A QUALITY "ONLINE" TEACHER – WHAT DO STUDENTS APPRECIATE AND VALUE IN TEACHERS DURING DISTANCE LEARNING?

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Abstract. The goal of the research was to determine what students praise and value about university teachers during distance learning, i.e. what qualities, according to students, characterize effective online teachers. By combining a quantitative and qualitative approach to research, we determined which teachers' qualities students highlighted as positive, examined the shortcomings in the work of teachers that students noticed in certain academic subjects, and determined differences in the evaluation of the quality of teacher work in relation to the level of study. The research included a total of 965 students, of which 674 were undergraduate students and 291 were students in master's academic studies. The paper used a descriptive-analytical method, a survey technique and a questionnaire for student evaluation of the quality of the teacher's work. The results of the research showed that students of both study levels during distance learning positively value the ways teachers treat them - appreciation, respect, understanding, investing extra effort when explaining content, fairness, correctness and a positive atmosphere in classes. In addition, students in master's studies especially appreciate discussion that enables them to discuss certain topics and give different opinions in class. Despite certain limitations of the study, the results overall suggest that students value and rank certain characteristics of teachers in an almost identical way regardless of whether it is an online or a face-to-face class.

Keywords: online teaching; teacher quality; higher education; evaluation; students

Introduction

The situation appeared around the world due to the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has led a large number of scientists in the fields of economics, medicine, industry and others to examine and determine the impact of the pandemic on various sectors and aspects of people's lives. In the field

of education, the effectiveness of distance learning was investigated (Kuleva 2020; Ivanović & Antonijević 2020; Stojanović 2020; Al-Karaki et al. 2021), then the challenges and opportunities of distance learning in different fields and levels of education (Dubey & Pandey 2020; Omerdić et al., 2021; Matijašević et al. 2021), as well as there were studies in attitudes and opinions of students about online classes during the pandemic, etc. (Al-Mawee at al. 2021; Aleksić-Veljković et al. 2020; Getova at al. 2020). However, despite a large amount of research, there is no definitive and unique answer to the question of how effective online education is and to what extent it satisfies the various parties involved in the learning process. Despite "there are positive results and findings related to the effectiveness of online learning, it is still unclear whether this applies to all types and levels of study" (Nguyen 2015, p. 311), as there are groups of students and teachers who have positive attitudes and the benefit of online learning, but also groups whose attitudes are negative and prefer traditional, face-to-face teaching.

Starting from the prejudice and, in our opinion, the widespread misconception that teachers mainly teach (implement teaching) in the way they were taught and according to the model of the teachers who taught them (Gourneau 2005), we decided to conduct research focusing on the characteristics, the way of working and the behavior of university teachers towards students during distance learning. The goal was to determine which qualities, forms of behavior and teaching skills students recognized and positively valued during the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. what, in their opinion, characterizes a high-quality, efficient "online" teacher. At the same time, we consider an effective teacher to be a teacher who, during online classes, had a positive impact on the education of students and left positive impressions on them (Walker 2008).

Characteristics of a good teacher
The teaching profession existed even before the creation of the school as an institution. Changes in society have influenced the role of teachers to change, expand, supplement, become more complex, and due to the need to innovate, intensify the teaching process and increase the educational achievements of students, the challenges and demands placed on teachers became greater and more numerous. "Teachers have always been expected to set an example not only for students, but also for the whole society" (Lasić 2015, p.102). How important the role of the teacher in the life of students (children, students at all levels of schooling) is, is shown by the fact that most of them often identify with the teacher and plan or want to do that job. Despite the fact that "a lot has been written and discussed about the teaching profession, an insight into the existing literature indicates a multitude of different approaches and understandings, but there is no agreement on what are the most significant characteristics of this profession (and thus of the

