Chapter 1

The impact of COVID-19 on education and on the well-being of teachers, parents, and students: Challenges related to remote (online) learning and opportunities for advancing the quality of education

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Chapter Summary: The closure of educational institutions as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 has affected the educational systems in the world. While the process of shifting learning to an online format has already become common to many educational institutions worldwide, several factors are assumed to affect the quality of remote or online learning, teachers' performance, and students' knowledge and skills. This chapter presents the research findings on the impact of COVID-19 on education and the well-being of teachers, parents, and students by listing the challenges relating to remote online learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with (n=13) parents and (n=11) teachers from pre-university public institutions within 14 municipalities, from seven regions of Kosovo. Findings from the study show that the circumstances created by COVID-19 have caused a great deal of concern among students, parents and teachers about assessment, distance learning inadequacy, and student overload., Opportunities to advance the quality of education, the support of teachers, parents, and families, coupled with practical suggestions for parties involved in the field of education are also included.

Keywords: COVID-19, Remote learning, Challenges, Opportunities

Introduction

More than 1 billion and 575 million students in approximately 188 countries around the world are reported to have been affected by the closure of schools and universities due to preventive measures taken by countries against the spread of COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2020a). Due to isolation, the use of technology has been considered the most appropriate (if not the only) alternative to keep educational systems functional in

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many parts of the world during this period. Despite the challenges in implementation, several advantages have been acknowledged in the need to shift to remote or online learning, among which stands out the opportunity for rapid progress in the field of digital education, which, in other circumstances, would take years (UNESCO, 2020b). The shift to the remote learning format has also been assessed as a good opportunity for teachers and students to become more creative (UNESCO, 2020b).

The spread of COVID-19 has also caused fear, anxiety and other concerns to citizens in different parts of the world, including groups engaged in the educational process, such as children, teachers and parents (NCIRD, 2020). Parents' concerns, apart from circumstances created due to physical distancing and other personal factors, are presumed to have been influenced by: an unwillingness to support their children in distance/online learning or home learning; the lack of access to technology and the Internet or the inadequacy of the technological formats used for children with special educational needs; economic hardship (UNESCO, 2020b). It was noted that the concerns of teachers engaged in the learning process were related to opportunities to conduct remote/online learning due to their level of knowledge and skills in the use of technology, access to technology and isolation at home (UNESCO, 2020a). Such concerns have been reported in particular by countries in which, prior to the circumstances created by the preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19, the level of use of technology by teachers in the classroom has been declared extremely low (UNESCO, 2020b). In addition, the demands to shift teaching to the online format have also been reported to have increased the level of stress and anxiety of teachers in different parts of the world (UNESCO, 2020).

Factors influencing the quality of teaching and online learning

Although the shift to online learning has already become part of many education systems in the world, the level of use and the way technology is used to achieve the quality of distance or online learning is considered to vary. This level depends on many factors, related to the various parties involved in the implementation of this learning format and the integration of technology in education systems before the school closure period as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For years, numerous studies around the world have focused on identifying factors that make technology integration successful in classroom teaching and learning. The same factors are assumed to influence the level of use of technology in the processes of shifting learning from school to a distance or online format, and the quality of learning in both formats. According to the findings of studies conducted so far, through which it was intended to identify the factors influencing the ability of educational systems to integrate technology in teaching, it is suggested that to achieve positive results in the integration of teaching technology,

it is required to understand the types of interchanges between teachers, students, and technology (Honey et al., 2000). In the group of factors influencing opportunities to successfully integrate technology into the classroom and make it part of the learning process, it has been suggested that the teachers' perspective on teaching has an impact. This means that it depends on whether the teachers consider the learning process:

- as a process of information transfer, or use the teacher-centered approach, within which the teacher communicates information to students and uses various assessment techniques to assess the memorization of data;

- as a process through which conceptual change is achieved (e.g. change of attitudes, knowledge, way of thinking) and/or see learning as a process that facilitates conceptual change, and therefore use the student-centered approach, where independence in learning is driven through discussions, debates, and questions among students, and by the forms of assessment through which conceptual change is assessed (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

The same factors related to teachers' perspectives on teaching methodology, which have proven to influence the level of technology integration in the classroom, are also expected to have an impact on the successful implementation of online learning, since the shift from school to the online format incorporates the concept of "flexible learning." According to this concept, regardless of whether they are online, the applied teaching methodologies should aim to stimulate learning and independence among the students, and the courses should be designed with the aim of supporting their individual needs (Huang et al. 2020). Therefore the student-centered approach is considered the main component of flexible learning (Lundin, 1999).

It has been proven that changes in education can be associated with a number of other factors, both when this change occurs due to preventive measures against the spread of pandemics, as well as when it is part of reforms within the educational system. Therefore, until change is defined as the creation of something unusual and involves everything that is different from the norm (Flamholtz & Randle, 2008), the request for change may not be readily accepted by the parties seeking the change, and may be meet with resistance. Studies in the field of education have proven that the highest level of resistance to change occurs within groups that lack interest in change, abstain from cooperation, and wish to maintain their status quo (Ibrahim et al., 2013). These studies analyzed the group of factors that can affect the implementation of educational changes and, in particular, when it was required to develop the skills and knowledge of educational leaders, teachers, and students (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Meanwhile, researchers such as Palmer et al. (2009) have pointed out several other factors that can encourage or discourage people to adapt to changes, such as: security, economic conditions, authority, status, responsibility, working conditions, level of self-satisfaction, or the time and dedication needed to implement the change.

