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# PROFESSOR'S NEW CLOTHES: 21ST-CENTURY TEACHING COMPETENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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*Keywords*:
21st-century teaching;
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reflective practice.

*Abstract*. The role of teachers in imparting knowledge and facilitating learning is complex and varies across cultures and educational levels. The evolving digital and knowledge society has led to a transformation in education, demanding innovative approaches to teaching and learning and higher education, in particular, is at the forefront of this change, as it prepares students for the future workforce. To develop as effective lecturers, it is crucial for educators to understand the evolving culture of academia and the roles they play within it. Despite the changing landscape of education, there is a lack of understanding regarding how lecturers perceive their roles and competencies in the 21st century. This exploratory study aims to bridge that gap by mapping the self-perception of the lecturers in higher education to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness.

The research design for this study is quantitative in nature, employing a questionnaire based on the conceptual framework the *21st-Century Teaching Competences* to gather data and draw conclusions on the self-perception of teachers in higher education. The approach involves administering the questionnaire to a convenient sample of 53 lecturers of the University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica. The analysis of the survey data suggests that lecturers hold a positive perception of their teaching competencies and generally view themselves as competent in their roles, particularly their proficiency in teacher leadership and content knowledge. However, the study also highlights some challenges and areas that require improvement such as enhancing leadership skills beyond the classroom, addressing the needs of students with special needs, implementing student-centered instructional approaches, and effectively integrating digital technology into teaching practices. By directly addressing the existing gap in knowledge regarding lecturers' perceptions, this study offers practical and actionable insights.

стр. 37–54

*What the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches.*
Karl Menninger

## *Introduction*

The advent of the digital and knowledge society has brought about a transformation in education, necessitating the adaptation of teaching approaches to meet the needs of the modern era (Gawe & De Kock, 2002). This shift impacts not only the content and delivery of education but also the roles and competences of teachers. The dynamic nature of education across different cultures and educational levels further adds complexity to the teaching process (Taguma et al., 2018). Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating students' acquisition of knowledge and enabling them to reach their full potential. However, fulfilling this role effectively requires more than just transmitting information. Teachers must be equipped to embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning, adapt to the evolving demands of the digital era, and engage with students both within the confines of the classroom and in broader community (Zhu, 2010). The acquisition and development of these competences are essential for lecturers to effectively navigate the changing landscape of higher education.

Against the backdrop of the evolving educational landscape and the growing importance of teaching competences, this study focuses on the self-perception of 21st-century teaching competences among lecturers at the University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica. Conducting this research allows us to expand our knowledge and expertise in the field of education. It presents an opportunity for professional growth and development as we delve into the complexities of the issue. The authors are motivated by the prospect of gaining a deeper understanding of teaching practices and contributing to the body of knowledge in the field. By investigating lecturers' perceptions and identifying areas for improvement, the aim is to provide practical insights and strategies that can enhance teaching effectiveness. Our motivation lies in the potential to positively influence educational practices and ultimately improve student outcomes.

## Literature Review

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant focus on studying teaching competencies across various educational contexts. Researchers have explored the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective teaching and have investigated different dimensions of teaching competencies. Studies have examined the core competencies of teachers (Awasthi, 2021; Eden & Ackermann, 2010; Mulder et al., 2009), including content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge (Rido, 2020), leadership (Wells, 2012; Xie & Shen, 2013), instructional strategies, assessment techniques, communication skills, and student engagement (Naibaho, 2019). These studies aim to identify the essential competencies that contribute to successful teaching and student learning outcomes. Additionally, research has focused on exploring innovative teaching competencies related to technology integration (David & Abreu, 2014), digital literacy (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022; Sillat et al., 2021), critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and cultural responsiveness (Zhu et al., 2010). Moreover, studies have investigated the relationship between teaching competencies and student outcomes (Lin & Jiar, 2018), such as academic achievement, motivation, engagement, and overall educational experience. They aim to understand how specific competencies and instructional practices impact students' learning and development.

