

DISTANCE EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *We live in a world of massively use of social networks, which are gradually taking a central place in modern communication, replacing forums, e-mail and sms. However, what needs to be pointed out is that the use of social networks has changed not only the way of spending free time, communication, business, but also the way of learning and the way of organizing the curriculum. Primary and secondary data sources were taken as well as statistics data and research conducted on the impact of the pandemic on education. The result of the research is technology that creates subtle advances in education, however the global COVID-19 pandemic has created a strong need for destructive innovation in education. In education as in other industries, technological advances represent constant opportunities for new innovations, including learning management systems. Viewed through a new perspective, social networks provide teachers with new opportunities for increased student engagement in an online learning environment. In the new reality, online solutions have become almost the only way of business communication between people, including online conferences and lectures. The aim of the research is to determine the use of information and communication technology (ICT) with regard to the new situation with the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, social networks, information, education system, technology*

Choice of marketing in education

The amount of knowledge is huge, and it doubles almost every two years. New scientific and professional knowledge is coming that is replacing existing or new technologies. The time of formal education is limited and the world is getting closer, communications between experts in various societies and countries are intensifying. Computers and programs are becoming the most important tools in everyday work. The Internet as such is becoming the dominant source of information. There is a need for new knowledge, skills and abilities. The labor market should clearly define which occupations are needed, but also which knowledge a particular occupation should have.

Knowledge and competencies become the greatest competitive advantage of an organization, and the result is learning organizations. Only organizations based on knowledge and continuous learning have a secure and predictable future. These are, above all, business organizations in the field of information and communication technology, but not only those for whom knowledge is a key resource and are more than any other organization synonymous with learning organizations. It is common knowledge that globalization processes also encourage the globalization of education. The purpose of education is not only to provide new knowledge and skills but also to develop educational and socializing content and values. The field of marketing requires broad knowledge, adequate education and readiness for lifelong learning.

A common feature of marketing and education as service activities is the satisfaction and development of human needs. Every individual has the right to upbringing and education and the need for acquired knowledge and education must be met regardless of the social status and material condition of individuals. Modern trends in the digital world require investment in new knowledge, technologies and professional staff. With the development of the Internet, social networks have also developed, free online services that enable

communication and connecting users. As this is a scientific discipline that is increasingly needed and sought after, quality education is needed that includes many areas; from knowledge of the social sciences to technical knowledge. The learning process is focused on new knowledge that is in demand in the labor market.

Student communication as the way of learning itself has changed significantly with the advent of social networks. Access to information is possible in a matter of minutes using smartphones and websites, and group conversations are simplified by forming online groups and conversations on social networks. This is just one of the opportunities that social networks can provide as an advantage in teaching. Students and pupils mostly use social networks to communicate, collaborate and share information. It is from this that the need for the application of social networks in education arises.

1.1. Distance learning through Facebook and Instagram platform

The founder of Facebook started from the assumption that users of this social network perform communication and Internet activities exclusively through Facebook, and this is the direction in which this network has developed in recent years. In addition to Facebook changing the way we communicate, it has also changed the way we follow everyday events.

Photo 1: Facebook: Class

School Books



Source: Facebook;

https://www.facebook.com/Razredna-nastava-%C5%A0kolske-knjige-293857354095462/?ref=py_c, (02.02.2021.)

Picture 1 shows the Facebook page of the School Classroom, where there are new video lessons every week, regardless of which book the student works on. For the purpose of monitoring and learning new teaching contents. Facebook is a powerful social network used in education because it allows easy connection with other teachers and students, collecting and publishing content, discussing and monitoring student activities. Professors and students are interconnected and can make good use of this type of platform to work in their education. Social networks help professors to connect with their students outside of university as well as with alumni. Professors use social networks as a way of learning, creating university groups for students where information can be accessed, they can also share ideas and direct students to other social networks. One of the main reasons teachers adapt to social media in the classroom is that they can do marketing through social media. Not only can they make business easier but they can also grow their business in the domain of social network.

