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Original research paper

FACULTY STRATEGIES AND THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. *The main goal of the research is to examine the connection between faculty strategies and perceived engagement of students. Character of engagement was shown through National Survey of Student Engagement indicators (2018): academic challenge (higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies, quantitative reasoning), learning with peers (collaborative learning, discussions with diverse others), experiences with faculty (student-faculty interaction, effective teaching practices), campus environment (quality of interactions, supportive environment). Since this research was based on NSSE conceptual framework, information about faculty perceptions of student engagement was collected through the adapted FSSE questionnaire (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, 2020). The research sample consisted of 118 faculty and associates from six institutions of the University of Niš: Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Electronics, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, and the Faculty of Occupational Safety. The results indicate that faculty members, who are satisfied with various aspects of teaching implementation, participate in activities with students, express high expectations regarding students' efforts respectively contribute to their learning and development.*

Key words: *higher education, partnership relationship, faculty strategies, student engagement, FSSE indicators*

1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from the traditional to the new educational paradigm can be understood as a challenge to the established hierarchy in higher education. For faculty, switching to a new, much different approach and persevering in its application is by no means an easy

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task. Traditionally, faculty are used to working in an environment in which they are the center and which is oriented towards their needs, competencies, knowledge and autonomy, as faculty and as researchers. The student-centered approach implies a continuous reflective process and review by the faculty with the aim of improving the quality of the teaching process (Ćirić, 2022). From the mentioned differences arises the need to change the culture of approach to teaching and learning in higher education.

Authors dealing with a student-oriented approach (Hoidn, 2018) emphasize that the professional role of faculty should be reflected in: (1) more flexible use and combination of teaching methods; (2) continuous evaluation and adaptation of teaching methods and techniques to students and (3) transformation of the faculty role, from a lecturer, presenter to facilitator and collaborator. With regard to the mentioned faculty competencies, in the book *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Bain (2004) lists desirable characteristics: (1) they know their subject very well, as well as the broader issues within of their scientific disciplines; (2) understand their students' attitudes and typical misinterpretations; (3) know how to clarify complex topics and use approaches such as collaborative learning in order to help students better understand underlying principles and concepts; (4) intuitively understand human learning in accordance with the scientific literature on intellectual development; (5) critically reflect on their teaching practice and see it as an academic inquiry through which they form a "natural critical learning environment"; (6) show openness and trust towards students believing that they want to learn and share with them a sense of admiration, curiosity and passion for the subject; (7) apply formative evaluation to check their teaching approaches and student progress, ready to face what is not working well and adjust teaching practice accordingly; (8) are highly committed to the academic community as part of a larger educational institution.

In order to achieve the aforementioned competencies, the European Commission, with the proclamation entitled *Common European Principles for Faculty Competencesand Qualifications*, insisted that faculty have a broad knowledge of the subject, good pedagogical knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to guide and support students, as well as to understand social and cultural dimensions of education. It is necessary to work in an organized and systematic manner on the development of faculty competencies and their professional support in order to achieve the expected results. The European Commission's working document *Supporting the Teaching Profession for Better Learning Outcomes* from 2013 indicates that a key component for establishing access to the quality of faculty work is the development of national frameworks and standards for admission to teaching. It was also possible to establish the nature of initial faculty education, introduction to teaching practice, and learning throughout the career.

According to the *Trends* 2018 survey, organized support for faculty exists at the university level in most countries (65%), while a significantly smaller number (19%) provides support to faculty in the implementation of student-oriented strategies within their institutions (Hoidn & Klemenčič, 2020). Although there is a clear desire to improve faculty competencies and strategies to encourage the quality of learning and teaching in higher education. The obstacles, institutional or individual, are often encountered in this process. In the literature, difficulties related to higher education institutions are deficiencies in terms of financial, organizational, and cognitive capacities, but also the lack of will to change established educational practices. The reasons can also be found in the faculty themselves. They are lack time for professional development, or not motivated by the institution to develop teaching competencies. Also, faculty career advancement depends on the research and not the teaching

segment of the academic profession. Bearing in mind the directions of development of higher education and expressed need for trained professionals, it is necessary for university faculty to devote more than centralized and declarative advice and recommendations for the improvement of pedagogical practice. In this respect, it is necessary to value the faculty role, but also to empower faculty to implement it in an adequate way.