For the purposes of this study, we adhere to the perception of competence as an activity that can be managed, hence being able to put the words 'an ability to' at the beginning (Eden & Ackermann, 2010). Traditional teaching methods, centred on knowledge transmission and passive learning, have given way to more student-centred and interactive approaches (Awasthi, 2021). There is now an emphasis on active learning, inquiry-based instruction, collaborative learning, and the integration of technology as a tool for enhancing teaching and learning experiences (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022). Moreover, the modern times call for educators to cultivate skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy among students. Teaching competences in higher education refer to "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable educators to effectively facilitate student learning and development" (Mulder et al., 2009, p. 757). These competences encompass a wide range of areas, including instructional design, classroom management, assessment and feedback, communication, collaboration, and the integration of technology into teaching practices (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2015). Kulić (2019) goes a step further and adds a competence of directing to the list in her work on drama techniques in English language teaching. In higher education, teaching competences are crucial for creating an engaging and supportive learning environment, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and preparing students for their future professional endeavours (Awasthi, 2021).

Identifying and defining key teaching competences involves recognizing the skills and knowledge that educators need to effectively engage and educate modern learners, the process which often incorporates "input from educational experts, research findings, and stakeholder perspectives" (Eden & Ackermann, 2010, p. 25). Several conceptual models and frameworks have been developed to define and organize the key teaching competences relevant to the 21st century. These models provide a structured framework for understanding and assessing teaching practices and they range from more traditional ones focusing on the teacher's personal and professional development to those which rely heavily on integration of digital technology.

One example is the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework, which emphasizes the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge in teaching. Developed by Koehler and Mishra (2009), it recognizes that effective technology integration requires more than just technical skills or content knowledge, prioritizing the interplay between three key components. Firstly, technological knowledge refers to an understanding of how different technologies work, their capabilities, and their limitations. It includes knowledge of various digital tools, software applications, and technological resources relevant to teaching and learning. Secondly, pedagogical knowledge focuses on the art and science of teaching and learning, such as knowledge of instructional strategies, learning theories, assessment techniques, and classroom management approaches. Pedagogical knowledge involves understanding how to engage students, design effective lessons, differentiate instruction, and promote meaningful learning experiences. Finally, content knowledge refers to a deep understanding of the subject matter being taught. The TPACK framework provides a valuable lens for "teacher preparation, professional development, and ongoing reflection to ensure effective technology integration in the classroom" (Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p. 67).

Another model is the UNESCO Competency Framework for Teachers, a comprehensive guide for the professional development and assessment of teachers worldwide (UNESCO, 2011), designed to provide a common language and set of standards for teacher competencies across different contexts and educational systems. It recognizes that effective teaching requires a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that go beyond subject matter expertise. It consists of three main domains: 1) cognitive competencies relate to teachers' knowledge and understanding of subject content, curriculum, and pedagogical approaches; 2) socio-emotional competencies focus on teachers' ability to create a positive and inclusive learning environment, establish supportive relationships with students, and effectively manage classroom dynamics; and 3) professional competencies pertain to teachers' commitment to continuous professional development, ethical standards, and professional responsibilities (UNESCO, 2011). This framework aims to support the development of high-quality teaching practices and "promote a shared understanding of what it

means to be an effective teacher" (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2021, p. 522) and serves as a guide for teacher preparation programs, professional development initiatives, and teacher performance assessment systems.

