one online learning platform, but mostly use the GoToMeeting platform in 29.08% of cases and Microsoft Teams in 24.32% of cases.

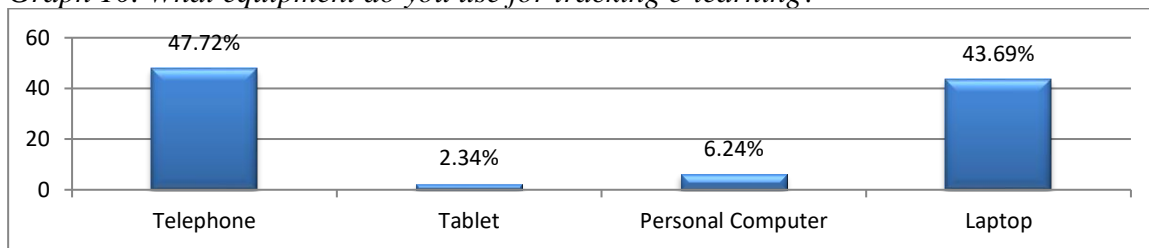
Graph 9: Platforms used for online learning



4.10. Equipment used to access online learning

Students in some cases use more than one device to access online learning. In 47.72% of cases for learning online they used mobile phones and in 43.68% of cases they used laptops. Tablets and personal computers were used less frequently. One of the causes of the opinion created for online learning is the impossibility for each student to have a personal computer, laptop or tablet. Attending lectures over the phone loses attractiveness and focus on learning.

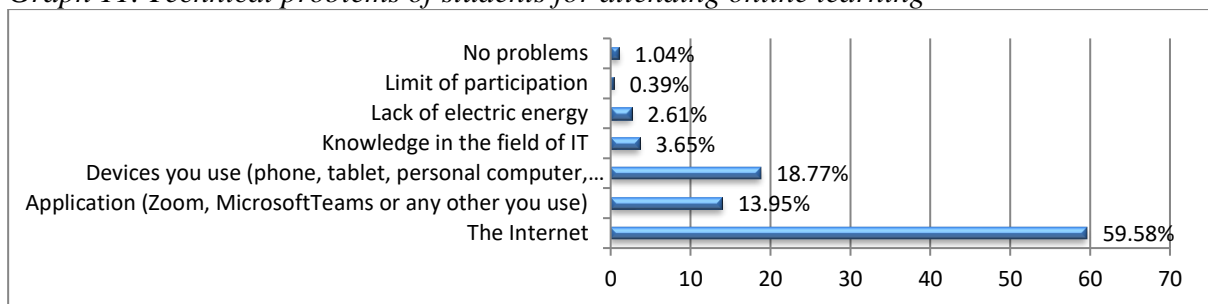
Graph 10. What equipment do you use for tracking e-learning?



4.11. Technical problems faced by students while attending e-learning

Only 1.04% of respondents had attended lessons without any problems online. Others had problems of various natures, with the most pronounced problem being regular and unobstructed internet access, which in 59.58% of cases. Other problems for attending online learning were the applications and equipment used, as well as the lack of proper knowledge in the field of IT, lack of electric energy and the limit of participation in online learning.

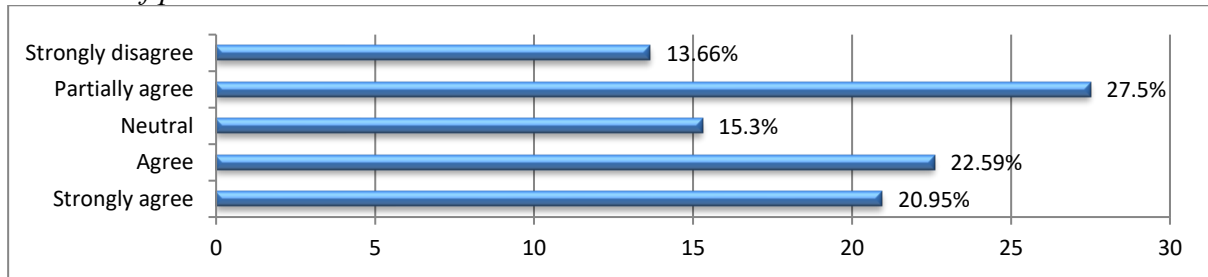
Graph 11. Technical problems of students for attending online learning



4.12. How much do you agree with the opinion "Online learning is essential in this time of pandemic"?

That online learning is necessary now in pandemic times, most students agree partially and strongly. Only 13.66% of respondents estimate that online learning in this time of pandemic is not necessary. This shows that despite the fact that we are facing an epidemiological crisis, there are still those who do not believe that there is a virus.

Graph 12. How much do you agree with the opinion “Online learning is necessary in this time of pandemic”?

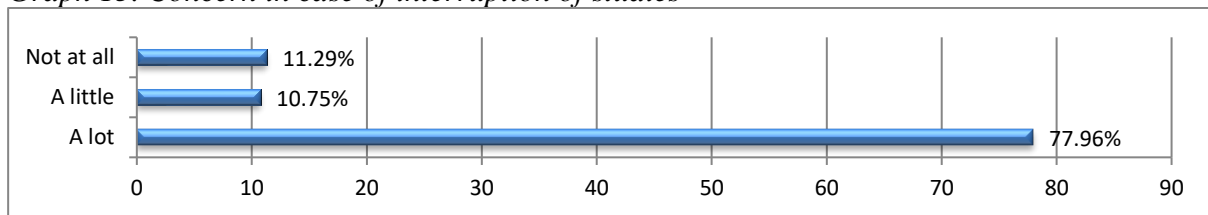


4.13. Failure to organize online learning and interruption of studies

Despite the mentioned difficulties, through online learning you are continuing your studies and you have no interruptions of studies. Would not the organization of online learning and with it the interruption of studies also bother you?

Despite the difficulties mentioned, the respondents in 77.96% of the cases are the answers that not organizing online teaching and interrupting studies would be a very big concern for students.

Graph 13. Concern in case of interruption of studies



5. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the results obtained after data processing, we can conclude that online learning in Kosovo is facing many challenges. Due to the low level of economic development and well-being, the few past experiences in the field of online learning, meeting the requirements of online learning (whether technical or human) is a major challenge universities especially for their students.

The low attractiveness for attending online learning expressed by the respondents is the result of many problems such as: limited opportunities to purchase equipment such as Laptop, Personal Computer or Tablet, internet distribution network with many problems, interruptions frequent power supply, as well as other problems mentioned.

Unsatisfactory motivation to attend online teaching can also be influenced by the quality of teaching, which raises the need to increase the commitment and dedication of teachers to suit online teaching.

We recommend that the provision of internet services be monitored to ensure the declared quantity and quality of internet distribution. Also a financial support for students for ICT equipment through soft loans, would improve the results in teaching and learning. Also, supporting teachers with training to maintain the trend in teaching based on ICT innovations, as well as with adequate IT equipment

We also recommend ongoing research in this area, but with deeper specifications, which will be an additional source of support for future education policies in the interest of raising the quality of education.

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