good work of a teacher)" (Stančić 2011, p. 212), because teacher professionalism is "a dynamic construct largely conditioned by the context" (ibid.). In addition to educating, "transfer" knowledge, training, developing numerous skills, abilities and habits of students, the teacher today is also an organizer, planner, coordinator, initiator, motivator, diagnostician, innovator and a partner in work. He should not be indifferent, but to cooperate with students, strive, endeavor and want them to successfully learn the material (Marković 2018). He should perform his work professionally, conscientiously and responsibly, behave in accordance with professional standards and pedagogical ethics, be motivated, patient, persistent, persevering and creative. The teacher should be free from universal recipes, daily routines and negative pedagogical traditions. The modern teacher is open, flexible, continuously improves and follows new changes, because only a teacher who possesses competencies in various aspects of the educational process can be a quality teacher (Lasić 2015). Students expect teachers not only to offer 'one-way path' during classes, which they consider an adventure, but to provide many 'paths' that lead to different destinations. In that adventure, at every obstacle, the teacher should welcome them with a smile, show understanding, care and affection, encourage and inspire them to continue their journey (Gourneau 2005). In practice, however, it is difficult to find a teacher who is "tailored" to the students in every respect and whose work most of them are satisfied with. While the evaluation and collection of information about the work of teachers at different educational levels is done formally, sporadically, insufficiently organized and with different goals, sometimes the fact that the evaluation of the work of teachers is the basis for its improvement and change is forgotten. In this regard, we agree with Anđelković and Petrović, who point out that "feedback on teachers' work plays an important role in teaching practice and teaching organization and affects the quality of teacher work, but it is not always used in adequate ways" (Anđelković & Petrović 2018, p. 41).

Online teaching and the teacher

At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, similar to most countries in Europe and the world, changes in the organization and implementation of teaching at all levels were inevitable in R. Serbia. Kindergartens, schools and faculties were mostly closed, direct (contact) teaching was suspended, and educational opportunities for students at all levels were denied and/or reduced (Tonković et al. 2020).

The sudden and unexpected transformation of education from the previous, usual "direct" teaching to "online", i.e. distance learning in R. Serbia was conditioned by the declaration of a state of emergency on March 15, 2020 – Official Gazette of the RS, No. 30/2020. Such a situation represented a "challenge for both students and teachers" (Ivanović & Antonijević 2020, p. 23), because they had to "face emotional, physical and economic difficulties" (Aleksić-Veljković et al. 2020, p. 206). Although technology in education (various types of presentations, virtual teaching,

video conferencing tools, learning software, etc.) was used long before the start of the pandemic, the education system has changed drastically since that moment. There was neither time nor conditions for a preliminary check of the readiness, digital competences and technical equipment of either teachers or students (Getova et al. 2020). Teaching continued exclusively using electronic forms of communication, using educational platforms, virtual classrooms and web portals for learning.

The effectiveness of online classes is conditioned by numerous factors, where "not all of them are easy to describe and easy to measure" (Nguyen 2015, p. 315), so research in that area was faced with the challenge and problem of how to measure each of the factors that influence effectiveness of online classes, and the quality of students' knowledge acquired in that way. The most common reason is that the researchers use different measuring instruments, approaches, respondents, and the research results they get are quite different. In the research, Jovanović and Dimitrijević (Jovanović & Dimitrijević 2021, p.14) point out that "teachers most often recognize evaluation obstacles that include the assessment of effort, not knowledge, insufficient insight into real activities and students' acquired knowledge". They also noticed that the final grades were significantly higher compared to the grades students got during regular classes.

Starting from the Walker's (2008) point of view, he believes that one of the important factors that influence the success of teaching is the teacher's personality and finds that there are 12 clear characteristics that consistently positively influence students, our intention was that his findings (assertions, results) compare with the attitudes and opinions of students - future teachers of Faculty of Education in Jagodina (FEJ) about the characteristics of their teachers during online classes.

The importance of the teacher's personality and its characteristics is also supported by the fact that the success of online teaching is conditioned by a good relationship and communication between teachers and students (Keengwe & Kidd 2010). Teachers need to be ready to help students master the material, and to be responsible, well-organized, "dedicated, quick and timely in responding to students' emails and text messages" (Sun & Chen 2016, p. 166). It is important that the lectures are accompanied by adequate materials that the teachers regularly update, post additional materials that would facilitate the students' learning, but also send feedback to the students about the quality of the tasks they have done. Timely, continuous feedback with teacher's comments, suggestions and remarks can significantly influence the activity and engagement of students (Gewin 2020). Furthermore, not only that the feedback is important but also it should be "clear and precise, sufficiently comprehensible, so that the student knows at all times what was properly done, what he/she did wrong and how to correct the mistake he/she made" (Kopas-Vukašinović et al. 2017, p. 161).

