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Challenges of distance didactics (data and recommendations)

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Abstract

This article aims at analyzing the problems of distance learning in terms of didactic emergencies. It focuses on bringing ideas on the remodelling of didactic programming, by making use of technological tools, on identifying the novelties of didactic strategies and on evaluating the internal and external cooperation between the system and the extra system. Online studying is gaining more and more space in teaching and learning, favouring opportunities and abilities to adapt the studying to digitized spaces. It has now become an indispensable tool, given that to combat pandemics such as Covid-19, physical distancing has become a necessity. Meanwhile, after a year of learning on digital platforms, the problems have crystallized and education systems are looking for ways and means to avoid them. Our study can be considered as an effort for information and orientation on distance learning, creating opportunities for implementation in schools and emphasizing its importance in teaching and learning. It uses a qualitative method approach. We have used an extensive literature review relevant for the topic. The authors also observed 1503 online teaching hours, including the Zoom and Moodle platforms. Surveys and interviews with 205 students from two private high schools in two cities in Albania, were conducted. Based on their data we identified the advantages and disadvantages of the new teaching process (on line). From the observations made, we have reached some data and suggestions regarding the instrumentalization of the new didactics that is already a reality.

Keywords: didactics; distance learning; technology; pandemic; strategies

1. Introduction

In the face of societal globalization and increase of consumption without limits, infectious disease outbreaks can easily turn into effective threats to social stability, as demonstrated by HIV, H1N1, H5N1 and SARS epidemics and pandemics (Verikios, Sullivan, Stojanovski, Giesecke & Woo, 2015). In many cases, the consequences of pandemics and epidemics have been fatal and have led to social, economic and political catastrophes (Davies, 2013).

In short, a pandemic event threatens all aspects of economic and social structure" (Drake, Chalabi, & Coker, 2012).

If these pandemic forms once caused severe health problems, devastating blows to various populations, mainly in the third world, the pandemic of this century did not spare any continent on earth, did not choose between rich and poor countries and had no age preferences. Today we all have to deal with this "jellylike micro-particle", as defined by virologist Ilaria Capua (2020) of the

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University of Florida, which in public opinion is known by the term "virus". The world of education was also at the forefront of tackling the virus, but differently from doctors.

As for what is happening today, making a metaphorical parallelism with what the apocalyptic conspiracy theories claim to fill the web, it seems as if the pandemic is really reshaping some important aspects of social life, which includes not only human behaviour but also forms of versatile consumer communication. Part of this formative communication, which was first found at the forefront of the transformative consequences of the pandemic, was therefore the learning process. From classroom and auditorium teaching, the process went first completely and then partly online. This term which is so much used today “on line”, was not completely unknown to the education system as a whole, because various training courses, masters, qualifications of IT specifics, had long used it, but what came as a novelty was its massification and the fact that from the viral origin that gave birth to it; it inherited the surprise: teachers, educators, students and institutions found themselves suddenly confronted with this format which essentially meant transformation: didactic transformation and methodical transfer. However, the process of adapting new didactics was not that easy, having in mind that the use of digital content worldwide was relatively uncommon before the crises started. According to the World Bank, no country has a universal digital curriculum for teaching and learning. (European Data Portal, 2020, Transition to Digital Education).

The first months were definitely months of chaos, where everyone, teachers and students tried to adapt to the new reality. COVID-19 thus identified the need for better digital skills and IT competencies by introducing new methodologies and technologies in teaching. However, in a study it is stated that the teachers faced less obstacles compared to the students, even though teachers pointed out that communication with students was not smooth, and remote teaching did not enable them to identify the extent to which students understood the lessons (Alolaywi, 2021).

But, for a poor country like Albania, with acute economic and social problems, it was not easy to move from classroom learning to online one. This was due to the lack of experience of teachers, technological tools, learning platforms, digital resources, etc., which even after a year continue to be the main concern (Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, 2020).

Now that a year has passed, the online learning is gaining more and more space in teaching and learning, providing opportunities and skills to adapt the studying processes to digitized spaces, as well as to ensure the freedom of studying wherever we are.