Other studies link factors influencing teachers' resistance to change to psychological, personal, school-related, and organizational factors. According to a study that analyzed the psychological factors that can affect teachers' ability to be part of the change, teachers report discomfort, feeling lost, and experiencing doubt and worry when they depart from what they know and what makes them feel comfortable, and move toward something that is unusual and uncomfortable (Flamholtz & Randle, 2008; Ibrahim et al., 2013). Other group factors that have been found to influence teachers' resistance to change are teachers' stress, accumulated fatigue, and mental exhaustion, which, in addition to making them resistant to change, can also negatively affect their performance and level of job satisfaction (Margolis & Nagel, 2006).

Regarding the group of personal factors (in particular, factors identified as influencing the level of rejection or acceptance of changes in the educational system), the following are mentioned in the literature: attitudes of the educational staff toward changes, level of adaptation opportunities and trust in change of the educational staff, age of teachers and appropriate time to incorporate new approaches into their work methodologies (Flamholtz and Randle 2008), and the discrepancies teachers have in relation to the proposed strategies of change (Van Veen and Sleegers 2006). The level of commitment that teachers have with children/students and parents, has also been identified as a contributing factor to the level of rejection or acceptance of change (McKenzie and Scheurich, 2008). Factors related to school, or school culture, include: how norms and values are formed, how work is organized, how interpersonal relationships are, and how the need for change is interpreted by the school. These are other factors that are supposed to influence teachers' perceptions of change, adaptation, or rejection (Per & Kitson, 2004). Moreover, the success of distance or online learning has been proven to be influenced by the way instruction is provided and the level of clarification, access and appropriateness of technological equipment, time, motivation and support to participate in online learning (Ibrahim et al., 2013).

Positive effects of technology on learning processes

The effects of the use of technology in educational institutions have been researched many years ago by researchers in the field of education, through which it has been proven and promoted that technology can help in various educational processes (Hung & Yyen, 2010), it can have a positive impact on supporting learning in students (Dyson et al., 2015), it can assist teachers, and aid them in professional advancement and development (Donelan, 2016; Manca & Raineri, 2017). Therefore, the integration of technology in the classroom has been promoted and supported for many years now in different countries of the world (Cope & Ward, 2002). The development of information and communications technology (ICT) and its utilization in learning processes has enabled learning to become more open and teaching methodologies to

become more flexible, thus making students more independent and self-determined, becoming responsible for learning (Goode et al., 2007), gaining self-regulating abilities in relation to goal setting, and becoming self-monitoring and adaptable. Such opportunities also allow teachers to promote active learning so that learning is engaging and effective (Collis 1998), which makes them facilitators of the learning process (Huang et al. 2020;) and exempts them from the responsibilities of teaching alone by giving students responsibilities as well (Goode, 2007).

The closure of schools and the organization of distance (online) learning in Kosovo

The preventive measures announced by the Government of Kosovo against the spread of COVID-19 on March 11, 2020, have affected the lives and education of approximately 450, 146 students and 30, 528 teachers/professors in the country (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2017, 2019; MESTI, 2020c). Days later, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) in cooperation with other actors, including education directorates at the municipal level and non-governmental organizations, began planning distance learning for children of certain age groups, and for particular subjects (language and mathematics). Weeks later, distance learning for public pre-university education began with video recordings broadcasted on the national television, through which selected teachers, for the subjects of Albanian language and mathematics, presented lessons for students in grades 1-5. Furthermore, in the framework of the plans of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, for the further planning of distance learning, the tasks and responsibilities for the realization of learning were published, through which the role of each party engaged in educational institutions in the country was specified (MESTI, 2020b)

The organization of the pre-university system, quality of education, and integration of technology in teaching

The public pre-university system in Kosovo is organized into 1,094 public pre-university educational institutions, of which 44 are preschool institutions, 921 are primary/lower secondary schools, 123 are upper secondary schools, and six are special schools/resource centers. The total number of students in public pre-university education is reported to be approximately 345,540, while the total number of educational staff is 28,150, of whom 23,234 are regular teachers, while 3,350 are support staff (MESTI, 2020).

According to data from the strategic plans of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, the quality of education in Kosovo has been accompanied by a number of obstacles, which may be even more apparent and hinder distance or online

learning, including the performance of teachers and students during the realization of teaching in this format. According to the findings from the evaluation of the strategic education plan for 2011-2016, it is emphasized that despite the developments for teacher retraining, work still needs to be done to ensure that teachers reach the minimum qualification standards. Furthermore, within the same assessment, it is noted that only 40% of teachers engaged in the education system in Kosovo have the necessary qualifications according to the administrative instructions in force for teaching, and that only 57% of teachers currently engaged in the education system have attended training in the use of technology (ECDL). In addition, schools have little access to information and communication technology (ICT) and technology was not sufficiently and adequately incorporated into the curriculum, teaching or management of education, although this was planned to happen during the period of 2011-2016. However, although in this report there is no assessment that documents the level of achievement after this period, it is emphasized that the integration of information and communication technology in the education system will continue to be a priority within future education strategies. On the contrary, the lack of technology inclusion in the classroom will affect the future of students (MESTI, 2015). The low level of ICT integration into the teaching process in pre-university education in Kosovo has also been reported in other studies conducted in the country. For example, the report by the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute reported that 38.9% of teachers participating in this study have a sufficient level of computer literacy (Mexhuani, KPI, 2015). Among the participants who use technology in their classes, 25.6% reported using it to illustrate or shape teaching content, 17.1% to consult scholastic literature, 13.4% to prepare and present various teaching topics using pictures and tables, and 6% to convey new methods in the field of teaching and drafting various projects, for providing additional information. Nevertheless, it was also observed that a very large percentage of teachers participating in this study do not use technology to stimulate learning in their students, due to: their negative attitudes about the importance of classroom technology; doubts about students' ability to use technology, emphasizing that students do not have a computer at home; considering that a book is sufficient to achieve the desired results; students' economic conditions; and due to students' lack of knowledge of computer use for learning purposes. In addition, among the total number of participants, the group of teachers who teach English language and mathematics reported higher levels of technological literacy (Mexhuani, 2015).