2. METHOD

The aim of the research is to determine the connection between faculty strategies and perceived engagement of students. It started from the assumption that there is a positive connection between teaching strategies and the student engagement. It is expected that faculty who are satisfied with various aspects of teaching implementation, participate in activities with students, express high expectations regarding students' efforts and contribute to their learning and development. Student engagement was shown through NSSE indicators: academic challenge (higher-order learning, reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies), learning with peers (collaborative learning and discussions with diverse others), experiences with faculty (student-faculty interactions and effective teaching practices), campus environment (quality of interactions and supportive environment). Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to test the mentioned hypotheses.

2.1. The sample

The research sample consisted of 118 faculty and associates from six institutions of the University of Niš: Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Electronics, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, and the Faculty of Occupational Safety. The structure of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample structure according to the higher education institution

Higher education institution	Faculty	
	N	%
Faculty of Sports and Physical Education	18	15.3%
Faculty of Science and Mathematics	21	17.8%
Faculty of Philosophy	27	22.9%
Faculty of Medicine	9	7.6%
Faculty of Electronics	28	23.7%
Faculty of Ocupatuional Safety	15	12.7%
Total	118	100.0%

Looking at individual higher education institutions, the largest number of respondents in the sample is employed at the Faculty of Electronics and Faculty of Philosophy, and the smallest at the Faculty of Medicine.

Table 2 Structure of the sample according to teaching profession

Teaching profession	Faculty	
	N	%
Full professor	24	20.3%
Associate professor	15	12.7%
Assistant professor	34	28.8%
Assistant (with PhD)	21	17.8%
Teaching fellow	15	12.7%
Demonstrator/Researcher	9	7.6%
Total	118	100.0%

The largest percentage of respondents who took part in the research is from the ranks of young faculty (assistant professors), full professors, and assistants (with a Ph.D.). The data are shown in Table 2.

Table 3 Structure of the sample according to employment years

Years of employment	Faculty	
	N	%
0 – 7	37	31.4%
8 – 15	35	29.7%
16 – 23	25	21.2%
24 – 31	13	11.0%
32 – 40	8	6.8%
> 40	/	/
Total	118	100.0%

The respondents are evenly distributed along the part of the continuum that represents the length of employment, which indicates a heterogeneous structure of the sample (Table 3).

2.2. Instrument

Empirical research was conducted using a modified *FSSE questionnaire* that examines the perceptions of faculty members at higher education institutions.The instrument consists of 51 questions (FSSE version 2020) and examines the faculty perspectives on student engagement: curricular and extracurricular activities, the quality and frequency of interactions between the faculty and the students, the organization of faculty time and teaching activities in terms of motivational strategies, and encouraging students to engage. The instrument is applied with the aim of providing a "bigger picture" of student engagement and opportunities. The data obtained with this instrument can provide a clearer picture of the teaching staff in the institution. In this way, deficiencies, weak points, obstacles, and, most importantly, elements of certain areas that require certain improvements can be identified. The questionnaire is under the authorship of the *NSSE Research Center* and the *Institute for Effective Teaching Practices* in Bloomington, Indiana, USA. Due to the copyright law the author was given the consent for use, translation and adaptation as well as public, non-commercial display.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 4 shows that faculty who have the experience of being able to adequately prepare for teaching encourages students to develop learning strategies (r = 0.218), to a large extent apply methods and techniques of effective teaching (r = 0.222) and perceive a high quality of student interactions in a higher education institution (r = 0.187).