Distance learning brought perceptions that changed traditional images of teaching. The school became more invasive.

Such a thing from a didactic point of view required a sufficient level of digital competence of both parties, as it is clear that online learning required the possession of this skill. In addition, not only the new process in which the education system entered, but every link of social and economic subsystems in the world, oriented in fact all productive spheres (of any kind) towards a new analytical format, which could result in having positive feedback or not, in the face of this rigorous new adaptation, where many failed even less delicate systems than the educational one.

1.1 Literature Review

In response to COVID-19 social distancing protocols, education systems all over the world had to switch to virtual teaching and learning. Even though, the current crisis caused by the pandemic is unique, we are aware that even in previous education emergencies it has taken years for students to recover the learning they’ve lost (Meghjani, 2021). However, compared to previous emergencies, it’s obvious that in the educational crisis caused by Covid-19, the most effective global response was to

shift learning from physical to virtual classrooms. Teachers had to adapt very quickly to this new reality, also finding innovative ways to conduct teaching in the most qualitative and effective way.

Early on, various studies have highlighted the importance and benefits of distance learning. In an article Keegan (1980) presents some of the key aspects of distance learning, by emphasizing several important elements such as physical separation of teacher and learner, usage of technical media, communication of teacher and learner etc. According to him (2002), distance education is an educational experience where instructors and learners are separated in time and space, which means the process happens away from an academic institution. Bates (2018) emphasizes that in today's digital age, online learning, blended learning, social media and open learning are critical developments for an effective teaching. And when distance education is imposed by a global crisis, such as the current one caused by Covid-19, developments in the field of distance learning education become even more necessary. A study (Schachar & Neumann, 2003) on the differences between the academic performances of students in distance education courses relative to those enrolled in traditional settings suggests that students taking courses by distance education outperformed their student counterparts enrolled in traditionally instructed courses. Another study (Neuhauser, 2002) reveals that when comparing students result in traditional learning and in online learning it turned out that there were no significant differences in test scores, assignments, participation grades, and final grades between two types of learning. According to this study, ninety-six percent of the online students who took part on the survey found the online course to be either as effective or more effective to their learning than their typical face-to-face course. In another study (Swan, 2003) it is stated that "we now have good and ample evidence that students generally learn as much online as they do in traditional classroom environments". This is also stated in a comparative research annotated bibliography on technology for distance education (Russell, 2001), according to which there is no significant difference in student outcomes based on the mode of education delivery (face-to-face or online).

Although studies show that in the digital age distance learning it's an effective alternative, there are still problems that should be addressed properly, in order to benefit from different kinds of distance learning in the maximum level possible. In a study on online learning and distance education Bates (2011) identifies a number of systemic barriers limiting the progress of distance learners, such as the lack of sufficient training, limited institutional and instructional goals in this area, failure to adequately project and fund the cost of online learning, and lack of a comprehensive approach to accommodate student mobility and non-traditional learners.

2. Methodology

The study uses qualitative methods. For the theoretical perspective, information from university publications and those of international educational institutions regarding the principles of the new didactics that are emerging, compared to the principles of traditional didactics are used. This research process has been observed in cases of confrontation with the canonical data of the didactics of the Albanian education system, with the aim of identifying the problems it presents.

We relied on surveys and interviews with 205 students from two private high schools in Elbasan and Tirana, and based on their data we identified the advantages and disadvantages of the new teaching process (on line).

Also, we have observed 1503 didactic hours of distance study, conducted in the platforms Akademia.al, Zoom and Moodle, of which 35% belong to Higher Secondary Education, 30% to Lower Secondary Education and 35% to Primary Cycle. Based on the conclusions from the observations made, we can conclude some statistics and have provided some suggestions regarding the instrumentalization of the didactics being applied recently.

3. Problems in focus

3.1 What are the advantages of online learning?

-Online learning has developed significantly in the last ten years, so much so that, as mentioned above, it is not difficult to find a rising number of courses, masters and schools offering study solutions which do not required physical presence in the classroom.

- Telecommunication technology today allows us to conduct lessons effectively thanks to video, voice recognition, automatic correction, streaming, and on line exams, etc.