Opportunities to advance the integration of technology in teaching

Although the insufficient inclusion of technology in the learning processes is documented by the evaluation of the strategic education plan for the period of 2011-2016 and the findings of previous studies, within the strategic education plan for the period of 2017-2021, there are objectives through which the aim is to advance of the

quality of education, which can contribute to the advancement of online learning or the integration of technology in teaching, and the further professional development of teachers. Participation and inclusion aims to increase, include and provide equal opportunities for development, training, and education of all individuals within pre-university education; Teacher professional development, which aims to improve the quality of teaching, and contribute to the implementation of reforms, which are expected to affect the improvement of learning outcomes in students. Furthermore, another objective of this strategic plan is teaching and learning, through which it aims to maximize the quality of teaching and implementation of curriculum-based competencies. Within the same objective, among others, is specified the necessity for the creation of electronic teaching materials, which are in line with the curriculum (MESTI, 2016). In the same strategy it is assumed that the development of technology over the next five years will take on other dimensions and, although they cannot be predicted, the strategic education plan may change in order to make the integration more rapid information and communication technology in school (MESTI, 2016).

Another contributing factor to the successful implementation of distance or online learning in Kosovo is the relatively high number of citizens in Kosovo who use technology. According to the findings from previous studies conducted in recent years, about 76.6% of citizens in Kosovo are Internet users. However, the use of the Internet has been reported to be primarily for entertainment purposes (social media). These same findings report that the largest number of Internet users comes from rural areas, low-income families (whose income is less than 200 euros per month), and citizens with secondary education. As for the age group, the highest levels of use have been reported by young people aged 10 to 19 and 20 to 29, while the lowest levels were found in the age group of over 30 years of age. In addition, 65.14% of participants reported having Internet at home, while 94.21% reported that they use the Internet the most at home. Participants who declared themselves unemployed also reported having more technological devices (smartphones) in possession than the employed population (STIKK, 2013).

Existing findings from previous research within the field of psychology and education confirm that factors related to education quality and technology use can influence the switching of the educational system from traditional to remote/online learning. Therefore, the quality of pre-university education in Kosovo and the insufficient level of technology integration in the teaching processes are expected to affect the implementation and process of distance/online learning in the country. However, there is no scientific evidence to measure the impact of COVID-19 on the circumstances of education and well-being of Kosovar citizens. Therefore, to fill this gap, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe the concerns of parents and teachers regarding the circumstances caused by quarantine, physical

distancing and the perspective of teachers and parents regarding distance or online learning. The findings from this study, which present the perspectives of teachers and parents, together with the findings from the studies of other countries that analyze the factors influencing the quality of educational systems and the use of technology, are foreseen to assist in the advancement of educational systems, the adaptation of education strategies, and the further organization of online learning so that the methods implemented have positive and long-term effects on all the parties and beneficiaries of the educational institutions involved. Therefore, these findings can be of great value to policymakers, educational leaders, and teachers. The findings and practical implications of this study can also greatly benefit mental health professionals and school psychologists, who can provide emotional support, increase motivation, improve attitudes toward change, and support the advancement of knowledge of sustainable educational skills of each beneficiary of the education system. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as a starting point for future studies that can assist other educational systems, in particular those of countries with low and medium economic development (which Kosovo is also a part of), in overcoming difficulties in reforming education systems.

Methodology

Research approach: This study used a qualitative research design. To explore the impact of COVID-19 circumstances (eg: physical distance and school closure) on teachers, parents and children, a descriptive phenomenological research approach has been used[1].

Participants: Participants: Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, with n=13 parents, and n=11 teachers. Participants for this study were selected using convenience sampling. All teachers and parents who at the time of the interview were involved or had children within the public pre-university education institutions, grades 1-9, in different cities of Kosovo had the right to participate in the study. Throughout the contact period, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the process at any time. No participants withdrew from the interview process. To protect the participants' confidentiality, all data through which their identities could be revealed were removed. The data collection process lasted from March 20 to April 1, 2020. In addition to the areas explored, the general characteristics of the participants were collected during the initial part of the interviews.

1　Descriptive phenomenology is based on the philosophical work of Husserl (Husserl, 1970), an approach, which explores the effects of a new phenomenon (eg: COVID-19). It is very important to study the experiences (in this case of teachers, parents and children) to reach an essential understanding of the phenomenon (Dowling, 2007).

Of the total number of teachers (n = 11): nine were women, two men, with work experience of 15.4 years on average (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Data on participants – Teachers

		n	%
Gender			
	Women	9	81.81
	Men	2	18.18
Level of Education			
	Associate's Degree	1	9.09
	Bachelor's Degree	9	81.81
	Master's Degree	1	9.09
Average number of students in class			
	N		11
	Average		25.4
Years of work experience as a teacher			
	N		11
	Average		15.4
Age			
	N		11
	Average		41.9

All participants in the capacity of parents (n = 13) were women with an average age of 36 years. Of the total number of parents, five held a bachelor's degree. The majority were unemployed (n=8), while the average number of children in their families was 2.5 (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Data on participants – Parents

		n	%
Gender			
	Women	13	100
	Men	0	0
Level of education			
	High school	4	30.7
	Associate's Degree	1	7.6
	Bachelor's Degree	5	38.46
	Master's Degree	3	23.07

Average number of children in the family			
	N		13
	Average		2.5
Employment situation			
	Employed	5	36.4
	Unemployed	8	61.5
Age			
	N		13
	Average		36

Geographical distribution of participants: The participating teachers are currently engaged in public pre-university institutions from grades 1 through 8, in different cities of Kosovo: (n = 3) in Prishtinë and the others in Fushë Kosova, Lipjan, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, Peja, Deçan, Gjakova, and Prizren (see Table 1.3). Participating parents had children in public pre-university institutions from grades 1 through 8 in different cities of Kosovo: (n = 4) in Prishtinë, (n = 2) in Ferizaj, (n = 2) in Suhareka, and others in Gjilan, Istog, Peja, Fushë Kosovë, Podujevë, and Suharekë.

