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Original
research paper

The Potential of Online Platforms Compared to In-Person Teaching – Different Experiences of Teachers[2]

Extended summary

The first part of the paper is dedicated to the theoretical interpretation of the research related to the examination of the effectiveness of online teaching caused by the Corona virus pandemic. The experiences of different countries in the past period are dichotomous; they speak in favor of the affirmation of this type of learning, but also reveal numerous limitations, especially in comparison to the efficiency of traditional teaching. The second, methodological part of the paper, examines teachers' views on the methodological potential of implemented platforms for distance learning in relation to face-to-face teaching, which indirectly examines the nature of their application in the past two-year period.

Is distance learning a good solution compared to traditional teaching? How do teachers use online platforms in the distance learning system? Do they perceive their advantages and limitations in relation to traditional teaching? How do teachers with different professional experience and of a different age cope with the new digital environment? Do the implemented platforms offer different possibilities, according to teachers` opinions? Is there a difference in the attitudes of the respondents, depending on which educational cycle they belong to, or which platform they use? How do they experience and implement online teaching from the aspect of quality and efficiency and, accordingly, will they be ready for its implementation in the future and after the end of Covid 19 measures? - were the key questions for defining the goal of the research: to examine how teachers perceive the possibilities of implemented distance learning platforms in relation to traditionally organized teaching. In this way, indirectly, in the

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sub-context, the dominant way of implementing the selected platforms, i.e. the character of the realized online teaching, will be established. The research tasks are oriented towards examining teachers' views on the possibilities of implemented platforms in the domain of: 1) application of teaching technology (sociological forms of teaching work, teaching methods, teaching systems, media and types of communication); 2) quality and effects of online teaching; 3) applications of online teaching in the future; 4) the influence of independent variables on teachers' attitudes on the possibilities of using online platforms in relation to face-to-face teaching.

The research sample is represented by 604 primary and secondary school teachers from all districts of the Republic of Serbia. The research was carried out using descriptive method and survey technique. The results of the research showed that teachers: a) do not have a dominantly positive perception of the advantages of educational platforms for distance learning compared to traditional, face-to-face teaching in terms of the application of teaching technology; b) evaluate traditional teaching as more effective in terms of the quality of work of students and teachers; c) they do not show the expected readiness for an occasional use of the hybrid model in the future. The independent variables did not affect the final results of the study. A statistically significant difference was observed only in the attitudes of teachers of different educational cycles and users of different educational platforms.

The results of the research of the transfer character carried out by using a questionnaire in 2022 showed that teachers in all three educational cycles in the Republic of Serbia: 1) do not have a dominantly positive perception of the advantages of educational platforms for distance learning compared to traditional, face-to.face teaching in terms of the application of teaching technology; 2) that a positive perception of traditionalal teaching in terms of the quality and effects of the work of teachers and students in on-site teaching is a dominant one; 3) that the application of online teaching in the future is conditioned by the educational context, more precisely by external factors; and 4) that teachers of different ages, work experience, environment in which they work, dominant work experience related to the corona virus and training for the implementation of online teaching , equally evaluate the possibilities of online platforms from a methodological point of view in relation to traditional teaching.

Bearing in mind the entire research findings in the context of the results of foreign studies, it is clear that distance learning cannot be an ideal and universal substitute for formal education (Nikolic, Milojevic, 2020; Sutiah et al., 2020; Terenko & Ogienko, 2020). However, there is an evident need to improve the digital competencies of teachers (Al-Ababneh & Alrhaimi, 2020), especially in the field of instructional design, that is, the methodological interiorization of teaching technology in a digital environment. It is the way for the positive aspects of distance learning to produce long-term results, to be recognized and properly incorporated into the educational system. Accordingly, further research should be focused on examining teachers on: predictors of online teaching, their own competence for its implementation, and readiness for improving methodological ICT competencies. Of particular importance will be to consider the advantages and limitations of online teaching in the context of the defined independent research variables.

Keywords: distance education, online teaching, educational platforms, Covid 19, teaching strategies

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