Method

Thanks to its flexibility and availability (in addition to the spatial and physical distance of the participants and significantly reduced education costs), online teaching is expanding, gaining in popularity and importance. Considering that during the pandemic it represented an alternative and only solution for students to continue their education in higher education institutions, and that the key factor in its successful implementation is the teacher, we tried to get answers to the question of what, in the opinion of students, characterizes a good, efficient "online" teacher. Although the criteria for evaluating the success of teachers are relative, undefined and debatable (Marković 2018), our starting point was the determination that an effective teacher is the one who helped students the most, best and most successfully during learning, and his characteristics are "special personal qualities of the teacher" (Wallker 2008) that contributed to the fact that students consider those teachers to be effective.

In order to strengthen the interpretability of the results, we organized a mixed-method research (Ševkušić 2009). The aim of the research was to determine what students appreciate and value in teachers during distance learning, and the research tasks that resulted from the aforementioned aim were:

1. Determine the qualities that, according to the students' opinions, characterize effective online teachers.

2. Examine what deficiencies in the teacher's work were recorded by students during online classes.

3. Determine if there is a difference in the evaluation of the quality of the teacher's work in relation to the level of study.

The research was carried out at the Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences of the University of Kragujevac at the end of May 2021 (just before the June exam period) and at the end of December 2021 (at the time of application for the January exam). We used a descriptive and analytical method, a survey technique and a *Questionnaire for student evaluation of the quality of the teacher's work*[1]. The questionnaire contains 15 closed questions and two open questions. Closed-ended questions were offered in the form of a series of statements with the task for students to express their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert-type scale for each individual statement, while the last two open-ended questions, particularly important for our work, gave respondents the opportunity to suggest to teachers what they should change in their work and highlight the good sides of the work of teachers. The survey was distributed through the Faculty Information System (FIS), so participation in the survey was anonymous.

When analyzing the data, we did not take into account the answers collected to all the questions from the questionnaire, but only those related to the set goal and tasks of the research. Also, we did not analyze the data concerning all teachers of the faculty, but we selected certain study subjects from different years of study, different study programs (class teacher education, preschool teacher education and

boarding school teacher education) and level of study (basic academic studies (BA) and master academic studies (MA)) from which online classes were implemented by the authors of the paper. We took care that, according to the accreditation standards, the sample included general education, theoretical, methodological, scientific, artistic and applied courses so that the results were as objective as possible.

For the purposes of the research, an appropriate sample was selected, which achieved greater economy and eliminated organizational problems. The research included a total of 965 students, of which 674 were BA students and 291 MA students. The structure of the sample according to the level of study and teaching area is shown in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Sample structure according to study level and study program

Sample characteristics (N=965)	Categories	Sample size	
		Frequency	%
Study level	BA	674	69,84
	MA	291	30,15
Teaching area	English language	OAC 191	19,79
		MAC 291	30.15
	Environment teaching	251	26,01
	Music education	232	24.04

In undergraduate studies, 191 students evaluated the online classes of English language and Integrated language skills 1 and 2, Methodology of environment teaching and Methodological practicum of environment teaching were evaluated by 251 students, and 232 students gave their assessment for the academic subjects of Methodology of music education and Methodological practicum of music education. Also, master students (N=291) evaluated English for Academic Purposes and the academic subject Teaching and Learning English.

Research results and discussion

According to the opinion of certain methodologists, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in research is not only possible, but also contributes to the discovery of different aspects of a certain phenomenon (Lazaraton 2005, p. 219). In order to better shed light on the phenomenon under investigation, a mixed-method research was conducted, because the quantitative method of interpretation contributes to the generalization of data, and the qualitative method provides more detailed and richer explanations within the research context (Litosseliti 2010). The use of combined methods is particularly productive, because this approach can give a more comprehensive, complete picture of the problem being investigated and the results obtained by the research (Patton 2002, p. 248). For the previously mentioned reasons, quantitative data, i.e. descriptive statistics of the data obtained through the

questionnaires served only as a description of the situation and an introduction to a more detailed analysis of the data using the qualitative method.