Procedure: Interviews were conducted by students in the Department of Psychology of the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina": Master's Program in School Psychology and Counseling, within the course of "Learning and Motivation". The students engaged in data collection had prior knowledge and skills related to interview procedures, ethical principles, and the subject researched. Prior to the data collection process, students were informed in detail, by the course supervisor, about the interview format, purpose, research areas, procedures to be followed, data transcription, and the research design. As physical contact with the interviewees was impossible due to isolation, interviews were conducted online. Each individual interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour.

Semi-structured interviews with teachers: The interviews cover 7 areas 1) the level of technology use by teachers before the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) methods of implementing classroom learning before the COVID-19 pandemic; 3) the level of teachers' concerns; 4) methods of implementing online learning and student assessment; 5) assessment of distance learning, challenges and opportunities in Kosovo; 6) attitudes towards distance or online learning; and 7) the level of motivation of teachers to implement online learning.

Semi-structured interviews with parents: These interviews covered eight main topics: 1) changes and concerns observed in children during isolation; 2) the impact of change on family concerns; 3) mastery of technological equipment (students); 4)

learning methods followed by children; parent-teacher communication; 5) children's reactions to distance or online learning; 6) the type of parental engagement with children while they stayed at home and during children's online learning; and 7) the impact of parental engagement on online learning and isolation.

Data processing: Data was analyzed through the Atlas.it software. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed through classical content analysis[2], which is based on content analysis and coding of certain parts of the material, continuing with the collection of similar codes in clusters. The coding process for the responses was done with in-vivo coding, through which categories and codes for each category were generated. During the coding, it was ensured that the codes result in all interviews, substantive differentiation was made between the codes, and the frequency of each code was quantified (quantitative information). In order to better understand, descriptive memos were also used for certain codes, which clarified how to code. The process of data analysis, coding, was done individually by two coders. After finalization, the categories of responses and differences were discussed in detail, and after reaching agreement, a randomly selected a third coder, who was generally informed on the main topic and areas of study, coded interviews. The reliability rate for this study turned out to be acceptable (81.0%).

Results

The following results reflect findings from the perspectives of teachers and parents, by areas explored. In addition to the narrative description, the findings are accompanied by excerpts from the interviews, and processed data, presented in tabular form. The findings listed within the codes and subcodes are derived from the classical analysis of the content of the interviews, and are ranked according to the frequency of information identified among the interviews.

Level of use of technology by teachers before the COVID-19 period

Teachers, participants in the study, stated that they did not have any previous experience in conducting distance or online learning. Most of the participants also stated that until the precautionary measures against the spread of COVID-19, communication with colleagues on school issues and conveyance of information from the school was done via verbal communication or by phone (including Viber).

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2   Content analysis is "any technique used, which results in conclusions, objectively and systematically identifying the specified characteristics of messages/texts" (Holsti, 1969 in Stemler, 2000).

A relatively small number of them have stated that they possess official emails and that they use them for school matters. They also stated that they communicated with parents through daily meetings, parent-teacher conferences, individual meetings or via telephone communication.

> "All information from the school was transmitted verbally while in school-hours, in some cases through phone calls, but never via electronic mail, emails. Also, communication with parents was done through joint meetings with them, before or after school hours, or by phone (including communication on Viber). (# 1, teacher).

Of the total number of teachers, a small number of them (n = 4) stated that they have attended technology training. Among the most frequent trainings is ECDL, which is also considered helpful during the implementation of online learning. The use of technology is considered to be a problem for teachers, parents and students.

> "Teachers, parents, and students have significant problems with the use of ICT." (#4, Teacher).
>
> "The online technology training, ECDL, helped me implement online lessons." (#10, Teacher).

Prior to the COVID-19 period, technology for teaching matters was used by a relatively small number of teachers. However, the use of technology is stated to have been made solely for the purpose of retaining information or researching teaching materials:

> "In addition to textbooks, I also use information from the Internet." (#7, teacher).

Methods of lesson implementation before the COVID-19 pandemic

The teachers participating in the study stated that they use a certain format for the implementation of lessons following a similar structure of the implementation of the online format through which students have an active role during learning. They also reported that, as part of their commitments, they have individualized education plans for students with special educational needs.

> "Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I based my lessons on three main phases: introduction, realization of understanding, and reflection. In addition, interaction with students was a essential criterion of the lessons." (#4, teacher)
>
> "Evocation, realization of understanding, and reflection." (#9, teacher)
>
> "Each student has their own individualized education plans along with relevant commitments and activities, as well as comments that follow their implementation." (#12, teacher)

Level of teachers' concerns

The participating teachers stated that the circumstances created by COVID-19, at-home isolation, and the changes associated with the organization of the lessons made them feel anxious, uncomfortable, confused, insecure, and overloaded (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 Level of teachers' concerns

Codes	Subcodes
Level of concerns	Worry, discomfort regarding lesson implementation or student assessment through online classes Increased confusion regarding student assessment Uncertainty Overload of information related to online learning

Methods of implementing online learning and student assessment

According to this study's findings, teachers use a variety of alternatives to conduct remote or online learning, including virtual learning (Google Meet and Zoom), task compilation, and placement of materials in Google Classroom. Teachers stated that they use Viber and WhatsApp to communicate with students and parents. In fact, these applications are especially used for the delivery and assessment of students' learning tasks.