-This platform provides facilitation in supervising the studies. In a physical class we have to keep notes on the topics covered by the teachers, while in an online class everything is recorded, on video or in writing.

3.2 How prepared were the teachers in front of the new platform?

When we talk about online learning, we do not mean learning that takes place exclusively through IT tools and pre-registered content. Of course, the teaching itself is a very useful tool, but the help that a professor can give in real time is irreplaceable and is the best way to understand and assimilate the concepts studied. The tools used for this new format were placed in relation to the teacher, who had problems when using this teaching platform.

- Online learning made it possible to reduce the distance between students and teachers of schools in Albania and beyond.

-Teachers for a short time switched from physical to digital platform, from physical didactic instruments, to digital dialectical instrument.

Our study throws light on concrete ideas on the newly created situation, and provides ideas which can be considered as suggestions to overcome the difficult situation**.**

4. Results

4.1 Diagnoses of online learning process

Thanks to the new educational transformations, how can we cope with the extraordinary situation we are going through in order to limit the damage to which the younger generations are also exposed during this time?

As lecturers and teachers, but also first of all as intellectuals and citizens, two alternatives are approachable: that of responsibility and that of research (Arendt, 2001). Both are not left without each other, as you are the leader of a generation, you have the responsibility to clarify and orient this generation towards choices and paths that will lead it to success and not failure. In our case, these two alternatives operate in conditions of universal emergencies.

The alternative of responsibility appears both personal and professional. As an individual, as a citizen, the orientations, the choices you make should be the products of a conscious and respectful process for the good of the individual and the community, especially in this particular moment in which one's choices affect everyone as well as the quality of life and health of other people.

The second alternative, refers to the "*meanings of the educational act*", which take value in the transformation and emancipation of social, educational and formative contexts (Mezirow, 2003), but also in the transformation of pupils, students (and not only) that find themselves in the trap of the pandemic. The second alternative is comprehensive, it deals with all levels and all contexts of training,

from kindergarten to university, wherever training service is provided, wherever it is undertaken to guarantee a package or training module conceived as a space for relationship and care, as an instrument of redemption from loss and isolation that unites pupils and students, as an integrative form which strives to keep alive relationships, processes and learning products.

What interests us and takes precedence in this context relates to the advancement of scientific research applied in teaching, both in the theoretical and practical field. Contemporary didactic research is divided into numerous heuristic paths, within which all self-discovery methods are used, which do not really guarantee solution optimality, but are sufficient to achieve an immediate goal, in accordance with the emergencies of the situation we are in. Judea Pearl (1983) claims that in cases where finding an optimal solution is impossible or impractical, heuristic methods can be used to speed up the process of finding a satisfactory solution. In our context, such heuristic examples include the use of a variety of general rules, informed assumption, intuition, common sense, as it is reminded by Giuliano Franceschini (2020), which deal with the study of new ways of learning, the elaboration of teaching strategies, effective practices, comprehensive methodologies, models and assessment tools, which today - even more than in the past - it is important to associate with a critical use of distance learning tools to be used even beyond the emergency.

It must be acknowledged that during the months of November 2020 and March 2021 the pandemic and its spread had a severe impact on the proper functioning of the school and university, the chaotic situation was further complicated by the occasional transition of the process which moved from classroom to distance learning and conversely, until the implementation of dual models that provided for the coexistence of the two formats.

Past experience (before the pandemic) offered distance learning as one of the possible alternatives to various ways, but in terms of total lock-down it was approached as a unique method, the only alternative that guaranteed the continuity of the education process globally.

Albanian government in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (2020) issued laws (Agency of Insuring Quality in Pre-University Education, 2020) decrees and special manuals (Ministry of Education, 2020) to orient the process towards this new format. The set of laws, manuals, and trainings aimed primarily at the continuation of the learning process and later the drafting of unified work plans for integrated digital teaching, which were later detailed in the digital platform Akademi.al (2020), whose purpose is presented in the motto: *"We aim to educate every individual, mainly students with our interactive methods, bringing the school closer to you. To encourage everyone, regardless of age, to get knowledge at any time, wherever they are*." This platform is functioning as a complement to teaching and it is used by all the educational institutions. However, later on different platforms, assisted the other early accessible platforms, could not cover the lack of preparation of the educational systems in some countries of the world as well as in the context of Albanian pandemic situation.