Table 2. Evaluation of the quality of the teacher's work during online classes

Statement	Undergraduate studies (BA studies)			Graduate studies (MA studies)		
	N	Average	Average grade	N	Average	Average grade
	674	Out of 100%	from 1 to 5	291	Out of 100%	from 1 to 5
1. At the beginning of the semester, we were given the course outline and plan.	421	62.46	4.7	282	91.96	4.98
2. The teacher respects the planned ways of working with students.	**423**	**62.75**	**4.73**	**285**	**97.93**	**5**
3. The teacher has chosen the appropriate online platform (zoom, google classroom, moodle) etc.	417	61.86	4.69	288	98.96	**5**
4. The teacher regularly conducts classes via a video conference tool (e.g. Zoom) or via some other tool.	421	62.46	4.72	287	98.62	**5**
5. The teacher uses specific examples to make it easier for students to understand the content.	405	60.08	4.67	288	98.96	4.98
6. If we don't understand something, the teacher makes an extra effort to explain it to us.	409	60.68	4.67	287	98.62	4.99
7. The teacher encourages students' interest in the subject in various ways.	413	61.27	4.66	285	97.93	4.97
8. The teacher provides an opportunity for students to gain insight into their work and receive feedback.	409	60.68	4.69	284	97.59	4.98
9. The teacher allows the expression of different opinions regarding the content of the course.	399	59.19	4.66	**289**	**99.31**	**4.98**
10. The teacher addresses the students with respect.	434	64.2	4.75	288	98.96	5
			overall 4.69			overall 4.98

Legend: N – the total number of students who evaluated a certain statement with a grade of 5.

Table 2 shows the results obtained from a questionnaire that contains several statements, but only statements related to the aim and tasks of the research are analyzed here. In this regard, the mentioned table shows the data collected by students (N=674) in BA studies and (N=291) in master studies (MA). Furthermore, the total number of students who evaluated a certain statement with the highest score of 5, the percentage of that number in relation to the

total number of students and finally the average score from the total number of surveyed students is given.

From Table 2, we can see that BA and MA students gave high marks to statements 2, 4, and 10 and thus emphasized that the most important thing for them was that the evaluated teachers respected the agreed methods of work at the beginning of the semester (grades OAS=4.73, MAS=5.00) and that they regularly held online classes (OAS=4.72, MAS=5.00). The students gave the highest marks to the teachers for statement 10 and thus emphasized that the teachers addressed them with respect. Namely, 64.2% of students at OAS graded this statement as 4.75, and 98.96% of students at MAS graded this statement a maximum grade of 5.00. It can be seen from this that the surveyed students at OAS and MAS were consistent in their assessment of statements 2, 4 and 10, i.e. they were most satisfied with these aspects of teaching; it is equally important for them that agreements are respected and that classes are held regularly, but the most important thing for them is that teachers address them with respect, as it is suitable for the academic community. Similar results were obtained by Kopas-Vukašinović and Lazarević (2014), who examined the quality of cooperation between students and university teachers several years before the pandemic. If we compare their results with those obtained by our research, we conclude that it is very important for students that work plans and agreements are respected, that there is a positive attitude towards students with mutual respect and understanding, regardless of whether it is online or live teaching.

Furthermore, in Table 2, we notice that, in contrast to undergraduate students, students in master's studies additionally selected some of the statements (statements 3, 5, 6 and 9), which speaks in favor of the third research task. 98.96% of master's students expressed satisfaction with the chosen method of online teaching by the teacher (grade 5.00). The same percentage of students (98.96%) gave a high score (4.98) to the teacher's activities, which included the use of specific examples to facilitate students' understanding of the content. With an almost maximum score (4.99), 98.62% of the students pointed out that it was important for them that the teachers made an extra effort to explain to them the contents that they did not understand during the lesson. Also, with a high score of 4.98, master's students (99.31%) valued the fact that the teacher enabled them to express their opinions and actively participate in class. In order to determine which teachers' qualities during online classes students value the most, we conducted a qualitative evaluation of the work of individual teachers during the 2020/2021 school year. The goal was to determine which qualities the students especially highlighted as positive, and which shortcomings in the work of teachers they noticed in the mentioned academic subjects. The characteristics of an effective teacher were analyzed according to Walker's classification (Wallker 2008, p. 66), and for each category the answers and comments of the students were given as an illustration.

Preparedness (teachers always come to class ready to teach). The students expressed their opinion about the teacher's preparation for teaching with the words – S1: "The professor is always ready for the lesson, she engages as much as possible, she tries to explain", S2: "She always tries to explain, she engages and explains well", S3: "I praise her expertise, preparedness for teaching and openness to any type of cooperation". There were students who also praised the online teaching as a whole – S4: "Excellent implementation of online teaching", S5: "I praise the way of working and the commitment invested in online lectures, so that students can master the material in the best possible way". Previous statements show that students were satisfied with the teachers' preparedness for online classes, because the data corresponds with the numerical evaluation of the statements in the questionnaire. Adequate preparation of teachers is, in addition to well-designed academic subject content and motivated interaction between teachers and students, a prerequisite for successful online teaching and according to research conducted many years before the pandemic (Keengwe & Kidd 2010).