As a consequence of the availability of education to every member of society, collective knowledge spreads more easily among members of society, resulting in a more efficient labor market, increased efficiency of existing businesses and, ultimately, a more competitive economy. Likewise, distance learning is the only way to reach a large number of workers in a way that is effective and adaptable to everyone.¹³

Visual content causes much more user involvement and connectivity than plain text or links, and for this reason Instagram is the

perfect platform to show business-related content and connect with users. An interesting setting offered by Instagram is Instagram Stories, what is posted within Stories or stories to users is visible until 24 hours after the post when the post is deleted. It is possible to take or take a photo or video, upload an image from a mobile phone, edit it and write text or even draw. This setting is useful if you want to highlight a specific offer that will only be available in the next 24 hours or if you want to document certain things and offer certain information to consumers. There is also the option of live streaming via Instagram story where various conferences can be broadcast or a popular question / answer session can be held.

" I've been hearing about the popularization of science for years, so I decided to take matters into my own hands and combine something popular - social networks, memes, fun videos with biology and chemistry material. I generally find that there is no boring material but it is a matter of perceiving and connecting the material with something that students find interesting and fun. I also think that social networks are a great tool and I noticed a lack of quality educational and entertaining content on the Croatian YouTube and Instagram scene. I think that all those handbags and eyelashes, as well as the unrealistic standards of beauty that social networks push under the nose of the younger generations, will not help you as much in life as "brain training" and developing curiosity can help you. Specifically, I set quizzes with the topic of the state graduation exam because I think that it is useful for most graduates in this strange time that has befallen us, and I am very happy to see that they are solved by both older and younger generations. Reactions and response are even better than I expected. I am very glad to see the messages that come to me directly from students, but also older friends and colleagues who approve of my initiative. " (Marković S., 2020).¹⁴

¹³ Smiljičić, I., Livaja, I., Acalin, J. (2017): ICT in education , *University in Šibenik*, Šibenik 2017., p. 157 - 170, UDK: 007:37

¹⁴ Marković S., Instagram as a new way of learning?, s: <https://kisobran.uniri.hr/2020/05/05/instagram-kao-novi-oblik-ucenja/>, 10.02.2021

The COVID-19 disease pandemic is greatly affecting society as a whole. Higher education institutions had to react quickly and make strong and innovative decisions on how to reorganize teaching, learning, research and other activities. In addition, their role in shaping a better and fairer world after a pandemic is also very significant.¹⁵

Photo 2: Quiz via social network Instagram



Source:

<https://kisobran.uniri.hr/2020/05/05/instagram-kao-novi-oblik-ucenja/>, 03.02.2021.

Photo 2. shows designed quizzes via the social network Instagram, designed by Professor Katarina Rodek, in order to motivate high school graduates during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the school system felt significant changes in the teaching process and the way of learning.

We live in a world of mass use of social networks, which are gradually taking a central place in modern communication, replacing forums, e-mail and SMS. The use of social networks in leisure time has become generally accepted, and is also becoming mandatory in business as a constant source of information. However, what needs to be

¹⁵ Najava webinara „Odgovor visokog obrazovanja na pandemiju COVID-19: izgradnja održivije i demokratičnije budućnosti, preuzeto s: <https://mzo.gov.hr/vijesti/najava-webinara-odgovor-visokog-obrazovanja-na-pandemiju-covid-19->

pointed out is that the use of social networks has changed not only the way of spending free time, communication, business, but also the way of learning and the way of organizing the curriculum. The tendency of people to take advantage of the opportunities provided by social networks is increasingly used in education, in order to adapt the learning process to the needs of students and make it more interesting and attractive to them.

2.Distance learning in different countries for the purpose of a continuous chain of education

The COVID-19 pandemic is a major stressor for educational institutions around the world. As a result of the crisis, 190 countries faced the complete or partial closure of schools, and as a result more than 1.7 billion students were affected, and they were forced to stay at home, where education policy makers are working to continue teaching. With different approaches from countries around the world, the crisis with COVID-19 is an opportunity for teachers and professors to learn from each other and work together to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The OECD states that there are large differences between socio-economic groups of pupils and students. During the first quarantine, Afghanistan had distance learning combining multimedia, video and radio, where educational content was broadcast 14 hours a day via television content and 7 hours a day through radio content. Austria has used learning platforms such as Moodle and WebCT, as well as the Cloud (cloud) owned by Microsoft and Google. Vienna has offered free tuition for children aged 10 to 14 via the internet that includes support for German, math and English for high school. Distance learning in Bangladesh was broadcast on television for students daily from nine o'clock in the morning until noon. The Government of Bangladesh has established cooperation with UNICEF to conduct and improve distance learning using mobile