4.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages of online learning (statistical data)

Online learning had its own problems, which began with the development and application of a new didactic application, which had to be conceived and continued without any previous experience. After a year of applying online learning, today we can identify the advantages and disadvantages of online learning in principle.

4.1.2 Strengths

Low costs

The most obvious advantage of learning online is economic (Chapman Alliance, 2010). Half a day of classical learning is equal to one hour of online course. Online learning increases productivity. In

2019, U.S. training spending totalled $ 83 billion! Of that, $ 29.6 billion was spent on travel, training equipment, in-house training development and equipment (Training Industry Report, 2019). Learning online reduces many of these costs, including those for hiring an instructor, booking facilities, printing materials, and traveling.

Students can learn anywhere, anytime

And why does this make learning effective? Students gain time, avoid wasting time moving from one building to the other during classroom learning. So they do no waste time on the move. They can attend classes anywhere, at any time.

Larger convenience and flexibility

On average, a full-time employee can spend only 1% of his time learning. It is often a struggle for employees to adapt their solid office hours and commitments to the demands of continuing education. In a survey of 204 employees (Baldwin-Evans, 2004), 93 of them cited lack of time as one of the reasons they were unable or unwilling to complete a course in one endeavour. 56 others indicated that work breaks were the reason. The average full-time employee can devote only 1% of his learning time. So only 24 minutes a week! Online learning allows employees to learn at times that best suit their commitments.

Adaptation to individual learning style

Online learning allows students to learn in their own style and at their own pace, this makes them assimilate more information. Those who need more time with a particular topic can approach it more slowly and come back to it whenever they need to. As you can imagine, this aspect of online learning improves information retention. A study (Urdan and Weggen, 2020) found that online learning increased the rate of absorption of teaching material from 25 to 60%. However, the target group studied belonged to the American community.

Updating content is very easy

In today's world, information and learning are changing fast! With paper materials, the only way to keep up with these changes is to reprint the material, which is quite expensive. Updating online courses not only allows these changes to be memorized, but makes the process much easier. Moreover, every update that a professor can make to his material, through the internet passes to the students in real time, but also becomes usable for a wider audience.

4.2 Disadvantages of online learning

Requires self-discipline and time management skills

26% of 205 students from two high private schools in Elbasan and Tirana stated that they felt motivated to participate in online learning, while 74% were not ready in dealing with the new method of learning.

Out of this 74%, it was noticed that 51.8% lack of self-discipline; 34.2% lack the desire and ability to manage time; 14% did not find the opportunity for interactivity.

Understandably, online learning involves less instruction from an instructor (who may even be a teacher) than traditional learning. Moreover, students remain in the spectator position, while they must be the protagonists. Interactive learning, in fact, is what brings full productivity.

Social interaction decreases

A traditional lesson is usually successful when students raise their hands, prompt discussions, use body language, communicate also through glances. Obviously, these moments do not happen so naturally in online learning.

And let's not forget that students (especially elementary students) have a strong attraction to certain forms of social interaction such as competitions, scheduled question-and-answer sessions with a leader, or discussion groups. Thus, in 205 students 86.7% stated that they miss socialization in online learning, 7.2% stated that there is full socialization and 6.1% were neutral. Out of 86.7%, 73.5% declare that they miss competitions, debates and discussions; 24.3% only miss competitions, 57.2% miss debates and discussions. (In percentage it should be considered that students could choose more than one alternative.)

It is not suitable for all subjects/topics

This issue in the student survey was posed as a question with alternatives:

What you can learn most easily through online learning:

- How to do a gymnastic exercise;
- How to write an essay?

Out of 205 students, 100% response was for the second option.

Complex topics, operational techniques, and practices that require a physical environment make online learning impossible.