Table 4 Correlations of perceived engagement and faculty attitudes towards the profession

FSSE indicators of engagement	p	Preparation	Resources	Environment	Help
Higher-Order Learning	Spearman's rho	.113	.040	-.021	.011
	p	.225	.664	.825	.909
Reflective and Integrative Learning	Spearman's rho	.121	.067	.053	.016
	p	.190	.471	.566	.860
Learning Strategies	Spearman's rho	**.218***	-.015	.073	**.280****
	p	**.018**	.868	.430	**.002**
Quantitative Reasoning	Spearman's rho	.066	.065	-.096	-.024
	p	.474	.485	.303	.796
Collaborative Learning	Spearman's rho	.155	.037	.060	.062
	p	.093	.687	.519	.508
Discussions with Diverse Others	Spearman's rho	.066	.065	-.096	-.024
	p	.474	.485	.303	.796
Student-Faculty Interactions	Spearman's rho	.151	-.049	-.038	.112
	p	.103	.600	.682	.226
Effective Teaching Practices	Spearman's rho	**.222***	.129	.154	**.342****
	p	**.016**	.165	.095	**.000**
Quality of Interactions	Spearman's rho	**.187***	**.324****	**.373****	**.334****
	p	**.043**	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**
Supportive Environment	Spearman's rho	.095	.077	.069	**.278****
	p	.306	.404	.457	**.002**

* Statistically significant on level p < 0.05, ** statistically significant on level p < 0.01

The obtained correlations show that faculty satisfaction with resources for the realization of lessons (cabinet, technology, materials, etc.) is related to the attitude towards interactions in the community (r = 0.324). According to established results, Dwyer (2017) in research emphasizes the importance of commitment of faculty to their profession besides encouraging engagement finds correlations with the social integration of students. This highlights the need for support for faculty because the experience of students largely depends on their positive attitude at work.

Faculty who perceive the environment as suitable and stimulating for work positively evaluate interpersonal relations in the institution (r = 0.373). It is assumed that faculty is initially open to experiences based on collaboration and interaction. Therefore, their implicit beliefs reflect the attitude that the relationship between colleagues and students rests on mutual trust and respect, as well as readiness for reflection and self-reflection. In order to achieve these effects, it is necessary to encourage constructive communication and teaching-research cooperation in the institution for most faculty members, which can be improved by various networking and negotiation training.

Considering that faculty represents the institutions, their actions greatly shape the students' attitudes toward the institution. This is supported by the data according to faculty who have a more pronounced habit and culture of turning to for help with the implementation of classes to encourage students to learn more successfully (r = 0.280). Emphasize the combination of teaching methods and adapt them to different student learning styles, provide clear standards for the successful completion of tasks, and implement teaching in a systematic and organized way (r = 0.342).

Today, expressed cooperative competencies are expected from the individual and students are being prepared for functioning in the wider community and future occupations. Faculty who show sincere care consider it very important to help students achieve the best possible academic success, but also provide support in the areas of personal and professional development (r = 0.278). The quality of students' interactions with different members of the organization is an important aspect of the study process (r = 0.334). Faculty who do not hesitate to ask for support and know who to turn to for help realize the importance and role of each individual member of the institution and strive to develop this feeling in students as well. This indicates the need for the organization to function as a community.

The tasks of faculty in higher education institutions often require a lot of time dedicated to various activities. In addition to teaching activities (preparation, implementation of teaching, assessment and work with students) the faculty role includes holding regular consultations and various administrative duties, such as working in faculty bodies, attending sessions, the teaching-scientific council, etc. The following analysis examines the relationship between perceived engagement and the time devoted to different aspects related to teaching roles. The options offered are the number of hours spent in activities (0; 1-4; 5-8; 9-12; 13-16; 17-20; 21-30 or more than 30 hours per week) and the representation of activities in classes (0; 1-9%; 10-19%; 20-29%; 30-39%; 40-49%; 50-74%; >75%). The results of this analysis are shown in Table 5.

The results show that faculty who devote more than 16 hours during the working week to teaching activities report high scores regarding the effectiveness of the teaching they implement (r = 0.225). Positive correlations point to a relationship according to which commitment to improving teaching practice, self-criticism, sharing experiences with other faculty, attending seminars, teaching evaluation, etc. Results in a clear understanding of the goals and requirements of the subject or class, systematic organization of teaching, use of examples, illustrations, and combining methods adapted to different learning styles of students.