Finally, the conceptual framework at the heart of this study is a model presented by Olga Nessipbayeva (2012) in an edited book, *International Perspectives on Education*. The 21st-Century Teaching Competences is a five-part model of key competences for a modern teacher. According to Nessipbayeva (2012), teachers should demonstrate leadership in the classroom by assessing student progress, using data to develop instructional plans, maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment, and managing student behaviour effectively. Teachers also demonstrate leadership at the school level by engaging in collaborative professional learning activities, contributing to school improvement plans, and advocating for positive policies and practices. The second component is a respectful environment for a diverse population of students which emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Teachers nurture positive relationships with students, embrace diversity, counteract stereotypes, incorporate different perspectives, and adapt teaching to meet the needs of students with special needs. The third component is the knowledge of the content they teach which focuses on teachers' expertise in their subject matter realized through the development and application of effective lessons based on a well-designed course of study. It is also important for teachers to recognize the interconnectedness of content areas and to relate their subject to other disciplines and global awareness. As a fourth component, Nessipbayeva (2012) emphasizes that teachers should facilitate learning for their students, primarily by understanding of how learning occurs and what the developmental needs of students are. Finally, teachers need to reflect on their practice. They analyse student learning data to identify areas for improvement, link professional development to their goals, and employ research-verified approaches to enhance teaching and learning. All in all, this conceptual framework provides a comprehensive overview of key teaching competences that can enhance teacher's effectiveness in meeting the diverse needs of students and addressing the demands of modern education.

Each of the presented frameworks emphasizes specific aspects of teaching competencies, ranging from technology integration to cognitive, socio-emotional, and professional competencies, and classroom leadership. Furthermore, all frameworks include multiple components that contribute to effective teaching, with varying emphasis on different knowledge and skill areas, though the purpose of each framework ranges from enhancing technology integration (TPACK), and promoting effective teaching practices (UNESCO), to developing key competences for modern teachers (Nessipbayeva, 2012). On the other hand, they differ in their approach; TPACK focuses on the integration of technology with pedagogy and content knowledge, while UNESCO emphasizes a comprehensive set of competencies for teachers. The 21st-Century Teaching Competences framework

combines leadership, inclusivity, expertise, facilitation, and reflection in teaching. These frameworks each provide unique insights into the multifaceted nature of effective teaching, with TPACK focusing on technology integration, the UNESCO framework providing comprehensive teacher competencies, and Nessipbayeva's (2012) model encompassing a holistic approach to modern teaching competences.

## Research Design

*The research problem.* This study addresses the need to understand how lecturers perceive their competences in the 21st-century educational landscape. The study aims to bridge the gap in knowledge regarding lecturers' perceptions and contribute to the advancement of teaching practices to meet the challenges of the modern education environment. The specific tasks include: (1) examining lecturers' self-perceived competences in various dimensions, such as leadership, creating an inclusive environment, content knowledge, teaching methods, and reflective practices; (2) identifying areas for improvement in lecturers' competences; and (3) developing strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness based on the identified areas for *improvement*. The chosen problem analysis addresses the gap in knowledge regarding lecturers' self-perceived competences. The problem analysis aligns with the broader goals of enhancing teaching practices and contributing to the advancement of education.

*The participants.* The population of interest for this study comprises lecturers at the University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica (N=53). The authors employed a convenience sampling technique, where lecturers who were readily available and willing to participate were included in the sample. This sampling method is chosen due to its practicality and ease of access to potential respondents within the university context. The majority of respondents were females in the age range of 31–40, accounting for 36.84% of the total. Additionally, the 41–50 age range had the highest number of responses from both females (47.37%) and males (26.32%). It is worth noting that there were a few respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender and fell within the 21–30 age range, representing 5.26% of the total responses.

*The instrument.* The research design for this study is quantitative in nature, aiming to gather data to analyse and draw conclusions on the self-perception of teachers in higher education. The approach involves administering a survey questionnaire to the selected sample of lecturers to collect data on their self-perceived competences in various domains of teaching. The questionnaire[3] is based on the conceptual framework presented in the previous section, the 21st-Century Teaching Competences (Nessipbayeva, 2012) and comprises of five sub-scales: 1) Teacher Leadership (8 items); 2) Learning Environment

[3] The questionnaire is available here: https://bit.ly/TeachingCompetencesSurvey

(7 items); 3) Content Knowledge (5 items); 4) Facilitating Learning (7 items); 5) Reflective Practice (3 items). The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or self-perception on a Likert scale to each item related to the five components. In addition, the questionnaire gathered demographic data on the respondents, namely, age and gender. In Table 1 we report reliability index of the questionnaire and present some sample items. The Cronbach's alpha score for the whole questionnaire is 0.75, which is generally acceptable for a research instrument, indicating valid internal consistency.