Lack of practice-based learning

E-learning cannot replace knowledge developed through practical experience. Online learning is often theory-based and lacks practice-based learning. 44.4% of students stated that theoretical knowledge refers to facts, theories and reasoning, while 55.6% acknowledged that practical knowledge is based on work and practical activities.

For example, learning online would be a great tool for learning the theory regarding basketball, such as its history and rules of the game. However, it cannot be used to learn how to really play basketball. It can only be done by going to the field. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that online learning cannot replace knowledge that is developed through practical experience.

Technology addiction

New generations entering the world of work and the technology that is increasing day by day, have led to the popularity of e-learning. However, not everyone has integrated technology into their daily routine. According to a 2019 OSCE study (2019), in Italy (we are referring to Italy because there is a study with such a focus, while in Albania not) only 21% of the population has sufficient skills to work on the Internet. If we refer to a poor country like Albania, with acute economic and social problems, it is not easy to move from classroom learning to online one. This is due to the lack of experience of teachers, technological tools, learning platforms, digital resources, etc., which even after a year

continue to be the main concern (Agency for ensuring Quality in pre-university education, 2020-2021). The rest can be considered as "computer illiterate".

Of the 205 students surveyed 55.6% had very good access to any online platform; 33.1% only on social networks and games; 11.3% had access only to social networks.

This issue raises several other issues:

• Do students and teachers have enough digital skills to easily access the Internet?

• Do students and teachers have good access to electronic devices?

• Are teachers or students able to build videos, screenplays or other media materials?

To summarize, if access to online learning becomes a burden, then the student or teacher may become demotivated.

5. Issues derived from the study of lessons in Zoom, Moodle and Akademi.al platforms

To understand what were the problems that accompanied this new form of teaching and learning, we intervened in several online lessons during the period April 2020-June 2020 and then January 2021-March 2021, in 1503 distance didactic hours, via the Zoom, Moodle and Akademia.al platforms, of which 35% belong to Higher Secondary Education, 30% to high School level, Lower Secondary Education and 35% to Primary level.

The problems we identified are:

5.1 Remodelling of didactics methods and coping with new occurrences

The new situation being created due to the Covid-19 put the teachers before the emergency of remodelling the didactic and methodological platforms.

The activity of face-to-face teaching in auditorium or in combinations of both modes, resulted in an increase in the workload of the teacher in terms of adapting to the new way of teaching, planning, preparation of didactic materials, already of a different kind, creating of communication networks between teachers of the same department, between teachers and parents and finally between teachers and students. In short the teacher load increased a lot.

From the surveys with 15 teachers of which 5 of the Primary School, 5 of the Secondary School and 5 of the Upper Secondary School, it resulted that the Primary School teachers had to intervene to a greater extent, redefining it from what was previously planned in a very short time and at the same time they had to deal with the control of the functionality of the new didactic tools. This has led to an increase in the number of working hours of the Primary School teacher from 4 to 5.5-6.5 on average; Lower Secondary Teacher from 6-7, Upper Secondary Teacher from 6 (7) to 7.5. This excess of time has gone into a greater commitment to redefine learning objectives, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and time devoted to collegial work.

5.2 Use of technological tools and the possibility of using didactics in distance

According to D'Alonzo, (2017) *to use didactics in distance requires technological support, learning management skills and IT recognition processes that allow a purposeful and functional use of selected equipment (assets, equipment, platforms, software, etc.).* From the observations in our lessons it turned out that the most used tool were digital platforms, first WhatsApp, then Moodle and Zoom, later the Akademia.al. Very often these platforms were also interrupted by messages that were transferred through social networks. There was a lack of school pages that could help these radical

didactic changes, but not too late, there were lessons on TV and in Akademia.al, which were used massively. There are significant differences regarding the choice of tools by teachers based on education level and the study cycles. In the Primary Cycle, importance was given to the conversation with the students, followed by the telephone used above all for contacts with families. Always in the Primary Cycle, after conversations, we find emails and electronic records. In the high school cycle, at the beginning the WhatsApp platform was used and was confirmed, but later they were encouraged to use Zoom. In the second phase observations, digital platforms occupy the first place, along with virtual classrooms and electronic recordings.