The time that faculty devote to reviewing and summarizing the content, reviewing students' completed tasks, and informing about the achieved performance is directly related to their dedication to the teaching role. In addition to preparing for classes and implementation, faculty allocate time for meetings with students outside of class and other duties related to classes (answering emails to students, updating notices and information on the institution website).

Consultation with students is a variable positively related to the frequency of interactions between faculty and students (r = 0.193). Faculty who have more time in their work for various forms of consultation with students have more opportunities to talk with students about their plans for future work, academic progress, and teaching content, but also to achieve closer cooperation with them. These are opportunities for faculty to get to know their students, their interests, and their aspirations. Faculty in conversation with students can get information about the obstacles they encounter on the way to realizing their interests, and problems they encounter during their studies and can work together to

solve them. Research has shown that faculty consultations with students should be done only a few times during the school year in order to have a positive impact on student engagement (Kuh et al., 2006; Stefani, 2009).

Table 5 Correlations of faculty perceived engagement with time devoted to different aspects related to faculty roles

FSSE indicators of engagement	p	Classes	Consultations	Research, creative activities	Administrative duties
Higher-Order	Spearman's rho	.165	.108	.041	.066
Learning	p	.074	.246	.658	.478
Reflective &	Spearman's rho	.034	.135	.070	**.221***
Integrative Learning	p	.712	.147	.448	**.016**
Learning	Spearman's rho	.116	.031	.164	.083
Strategies	p	.211	.741	.076	.372
Quantitative	Spearman's rho	.011	.028	-.002	.014
Reasoning	p	.905	.760	.981	.881
Collaborative	Spearman's rho	.123	.098	.006	-.001
Learning	p	.185	.293	.947	.995
Discussions with	Spearman's rho	.011	.028	-.002	.014
Diverse Others	p	.905	.760	.981	.881
Student-Faculty	Spearman's rho	.085	**.193***	.156	.038
Interaction	p	.362	**.037**	.091	.682
Effective Teaching	Spearman's rho	**.225***	.058	.172	.008
Practices	p	**.014**	.538	.062	.934
Quality of	Spearman's rho	.047	.151	.014	.123
Interactions	p	.613	.104	.880	.184
Supportive	Spearman's rho	.013	.058	.050	.105
Environment	p	.889	.532	.591	.256

* Statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$, ** statistically significant on level $p < 0.01$

Administrative duties of faculty positively correlate with the importance that faculty attach to the reflection and integration of students' knowledge ($r = 0.221$), which can be related to their implicit beliefs about the importance of this aspect of learning and teaching. Considering that the duties of faculty often involve critical reflection, this aspect "spills over" to the teaching they carry out.

Creative or educational activities have no significant correlations with indicators of student engagement recorded. Although faculty answered that, on average, they devote 17 or more hours a week to activities, these activities have no effect on engagement. The results confirm the need to improve the quality of faculty competencies because they correlate with teaching performance. Although various activities indirectly contribute to faculty competencies and influence their development and experiences, there is no significant relationship with engagement. Although no statistically significant correlations were found in the mentioned area, it is important to note that faculty devote a lot of time (more than 30 hours a week) to various activities that improve their personal and professional development.

Classes that faculty implement are mostly lectures, which occupy more than half of the activities of all respondents, over 75%. In addition to lectures, experiential activities are dominant (laboratory work, clinical, field teaching). These activities are connected to the exercise classes and they complement the lectures.

