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STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF ONLINE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN THE COVID-19 ONLINE TEACHING PERIOD: IN TÜRKIYE, POLAND, REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak forced many changes in education, including teaching techniques, teacher-student interactions, materials, and assessment practices. The present study aims to uncover students' opinions on the types of exams they took, their evaluation of the testing/ assessment practices they experienced, whether online learning influenced the way they prepared for the exams, whether they would like to keep the testing/assessment practices in the new normal and how they evaluate the teacher's role as an assessor.

The data for the study were collected in Türkiye (TUR), the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), Poland (POL), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) using cross-culturally valid questionnaires including items asking students to evaluate the teaching, assessment, and interaction skills of their teachers during the first “emergency online teaching semester”. Both closed- and open-ended items were included in the data collection tools. Responses to the items in the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively, keeping in mind country and context-specific peculiarities. The study results show similarities in the ways students were evaluated and their perceptions of evaluation procedures during the COVID-19 period, as well as contextual differences in the four countries.

Keywords: COVID-19-related educational change, language assessment, language learning, evaluation of assessment practices

1. Introduction

Assessment is defined as “the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning” (Stassen, 2004: 5), which includes the process of testing and making a judgment about someone’s knowledge, ability, skills, etc. Assessment practices are an essential part of the educational process in the context of higher education. They have an impact on learning and teaching, faculty knowledge, students’ future education, promotion, employment opportunities and students’ future choices. The policies of the national ministries of education in TUR, POL, RNM, and B&H influence assessment practices in the higher education (HE) context in the studied countries. The educational system in TUR is and has always been very examination-oriented. Here, “the performance of the students, teachers and even schools at each ring of the system is evaluated by looking at how well students perform on various exams” (Hatipoğlu, 2010: 43.). “At every level (primary, secondary, high school, university), there are compulsory class evaluations (e.g., quizzes, midterms, take-home exams) and end-of-term exams (e.g., finals)” (Hatipoğlu, 2010: 43) without which students cannot move from one grade to another and cannot graduate. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from the distance education programmes (e.g., Anadolu University), exams at universities were done face-to-face, and it was a requirement that for each course, students took at least one midterm and one final sit-in exam, which usually formed the bulk of the final

grade in a course.¹ Alternative assessment methods, such as projects, take-home exams, topic presentations, etc., usually formed a small portion of the overall grade.

With the introduction of online education because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Higher Education Council (HEC), the body regulating and monitoring tertiary education in Turkey, allowed universities to switch to online testing. On May 27, 2020, HEC issued a circular note listing the basic principles and rules that had to be followed while administering exams in a digital environment (YÖK..., 2020). The universities were instructed to make the online exams as transparent and controllable as possible by following the randomisation of questions and using full-screen and browser lockers. With this circular, universities were also allowed to replace the timed online exams with projects, assignments, or homework where possible or necessary. What is more, universities and instructors were encouraged to include homework, projects, class discussions, and participation scores in calculating end-of-term grades. At Middle East Technical University (METU), where the TUR data were collected, lecturers followed different strategies to assess their students during the COVID-19 online terms. The first group of lecturers followed the already established system and used only official, timed online midterm and final exams. The second group decided it would be better to use only alternative assessment tools (e.g., take-home exams, projects) under the given circumstances, while the last group employed a combination of both. To prepare both lecturers and students for the online exams, METU administration and the Lifelong Learning Centre organised special training programmes where topics such as writing and evaluating online closed-ended (e.g., Multiple choice questions, true-false items, matching) and open-ended questions, reporting results, item analysis were presented to the university staff and students.

In POL, the system of education is decentralised. The Law of Higher Education (2018) states only that the student has to accomplish all requirements of the study programme (2018 § 76), and the HE institution can organise verification of learning outcomes online, including the thesis defence. This means that each university is allowed to introduce its own policies regarding assessment, but all of them follow the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System levels and scales. Thus, the university's internal document called Study Regulations regulates the student evaluation system. For example, the University of Gdańsk

1 <http://oidb.metu.edu.tr/en/middle-east-technical-university-rules-and-regulations-governing-undergraduate-studies>

set precise numbers explaining that to get the highest grade 5, a student has to acquire 91% of assigned knowledge, skills, and social competencies. The percentage for the lowest-failing grade 2 is 50% or less (2017 §25). The University of Warsaw, as well as many other HE institutions, specify the grades but not the percentages (2019 § 34). The assessment forms are specified in the course description in the study programme and include the following ways of verifying learning outcomes: written and oral exams, tests, projects, essays, and portfolios, as indicated for each course. On March 12, 2020, The Ministry of Science and Higher Education suspended face-to-face teaching at all HE institutions for two weeks, and then the suspension was prolonged until September 30, 2021. All courses were set to online mode. There were no specific organisational, content or technical requirements. Thus, in this period, universities aimed to achieve the same learning outcomes with the use of the online mode of teaching. The assessment practices remained the same as specified before the pandemic. The teachers were advised to adapt them to the new form of teaching with the use of digital tools available: MsTeams, Google Meet, Zoom, Moodle.