Table 1. Reliability index

| Subscale | Items | Sample | α |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher Leadership | 8 | I engage in collaborative and collegial professional learning activities. | .75 |
| Learning Environment | 7 | I maintain a positive and nurturing learning environment. | .70 |
| Content Knowledge | 5 | I demonstrate an appropriate level of content knowledge in my specialty. | .70 |
| Facilitating Learning | 7 | I use a variety of methods and materials suited to the needs of all students. | .74 |
| Reflective Practice | 3 | I use a variety of research-verified approaches to improve teaching and learning. | .86 |

Based on the questionnaire, several expected outcomes can be formulated. Namely, we expect the respondents to describe themselves as:

- demonstrating strong leadership competences;
- conscious of the importance of establishing a respectful environment for a diverse population of students and striving to create an inclusive learning environment;
- exhibiting a solid understanding of the content they teach and effectively integrating it into their instructional practices;
- employing diverse teaching methods and adapting their instruction to cater to the different learning needs and levels of their students;
- reflective teachers who actively seek opportunities for professional growth and improvement.

*Data analysis.* Once the survey responses were collected, the data was subjected to quantitative analysis techniques. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the responses, including measures of central tendency (mean) and variability (standard deviation). The mean score gives an indication of the typical value in the dataset with higher scores suggesting stronger agreement. The standard deviation (SD) measures the spread of the data points around the mean with the lower SD score showing that the data points are closer to the mean which is useful for understanding the distribution of the responses

and assessing the consistency of the measurements. The analysis involved interpreting the findings in relation to the expected outcomes.

## *Results*

The first subscale examines the self-perception of lecturers on the role of leadership in the teaching practice. It asked the respondents to reflect on their involvement in shaping g educational practices and policies in and beyond their own classrooms. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses for this subscale.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the Teacher Leadership subscale

| Item | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| I evaluate student progress using a variety of assessment-data measuring goals. | 3.81 | 1.02 |
| I draw on appropriate data to develop classroom and instructional plans. | 4.33 | 1.16 |
| I maintain a safe and orderly classroom that facilitates student learning. | 4.29 | 0.99 |
| I use effective communication to defuse and de-escalate disruptive or dangerous behaviour. | 4.33 | 1.03 |
| I engage in collaborative and collegial professional learning activities. | 4.29 | 1.06 |
| I can identify the characteristics or critical elements of a school improvement plan. | 4.10 | 1.15 |
| I participate in professional development and growth activities. | 4.24 | 1.09 |
| I develop professional relationships and networks. | 4.19 | 1.02 |

Generally, the results presented in Table 2 show a positive perception of the evaluated items, with high levels of endorsement for these professional practices (mean ranging from 3.81 to 4.33). Firstly, there is a positive perception of evaluating student progress using various assessment data with the lowest mean score of 3.81 in this subscale. Drawing on appropriate data to develop classroom and instructional plans has the highest mean of 4.33, indicating a more positive response with a standard deviation score of 1.16 which shows some variability in the responses. Another item with the highest mean score is using effective communication strategies in class with even lower variability in the responses indicating that the lecturers perceive themselves as skilled in defusing disruptive behaviour. Furthermore, the respondents show uniformity in their self-perception of maintaining a safe and orderly classroom that facilitates student learning (SD=0.99). When it comes to exhibiting leadership outside the confines of a classroom, the respondents see themselves as less skilled with the mean of 4.10 for identifying the critical elements of a school improvement plan, 4.24 for participating in professional development activities, and even

lower mean of 4.19 for developing professional networks. Overall, with the subscale mean score well above the neutral threshold, the results fall within the expected margin.