[izgradnja-odrzivije-i-democraticnije-buducnosti/4227](https://www.izgradnja-odrzivije-i-democraticnije-buducnosti/4227), 10.02.2021.

phones and Internet platforms. Brazil conducts similar distance education, while Bolivia conducts workshops for parents in collaboration with UNICEF with the aim of promoting children's healthy habits. Chile uses the Aptus platform where learning materials are available to students. During the first two weeks of closing schools, China organized telephone and video conversations with education agencies, course service providers, and setup planning service providers. The possibility of psychological support was also provided. In Croatia, classes for lower grades took place on public television in combination with additional tasks and exercises by teachers, and later classes took place in school. Ecuador did not implement a system of assessment during distance learning, while Finland continued examinations and assessment during distance learning, and organized a flexible way of learning, including games and simulations in teaching. Madagascar held distance learning through public television and radio. Mexico provided support to teachers in digital education through courses and video conferencing. Russia has used various platforms in the distance education system.

3. Curriculum and education in Croatia during the pandemic COVID-19

Technology is creating subtle shifts in education, however the global COVID-19 pandemic has created a sharp need for destructive innovation in education. In education as in other industries, technological advances represent constant opportunities for new innovations, including learning management systems. Social networks like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp can be used to message and encourage motivation with creative ideas in education. Viewed through a new perspective, social networks provide teachers with new opportunities for increased student engagement in an online learning

environment. The digital revolution has caused the IT sectors to be the center of attention of school and higher education managers. The COVID-19 crisis has removed the former thinking of higher education institutions that distance learning is a real possibility only for technologically skilled professors. The training of all professors and students is now being encouraged.

The survey was conducted in mid-2020 using survey questionnaires for higher education institutions and questionnaires for students and staff of higher education institutions during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey questions were designed in several short thematic units aimed at exploring the current situation in terms of technological conditions of studying in the online environment during social distance, distance learning, support for students in the online environment, student assessment system, student stress, socio - psychological teaching segments and support from higher education institutions. 764 employees participated in the questionnaire for employees, of which 102 members of the management of higher education institutions, 96 heads of organizational units, 540 teachers and 26 employees of the professional service of higher education institutions.¹⁶

Research results :

Graph 1: Internet access - students

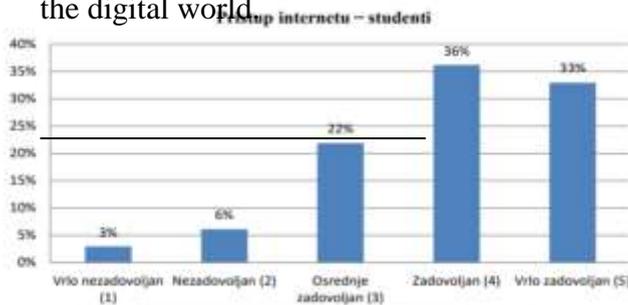


Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Izazovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_izolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

¹⁶ Challenges in higher education during the pandemic of COVID-19 disease and social isolation: experiences and needs of students and staff of higher education institutions,

https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Izazovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_izolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

The data from Chart 1 show that students are satisfied and very satisfied with Internet access during challenging circumstances (69%), while 9% of them are very dissatisfied and dissatisfied. Technological changes affect everyday business in a way that companies and individuals want to be competitive should be ready to do business in the digital world.



Doing business in the digital world no longer means just an online presence but also encompasses concepts on online platforms.

Graph 2: Internet access - employees

Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Izazovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_izolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

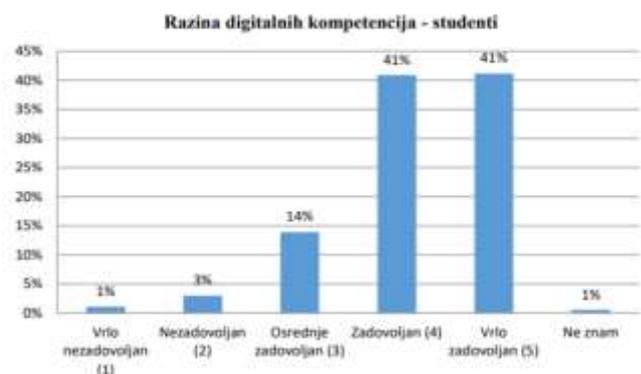
Graph 2 shows that employees are satisfied with Internet access (77%), while 4% of them are dissatisfied and very dissatisfied.

