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Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Teaching from Teachers' and Parents' Perspective²

Extended summary

The new situation caused by the corona virus pandemic has put online teaching and distance learning in the foreground, which is very different from the previous teaching in the school environment. In the literature, the advantages of distance learning are the reduction of space and time constraints, saving valuable time on the way from home to school, reducing the cost of accommodation and transportation, as well as the ability to learn at your own pace (Mikelić Preradović et al., 2016). On the other hand, it is considered that this type of teaching does not contribute to the social and emotional development of children, has negative health consequences due to a long time spent in front of computers and requires appropriate equipment and knowledge of new educational technologies, which can be stressful and burdensome for students, teachers, and parents (Edwards et al., 2012; Zalaznick, 2019; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

In the Republic of Serbia, the entire teaching in schools began to be realized in the online form of organization, after the state of emergency had been introduced in March 2020. For this reason, it was important to examine how teachers and parents experienced this type of teaching process and their role in it, hence the aim of this paper was to determine the difference in the perception of advantages (positive sides) and disadvantages (negative sides) of distance learning between primary school teachers and parents of primary school children.

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The sample consisted of a total of 1120 respondents, out of which there were 570 teachers employed in primary schools (50.9%) and 550 parents (49.1%) of children attending primary schools in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. For the purposes of this research, an online questionnaire was created which contained 36 units, and for the purpose of writing this paper, four units were selected which referred to the assessment of advantages and disadvantages of distance learning implemented with students during 2020. The respondents also had the opportunity to list some other advantages or disadvantages of distance learning within the open-ended question, if they wished so.

The results showed that the most prominent advantage of distance learning, both for teachers and parents, is that the use of information technology and digital resources contributes to improving the quality of teaching. Teachers, statistically significantly more than parents, emphasize the advantage of using information technologies and digital teaching aids to improve the quality of teaching and to a greater extent consider working from home as an advantage of distance teaching. On the other hand, parents statistically significantly more than teachers believe that distance learning requires less resources. The most prominent negative side of distance learning, according to both parents and teachers, is the lack of direct contact with students. Teachers statistically significantly more than parents point out the following shortcomings of distance learning: lack of a direct contact with students, requires more preparation time, special digital educational resources, special knowledge and skills for preparation and implementation, and appropriate support for information technology and electronic teaching content.

The obtained results of this research showed that there are significant differences between teachers and parents in the perception of the distance learning process, in most of the examined aspects of the teaching process. In general, it is noticed that teachers experience the entire process of distance learning more intensively compared to parents, in other words, they perceive both positive and negative sides of distance learning to a greater extent. This can be largely explained by the fact that they are more involved in the whole process from a professional point of view, unlike parents who are now far more involved than in regular classes, but still as an auxiliary support and support for the whole process. The pedagogical implications of this research relate to the need to further develop digital competencies of teachers, but also the resources for new professional challenges (appropriate information technologies and digital resources) and support for their successful implementation, as well as the need to encourage and guide parents as indispensable partners for a more active role in the process of educating their children in terms of distance learning.

Keywords: online teaching, advantages, disadvantages, teachers, parents

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