The second subscale tests for teachers' competence at building an effective learning environment, recognizing the influence of diversity, and planning their instruction accordingly. They strive to create meaningful learning experiences that connect with students' backgrounds and experiences, fostering a sense of relevance and global awareness. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses for this subscale.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the Learning Environment subscale

| Item | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| I maintain a positive and nurturing learning environment. | 3.85 | 1.74 |
| I use materials or lessons that counteract stereotypes and acknowledge the contributions of all cultures. | 3.77 | 1.69 |
| I incorporate different points of view in my instruction. | 3.77 | 1.76 |
| I understand the influence of diversity and plan instruction accordingly. | 3.58 | 1.70 |
| I maintain a learning environment that conveys high expectations of every student. | 3.54 | 1.69 |
| I cooperate with specialists and use resources to support the special learning needs of all students. | 3.38 | 1.86 |
| I use research-verified strategies to provide effective learning activities for students with special needs. | 2.85 | 1.92 |

On the whole, the data in Table 3 indicate a positive perception of maintaining a positive (mean 3.85) and inclusive learning environment (mean 3.77), incorporating diverse perspectives (mean 3.77), and recognizing the influence of diversity in instruction (3.58), though standard deviation scores for these items range from 1.69 to 1.76 which show significant variability in the responses. However, there is some variation in the level of agreement regarding the use of materials and strategies specifically related to students with special needs with the lowest mean of 2.85 and the highest degree of variance (1.92). These findings emphasize the importance of continued professional development and growth in addressing the diverse needs of students and promoting inclusive practices. With mean scores slightly above the neutral point of 3.0, our second expected outcome is partially met in that the lecturers are conscious of the importance of establishing a respectful environment for a diverse population of students. However, the results do not reflect lecturers' attempts to create an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs.

The third subscale explores content knowledge as a fundamental teaching competence that refers to a teacher's deep understanding and expertise in the

subject matter they are teaching. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses for this subscale.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the Content Knowledge subscale

| Item | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| I demonstrate an appropriate level of content knowledge in my specialty. | 4.01 | 1.67 |
| I encourage students to investigate the content area to expand their knowledge and satisfy their natural curiosity. | 4.27 | 1.40 |
| I demonstrate a knowledge of my subject by relating it to other disciplines. | 3.96 | 1.50 |
| I relate global awareness of the subject. | 4.08 | 1.59 |
| I integrate 21st-century skills and content in my instruction. | 4.04 | 1.55 |

Content knowledge has always been a key teaching competence and as data in Table 4 show, respondents perceive themselves as highly competent in demonstrating an appropriate level of specialty (mean 4.01) indicating an awareness of the importance of content knowledge. The respondents also evaluated themselves highly in regard to encouraging students to investigate the subject matter with the highest mean score of 4.27. They somewhat perceive themselves as competent in relating their subject to other disciplines, helping students understand the interconnectedness of different subjects with the lowest mean of 3.96. A slightly higher agreement is expressed in relating global awareness to the subject, incorporating a global perspective, and emphasizing its relevance on a global scale (mean 4.08). Lastly, a significant proportion of respondents said they integrate 21st-century skills and content in their instruction with a mean score of 4.04 and standard deviation of 1.55 suggesting a moderate level of consensus among them. This indicates that lecturers incorporate modern skills and knowledge necessary for success in the modern world. On balance, these results align with the expectation that the respondents would describe themselves as exhibiting a solid understanding of the content they teach and effectively integrating it into their instructional practices.