While in relation to assessment methods, different alternatives which have been used by teachers were presented. According to statements from teachers, the most frequent assessment of student performance was done through homework assessment. However, in the context of planning for ongoing assessments, teachers emphasize that they had combined assessment methods planned (see Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Methods of online learning implementation and student assessment

Codes	Subcodes
Method of conducting remote/ online learning by teachers	Compilation of tasks from the curriculum in combination with virtual learning (Zoom and Google Meet) Google Classroom Platform Giving homework to students every work day Making classroom groups (on Viber) Communication for homework is carried out through parents (Viber and WhatsApp)

Method of student assessment during remote/online learning	*At present*
	Homework assessment (submission of homework on Viber)
	Assessment – through homework
	Homework assessment for every lesson (by e-mail)
	Assessment of homework with stickers (first grade)
	Assessment with a grade in the basis of percentage per homework submitted
	Planned for the future
	Assessment will be made through communication, online homework, and tests (presentations, homework, and online tests)
	Creating online tests
	Assessment of students through a dossier that will compile their work throughout this period
	Individual assessment throughout the implementation of lessons on an online platform (Zoom)

Teachers' evaluation of remote or online learning, challenges, and opportunities

According to the teachers, the factors that may have affected the quality of the implementation of online education, namely planning for the learning process, relate to organizational factors, including inadequate level of cooperation from the school management and precarious organization in the distribution of information to teachers. However, they also stressed that, during this period, there has been proper cooperation between teachers. Regarding the lessons broadcast by public television, they express skepticism, consider the format short and vague, and state that the lessons presented are not in accordance with the curriculum offered by them at schools.

Furthermore, in the context of potential concerns about remote or online learning, the teachers express doubts about the technical issues that can hinder the process, show concern about whether this form will be accepted by students, and point out that student participation is low. Other concerns refer to their confusion about how students will be assessed.

Meanwhile, for teachers, an ongoing challenge for remote or online learning will be the large number of students, frequent communication with parents, and students' difficulty in using technological devices. However, they suggest that, in order to advance online learning, teachers need to raise the level of their knowledge and skills

in technology, and the level of interactions with students should also increase over the course of online learning (see Table 1.5).

Table 1.5 Teachers' evaluation of remote (or online) learning

Codes	Subcodes
Organizational factors: Evaluation of school planning and collaboration in regards to distance or online learning	Inadequate level of cooperation with school management Proper cooperation between teachers Weak organization of information distribution to teachers Good organization
Assessment of lessons broadcasted on public television	Skepticism about lessons compiled from MESTI Lessons from MESTI are short and unclear Units broadcast on TV are not in accordance with the curricula previously implemented
Concerns related to future remote or online learning	Technical issues Concerns about whether the format will be accepted by students Low student participation With regard to assessment: Confusion about student assessment at the end of the semester Added confusion with regard to student assessment
Challenges	Large number of students Frequent communication with parents Online learning as a challenge Students have difficulties using ICT
Opportunities and recommendations	Need for technology training More frequent interaction with students

Attitudes toward remote or online learning

Teachers consider remote or online learning as an advantage that enables them to be more flexible, as well as a process that will distract students from the pandemic and keep them engaged with the flow of lessons. However, they see it as useless for students with special educational needs (see Table 1.6).

Table 1.6 Attitudes toward remote or online learning

Codes	Subcodes
Attitudes towards online learning	Schedule flexibility is an advantage of online learning
	Online learning is child-friendly
	Online learning helps to distract students from the pandemic
	Online learning helps students to engage with lessons
	Online learning is useless for children with special educational needs

"… such a form of online learning is not useful for learning new study units. This form of learning only helps to reinforce retention of previous study units, but not in understanding a new study unit. Given the fact that children in my class need more supervision, online learning does not give me complete confidence of their proper engagement." (#12, teacher)

Teachers' motivation level to implement remote or online learning

The largest number of teachers have stated that they are motivated to continue with the realization of distance or online learning, and as a contributing factor to have influenced this motivation is the expression of gratitude and thanks from the students' families. However, in the group of risk factors, which have been observed to have influenced their lack of motivation, is the lack of physical presence of students and the suspicions that the results from learning in this format will not be the same as from in-school learning (see table 1.7).,

Table 1.7 Level of motivation of teachers and influential factors

Codes	Subcodes
Teachers' motivation in implementing remote/online learning and contributing factors	Motivated
	Unmotivated
	Risk Factors
	Absence of physical presence of students
	Results from lessons will not be the same
	Supporting Factors
	Gratitude and acknowledgments from the students' families
	Support from schools

"The part that influences demotivation the most is the fact that, no matter how hard I try, the learning outcomes will not be the same as they would be in school settings. I am afraid that teachers' shortcomings will negatively affect students." (#3, teacher).

"Support from the school principal and school management, in parallel with the provision of clear guidelines for teachers, results in increased levels of job satisfaction and willingness to contribute to online teaching." (#5, teacher).

Students' (children's) concerns per the perspective of parents

The results of the study highlight the level of concerns and other changes in students (children) and families. From the parents' perspective, during the period of isolation, it was observed that children had changes in behavior, were scared (showed signs of panic), desperate, stressed, frightened, anxious, confused and passive. Various changes and levels of anxiety have also been observed within the family, including increased burden and worry levels, increased fear, pressure, and changes in sleep rhythms (see Table 1.8).

Table 1.8 Concerns of children (students) and family (parents)

Codes	Subcodes
Changes and concerns observed in children during isolation	Frustrated In panic Passive Stressed Distressed Scared Concerned Confused
Changes and concerns in families	Worried about children because of the halt of other activities Insomnia Overload Fear Pressure

Parents also report an increased burden on children and their coping with this situation, where they are expected to do their best in lessons, while everything around them has changed – and fear, frustration and insecurity for the near future prevail. In addition, a large part of the impact on children is the impossibility of personal space and activities that are only theirs, where in normal conditions going to school and contact with peers made this possible.