Positive attitude (teachers have a positive attitude towards teaching and students, praise their success, support them and are always at their disposal). Within this category, students often stated that the professor's positive attitude towards classes and their achievements is of great importance to them. This is illustrated by the following statements: S6: "The professor's approach, warmth, availability, kindness, understanding, accessibility to students, is at a very high level and deserves every praise!" S7: "Compassion, honesty, openness, approachability, promptness, availability at all times", S8: "Praise for engagement, effort, great desire to help students, answer every question", S9: "Praises, extremely pleasant, appreciates students, wants to cooperate". According to these answers, we may state that honesty, a positive and encouraging atmosphere, availability and accessibility of teachers are what motivates students to learn and progress during their studies.

High expectations (they do not set limits and believe that every student can be successful, but they have certain requirements and standards from which they do not deviate and require students to do their best). The comments of the surveyed students show that they recognized the teacher's positive expectations and faith in their success as positive qualities of their teachers: S10 – "We saw that she wants to get the most out of us", S11: "I praise the effort, work and dedication of the professor so that each of us learns the content", S12: "There was a minimum that every student had to master". High expectations are directly related to the quality of knowledge, so the quality of learning can be determined based on an assessment of how successfully a student learns, how active and independent he is in the process of acquiring knowledge. Based on this, it can be said that a supportive environment is equally important for both online teaching and classroom teaching. *Creativity* (they are proficient, innovative and inventive, successfully use teaching technology). University teachers are expected to be creative in designing and choosing methods

and procedures for encouraging critical thinking (Partalo et al. 2019), so in this sense the students praised the following – S13: "The professor delivered the lectures in an interesting and creative way, which kept our attention", S14: "Lectures start with motivating stories and then every lecture is interesting, and at the same time we learn the material she teaches", S15: "I praise the originality and effort, the approach to the subject and the explanations." From these sentences, we can see that the students highly valued the originality and creativity of the teacher.

Fairness (they objectively assess and value the commitment and work of students, give everyone the opportunity to succeed, have the same requirements for everyone, but also equal opportunities without privileges). The students also rated this characteristic of their teachers positively – S16: "She is open in communication with students, gives everyone the opportunity to express themselves", S17: "She evaluates objectively and is fair in every sense", S18: "The professor is more than excellent, she has a lot of understanding for everyone and is very fair." Considering the different individual abilities of students, but also the specificity of certain areas, such as music education, evaluating student achievements is a delicate procedure that requires continuous monitoring of the progress and development of students in relation to the initial position (musical abilities and prior knowledge). Even in conditions where this is difficult, the teacher must provide every student with the opportunity to express their individuality and develop independence. At the same time, the student should harmonize his/her needs with others in the environment, while accepting responsibility for his/her own results and overall development (ibid.). Independence and responsibility are exactly what is expected from students at OAS and MAS. *Accessibility/availability* (they allow students personal contact, freedom to turn to them if they have any problem, show interest in events outside of class, student life situations and problems). When it comes to this category, it should be taken into account that, especially during the emergency situation, under the influence of social isolation, quarantine and the consequences of the spread of the virus, students were exposed to various fears, family situations and problems, uncertainty and sudden changes that led to declining motivation to study, delaying or dropping out of studies. The appearance of feelings of "anxiety, insecurity, nervousness, sadness, concern and helplessness" (Pavlović, A., et al. 2021, p. 190), technical limitations, inexperience and inadequate access to digital resources contributed to students' positive evaluation of this quality of teachers in different contexts, connecting and/or identify with sensitivity, commitment and rank it above teacher traits that would normally be at the top of the ladder. In their statements, the students stated the following: S19: "I appreciate the fact that the professor always has time for additional questions, respects the needs and suggestions of students, I praise her patience and her work, as well as her understanding of our problems", S20: "It meant a lot to me that in I can send a message or email at any time if I have a problem or question", S21: "During the pandemic, the professor was available at

all times of the day". These statements confirm that successful online teachers are, among other things, "available online at all times, check email and text messages frequently, respond promptly to students' questions and concerns, grade and return assignments with feedback in a timely manner" (Bailey & Card 2009, p. 154).