The next subscale explores teachers' competence in facilitating learning by guiding and supporting students' cognitive, social, and emotional development throughout the learning process. We discussed several components related to facilitating learning, such as collaborating with colleagues, using a variety of methods and materials, integrating technology, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving, organizing learning teams, effectively communicating, and using multiple indicators for assessment and instruction. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses for this subscale.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the Facilitating Learning subscale

| Item | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| I collaborate with colleagues to monitor student performance. | 2.83 | 1.20 |
| I use a variety of methods and materials suited to the needs of all students. | 2.78 | 1.21 |
| I integrate digital technology into my instruction to maximize student learning. | 2.27 | 1.33 |
| I integrate specific instruction that helps students develop strategies for critical thinking and problem-solving. | 2.71 | 1.41 |
| I organize learning teams for the purpose of developing cooperation and student leadership. | 2.61 | 1.38 |
| I use a variety of methods to communicate effectively with all students. | 2.73 | 1.39 |
| I use multiple indicators, both formative and summative, to monitor and evaluate student progress and to inform instruction. | 2.78 | 1.33 |

Based on the responses provided, several key findings emerge regarding the facilitation of learning as seen in Table 5. Primarily, the mean scores range from 2.27 for integrating digital technology into the teaching practice to 2.83 for collaborating with colleagues in monitoring student progress, which is below the neutral point of 3.0, indicating low commitment to the various aspects of this subscale. All in all, the results indicate that the respondents generally demonstrate somewhat positive attitudes and practices towards facilitating learning. They moderately collaborate with colleagues, use a variety of methods and materials, integrate technology, promote critical thinking and problem-solving, organize learning teams, communicate effectively, and employ multiple indicators for monitoring and evaluating student progress. These findings suggest a weak commitment to student-centred instruction and lower engagement in the integration of digital technology in the teaching practice contrary to our anticipation that lecturers employ diverse teaching methods and adapt their instruction to cater to the different learning needs and levels of their students.

Finally, the fifth subscale examines reflective practice that involves a thoughtful and intentional examination of teaching methods, instructional decisions, and their impact on student learning. It is a continuous process of self-evaluation, analysis, and adjustment aimed at improving teaching practices and enhancing student outcomes. Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses for this subscale.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for the Reflective Practice subscale

| Item | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| I use data to provide ideas about what can be done to improve student learning. | 2.83 | 1.10 |
| I participate in recommended activities for professional learning and development. | 2.65 | 1.27 |
| I use a variety of research-verified approaches to improve teaching and learning. | 2.78 | 1.27 |

As evident in Table 6, the mean scores on all three items are below the neutral 3.00 which suggests a mildly positive inclination towards reflective practice. Firstly, a significant portion of the sample (mean 2.83) reports using data to generate ideas for improving student learning, indicating a moderate level of agreement and an understanding of the importance of data-driven decision-making. Secondly, over half of the sample, with the lowest mean score of 2.65, say that they actively participate in recommended activities for professional learning and development, demonstrating a positive attitude towards ongoing professional growth. Lastly, with a slightly higher mean score of 2.78, the respondents reveal that they employ a variety of research-verified approaches to improve teaching and learning, emphasizing their moderate commitment to evidence-based practices. These findings highlight the respondents' recognition of the value of utilizing data, engaging in professional learning activities, and incorporating research findings into their instructional strategies. As expected, the respondents evaluated themselves as reflective practitioners who foster continuous improvement.