The educational system in RNM is examination-oriented as well. The law on higher education², as well as internal acts of higher education institutions, regulate aspects relevant to higher education, including assessment. In higher education institutions (HEI) in RNM, for most courses, 80% of students' scores is based on examinations and only 20% on other activities such as class attendance and participation, quizzes, class assignments, practical work and projects. Article 154 of the law on higher education states that the course instructors have the freedom to choose the assessment methods they deem most suitable for the particular course within the prescribed guidelines. During the first period of the COVID-19 pandemic (spring semester 2019/2020), the policies of the Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia changed in relation to assessment. On March 23, 2020, by decree with legal force, the government of North Macedonia³ decided that exams and tests be conducted using electronic communication, provided that appropriate technical solutions are secured to ensure the identification and control of student work during exams. This governmental decision encouraged the adoption of alternative assessment methods and allowed for a modification of the weight allocated to written mid-term and final examinations and assessment tasks. Subjects of assessment might be various course-related activities such as tutorials, practical work, fieldwork,

2 Law on Higher Education in RNM <https://mon.gov.mk/page/?id=2055>

3 Government of RNM. (23.3.2020). Decree with legal force for application of the Law on Higher Education for during the state of emergency.

seminars, assignments, projects, courses, essays, artistic performances, artistic production, and other activities as per the course requirements (Miloshevska et al., 2020, p. 120). Some universities postponed or cancelled final examinations in the written format to encourage the use of alternative assessments and avoid technical difficulties reported by students and academic integrity issues raised by faculty members making use of the suggested alternative assessment methods and relocating the distribution of coursework scores.

In B&H, the system of education is decentralised. Cantonal laws on higher education define assessment policy in HEI in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the decentralised approach implemented. The teachers have a certain freedom to choose assessment methods and the distribution of the tasks students should complete before the final exam. However, at least 50% must be allocated to different tasks (seminars, progress tests, essays, projects, etc.) that students complete during the semester before they take the final exam. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from the distance education programmes (Memić Fišić and Delibegović Džanić, 2020), exams at universities were done face-to-face. It was a requirement that for each course, students took at least one midterm and one final sit-in exam, which usually formed the bulk of the final grade in a course. During the first COVID-19 period, respecting the autonomy of the HEI cantonal governments allowed HEI to decide whether the exams would be online or on campus in accordance with all epidemiological measures. Some HEIs, like the University of Tuzla, where the data were collected, decided that only final exams would be on campus while other assessment forms were online. For these online assessment forms, the teachers were advised to use Google Meet, Zoom, or Moodle.

As in other countries worldwide, the transition to online learning and teaching in TUR, POL, RNM, and B&H occurred within a couple of weeks. All higher education institutions from which the data for the current study were collected had the necessary technical infrastructure (e.g., an Institutional Learner Management System, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and other apps) for online teaching and communication. Faculty members and students continued the semester with several changes (Miloshevska et al., 2020; Hatipoğlu et al., 2021). The challenges reported included the uncertainty regarding online teaching duration, how the assessment would be conducted, and whether examinations would be postponed or substituted with alternative assessment tasks. Other issues were related to internet connections, access to devices and tools, and personal problems such as lack of motivation, organisation, institutional support, and feeling overwhelmed (Miloshevska et al., 2020). Questions have been raised

as the pandemic prolonged on fair methods of student assessment, objectivity, academic integrity, the COVID-19 pandemic's lasting impact on assessment, and the sustainability of pandemic-related changes in the post-pandemic period. Calls have been made for reflections on new, innovative online assessment methods that can suit different courses (Al-Salman and Haider, 2021; García-Peñalvo et al., 2020). Yet there is more to learn about how online assessment has affected students' learning habits, academic performance, and expectations and what aspects of online assessment should remain. Accordingly, this paper compares the results of two surveys administered in TUR, POL, RNM, and B&H among university students over two academic semesters during the online learning period. The first survey was conducted in May-June 2020 (henceforth, the first period (FP)) and the second in December 2020-January 2021 (hereafter, the second period (SP)).

2. Literature review

It is known that the COVID-19 outbreak forced many changes in education, including teaching methods, teacher-student interactions, instruction tools, teaching materials and assessment practices. The transition from face-to-face to online learning was abrupt and occurred within a matter of days in March 2020, significantly affecting the long-term future of online learning and assessment. Emergency e-learning was the obvious option, as governments prioritised the health and safety of teachers and students. The emergency e-learning provided access to synchronous and asynchronous education and helped maintain the educational process during the pandemic. The basics of online teaching and learning were set (Healey et al., 2011). However, online assessment has to be rethought (King Ramirez et al., 2021). Many teachers had to learn from scratch, and others had to adapt their assessment tools and methods to the new online environment. At the same time, students faced the challenge of preparing for and taking online exams under unusual and unexpected circumstances (Irfan et al., 2021; Jaschik and Lederman, 2019).

Online teaching and learning brought many challenges. However, online assessment was often reported as the biggest obstacle to completing the academic year (García-Peñalvo et al., 2021). During COVID-19, universities adopted various assessment methods depending on their policies and course requirements. These included time-restricted assessment tasks such as quizzes, non-restricted assessments such as home assignments, essay questions, video streaming assessment tasks such as oral examinations, and oral presentations

(Gamage et al., 2020). Some universities adopted un-invigilated, open-book, open-web examinations taken over 24 hours during the examination period, with papers accessed and scripts submitted online (Buckley et al., 2021: 127).

Some universities used limited options for the delivery of online lectures through specified platforms only, such as Blackboard and Webex, to monitor teaching activities and to ensure the security of the data and protection of the student's data. Others did not use online proctoring software that required camera use or real-time invigilation (Almossa, 2021).