Activities that encourage engagement are given significantly less attention, so discussions and work of students in small groups, student presentations or independent work of students are represented by an average of 30%. More time is devoted to group work and the exchange of ideas, while the encouragement of student independence is estimated to be around 1-9% of classes. As the self-evaluation reports of institutions often state that students do not show interest in teaching, one of the reasons may be insufficient opportunities to show their work, how and how much they can achieve. The results on the representation of different activities in classes indicate that the student- centered paradigm is still rarely represented in the examined contexts. According to data, three-quarters of the class belongs to the faculty, while students are offered opportunities for active engagement within the remaining time. Bova (2015) emphasizes that higher education faculty in most cases ask questions related to special aspects of a certain theory (specific questions) and do not lead to a broad discussion among students. Additional training for faculty is oriented toward the approach and ways of implementing lessons. These data point to a complex overview of the mentioned problem, which would specify the essential problems of faculty and students and formulate possible solutions. In this way, it would significantly contribute to improving the quality of institutions.

The next examined variable refers to participation in partnership activities. The paper is based on research in which the intensity of partnership participation and cooperation is linked to elements of student engagement, motivation (Trumić, 2021), achievements (Krause, 2005), and positive values (Yuhas & BrckaLorenz, 2017). Other research studies have also established the importance of student-faculty interactions on engagement and overall studying (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For this reason, the connection between the perceived engagement and different ways of cooperation between faculty and students was examined: monitoring students during professional practice or fieldwork, monitoring students who are on international exchange, research work with students, and mentoring students' final paper and the results are presented in Table 6.

Identified positive correlations indicate that higher average scores are obtained by faculty who participated in the mentioned activities, and negative correlations mean that higher scores are obtained by those who did not have the opportunity to cooperate with students in any of the mentioned ways.

The presented results indicate that faculty who participated in professional practice or fieldwork ($r = -0.226$), in monitoring students who are on international exchange ($r = -0.207$), and in research work with students ($r = -0.251$) have lower scores regarding communication with students about their academic and career plans and less formal forms of collaboration. The ones who are tasked with managing certain activities do not have to make contact with the students who participate in them. Their role consists in the organization and coordination of the mentioned activities, but not in direct cooperation with the participants. Students express the opinion that faculty rarely participate in partnership activities.

This is supported by the recorded negative correlations between research work with students and encouraging learning strategies ($r = -0.229$) and work with students on international exchange and effective teaching ($r = -0.269$). These results were also confirmed in the sample of faculty and students (Fassett et al., 2021). Research encourages students to adopt adequate learning strategies and assume a proactive approach of the faculty who participate as hosts in exchange programs. Future research may refer to the need to apply a qualitative analysis of the

participation of faculty and students in partnership activities. This would provide additional information and adequate answers to such results.

Table 6 Correlations of perceived engagement in student-faculty partnership activities

FSSE indicators of engagement	p	Professional practice or field work	International exchanges	Research	Mentorship
Higher-Order Learning	Spearman's rho	-.020	-.164	.037	.093
	p	.830	.075	.692	.317
Reflective & Integrative Learning	Spearman's rho	-.113	.001	-.001	.012
	p	.223	.991	.990	.894
Learning Strategies	Spearman's rho	-.038	-.155	**-.229***	-.040
	p	.684	.094	**.013**	.668
Quantitative Reasoning	Spearman's rho	-.093	-.094	-.025	.139
	p	.315	.312	.785	.133
Collaborative Learning	Spearman's rho	-.132	-.106	-.103	.058
	p	.153	.255	.269	.534
Discussions with Diverse Others	Spearman's rho	-.093	-.094	-.025	.139
	p	.315	.312	.785	.133
Student-Faculty Interaction	Spearman's rho	**-.226***	**-.207***	**-.251****	-.057
	p	**.014**	**.025**	**.006**	.541
Effective Teaching Practices	Spearman's rho	.004	**-.269****	-.170	-.006
	p	.970	**.003**	.066	.948
Quality of Interactions	Spearman's rho	.043	-.009	.052	.099
	p	.646	.923	.574	.286
Supportive Environment	Spearman's rho	-.001	-.081	-.060	-.062
	p	.989	.383	.519	.502

* statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$, ** statistically significant on level $p < 0.01$

When mentoring students' final papers, no significant correlations were recorded with indicators of engagement. Different forms of mentoring work are an integral part of the teaching profession in the Republic of Serbia and the results can be explained in such a way that this variable is not determining when it comes to faculty perceptions of student engagement. This is supported by the data obtained in research by Jovanović and Vukić (2020) about the expressed communication competencies of mentors, which students evaluate very positively. All professor participants answered in the affirmative, while the associates gave negative answers. Therefore, mentoring as a factor of engagement should be excluded from future research. The results of the research can be explained in a way that faculty who continuously implement activities through cooperation with students do not perceive the engagement as a separate entity, but understand it and integrate it into everyday educational practice.