## *Discussion*

The results presented in the previous section reveal several important points. In general, there is a positive perception among the respondents regarding various teaching competences, that is, the lecturers perceive themselves as competent in their roles. However, there is variability in the responses, suggesting the need for ongoing professional development to address specific areas. The respondents evaluated themselves highest on the Teacher Leadership subscale. Evaluating student progress using various assessment data and drawing on appropriate data to develop classroom and instructional plans are perceived positively, with the highest mean scores which aligns with the findings of Xie and Shen (2013) in their *Schools and Staffing Survey in US Public Schools* and that of Wells (2012). Effective communication strategies in class also receive high mean scores, indicating that lecturers view themselves as skilled in managing disruptive behaviour. Respondents demonstrate uniformity in maintaining a safe and orderly classroom. However, when it comes to leadership outside the classroom, the respondents perceive themselves as less skilled, particularly in identifying critical elements of a school improvement plan, participating in professional development activities, and developing professional networks. It seems that at all levels of education, "teacher leadership was still confined at the classroom level" (Xie & Shen, 2013, p. 310) and that "teachers are primarily performing traditional roles that include various leadership assignments such as school, department or grade level positions" (Wells, 2012, p. 2).

In terms of maintaining a positive learning environment and incorporating diverse perspectives, the respondents generally perceive themselves positively, but

there is room for improvement, especially in addressing the accommodations for students with special needs which is a common occurrence in higher education (Lightfoot et al., 2018). There is some variation in the agreement regarding the use of materials and strategies for students with special needs, indicating a need for further attention in this area. While lecturers are conscious of the importance of a respectful environment for a diverse population, it is important to provide lecturers with continuing professional growth opportunities in creating an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs (Renandya, 2012).

Content knowledge is recognized as a key teaching competence, and the respondents perceive themselves as highly competent in demonstrating specialized content knowledge, emphasizing its importance echoes the study of Lin and Jiar (2018) whose findings highlighted the importance of teacher content knowledge. The interconnectedness of different subjects is emphasized because incorporating global perspectives into the teaching practice is an important teaching competence because "the way we come to know the world can change if we view it from different points in time or space, or if different languages or cultures shape the way we experience reality" (Adendorff et al., 2002, p. 97). Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents integrate 21st-century skills and content into their teaching, highlighting their adaptation to the modern world in which "it is unlikely for teachers not to take up some kind of a custodial role in using technology with their students" (Lai, 2002, p. 344).

Facilitating learning shows a mixed picture, with the mean scores indicating a low commitment to integrating digital technology into teaching and a moderate commitment to collaborating with colleagues in monitoring student progress. Overall, the results suggest that respondents demonstrate somewhat positive attitudes and practices in facilitating learning which is consistent with the findings of Rido (2020). They show moderate collaboration, use various methods and materials, integrate technology to some extent, promote critical thinking and problem-solving, organize learning teams, communicate effectively, and utilize multiple indicators for monitoring and evaluating student progress. However, these findings also suggest a weak commitment to student-centred instruction and lower engagement in integrating digital technology which aligns with the findings of Sillat et al. (2021, p. 412) who report that "the connection between emerging new technologies and educators' barriers in integrating technology is clearly evident from the research".

Reflective practice is perceived positively, with an understanding of the importance of data-driven decision-making, engagement in professional learning activities, and the use of research-verified approaches. This underscores the lecturers' commitment to continuous improvement and professional growth. The mean scores on all three items suggest a mildly positive inclination towards reflective practice which aligns with Guilfoyle's (1995, p. 17) findings that there was "limited attention in teacher education to the role of teacher as a critical,

reflective practitioner". These findings highlight the recognition among respondents of the value of utilizing data, engaging in professional learning activities, and incorporating research findings into instructional strategies. Although the results indicate that the respondents reflect on their teaching practices, they need to be encouraged to actively seek opportunities, to "feel the need and the obligation" (Михајловић, 2019, p. 54) for professional growth and improvement.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that while the respondents generally perceive themselves positively in various teaching competences, there are areas that require further attention and development. Ongoing professional development and support are essential for addressing these areas and promoting continuous improvement in teaching practices, ultimately leading to enhanced student outcomes. To overcome these challenges, there are some strategies that can be implemented: regular professional development opportunities; specialized training and resources; engagement in interdisciplinary collaboration; comprehensive support and training in integrating digital technology into teaching; student-centred instruction; and finally, a culture of reflective practice (Visser et al., 2013).