The ability of individuals to adapt in today's rapidly changing professional environment depends less and less on his professional knowledge, and more and more on traits such as curiosity, agile mind and desire and ability to learn quickly. The education system should focus on encouraging these qualities from the earliest age to higher education, and this means moving away from traditional methods of teaching only

theoretical knowledge to a format that requires greater involvement of students, and the end result is the development of the right way of thinking.

Students emphasize both positive and negative experiences. Satisfaction is provided by those students who work and study, since in addition to online classes they did not have to physically attend, where they saved on travel and going to college, their biggest contribution was that they could record a lecture and review them again. Some students stated that they like online lectures, but when it comes to exercises or seminars, they prefer live classes. At the same time, they believe that not all teachers are equally trained to use the necessary applications for distance learning.

Graph 3 shows the digital competencies of students, 82% of students expressed their satisfaction with their own level of digital competencies, only 4% of them expressed dissatisfaction with knowing the digital competencies that were needed for *online* lectures.

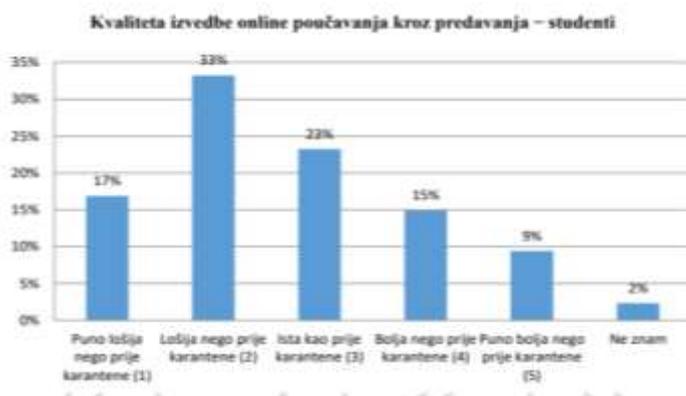


Graph 3: Level of digital competencies in students

Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Izazovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_izolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

The data from Graph 4 show the quality of online teaching performance through lectures, where half of the students 50% of them think that the quality is much worse and worse than the lectures before quarantine. 23% think that the quality is the same as

before, and 24% think that it is better and much better than before the quarantine.



Graph No. 4: Quality of online teaching performance through lectures - students

Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Iza_zovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_i_zolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

Graph 5 shows the quality of online teaching through lectures, 38% of employees think that the quality was the same as before quarantine, 27% think that it is to some extent worse than before quarantine, 39% of employees think that such teaching is better than before quarantine.



Graph 5: Quality of online teaching performance through lectures – employees

Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Iza_zovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_i_zolacije.pdf

[zovi u visokom obrazovanju za vrijeme pandemije bolesti COVID19 i socijalne izolacije.pdf](https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Iza_zovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_i_zolacije.pdf), 02.02.2021.

Students believe that the quality of teaching is not uniform, the performance depends on the teacher / professor. Part of the professors were praised by the students as enthusiasm, accessibility and adaptation to new circumstances, in the second case online teaching was not or was not properly organized and conducted. Some research participants believe that exams and colloquia are not properly organized and the literature was not sufficiently available. They also stated that the quality was affected by the overall atmosphere of quarantine, also a big role is played by the challenge of motivation, but also the conditions that students have at home (own computer, internet access, etc.). Colleges are presented as a meeting place, and study as one of the significant periods of life in which acquaintances are made and networks are created that remain for a lifetime. University education is based on a critical, cooperative and confidential exchange between students, where one lives from live chat. There are fears that these important elements may disappear through the digital shift.¹⁷

4. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student mental health

¹⁷ Universities in the Corona Age: The Digital Trap, <https://www.dw.com/hr/sveu%C4%8Dili%C5%A1ta-u-doba-korone-digitalna-klopka/a-54849498>, pristup: 02.02. 2021.