However, it was also observed insufficiency in the teacher preparation in the use of ICT, and this was noticed in almost all cycles. A slight difference was observed also in the high school cycle. Out of 15 teachers, no Primary School teachers had digital experience, 2 of the Lower Secondary Teachers stated that they had experience and 4 of the university level teachers were trained on distance learning. It is to be appreciated the willingness of teachers to use distance learning even after emergencies, taking advantage of the ICT-related skills acquired during the pandemic. However, teachers considered this experience very important and encouraged online as a good prospect for the future.

5.3. Didactic adaptation and didactic strategies

Intervention in lesson plans

At the beginning of the on line teaching and learning, to intervene in the curriculum, it was difficult and chaotic and teachers were faced with the difficulty of managing the new teaching format. This led many teachers to compile and decide on didactic planning, relying on traditional ones. In most cases, customized material was prepared, often not documented properly.

In the second phase of the study, after 2020, interventions were made with the adaptation of didactic plans, mainly centralized in very sensitive measures, e.g. up to 100% of curricula. (We want to note that at the national level this centralization damaged the specifics of different schools and areas where these schools were located).

In the second phase we intervened on the didactic platforms in the schools we studied:

84.3% in the Primary Cycle;

91.8% in the Lower Secondary cycle;

94.7% in the Upper Secondary Cycle.

In terms of didactic strategies, we noticed that the emergency situation generated by Covid-19 has led to a greater use of transmission methods than interactive ones. This can be explained by the difficulties that some teachers usually face in the interactive use of ICT, but also by the desire to use more experienced and consolidated didactic forms in the face of a general situation that is more precarious than usual. What emerges is a wide use of traditional teaching methods even in those school cycles, such as primary schools, where active and participatory methodologies are more present. As Lucisano (2020) argues: "The difficulty of communicating with students and obtaining interactions and responses from them through the use of telematic means has led to a regression towards traditional or transmissible forms of teaching methods".

From our observations we concluded that the most intensive way of teaching is the method of transmission, not interaction. We have built a scale according to the density of use of the identified methodological strategies:

First phase of observation (710 hours)

Reasonable transmission of materials, accompanied by specific indications in the WhatsApp network about 78%,

- photos of textbooks with side notes or drawings 39, 9%;
- written explanations of transmitted materials 40.1%;
- explanations recorded in audio or video 18.6%;
- intervention after explanation for clarification 6.8%;
- homework and self-study 13.4
- explanations in person with video lessons 3.2%;

Second phase of observation (793 hours)

It showed that teachers and students had quickly managed to recover some of the problems displayed in the first phase, so the percentages of using the methods below did not exclude each other but alternated within a lesson. Therefore, in the 793 hours observed, we found the following percentage of use of the following methods:

- Explanation and interactive discussion on Zoom, Moodle, Akademia.al platforms 82.3%;
- Lessons prepared and transmitted on TV 31%;
- Presentations of individual works by students 59.7%;
- Presentation of group work by students 26.3%;
- Synchronous collective discussion (in presence) 64.7%;
- Unstructured group work 13.8%;
- Inverted class 5.2%;
- Virtual laboratories 5%.

This tendency was also present in the Lower Secondary School Cycle, and tends to shift closer to the Upper Secondary Cycle.

5.4. Collaboration as a key element of achieving didactic goals

With the term cooperation we mean not only the simple teacher-student cooperation, but also the cooperation between other stakeholders in the education system: teacher-school director; school board; teacher-parent community; teacher-student-community as a whole; school community-local government bodies. In support organizational cooperation, we bring to attention the statement of Pietro Giuffrida (2018) according to whom *"in an emergency situation such as that created by a pandemic, cooperation between the parties that make up a system represents a strategic dimension so that the activities and goals of an organization can be carried out*." This also affected the functioning of the school and teaching during the lock-down period.

From the 15 teachers we interviewed, only 2 considered the application of the above statement to be fruitful at the beginning of the on line studies which corresponds to the first phase of our study and 11 thought it was fruitful later and which corresponds with the second phase of our study.