The next examined variable is the connection between perceived engagement and faculty expectations regarding student commitment (Table 7). Perceptions of preparation, activities in teaching practice, and faculty expectations were examined using the average number of hours they consider necessary for the successful implementation of tasks. Faculty answered questions about students' preparedness, activity, and contribution to classes, and how much, in general, they "do their best" in class. Also, faculty expressed their opinion about the need to provide students with more time for studying and making pre-exam assignments.

Table 7 Correlations of perceived engagement with faculty expectations regarding student commitment

FSSE indicators of engagement	p	Learning	Work on tasks	Activity	Preparedness
Higher-Order Learning	Spearman's rho	.121	.057	**.217***	**.221***
	p	.190	.536	**.018**	**.016**
Reflective & Integrative Learning	Spearman's rho	**.278****	.140	**.325****	**.252****
	p	**.002**	.129	**.000**	**.006**
Learning Strategies	Spearman's rho	**.302****	**.219***	**.383****	**.350****
	p	**.001**	**.017**	**.000**	**.000**
Quantitative Reasoning	Spearman's rho	.052	.163	.118	.109
	p	.573	.078	.202	.240
Collaborative Learning	Spearman's rho	**.344****	.093	**.387****	.094
	p	**.000**	.316	**.000**	.309
Discussions with Diverse Others	Spearman's rho	.052	.163	.118	.109
	p	.573	.078	.202	.240
Student-Faculty Interaction	Spearman's rho	.100	**.202***	**.229***	-.068
	p	.280	**.028**	**.013**	.467
Effective Teaching Practices	Spearman's rho	**.284****	**.202***	**.296****	.142
	p	**.002**	**.028**	**.001**	.125
Quality of Interactions	Spearman's rho	.132	.180	-.084	.178
	p	.154	.051	.365	.054
Supportive Environment	Spearman's rho	**.453****	**.198***	**.348****	.064
	p	**.000**	**.031**	**.000**	.491

* Statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$, ** statistically significant on level $p < 0.01$

Findings in other research indicate that students often negatively emphasized the lack of time for studying during their studies. It can be established that faculty who have a developed attitude towards student workload and are aware of the need to provide time for learning tend to encourage student engagement. According to the data in the table, the perceived time for learning by faculty is related to certain indicators within the category of academic challenge. A correlation was obtained between providing time for students to study and encouraging reflective and integrative learning ($r = 0.278$) and learning strategies ($r = 0.302$). Time for learning is positively correlated with collaborative learning ($r = 0.344$), faculty experiences with effective teaching ($r = 0.284$), and supportive organizational culture ($r = 0.453$). Therefore, faculty who consider it important to provide students with more time for studying and pre-examination duties also show a high level of encouraging reflexivity and cooperation among students in teaching.

Faculty expectations regarding student workload are presented through the average time students spend studying, the time they actually spend, and the effort they devote to the assigned tasks. The general opinion of faculty members is that students, on average during the week, should spend 5 or more hours studying (often the answer was more than 10) and that students really dedicate about 1 hour to studying. The most common responses of faculty in terms of dedication to the tasks, expressed in hours, is between 2 and 3 hours per week. It can be observed that faculty members do not have high expectations from their

students. Faculty believes that students need to devote a lot of time to studying. These results reflect the weaknesses stated in the reports on self-evaluation of institutions, and SWOT analyses, according to which insufficient interest of students is one of the pressing problems. Expectations of student engagement are linked to discussion with diverse others, student-student, faculty-student, and environment-student interactions, and effective teaching. As the correlations were recorded in the crucial segments of the realization of learning and teaching practice, it can be established that the rule according to which higher expectations result in more intense engagement is confirmed by the obtained results.