Distance learning is a series of challenges for teachers and professors because the learning process takes place at home and it is necessary to provide the prerequisites for learning, but also to determine how much you actually need to learn. Education is considered a development of modern society. The COVID-19 pandemic changed all aspects of life in all social groups and brought numerous economic and social consequences. For students, the pandemic has caused additional difficulties in education, learning, employment and maintaining mental health. Quality assurance and the relationship between distance learning are becoming a global problem of the current education system. Lack of physical contact, social support of professors and students, can lead to student inadequacy, lack of motivation and to the final withdrawal from education.



Graph 6: Student workload in an online environment during emergencies - student assessment

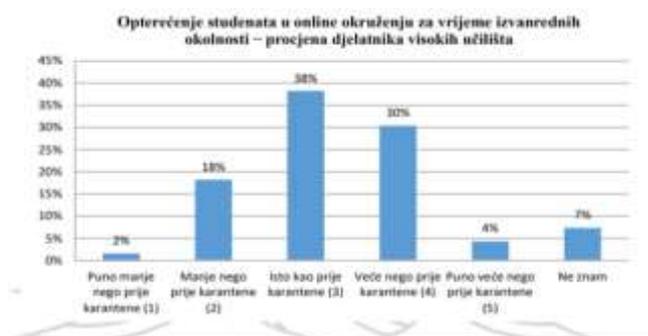
Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Iza_zovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_izolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

Graph 6 shows the workload of students in the online environment during quarantine, half of the students who participated in the study (56%) believe that the workload was higher and much higher than before, that it was the same, 23% of them, and much less 18% consider them less.

Most students believe that they needed significantly more independent work during

quarantine, while some pointed out that distance learning provided additional time that would normally be spent on travel and the like, and therefore could cope with the additional burden caused by conducting distance learning.

According to Graph No. 7, it can be seen that higher education staff assessed the workload of students during quarantine, 38% of staff believe that students were burdened to the same extent as before quarantine, while 20% believe that they were less burdened, and 34% considers that they were more and much more burdened.



Graph 7: Workload of students in the online environment during extraordinary circumstances - assessment of higher education staff.

Source: https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/novosti/Rezultati_istra%C5%BEivanja_Iza_zovi_u_visokom_obrazovanju_za_vrijeme_pandemije_bolesti_COVID19_i_socijalne_izolacije.pdf, 02.02.2021.

Some teachers state that due to the increased exposure of students to stressful circumstances, they tried to ensure the continuity and continuity of the study process and to maintain the student workload and scope of work as similar as possible to teaching and knowledge tests that students are used to in the previous environment.

CONCLUSION

„New Normal “means continuing business activities and maintaining regular

communication with employees working in remote locations, with clients and with the target audience in general. For years, the trend of organizing virtual and hybrid conferences, education and teaching has been growing, but the primary reason for using this type of technology was the lack of financial resources. In the new reality, online solutions have become almost the only way of business communication between people, including online conferences and lectures. Social networks were created for communication that began to be increasingly used for educational purposes. They improve communication between students, but also between students and teachers. Social networks allow students to seek the help of their friends. Students can also create a learning group, which encourages interaction between them. Students can get information about the latest events in just a few minutes spent on social media. I can search for relevant information and speed up my learning. The ability to get key information at the right time is one of the most important reasons why social media should be used in education.

Different social networks have different tools to help users easily find the right topic. Social networks are a challenge in the teaching process of education, because they are an almost indispensable part of free time for pupils and students. From a technological point of view, they are online services that offer users free communication. There are a significant number of social networks on the Internet, from those used only to connect with friends, family through informational, all the way to academic social networks that allow scientists to share their research. Social networks are an increasingly important space for cooperation and exchange of ideas in everyday life situations. It is desirable to direct the education of new generations in the direction that will meet their needs and motivate pupils and students to actively participate in the teaching process. Social networks have the opportunity to make changes in the model of the teaching process. Such an environment, whether primary, secondary or higher education, improves communication and problem solving by connecting different opinions, knowledge

and attitudes of students and teachers. The fact is that social networks are increasingly used and are gradually taking center stage in the modern educational process.

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