> "…my daughters have been showing feelings of fear …" (#8, mother).
>
> "…children on the other hand are very frustrated that they can't go out and that they have to do homework all the time." (Interview #1, mother).
>
> "The emotional state of the child is impacted a lot by the quarantine, and this causes pressure on parenting and presents as an impossibility to calm the children about the current situation." (Interview #11, mother).

Possession of technological equipment

According to the study findings, students possess sufficient technological equipment to attend online school. In most cases, parents have stated that their children have more than 1 (one) technological device, which they can use to participate in online learning.

> "…Children have special (technological) devices that they can use to complete school tasks, such as phones, iPads, computers, or laptops…" (#5, mother).
>
> "…Children own technological devices – phones, laptops and iPads." (#1, mother).

Methods of participation in distance or online classes and reactions of students and parents

According to parents, most children have participated in remote learning through lessons broadcast on public television. Some of them have also followed online lessons with teachers, on online platforms, and/or on Viber, in addition to watching classes on television. Meanwhile, parents' communication with teachers has been done mainly through Viber, email, or Skype.

From the parents' perspective, carrying out remote and online learning and staying at home has had a positive effect, as they have become able to distract themselves from the pandemic situation, and spend quality time with their children. However, parents have perceived that their children (students) do not see online learning as an obligation and are dissatisfied. In addition, the change in learning has led to additional commitments for parents, both in monitoring children during online learning and in communicating with teachers. They also stressed that commitments to their children's lessons and homework have become a burden for them (see Table 1.9).

Table 1.9 Methods of participation in online learning, parents' engagement, and reactions toward learning

Codes	Subcodes
Learning method followed by children	Remote learning, study units on public television Online learning with teacher on different platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, Skype) Communication with teachers on Viber
Method of communication between parents and teachers	Smartphone apps (Viber, WhatsApp) Email Skype

Children's reactions in regards to remote/online learning	Children are dissatisfied Children do not consider lesson attendance as an obligation
The type of parental engagement throughout children's online learning and at-home stay	Different activities with children including their preferences Communication with teachers (for children's homework) Psychological and emotional support for children
Effects of parental engagement throughout the implementation of online learning and isolation	Positive: Distract from the pandemic situation Spent quality time with their children Negative: Overburden from the educational process, homework aid, and arrangements in regards to their children's learning

Another important factor that has resulted from the analysis of interviews is the level of difficulty of homework with regard to dealing with online learning and the work of parents with their children at home.

> "If the homework is not in my field of expertise and my daughter is stuck with it, I seek help from another family member (e.g., the girl's grandmother)."(#1, mother).

Parents' assessment and recommendations for the implementation of remote or online learning

Parents claimed that several challenges and advantages accompany the process of conducting remote or online learning. According to them, the short duration of the class, the ambiguity of the homework, the asynchrony of the teaching units broadcast on television with the classes attended by students at school, the lack of other subjects besides basic ones, the home environment, the level of parental education, and the lack of physical conditions (separate rooms) are factors that have hindered the quality of teaching. However, they also considered the organization of remote learning and the speed of its implementation an advantage, and recommend that, during the development of online learning, it would be important to improve the interaction between teachers and parents, improve online learning, provide better explanations for assignments, and clarify student assessment methods (see Table 1.10).

Table 1.10 Parents' assessment and recommendations for the implementation of remote/online learning

Codes	Subcodes
Parents assessment in regards to methods of implementation for remote/online learning	*Challenges:* Duration (short) of classes on TV Classes on RTK are not clear, the homework is not seen clearly enough TV broadcast lessons are not synchronized with children's learning up until now Other classes are missing Home environment has sometimes hindered the attendance of remote or online learning Parents' level of education Physical conditions – absence of separate rooms for children Tools for work *Advantages* Online/Virtual learning was welcome The rapid response of MESTI and schools - to be appreciated
Recommendations to improve quality of remote (online) learning	Better interaction between teachers and parents Online learning needs to be improved Clarification of homework Explanation of how assessment will be done

Common findings between the two groups – teachers and parents

During the execution of the classical content analysis of the two target groups, some common findings have resulted which are indicative of the strong presence of these factors in this situation. Assessment of children's learning during this semester, concern and overload, and assessment of learning achieved so far are three factors that result in greater frequency in both target groups.

"…what will be done in regard to assessment?" (#4, mother).

"One aspect that I am confused about is the assessment of students at the end of the semester. Although I keep notes on student engagement, I need to meet with a few other teachers to decide on how to evaluate them." (#1, teacher).

"Responsibilities and commitment to children are ongoing; however, in the current situation, the responsibility is even greater, especially in supporting them psychologically and emotionally." (#6, parent).

"…all teachers are facing their own uncertainties, perhaps because they were not prepared and had never imagined themselves under these circumstances." (#3, teacher).

"The broadcast on RTK is far behind what was taught to children at school or vice versa: lessons from RTK are further along and children have not yet reached these lessons." (#3, parent).

"…The lessons presented on national television are in a much shorter format and there is a lack of teacher-student interactivity." (#2, parent).

"The units that are being presented on television by MESTI are not in accordance with the curriculum previously implemented by the school." (#3, teacher).

Conclusions

The findings of this study confirm that social isolation and the new circumstances created against the spread of COVID-19, including changes in education, have caused a number of concerns for children, parents, and teachers in Kosovo. These changes are in line with expectations that the spread of COVID-19 would cause fear, anxiety, and other concerns among citizens around the world (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2020).