Regardless of the assessment methods, creating equal opportunities for students to undergo online assessment was not always possible, given individual constraints and inequality in access to devices and internet connection (Almossa, 2021; Miloshevska et al., 2020). Faculty members frequently raised questions on how to tell whether a student had left the exam because of a technical issue or lack of competence in the subject, in addition to issues regarding cheating and plagiarism. Whilst the transition to online assessment, as argued by Buckley et al. (2021), reduced stress and anxiety and provided better results for some students due to the increased period, the comfort of one's own personal space, and the opportunity to take breaks, Buckley et al. (2021), Robertson and de Silva (2020), and Tam (2022) reported that some students experienced significant stress and anxiety related to online assessment during the pandemic attributable to time constraints, increased question difficulty, unclear expectations regarding the standard of work expected, and unfamiliarity and/or technical problems with online submission procedures. Students' evaluation of assessment is part of students' evaluation of teaching (SET), which has been discussed for over a century since 1920 (Addison & Stowell, 2012). Recent studies on the role of SET address local situations in various educational and cultural contexts and confirm that "SET as a feedback for teacher's use and a measure of students satisfaction is not problematic" (Sánchez et al., 2020: 9, see also Spooren et al., 2013; Uttl et al., 2017). Some studies indicate statistically significant correlations between SET and teaching effectiveness (Sánchez et al., 2020) but not as strong as was claimed before (Uttl et al., 2017). On the one hand, Greimel-Fuhrmann and Geyer (2003) claim that the results might be biased, while on the other hand, Suárez et al. (2022) confirm that students believe that SET could improve teaching practices. Moreover, Antoci et al. (2021: 327) point out that constructive feedback from student evaluations seems to be helpful in improving teachers' performance" as both students and teachers should strive towards the same goal, i.e., high-quality

higher education. Needless to say, students' evaluation of teachers is a standard practice in almost all Higher Education Institutions.

Online education extends an interest in assessment practices from the perspective of academic integrity, that is, "commitment to fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage" (Holden et al., 2022; Fishman, 2014). It was noted before the pandemic that both teachers and students perceive more opportunities for cheating in an online setting than in the classroom (Kennedy et al., 2000; Smith, 2005; Mecum, 2006; Holden et al., 2022). There are various individual reasons and conditions that drive students to academic dishonesty, such as (1) opportunity, (2) incentive, pressure or need, (3) rationalisation or attitude (Holden et al., 2022, Becker et al., 2006, Ramos, 2003). There are also institutional factors, such as the existence of a "cheating culture" (Tolman, 2017), which encourage students to be more tolerant of cheating. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, the changes and pressures may increase the tolerance of dishonesty among students, especially when the institutional policies against it are too lax. The medium of delivery also contributes to the increase in cheating. Approximately 42-74% of students tend to believe that it is easier to cheat in an online class (King et al., 2009; Watson and Scottie, 2010; Holden et al., 2022). However, there are also studies that indicate a decrease in academic dishonesty in online settings (Grijalva et al., 2006; Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009). Another factor influencing cheating relates to assessment types, e.g., high-stakes summative assessment may create more opportunities for dishonesty than formative assessment procedures. However, there is little difference between traditional and online assessment practices that allow for plagiarism (Watson and Sottile, 2010). There are various methods to combat dishonesty, which address the abovementioned factors. Individual and institutional factors may decrease with the implementation and dissemination of clear policies against misconduct. In relation to the delivery medium, technological systems that detect cheating may prevent students from getting involved (Holden et al., 2022). For example, video summation (abstraction) software with the use of artificial intelligence helps to detect cheating (Truong and Venkatesh, 2007); web video recording of the entire exam, which can be viewed by the instructor after the exam is preventive; the most expensive is live online proctoring, which involves a proctor supervising a group of students. Other solutions may include challenge questions to identify the test taker, biometrics to check fingerprints via a scanner, checking for text originality to prevent plagiarism, and lockdown browsers which block the use of additional

electronic materials and websites (Holden et al., 2022). Many of such solutions require financial and logistical adaptations. Academic integrity can also be encouraged by the change of the exam structure, that is, a change in the item format and content; the change in the assessment delivery by setting time limits, blocking the use of copy and paste functionality, preventing going back to earlier items, response option randomisation (Holden et al. 2022). All in all, ensuring academic integrity in the online environment requires raising awareness of its importance in the community, investments in supporting technology, and reflection on the assessment procedures.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aims and research questions

The first goal of this study is to uncover university⁴ students' opinions on assessment practices. The specific research questions that this study aims to answer are:

- (1) What types of exams did the students take during the online learning period?
- (2) What evaluation of the testing/ assessment practices did the students experience?
- (3) Did online learning affect the way students prepare for exams?
- (4) What aspects of the testing/assessment practices should remain in the new normal?
- (5) How did students evaluate the teacher's role as an assessor?

The study also aims to compare students' responses collected in two periods of online education in order to determine whether assessment practices had changed or not in the examined timespan.

3.2. Data collection

This paper presents and compares the results of surveys administered in TUR (METU), POL⁵ (University of Warsaw - SP), RNM (University of Information Science and Technology), and B&H (University of Tuzla) among university students. To ensure parallelism among the data sets collected in the four countries, a cross-culturally appropriate questionnaire was designed

4 Except one cohort of learners at secondary school level – data collected in the first period.

5 The name of the secondary school is not revealed to protect the students' individual data.

specifically for this study. Both closed and open-ended items were included in the data collection tools. However, in this text, we present and analyse only the quantitative results. The data-gathering tool was in English.

The same tool was used twice: (i) after the spring semester of 2020/2021 and (ii) after the winter semester of 2021/2022. The first dataset was collected in May- June 2020, and the second was collected in December 2020- January 2021. The questionnaires were distributed online among students using Google Forms. The data gathered in the questionnaire, which refers to other aspects of learning and teaching, is discussed in Miloshevska et al. (2021) and Hatipoğlu et al. (2021).

3.3. Participants

The number of participants in both periods was similar (FP=216 (Males=40.2%, Females=59.2%; SP=214 (Males=36%, Females=61.7%)). In the FP, 75 (34.7%) of the informants were from TUR, 23 (10.6%) POL, 49 (22.7%) RNM and 69 (31.9%) B&H participants. The country distribution in the SP was: TUR=65 (30.4%), POL=30 (14.0%), RNM=45 (21.0%) and B&H=74 (34.6%).