According to the stakeholders we identified, the cooperation was evaluated in the following standards:

First phase (April 2020-June 2020)

- teacher-student 74.4%
- teacher- school director 97.2%;
- teachers-governmental education institutions 64.3%
- school board 10.1%;
- teacher-parent community 68.7%;
- teachers, students-community in general 5.3%;
- school community-local government bodies 45.5%

Second phase (January 2021-March2021)

- teacher-student 87.6%
- teacher- school director 100 %;
- teachers-governmental education institutions 68.6%
- school staff 32.8%;
- teacher-parent community 54.9%;
- teachers, students-community in general 12.5%;
- school community-local government bodies 76.4%

As it can be seen, the parent community, the school board, the local authorities were just as unprepared in the new situation. We have to admit that the statistical data of the Primary School were more emphatic, because the community is more sensitive to this age band, a sensitivity that decreases with the growth of children.

While in the second phase of the study, it was observed an increased sensitivity and responsibility to the situation created, of course with the intervention of certain policies initiated by both non-governmental and institutional organizations.

The most significant problem has been between observed in the relation created between the school and the family. There has been a greater cooperation with families and primary school, whose interests fell in the second phase of study, as we were not able to identify them and because they were not in the focus of our study.

6. Conclusion

At the end of our analytical study, we want to recall once again the value that the education system has in building a society. As stated by the scholar Rrokaj (2013), "what is related to education is very important, as the quality of education goes along with the future quality of the society: the school projects the society's future". In a knowledgeable society, the school performs two main missions: it provides young people with the values of patriotism, citizenship, democracy, humanism and global integration on the one hand, and it equips them the professional skills and ability to follow the flow of technological development, of global science and to implement it in the perspective of a national, regional and wider development, in order to improve the quality of life.

We think that the conclusions we reached aim to meet some key orientations:

- diagnose the condition before the pandemic;
- help build innovative policies based on global and digital capabilities;

• to include distance learning as an organic and perspective part of the Albanian schools;

• to intervene in the adaptation of didactics by evaluating distance teaching as a very necessary organic part;

• to support the work for providing the necessary infrastructure for the realization of distance learning;

• to involve teachers in the design, implementation and evaluation of didactic actions which are necessary for a quality teaching.

The damage that the pandemic manifested in the field of education will be longer lasting than the damage to health, because what education is like today will be the society of tomorrow. To minimize this damage, we must definitely determine with scientific accuracy what is beneficial for the future, which presumably, belongs to the digital age. We must not allow ourselves to be faced with critical and emergency situations another time, so distance learning must be transformed from an emergency measure into a tool, an opportunity, a creative space for integrated teaching for the benefit of all cycles, even university ones.

7. Recommendations

In the didactics of online learning, we see the integration of digital learning as a necessity in the newly created situation, which must provide a balance between synchronous and asynchronous activities according to the paradigms of mixed learning, which has been already tested (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004; Picciano, Dziuban and Graham, 2013), and the experimentation of a dual system (oral explanation and digital interventions), which is mostly prevalent at the university level.

A lot of attention must be paid to the presence of an infrastructure network and an efficient digital connection to make distance learning activities sustainable. Here we insist on the adequate construction of internet lines and updated digital tools.

Of a vital importance is the involvement of the teachers in curriculum design, because they are the first actors to diagnose the problems and identify the means to avoid the recurrence of these problems.

In addition, it is crucial to maintain the collegiality and efficiency of the relationship with the university in order to ensure smooth shifts from school to university by having common digital communication strategies and digital didactic platforms.

The pandemic claimed the historical weaknesses of our school, weaknesses in the field of teacher training, their digital skills, digital infrastructure, inadequate initial training and service of teaching staff regarding the use of ICT, poor quality of network connection, lack of coordination of work in the hierarchical perspective led to a qualitatively poor and chaotic education.

In short, in the face of an overall positive assessment made by teachers or even representatives of institutions regarding the activation of our school in emergency conditions, the results were not very satisfactory and large empty spaces appeared which need immediate intervention to improve school effectiveness.

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