Commitment (they put a lot of effort in teaching, strive to present the content they teach to students as best as possible, they leave the impression that they care and love their work, and with their way of working and attitude towards students contribute to making them feel welcome and belong to the academic environment, make sure that students are comfortable and pleasant in classes). Teaching the content in several different ways promotes learning and makes it more effective, but it should be taken account fact that it requires special preparation and greater involvement of teachers. Regarding the teacher's dedication, the students wrote the following: S22: "I praise the commitment to each student and work", S23: "All praise for the professor and her commitment", S24: "The professor tried her best to explain each lesson and if necessary she would invest additional efforts to clarify any confusion. Praise!".

Sensibility (show interest and concern for students' personal problems that are not exclusively related to teaching, try to advise them and help them overcome and/or solve such problems). When it comes to this characteristic of the teacher, the students associated it with the understanding and previously mentioned availability of the teacher, and stated – S25: "The professor shows understanding to the students in every sense", S26: "I am grateful that she had understanding about my absences", S27: "It meant a lot to me that the professor accepted the assignments that I sent late due to technical problems." The results of the research by Velikova (Velichová at al. 2020) confirmed the assumption that the technical equipment students need for online learning is an important factor that affects their perception of online learning. The understanding of this type of problem faced by the students was also reflected in the evaluation of the teachers' work.

A sense of humor (teachers don't take everything seriously, they try to make learning fun, they bring humor into the classroom, they joke and laugh together with the students, but never with a negative connotation or to make fun of any of the students' answers, comments, assignments, etc.). From the statements of the students, it is clear how important it is for them that the atmosphere in the class stays pleasant, interesting, and with a touch of humor and jokes at certain moments – S28: "The classes are useful, and the prevailing atmosphere is friendly and relaxed", S29: "The professor is always in a good mood in class, she laughs and jokes with us", S30: "I like her mood in class, which is always positive." A pleasant atmosphere, full of support and understanding, is also an atmosphere in which quality learning takes place and which motivates students to master teaching tasks and strive for better achievements.

Respect for students (never insult or embarrass students, respect their privacy, talk to them privately about grades or behavior, avoid situations where any of the

students could be embarrassed or uncomfortable: "the teacher who respects his/her students the most is the most respected hmself" (Wallker 2008, p. 66) Although this category is near the end of the list of characteristics of a quality teacher, the largest number of comments was directed to the topic of students' respect – S31: "I praise the way of communication and attitude towards us"; S32: "I like the fact that the professor addresses us with respect." The students particularly emphasized that appreciation and respect from the teacher means a lot to them and that such an atmosphere in the classes only contributed to their better and more qualitative learning.*Fairness* (doesn't hold complaints against every little thing, has understanding for student omissions and mistakes, is tolerant and enables them to correct certain difficulties in learning, behavior, taking exams, fulfilling pre-exam obligations, etc.). Fairness is a broad concept, but the students emphasized it in their statements as: S33: "The professor is fair, she always gives us a second chance"; S34: "I praise correctnessfairness, understanding for our mistakes, etc." Here it is clear that it is very important for students that the teacher is fair and respects the students, even when they make mistakes. Since mistakes are an integral part of learning, they should not be a problem, but only indicators in which direction to redirect teaching and how to correct mistakes.

Drawbacks (behaviour, activities and aspects that can be further improved in teaching). Regarding drawbacks, students most often suggested that the examined teachers should reduce the number of activities, tasks and requirements they set and to slightly lower the evaluation criteria, so, S35 says: "I think that the professor should reduce the number of the analyses we do after each class with young learners", S36: "The professor should reduce the evaluation criteria", S37: "It is necessary to be more objective in the evaluation and value the effort and commitment of the student". S38: "Reduce the number of questions in the test", S39: "Apply innovative models and ways of working". In this category, we may say that the number of tasks in the test was the biggest problem to the surveyed students as well as the high evaluation criteria. The number of the negative comments given by the students in this category was insignificant due to only 4 such comments out of many.

From the obtained results, it can be concluded that during online classes, students most valued the respect and appreciation of students, accessibility, fairness, positive attitude and cheerful atmosphere in classes, and the above data coincides with the high marks given by students to teachers in the same questionnaire. On the other hand, the negative comments were directed to the evaluation criteria and the number of tasks given to students.