Furthermore, these circumstances, which have influenced the changes in the engagement of teachers, parents, and students are confirmed to have influenced both parents' and teachers' overburden. However, as highlighted by other countries, these concerns have also been affected by other changes, including the impact of COVID-19 in the field of education and inexperience or lack of preparation of teachers and parents to support students or their children in remote or online learning – also influenced by the inadequacy of the methods used for online learning to the individual needs of students (UNESCO, 2020a). In addition, these results confirm that, as in other countries of the world, knowledge of the use of technology and the demand for change, in conjunction with the circumstances caused by COVID-19, can bring on a number of concerns, including increased stress and teacher anxiety (UNESCO, 2020b).

However, despite the declared changes and concerns, the early implementation of remote and online learning has been confirmed to have been positively assessed during this period, keeping students engaged and distracting them from the pandemic. In addition, while increasing parental responsibilities, home isolation is considered valuable and influential in raising the level of quality and productive time among family members.

The findings of this study confirm the implementation of remote and online learning and demonstrate the efforts of teachers and students to engage in the learning processes. The findings also show that most students have no problems with possessing the technological equipment needed for online learning (including smartphones, computers, laptops, and iPads) that can negatively influence their participation in

online educational processes. In addition to indicating the possibility of effective implementation of online learning and the integration of technology into teaching, this fact also reconfirms the findings of previous studies that emphasize that about 76.6% of citizens in Kosovo are Internet users and that families in Kosovo, despite their income, housing area, level of education, and other socioeconomic factors, have sufficient technological equipment (STIKK, 2013).

Similar to previous studies, which measured personal, psychological and organizational factors influencing the successful participation of teachers in change, in this case in the implementation of online learning, in Kosovar teachers too, the demand for change is observed to be accompanied by a range of personal, psychological, and organizational factors (Flamholtz & Randle, 2008 in Ibrahim et al., 2013). According to the results, teachers' attitudes towards change are influenced by lack of experience in distance or online learning, insufficient level of skills and knowledge related to the use of technology, lack of clear instructions for putting online teaching into practice and lack of cooperation. These factors have been shown to bring anxiety, overload, and insecurity to teachers, in addition to further raising their stress levels, making them feel tired or mentally exhausted, increasing their level of resistance to change, hindering their performance and reducing their level of job satisfaction (Margolis & Nagal, 2006).

Alternatives used by teachers to communicate with students and parents about school issues (e.g. via Viber, WhatsApp), lack of knowledge and skills for the integration of technology in teaching, are considered factors influencing attitudes of teachers in regards to technology and online learning. Furthermore, these may be issues that will affect the further development or advancement of the quality of teaching and education in general. This set of findings also confirms the existing data from the evaluation of educational policies and the findings of previous studies, which state the low level of skills and knowledge of teachers for the integration of technology in learning and their attitudes that technology is not considered as a tool through which learning can be stimulated or an important tool for advancing the quality of education (MESTI, 2017; Mexhuani, 2015).

In addition, according to the findings from this study, it is pointed out that teachers within the school have used pedagogical approaches through which they have encouraged the active participation of students in lessons. However, in the context of the approaches that teachers have stated to be using during online learning, elements from interacting with students, through which their engagement and active participation in different subjects is assessed, are missing. In addition, the assessments and attitudes for distance learning realized during the pandemic period highlight the inadequacy of the alternatives adopted during the pandemic, with special emphasis on the teaching units broadcast through public television in relation to schools' curricula, of school lesson implementation and their unsuitability to the individual needs of students.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study confirm the willingness of teachers and their motivation to advance the level of knowledge and skills needed to advance the quality of education, a contributing fact that can facilitate the creation of opportunities for the development of digital education, empowerment of teachers and students, and raising the level of creativity and opportunities to become more innovative. Similar factors have been found to contribute to the advancement of the online learning format, as well as to the improvement of learning in general, as they imply the importance of increased encouragement and support for the individual needs of students (UNESCO, 2020b).

Practical implications and suggestions for future research

The findings of both groups of study participants – teachers and parents – confirm the need to further advance remote and online learning, to increase interaction between teachers, parents and students, to improve the way in which students are instructed to performing tasks, and to clarify assessment methods. Previous studies confirm the impact of all of these factors on the quality of online learning, learning stimulation, motivation and improvement of teachers' attitudes toward technology, and integration of technology into learning processes (Huang et al., 2020).

School principals can have a positive impact on supporting teachers to change when they believe in change. They promote change, address teachers' concerns, helping them feel less anxious and irritated by change-related concerns (Ibrahim, et al., 2013; de la Varre et al., 2010). Reminding teachers of the benefits of change and increasing their professional development, skills and knowledge needed for change are other factors that can facilitate change. Also, findings from studies recommend that teachers should be part of the change, because this will help them feel involved in planning professional developments and give their perspective on what can be most effective in the development of any kind of reform within the school (Kise, 2005; MacNeill et al., 2005). Teacher support and motivation to be part of the change are also other organizational factors that have been proven to have an impact and are suggested to be considered by school principals when implementing change (Rayan and Ackerman, 2005). During the development of distance or online learning and or during the implementation of learning on school premises, educational policy makers, responsible educational institutions and other actors involved in the school process, including school psychologists, are recommended to create programs to support teachers, parents and students to overcome concerns that affect well-being and performance in the learning processes. The data from this study revealed different types of concerns present in groups of students, which have been proven to have an impact on deteriorating mental health and even behavioral changes in children (NCIRD, 2020). Also, creating appropriate educational programs based on the individual needs

of students, supporting welfare and mental health, and raising the level of support for families, teachers and guardians should be considered necessary (Covid-19 Educational Disruption and Response: UNESCO, 2020b). Moreover, despite the circumstances, COVID-19-related concerns and commitments about their children's learning can be overwhelming for parents. The situation created during the pandemic can be considered as a priority in increasing the cooperation of the school with the parents, their support to overcome the challenges related to the school, and at the same time to advance their level of knowledge and skills for appropriate support practices in regards to their children, in order to improve behaviors, foster learning, and create a positive approach to school.

