



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CASE OF KLAIPĖDA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about changes in the processes of teaching and learning in higher education institutions and affected all possible areas of the higher education process. The opinion of teachers of the Klaipėda University Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities on the changes of their professional competencies during the Covid-19 pandemic was chosen as the research object. The aim of the research is to reveal peculiarities of professional development of teachers of higher education institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to qualitative content analysis of university teachers' answers, the concept of their role, the nature of teaching/learning methods and organization have changed, subject knowledge had to be adapted to suit online studies. A striking feature is that though there was no time to prepare for these conditions, teachers were forced to find a creative and an innovative commitment to act, learn, improve and demonstrate adaptability and flexibility by strengthening teacher-student communication in a virtual environment, using new online platforms, and ensuring appropriate follow-up study activities. It has also become clear that the constantly changing role of teachers, especially during a pandemic, requires more creative thinking and time for creating new teaching/learning methods, modules, and this implies extensive online/digital trainings. The research showed that distance learning in a higher education institution caused difficulties for teachers during the pandemic, but teachers were able to quickly master digital programs, manage information flows, collaborate with colleagues and students, engage in self-education, help students address the concerns raised that have really increased during the quarantine period, and at the same time maintain the continuity of the study process.

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