Respondents in POL were aged 16-17 in FP and 20-23 in the SP. Respondents in RNM were aged 19-24 in FP and 18-21 in the SP. Respondents in TUR were aged 19-25 in FP and 20-23 in the SP. Respondents in B&H were aged 19-24 in FP and 19-25 in the SP.

They were all learners of English as a foreign language, and the surveys were distributed among such groups. However, they were also learning other languages, either formally or informally, and we found such data not relevant to the study.

4. Results

4.1 Types of exams during the pandemic online learning period

Data in Tables 1 and 2 show the answers to the question: **“What kinds of exams have you taken during the online teaching period?”**

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	ALL
Online oral	4 (5.3%)	17 (73.9%)	13 (26.5%)	34 (49.3%)	68 (31.5%)
Online written	57 (76.0%)	23 (100.0%)	46 (93.9%)	57 (82.6%)	183 (84.7%)
Take home	74 (98.7%)	13 (56.5%)	3 (6.1%)	52 (75.4%)	106 (49.1%)
Projects	54 (72.0%)	17 (73.9%)	20 (40.8%)	35 (50.7%)	126 (58.3%)
Other	3 (4.0%)			1 (1.4%)	4 (1.9%)

Table 1. The types of exams students took in the first period.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	ALL
Online oral	8 (12.3%)	21 (70.0%)	22 (48.9%)	29 (39.2%)	80 (37.4%)
Online written	48 (73.9%)	30 (100.0%)	44 (97.8%)	45 (60.8%)	167 (78.0%)
Take home	54 (83.1%)	15 (50.0%)	4 (8.9%)	25 (33.8%)	98 (45.8%)
Projects	58 (89.2%)	27 (90.0%)	10 (22.28%)	46 (62.2%)	141 (65.9%)
Other	2 (3.1%)	3 (10.0%)		6 (8.1%)	11 (5.1%)

Table 2. The types of exams students took in the second period.

The data in Table 1 and Table 2 show that in the second period, there was a decrease in written exams that students wrote by 6.7% and take-home assignments by 3.3%, whereas in the second period oral exams increased by 12% and projects by 7.6% in the four studied countries. The results show the contextual grounds valid in each country. In TUR, oral exams were not extensively applied in both periods (FP=5.3%, SP=12.3%), showing that other forms were more widely applied, such as online written (FP=76.0%, SP= 73.9%), take-home (FP=98.7%, SP=83.1), projects (FP=72%, SP=89.2%). In POL, the take-home exam was the least popular (FP=56.5%, SP=50%). While the other forms, such as online written, reached 100% in both periods, the online oral (FP=73.9%, SP=70%) and projects (FP=73.9%, SP=90%) demonstrated varying success rates. In RNM, in both periods and in spite of the governmental guidelines for seeking alternative assessment methods, the data show that most students have been assessed through an online written exam, 93.9% in the FP and 97.8% in SP. However, the data show that oral exams and take-home assignments have been employed more during the SP. In the SP, 48.9% of the students had an oral exam compared to 26.5% in the FP; 8.9% of students did take-home assignments in the SP compared to 6.1% in the FP. Interestingly, the number of students who delivered projects as a form of assessment in the SP in RNM has decreased by 18.52% compared to the FP. In B&H, the results are

more diverse. Noticeable changes are observed in the application of online oral exams (FP=49.3%, SP=39.3%) and online written exams (FP=82.6%, SP=60.8%), take-home (FP=75.4%, SP=33.8%). The use of projects increased in the second period (FP=50.7%, SP=62.2%) and other forms of assessment (FP=1.4%, SP=8.1%). In the FP, students stayed at home, and all forms of progress tests and midterm exams were conducted online using different platforms. The students returned to campus to take final written exams. In the SP, some classes remained online due to the number of students and epidemiological measures that were in force. In SP, most students were on campus and could intensively work on projects with their peers in the way they used to do prior to the pandemic.

4.2. Students’ expectations of better grades because of online learning

Students’ expectations of better grades thanks to online learning in the FP and SP were elicited via the statement “**I think I will get better grades because of OL**”, followed by five-point Likert scale questions (5=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree), and their answers are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	2 (2.7%)	4 (17.7%)	3 (6.1%)	3 (4.3%)	12 (5.6%)
4 - agree	8 (10.7%)	9 (39.1%)	4 (8.2%)	7 (10.1%)	28 (13.2%)
3- neutral	25 (33.3%)	5 (21.7%)	21 (42.8%)	25 (36.2%)	76 (35.2%)
2- disagree	23 (30.7%)	3 (13.0%)	14 (28.6%)	19 (27.5%)	59 (27.3%)
1 - strongly disagree	17 (22.7%)	2 (8.7%)	7 (14.3%)	15 (21.7%)	41 (19.3%)

Table 3. Students beliefs that they got better marks thanks to online learning in the first period.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	4 (6.2%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (8.9%)	2 (2.7%)	12 (5.6%)
4 - agree	12 (18.5%)	8 (26.7%)	5 (11.1%)	3 (4.5%)	28 (13.1%)
3- neutral	24 (36.9%)	13 (43.3%)	23 (51.1%)	23 (31.1%)	83 (38.8%)
2- disagree	19 (29.2%)	5 (16.7%)	11 (24.4%)	30 (40.5%)	65 (30.4%)
1 - strongly disagree	6 (9.2%)	2 (8.7%)	2 (4.4%)	16 (21.6%)	26 (12.1%)

Table 4. Students beliefs that they got better marks thanks to online learning in the second period.