## *Conclusion*

While our study offers valuable insights, it is essential to consider its limitations in interpreting the results. Primarily, the study relies on self-reported data from the lecturers themselves, which introduces the potential for self-perception bias. Participants may have provided responses that align with their desired self-image or may have overestimated their competences. In addition, these positive perceptions may be influenced by social desirability bias compelling the lecturers to present themselves in a favourable light, especially since the study was conducted within their own institution. Furthermore, the size of the sample may not be representative of the entire population, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Bearing in mind these limitations, it is possible to draw some conclusions relevant to the principal aim of this study which was to identify areas for improvement and inform the development of strategies that enhance teaching effectiveness and contribute to the development and growth of teaching practices at the University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica. The study reveals that lecturers generally perceive themselves as competent in their teaching roles, with a positive perception of their teaching competences. Lecturers demonstrate high levels of self-perception in teacher leadership and content knowledge, emphasizing the importance of these competences in their roles. Challenges and areas for improvement include leadership outside the classroom, accommodations for students with special needs, student-centred instruction, and integration of digital technology. Lecturers demonstrate somewhat positive attitudes and practices in facilitating learning, with moderate collaboration, use

of various methods and materials, and promotion of critical thinking. However, there is a weak commitment to student-centred instruction. Finally, lecturers show a positive inclination towards reflective practice, with an understanding of the importance of data-driven decision-making, engagement in professional learning activities, and the use of research-verified approaches.

These findings could contribute to the understanding of teaching competences and could provide insights for professional development and improvement in higher education settings. The findings of this study could have implications for both research and practice in the field of teaching competences. The identified limitations and recommendations provide a roadmap for future research, while the strategies for overcoming challenges offer practical insights for institutions and educators to enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. In the coming months, the authors will investigate the relationship between the various facets of the competency framework and the actual demonstration of the competences through student evaluations, classroom observations, or peer assessments which would offer a more holistic and multi-perspective evaluation of teaching competences.

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## Професорово ново одело:
## нове компетенције наставника у високом образовању

Резиме

Улога наставника у процесу учења је сложена и варира у зависности од културе и нивоа образовања. Принципи дигиталног друштва и економије знања довели су до трансформације у образовању стварајући потребу за иновативним приступима у настави и учењу, а високо образовање налази се на челу ове промене, јер припрема студенте за тржиште рада будућности. Да би се развили као ефикасни предавачи, од кључне је важности да наставници разумеју развојну културу академске заједнице и улоге коју играју у њој. Упркос променљивом пејзажу образовања, постоји недостатак разумевања у погледу тога како предавачи перципирају своје улоге и компетенције у XXI веку. Ова студија има за циљ да премости тај јаз тако што ће забележити самопроцену предавача у високом образовању како би се идентификовале области за побољшање и развиле стратегије за осигурање квалитета наставе.

Ова студија је квантитативне природе и базира се на подацима добијеним путем упитника који је заснован на концептуалном оквиру Наставне компетенције за XXI век. Истраживачки приступ подразумева дистрибуцију упитника погодном узорку од 53 предавача Универзитета у Приштина са привременим седиштем у Косовској Митровици. Анализа података добијених анкетирањем сугерише да предавачи имају позитивну перцепцију о својим професионалним компетенцијама и генерално себе сматрају компетентним у својим улогама. Међутим, резултати студије, такође, наглашавају одређене изазове и области које захтевају побољшање, као што су унапређење вештина вођења изван учионице, рад са студентима са посебним потребама, примена наставних приступа усмерених на студента и ефективна интеграција дигиталне технологије у наставни процес. Резултати добијени анализом помажу ауторима да стекну увид у то како предавачи у високом образовању перципирају своје улоге и компетенције као наставници у XXI веку.

*Кључне речи:* наставне компетенције за XXI век; улоге наставника; високо образовање; наставници као лидери; стручна експертиза; средина за учење; рефлексивна пракса у настави.