The lack of sufficient skills and knowledge of the teachers participating in the study to integrate technology and identify appropriate approaches to promote learning, whether they are technological or pedagogical, and the inadequacy of distance learning programs for the individual needs of students, confirms the need to advance online learning, the quality of pre-university education, the knowledge and skills of teachers and the integration of technology into learning processes. Therefore, as in other countries, the circumstances created can be considered as an advantage in improving the quality of education, the performance of students and teachers, while helping to achieve the objectives of the education strategy, through which the aim is to provide equal opportunities for education of all individuals within pre-university programs, improving the quality of teachers, and maximizing the quality of teachers (MESTI, 2016).

Studies conducted in the field of education and technology also suggest that having the opportunity to integrate technology into the classroom requires an understanding of teachers' level of knowledge in relation to technology[3], the knowledge of course content[4], pedagogical knowledge[5], knowledge of pedagogical content[6], knowledge of technological content[7], technological pedagogical knowledge[8] and technological

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[3] Technology knowledge refers to a variety of technological knowledge that ranges from low-tech technologies, such as pencils and paper, to digital technologies, such as the Internet, digital videos, interactive whiteboards, and various computer programs.

[4] Knowledge of course content refers to the knowledge of current subjects that the teacher must implement or already implements.

[5] Pedagogical knowledge refers to teaching methods and includes the knowledge of teachers in managing the classroom, planning the lesson and evaluating students' achievements.

[6] Knowledge of pedagogical content refers to teachers' knowledge on how to transfer knowledge to students.

[7] Knowledge of technological content refers to teachers' knowledge of how certain content can be presented through technology and how much teachers understand that by using specific forms of technology they can change the way students understand specific concepts in certain areas.

[8] Technological pedagogical knowledge refers to the level of knowledge that teachers possess about how different technologies can be used in teaching and understand that the use of technology can change the way teachers teach students.

knowledge of content[9](Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Shulman, 1986). One of the theoretical perspectives present in the educational field research by which the abovementioned factors can be assessed is Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK; Mishra and Koehler 2006). Through this perceptive, which was developed based on Shulman's construction of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), three areas for teacher knowledge are addressed: technology, pedagogy, and content (Thompson and Mishra 2007). According to this perspective, the interplay among these three components is necessary to enable the association of learning content with the appropriate pedagogical methods and technology (Schmidt et al. 2009).

Throughout the development of online learning and in the efforts to integrate technology into the learning processes, teaching staff should also be supported when it comes to enhancing their knowledge and skills on improving teaching methodologies with a student-centered approach. As emphasized by previous studies, technological and communications developments, their use in teaching processes, and teacher approaches in which the student is at the center promote active learning, remove teachers from traditional lecturing shaping their roles as facilitators, increase students' responsibilities, make learning more open, and stimulate students to be more independent, have the opportunity to self-determine, gain self-regulatory skills, be self-monitoring, and adapt (Goode et al., 2007; Huang et al., 2020).

Influenced by the same circumstances, due to preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19, practices from other countries of the world promote the flexible learning approach during the implementation of learning and assessment of students. According to the flexible approach, students are given the opportunity to master the subject materials in different forms, specifying the time when they want to interact with others or to learn, and the format of their evaluation. In addition to providing students with the opportunity to access teaching materials in a variety of ways, flexible teaching also enables teachers to offer students various learning activities in different online applications. Furthermore, assessment methods can also be flexible, including presentations, group projects, peer/student assessment, standard forms of online testing, and e-portfolios (Casey & Wilson, 2005; Gordon, 2014; Huang et al., 2020).

Isolation at home and engagement of students for longer periods of time in technological equipment while they carry out school activities and/or are in contact with peers, in the absence of monitoring and lack of information about factors that may harm them, will increase the likelihood of their involvement in violent behavior or victimization from cyber-bullying. Therefore, during the development of further

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9   Technological knowledge of content refers to the knowledge that teachers are required to have to integrate technology into their teaching in any field in accordance with the content. Through this component, the teacher's knowledge is evaluated in integrating the three components: learning the content, using appropriate pedagogical methods, and implementing technologies (Schmidt et al. 2009).

online programs, the parties involved are encouraged to take preventive measures, increase student monitoring, and raise awareness of teachers and students to prevent risk factors, while building a suitable environment for online learning and the establishment of healthy relationships between peers.

Findings of previous studies through which the multidimensional factors of violence in Kosovo's public schools have been explored report that online violence is present among students from grades 6 through 9 in public schools in Kosovo, including harassment/threats through the Internet/phone (13.8%), gossip about students via the Internet/e-mail/Facebook/other social media (10.8%), and threats/shaming through photo sharing (5.9%) (Arënliu et al., 2020).

The findings of this study represent the changes, concerns, and factors influencing teachers, children, and parents' participation in and benefiting from the online education processes. However, these elements reflect the initial effects of shifting the classroom-based education system to an online format and the effects of the changes caused by the new circumstances. Therefore, while these findings may serve as a basis for supporting parents, teachers, and other actors involved in the lives and education of children for improving the quality of education, further research may be needed to measure other eventual changes in the subsequent stages of social isolation and the current circumstances created against the spread of COVID-19, as well as the further impact of changes in education during the following stages of the academic year. Ongoing research on the issues addressed in this chapter, and other factors influencing the education and mental health of children, parents and teachers, can help educational institutions in carrying out possible interventions to support students, teachers, parents, school psychologists and others engaged in the education system, in advancing their learning and well-being, both during the COVID-19 period and after returning to school.

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