Interestingly, the data show that students who strongly agree or agree that, because of online learning, they will have better grades are in the total identical in both the FP and SP across the four countries. The number of students who are neutral to this statement has increased by 3.6 % in the SP compared to the FP. By contrast, 91 (42.5%) students in the SP disagreed or strongly disagreed that online learning would contribute to their better academic performance, which is a decrease of 4.6% when compared to the FP. However, in POL, in both periods, students are more optimistic in their expectations of better marks in both periods. On the contrary, in TUR, students did not expect better marks after the first period FP 50 (63.4%) but changed their opinions after the second period SP 25 (38.4%). In B&H, the respondents did not expect better marks, FP 34 (49.2%) and confirmed their lack of such expectations after the second period, SP 46 (62.1%). In RNM, similarly to TUR, students did not expect better marks in FP 21 (42.9%) but changed their opinions after the second period SP 13 (31.1%).

4.3. Objectivity of online assessment

We asked students to indicate their opinions regarding the objectivity of online assessment. They rated the statement: **The online testing/assessment practices in your school are objective**, using Likert scale questions (5=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree). The obtained data are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	13 (17.3%)	2 (8.6%)	4 (8.2%)	13 (18.9%)	32 (14.8%)
4 - agree	22 (29.3%)	9 (39.1%)	20 (40.8%)	38 (55.0%)	89 (41.2%)
3- neutral	26 (34.7%)	10 (43.7%)	21 (42.9%)	17 (24.6%)	74 (34.3%)
2- disagree	11 (14.7%)	2 (8.6%)	2 (4.1%)	(1.4%)	18 (8.3%)
1- strongly disagree	3 (4.0%)	0	2 (4.1%)	0	5 (2.3%)

Table 5. Objectivity of online assessment practices in the first period in students' perceptions.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	8 (12.3%)	2 (6.7%)	6 (13.3%)	3 (4.1%)	19 (8.9%)
4 - agree	28 (43.1%)	20 (66.7%)	21 (46.7%)	26 (35.1%)	95 (44.4%)
3- neutral	23 (35.38%)	6 (20.0%)	16 (35.6%)	42 (56.8%)	87 (40.7%)
2- disagree	3 (4.6%)	1 (3.3%)	0	3 (4.1%)	7 (5.3%)
1- strongly disagree	3 (4.6%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (4.4%)	0	6 (2.8%)

Table 6. Objectivity of online assessment practices in the second period in students' perceptions.

That data show that students across the four studied countries believe that the online assessment they experienced was objective in both the first and second periods. In the FP, 121 (56.0%) students either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Similarly, 114 (53.3%) participants shared the same opinion in the SP. The respondents' opinions on the objectivity of the assessment practices are similar in all four countries after the first period. However, the respondents' opinions on objectivity increased in TUR, POL and RNM but decreased in B&H.

4.4. Validity of online assessment

For an assessment to be valid, it needs to produce correct results: 1) it needs to measure what the assessor intends to measure, and 2) it measures it correctly and precisely.

In terms of the validity of the online assessment, students were asked to indicate their opinions. They rated the statement: **The online testing/assessment practices in your school are valid**, using Likert scale questions (5=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree). The obtained data are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	10 (13.3%)	1 (4.3%)	6 (12.2%)	13 (18.9%)	30 (13.9%)
4 - agree	25 (33.3%)	8 (34.8%)	21 (42.9%)	33 (47.8%)	87 (40.3%)
3- neutral	23 (30.7%)	12 (52.2%)	19 (38.8%)	21 (30.4%)	75 (34.7%)
2- disagree	12 (16.0%)	2 (8.7%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (1.4%)	16 (7.4%)
1- strongly disagree	5 (6.7%)	0	2 (4.1%)	1 (1.4%)	8 (3.7%)

Table 7. Validity of online assessment practices in the first period in students' perceptions.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	8 (12.3%)	3 (10.0%)	7 (15.6%)	4 (5.4%)	22 (10.3%)
4 - agree	33 (50.8%)	17 (56.7%)	24 (53.3%)	30 (40.5%)	104 (48.6%)
3- neutral	17 (26.2%)	6 (20.0%)	11 (24.4%)	38 (51.6%)	72 (33.6%)
2- disagree	4 (6.2%)	3 (10.0%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (2.7%)	10 (4.7%)
1- strongly disagree	3 (4.6%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (4.4%)	0	6 (2.8%)

Table 8. Validity of online assessment practices in the second period in students' perceptions.

These data show that students across the four studied countries believe the online assessment they experienced was valid in both the first and second periods. In the FP, 117 (42.2%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. In the SP, 126 (58.9%) share the same opinion. In TUR, the increase of opinions increased from 46.6% to 63.3%; in POL, it increased from 39.3% to 66.7%; in RNM, it increased from 55.1% to 68.9%; in B&H, the evaluation of validity decreased from 66.7% to 45.9% but still remained high.

4.5. Reliability of online assessment

The reliable assessment produces results that can be replicated. An assessment is reliable when its results are consistent or when a respondent gives related answers to the same test given twice or to different versions of the same questions.

Students' perceptions of the reliability of online assessment were elicited. They rated the statement: **The online testing/assessment practices in your school are reliable**, using Likert scale questions (5=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree). The obtained data are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	7 (9.3%)	1 (4.3%)	6 (12.2%)	10 (14.5%)	24 (11.1%)
4 - agree	26 (34.7%)	5 (21.7%)	12 (24.5%)	33 (47.8%)	76 (35.2%)
3- neutral	22 (29.3%)	9 (39.1%)	21 (42.9%)	21 (30.4%)	73 (33.8%)
2- disagree	13 (17.3%)	7 (30.4%)	8 (16.3%)	4 (5.8%)	32 (14.8%)
1- strongly disagree	7 (9.3%)	1 (4.3%)	2 (4.1%)	1 (1.4%)	11 (5.1%)

Table 9. Reliability of online assessment practices in the first period in students' perceptions.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	8 (12.3%)	3 (10.0%)	6 (13.3%)	4 (5.4%)	20 (9.6%)
4 - agree	27 (41.5%)	13 (43.3%)	24 (53.3%)	30 (40.5%)	83 (38.8%)
3- neutral	18 (27.7%)	8 (26.7%)	12 (26.7%)	38 (51.6%)	83 (38.8%)
2- disagree	6 (9.2%)	5 (16.7%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (2.7%)	19 (8.9%)
1- strongly disagree	6 (9.2%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (4.4%)	0	9 (4.2%)

Table 10. Reliability of online assessment practices in the second period in students' perceptions.