Given that the first research task was to determine the qualities that, according to the students, characterize effective online teachers, based on the statements and evaluations of the students, the following stand out: the respect for agreed working

methods, regular teaching, selection of appropriate tools, use of specific examples to make the content better understood, investing extra effort while explaining the content and respecting the students. Starting from the fact that students highly value the affective characteristics of teachers – patience, compassion, creativity, enthusiasm, dedication to the teaching profession, availability and willingness to take time for each student, which is not new (Miller, 1987) and concerns immediate, direct teaching, we can say that the list of teacher characteristics does not differ much when it comes to online teaching.

As part of the second research task, which refers to the drawbacks in the work of teachers during online classes, the volume and number of tasks, as well as the requirement that the tasks should be submitted within certain deadlines, are highlighted, which is not directly related to the teacher's characteristics. We find similar results in other research (Al-Mohair & Alwahaishi 2020; Velichová et al. 2020) where the majority of respondents believe that the demands of professors during online classes are higher compared to the demands during immediate, direct classes, however, the fact is encouraging that despite the mentioned objections, the students positively evaluated and emphasized the understanding of the teacher for all the difficulties they had during online classes.

With the third research task, we determined that among surveyed students of different study levels there are differences in the evaluation of the quality of the work of teachers. Namely, both groups of students (BA and MA) pointed out that they were satisfied with the respect of the working plan, the regular online classes and addressing the students with respect. Master's students especially praised the opportunity to express their opinion during classes and thereby confirmed their maturity compared to undergraduate students. Students of both levels of study have positive attitudes about creative teaching methods, but master's students value the appreciation of different opinions in class and the discussion that is encouraged based on that. Bearing in mind that modern education should provide students with the opportunity to develop and improve critical thinking skills, the examined master's students recognized and valued this as very important.

Conclusion

Contemporary pedagogy emphasizes the importance of a quality and competent teacher. Online teaching has only added, to an already long list, some of the qualities and competencies that a teacher should have.

The research we conducted shows how important it is for the teacher and students to have good cooperation, because this component greatly affects the degree of motivation, self-esteem and commitment of students. For students, regardless of whether it is direct, immediate or online teaching, is not the most importnant trait of the teacher to be an expert in a certain area, to have excellent knowledge of the subjects he/she teaches and master modern teaching skills and

strategies, but to believe in the students, "to show interest and understanding in [students'] problems, cooperates with them in solving those problems, respects the personalities of his students and generally treats them positively" (Lasić 2015, p. 103). Regardless of whether instruction is online or classroom-based, student appreciation and respect for the planned ways of teaching makes instruction more enjoyable and, most importantly, can encourage students to be more active (Duron, Limbach & Chadron 2006). "Effective teachers genuinely care, love, accept and value their students" (Gourneau 2005, p. 6), so students have a positive opinion of a teacher who encourages them to achieve their goals, listens to their questions and their comments and overall what they say in class, he/she doesn't make fun of their mistakes. The surveyed students especially value teachers who take their suggestions, ideas and interests into account when planning and organizing teaching activities. Given that there is a strong correlation between certain characteristics of teachers and the process of engaging students in teaching, learning outcomes are conditioned by mutual respect and the quality of the student-teacher relationship.

Therefore, the research confirmed that the way teachers treat students determines the quality of their communication, and therefore the success of cooperation. Students evaluate and rank certain characteristics of teachers in an almost identical way, regardless of whether it is an online or face-to-face class. Appreciation, respect, understanding, a positive atmosphere and a working environment characterized by teachers' cordiality, openness and relaxation, but within academic limits, are important to the examined students. For some further researches, it remains an open question how much and in what way the mentioned characteristics of teachers affect the quality of students' knowledge, exam results and their overall academic achievements.

NOTES

1. You may find the questionnaire at:

    https://pefja.kg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Izvestaj-KZOK-pedagoski-rad-nastavnika-20-21.pdf

2. OMERDIĆ, N.; RIĐIĆ, M. & KERIĆ, A., 2021. Onlajn nastava – novi izazovi u obrazovanju. viewed on 24.12. 2020. At https://www.researchgate.

net/publication/352119424_ONLINE_NASTAVA_-NOVI_IZAZOVI_U_ OBRAZOVANJU

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