That data show that students across the four studied countries believe the online assessment they experienced was reliable in both the first and second periods. In the FP, 100 (46.3%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Similarly, 103 (48.4%) share the same opinion in the SP. The results show that in TUR, the perception of reliability increased from 44% in the FP to 53.8% in the SP. In RNM, it increased from 36.7% in FP to 66.6% in SP. In POL, it increased from 26% in the FP to 53% in the SP. In B&H, it decreased from 62.3% to 45.9%. This decrease in B&H could be related to the decrease in students' exposure to online testing in SP, as most students returned to campus and had both classes and tests on campus. Only bigger classes had to remain online due to epidemiological restrictions.

4.6. Online assessment is easier than in-class testing

The results of students' answers to whether the testing/assessment practices during the online learning period were easier than in-class testing are presented in Tables 11 and 12. They rated the statement: **The online testing/assessment practices in your school are easier than in-class testing**, using Likert scale questions (5=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree).

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	6 (8.0%)	7 (30.4%)	6 (12.2%)	4 (5.8%)	23 (10.7%)
4 - agree	15 (20.0%)	4 (17.4%)	7 (14.3%)	18 (26.1%)	43 (19.9%)
3- neutral	16 (21.3%)	7 (30.4%)	19 (38.8%)	25 (36.2%)	67 (31.0%)
2- disagree	24 (32%)	5 (21.7%)	14 (28.6%)	16 (23.2%)	59 (27.3%)
1- strongly disagree	14 (18.7%)	0	3 (6.1%)	6 (8.7%)	23 (10.7%)

Table 11. Easiness of online testing/assessment practices in the first period in students' perceptions.

P	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
5- strongly agree	9 (15.9%)	3 (10.0%)	9 (20.0%)	4 (5.4%)	25 (11.7%)
4 - agree	7 (10.8%)	13 (43.3%)	16 (35.5%)	18 (24.3%)	54 (25.2%)
3- neutral	22 (33.9%)	8 (26.7%)	24 (53.3%)	38 (51.6%)	92 (43.0%)
2- disagree	20 (30.8%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (6.7%)	12 (16.2%)	42 (19.6%)
1- strongly disagree	7 (10.8%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (4.4%)	2 (2.7%)	12 (6.6%)

Table 12. Easiness of online testing/assessment practices in the second period in students' perceptions.

The data show that in the FP, 82 (38%) of respondents disagreed with the statement that online assessment was easier than in-person assessment. However, 26.2% of students (n=54) disagree with this statement in the SP. We might argue that students got used to online assessment and instructors' expectations in the SP.

There are substantial differences among the results collected in each country. In TUR, the evaluation of easiness of the assessment practices remained the same FP 21 (28%), SP 16 (26.7%). It increased in POL, FP 11 (37.8%) and SP 16 (53.3%). In RNM, it also increased from FP 13 (26.5%) to SP 35 (55.5%). In B&H, the evaluation is similar in both periods: FP 22 (31.9%) and SP 22 (29.7%)

4.7. The effects of online assessment on the way students prepare for exams

We wanted to know whether online assessment has affected how students study and prepare for exams. Students' answers to the question “**Has online learning changed how you prepare for exams?**” are displayed in Tables 13 and 14.

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
Yes	44 (58.7%)	15 (65.2%)	13 (26.5%)	24 (34.8%)	96 (44.4%)
No	31 (41.3%)	8 (34.8%)	36 (73.5%)	45 (65.2%)	120 (55.6%)

Table 13. The effects of online assessment on students' preparation for exams in the first period.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
Yes	35 (53.8%)	15 (50.0%)	10 (22.2%)	19 (25.7%)	79 (36.9%)
No	30 (46.2%)	15 (50.0%)	35 (77.8%)	55 (74.3%)	135 (63.1%)

Table 14. The effects of online assessment on students' preparation for exams in the second period.

The data show that, in the FP, more than half of our respondents, n= 120 (55.6%), stated that online assessment did not affect how they studied for exams. In the SP, this number is higher by 7.5%. However, it is worth mentioning that there are differences in the studied countries regarding this question. Most students from TUR (n=44, 58.7%) and PL (n=15, 65.2%) in the FP stated that online assessment affected how they prepare for exams, whereas students from RNM and B&H stated the opposite. Interestingly, students' perceptions of whether online assessment affected how they study for exams remained consistent for both studied periods across the examined countries.

4.8. Online assessment should remain a regular practice beyond the pandemic

As we look beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and reflect on all the changes it introduced to the educational process, we want to understand students' opinions on whether online testing should continue to be a part of educational practices after the pandemic concludes. One of the options offered as the answer to the question: "What elements of online learning should remain as regular teaching-learning practices when the pandemic ends and we go back to face-to-face teaching? (You can select several options)" was related to testing and assessment practices. The data on whether testing and assessment practices as elements of online learning should remain as regular teaching-learning practices when the pandemic ends is presented in Table 15.

FP/SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
FP Testing / assessment practices	19 (25.3%)	3 (13%)	12 (24.4%)	15 (21.7%)	49 (22.7%)
SP Testing / assessment practices	15 (23.1%)	6 (20.0%)	7 (15.6%)	11 (14.9%)	39 (18.2%)

Table 15. The opinions on whether testing and assessment practices as elements of online learning should remain as regular teaching-learning practices when the pandemic ends in the first and second periods of online learning.

It seems that in the FP, students favoured integrating online assessment as a regular practice in higher education institutions (n=49, 22.7%) more when compared to SP (n=39, 18.2%). In three countries, TUR, RNM and B&H, fewer students after the second period wanted online assessment practices to remain a

regular practice beyond the pandemic. Only in POL, the students wanted them to remain.

4.9. Teacher's role as an assessor

We asked students to rate their teachers' different roles in the online learning period. They responded to the statement: "How would you rate your teachers' roles when you compare face-to-face teaching with online teaching?", using the Likert scale: 4 - exactly the same, 3 - somewhat the same, 2 - somewhat different, 1- completely different.

Among the different roles teachers played, only the assessor's role is discussed here. Students were asked to rate their teacher's role as an assessor in the online learning period compared to the in-person period in the FP and SP. The results are displayed in Tables 16 and 17.

FP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
4 - exactly the same	24 (32.0%)	4 (17.4%)	16 (32.7%)	20 (29.0%)	64 (29.6%)
3 - somewhat the same	31 (41.3%)	13 (56.5%)	26 (53.0%)	34 (49.3%)	104 (48.2%)
2 - somewhat different	14 (18.7%)	6 (26.1%)	7 (14.3%)	13 (18.8%)	40 (18.5%)
1- completely different	6 (8.0%)	0	0	2 (2.9%)	8 (3.7%)

Table 16. Students' opinions on the assessor's role compared to face-to-face and online teaching in the first period.

SP	TUR	POL	RNM	B&H	All
4 - exactly the same	21 (32.3%)	6 (20.0%)	11 (24.4%)	16 (21.6%)	54 (25.2%)
3 - somewhat the same	33 (50.8%)	16 (53.3%)	23 (51.1%)	48 (64.7%)	120 (56.1%)
2 - somewhat different	8 (12.3%)	6 (20.0%)	9 (20.0%)	10 (13.5%)	33 (15.4%)
1- completely different	3 (4.6%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (4.4%)	0	7 (3.3%)

Table 17. Students' opinions on the assessor's role compared to face-to-face and online teaching in the second period.

The data show that most students in FP (n=168, 77.8%) and in the SP (n=174, 81.3%) believe that the teacher's role as an assessor remained "exactly the same" or "somewhat the same" as before online learning. There are no differences observed across the countries. The students might not be aware of the huge

amount of effort their teachers put into performing their roles. We might argue that teachers successfully adapted to the new setting and played the different roles expected from them well.

5. Discussion of the results

5.1. Comparison of the results collected in the two periods

The results of the study show that there are important similarities and differences in how the teachers and students adapted to the new learning environment and changes in how students were assessed in TUR, POL, RNM and B&H.

There are opinions arguing that online assessment is harmful and inefficient (Elshawa et al. (2016). Bedi and Roje (2021) in their study on students' responses, identified the need for better organization of online lessons to create better learning environment. However, there are other studies that confirm the lack of negative effects of the pandemic on students learning. Adıyaman, A.; Demir, Ç. (2021) did not observe any negative impact on student's motivation during the pandemic. Healy (2021) emphasised the positive effect of inclusion observed among Japanese students. The results of the present study show that some changes in assessment and evaluation are observed by students. However, the online assessment did not affect the way students prepared for exams. Students also observed that the teachers performed the assessor role almost the same way as in the F2F environment. Students took **more oral** exams in the SP than in the FP - an increase of 5.9 percentage points (pp), and fewer written exams – a decrease of 6.7 pp.

The students reported an **increased number of projects** as assessment forms in the second period – an increase of 7.6 pp.

Interestingly, students' expectations of better grades because of online assessment remained consistent in both periods. Namely, the same number of students expected **better marks** because of OL (18.7%) in both periods, and a similar number of students disagreed with this statement - a decrease of 3.8 pp.

Students' belief that online assessment might contribute to obtaining better grades is related to the issues of academic misconduct and the availability of resources at students' disposal for cheating during the online assessment. In order to prevent such practices, a clear attitude to assessment integrity may ensure a sound assessment process and accurate results. Moreover, assessment

design may prevent instances of cheating and plagiarism (Almossa & Alzahrani, 2022). A shift from tasks that focus on the reproduction of knowledge to tasks that focus on the application of learning minimises the chance of misconduct (Ellis et al., 2020; Brown and Janssen, 2017).

Few students perceived their assessment as **objective** - a decrease of 2.7 pp, but also fewer of them disagreed with this statement – a decrease of 2.7 pp. More stayed neutral - an increase of 6.4 pp.

More students perceived their exams as **valid**, an increase of 4.4 pp and fewer disagreed - a decrease of 3.6 pp.

Slightly more students perceived their exams as **reliable** - an increase of 2.1 pp and fewer of them disagreed with the statement - a decrease of 6.7 pp.

On the one hand, students' opinions on the three assessment characteristics: objectivity, validity and reliability may mean that course instructors seem to have successfully adapted their assessment methods to the new online environment as they have provided students with valid and objective evaluations. On the other hand, it may mean that students generally believe in teachers' professionalism.

Only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the students perceived the OL exams as **easier**, 30.6% (FP) versus 31.9% (SP), with a decrease of 10.8 pp of those who disagreed with the statement, which is less than reported in the literature. This may refer to students' perceptions of academic integrity. The decrease in disagreement may mean that the initial opinion that online exams were not easier was verified, and many fewer students disagreed with this statement – either the exams became easier, or they got used to them, or they became more mature students.

Fewer students responded that OL changed **the way they prepared for the exams** – a decrease of 7.5 pp with even more students – who did not change the way they prepared for the exam - an increase of 7.5 pp. We might argue that as the pandemic prolonged, students got more familiar with online test formats and regulations.

More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of students evaluated the role of a **teacher as an assessor** as the same or somewhat the same in FP, but this increased by 3.5 pp in the SP. In comparison, differences were noticed by 22.2% of students in FP and remained unchanged in the SP by 22.7%. The number of students who wanted the **testing practices to remain** after the end of OL decreased by 10.7 pp. This may show the general tiredness of the pandemic restrictions among students. Students experienced different difficulties as timed exams often assess students' speed

and not comprehension of the matter studied, which could be a challenging experience with different technical difficulties that students might have (lack of equipment, internet connection, digital skills, technical support).

The results, especially the perception of easiness and expectation of better results by students, may bring reflections on academic integrity. That is, the need for providing a secure online assessment that eliminates the opportunities for academic misconduct was a major difficulty for faculty members during the pandemic. Eaton (2020) noted that the pandemic was a time wherein technology companies with advanced proctoring and cheating measurement systems thrive with solutions for institutions, but these require infrastructure such as laptops equipped with cameras and internet access, programmes for students and faculty, and substantial budgets. Unfortunately, not all institutions could afford such technology. For instance, at Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, the University of Information Science and Technology in RNM, the University of Tuzla in B&H and the University of Warsaw, where data for this study was collected, faculty members tried several solutions to ensure the academic integrity of online assessment and minimise cheating. Several free options were utilised, for example, Testportal and exam.net, among others, and students were required to have their cameras on throughout the duration of the whole exam. However, these solutions are not cheating-proof and still, many faculty members raised their concerns regarding the accuracy of online assessment scores. Another way of preventing cheating was to change the tasks in such a way that cheating was restricted.

6. Limitations of the study

Despite the rigour with which the data collection and analysis procedures were carried out, the results of the current study should be generalised with caution as the data were collected from only a limited number of students in the four countries. A limited number of educational institutions were represented in the study. The questionnaire was focused on students' opinions as the data from teachers in these four countries were not collected. To some extent, the differences in the responses obtained in POL may reflect the difference in the institutions and age of the respondents. However, the changes are also observed in the data collected in the other three countries. They might illustrate the individual characteristics of the cohorts of respondents approached in the FP and SP of the pandemic period. In both surveys, we might assume that the respondents may also be tired of online surveys (Mol, 2017).

7. Conclusions

The study results show important similarities in the ways students in TUR, POL, RNM, and B&H were evaluated in the four countries. On the one hand, certain changes in the forms of evaluation were observed. Students selected the middle option while evaluating the objectivity of their assessment. This way, they might show their doubts about understanding the terminology. However, they noticed an increase in the validity and reliability of their assessment. The number of students who wanted the online testing practices to stay as part of the educational offer beyond the emergency online learning was not impressive after the FP (28.9%) and decreased to 18.2% in the SP.

On the other hand, no change is noticed in the expectations of better results due to OL. With time, students declared that there was no change in how they prepared for the exams. The role of the teacher as an assessor was predominantly evaluated as the same in OL and f2f environments and remained the same in both periods. This confirms teachers' professionalism in the students' eyes.

It can be concluded that, in the students' perceptions, assessment and evaluation were strongly affected by the change in the learning environment, but only in some areas. With time, (online) assessment was getting more and more normalised. It may imply that both teachers and learners had more time to adopt new evaluation strategies, given the delay in teaching that had to be changed nearly overnight.

The study results could encourage teachers to discuss new assessment forms in the online evaluations. Also, test developers may consider developments in the test design to prepare more suitable tools to support online assessment.

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STUDENTSKA EVALUACIJA *ONLINE* OCJENJIVANJA U RAZDOBLJU *ONLINE* NASTAVE ZA VRIJEME PANDEMIJE COVID-19: U TURSKOJ, POLJSKOJ, REPUBLICI SJEVERNOJ MAKEDONIJI I BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI

Sažetak

Izbijanje COVIDA-19 iznudilo je mnoge promjene u obrazovanju, uključujući tehnike podučavanja, interakcije nastavnika i studenata, kao i prakse ocjenjivanja. Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj otkriti stavove studenata o vrstama ispita koje su polagali; njihovu procjenu praksi testiranja/ocjenjivanja koje su iskusili; je li *online* učenje utjecalo na način pripreme za ispite; žele li zadržati praksu testiranja/ocjenjivanja u novoj stvarnosti i kako procjenjuju ulogu nastavnika kao ocjenjivača.

Podatci za studiju prikupljeni su u Turskoj (TUR), Republici Sjevernoj Makedoniji (RNM), Poljskoj (POL) i Bosni i Hercegovini (BiH) korištenjem međukulturalno valjanih upitnika koji uključuju stavke u kojima se od studenata traži evaluirati nastavu, ocjenjivanje, te interakcijske vještine njihovih nastavnika tijekom prvoga semestra "hitne *online* nastave". U alate za prikupljanje podataka uključene su i zatvorene i otvorene stavke. Odgovori na stavke u upitnicima analizirani su kvantitativno imajući na umu specifičnosti zemlje i konteksta. Rezultati studije pokazuju sličnosti u načinima na koje su učenici ocjenjivani i njihove percepcije postupaka ocjenjivanja tijekom razdoblja COVID-19, kao i kontekstualne razlike u četirima zemljama.

Ključne riječi: Obrazovne promjene povezane s COVID-19, ocjenjivanje poznavanja jezika, učenje jezika, evaluacija praksi ocjenjivanja