When it comes to the preparation and activity of students during classes, correlations with most indicators in the area of academic challenge (higher-order learning ($r = 0.217$; $r = 0.221$), reflective and integrative learning ($r = 0.325$; $r = 0.252$), learning strategies ($r = 0.383$; $r = 0.350$). Faculty express the opinion that students who regularly come to classes, prepare for classes, and actively participate in discussions, show a higher level of reflective and integrative learning, and also improve their learning strategies. Also, student activities in classes to the area of cooperation between students and intensive communication with faculty (faculty-student interactions ($r = 0.229$) and effective teaching ($r = 0.296$). Faculty members who are open to cooperation with students and who encourage their mutual communication also motivate students to be active in classes. As the previous results indicated a weak representation of highly influential activities and the dominance of lectures, it is very important to point out this type of relationship and its importance for student engagement.

The results can be singled out by correlations of medium and low intensity with supportive organizational culture within the institutional environment. Participants who believe that it is possible to achieve very good mutual relations in institutions at the same time have an optimistic attitude regarding expectations from their students. These findings point to the need to develop such an organizational climate and culture that will encourage faculty to have an affirmative attitude towards relationships in the institution. Therefore, they will contribute to the teaching process and the functioning of the entire community. This is also indicated by the research results of Hill et al. (2021), Healey et al. (2016), and McMillan et al. (2020), who in recent years during the so-called "era of cooperation" (*Strength in numbers: Strategies for collaborating in a new era for higher education*, 2020) examined the role of partnership relations in higher education.

According to research related to the NSSE - FSSE framework, Miller et al. (2021) state that faculty encourage student engagement more intensively if it is a question of gifted groups. The research results indicate that the input of the students greatly influences the faculty reactions and responses. Thomas (2008) indicated application of a student-centered approach and principles that encourage engagement has an impact on students regardless of subculture. Student persistence directly depends on what faculty does. Nelson Laird et al. (2014) by examining the impact of teaching strategies on engagement, state content, and teaching context as one of the key factors. Although the test results differ, each of the mentioned elements represents an important aspect of the manifestation and quality of student engagement.

4. Conclusion

Higher education learning and teaching are in an interdependent relationship.The learning largely depends on quality teaching and that the main goal of teaching is to create conditions for learning. Considering the importance of effective teaching, there is an increasing number of research studies in this topic.

In the modern conception of learning and teaching in higher education, the faculty encourages and directs the autonomous and independent acquisition of knowledge. Students are considered the main actors of the teaching process, they are placed in the center and the importance of their needs is emphasized. In classes that encourage student engagement, the faculty ceases to be only a lecturer and evaluator; he more often successfully fulfills new functions – innovator, researcher, advisor, partner in learning, evaluator. With such actions, the faculty member contributes to the student becoming more and more his partner in the process of his own learning.

The basic assumption of this study was that there is a positive connection between teaching strategies and the student engagement. It is expected that faculty who are satisfied with various aspects of teaching implementation, participate in activities with students, express high expectations regarding students' efforts and contribute to their learning and development. The main findings have shown that the faculty members who have a more pronounced habit and culture of turning to for help with the implementation of classes to encourage students to learn more successfully. Also, positive correlations point to a relationship according to which commitment to improving teaching practice, self-criticism, sharing experiences with other faculty, attending seminars, and teaching evaluation. Systematic organization of teaching, use of examples, illustrations, and combining methods adapted to different learning styles of students.

In this regard, it is important to point out the help from the faculty for the students to understand and incorporate new knowledge into the existing cognitive schemes as well as the precise and transparent communication of the expected requirements. Adequate preparation, precise explanations, illustrative examples and timely feedback from faculty significantly contribute to and encourage student learning and understanding. Therefore, in their work, faculty members should start their work from clearly defined learning outcomes that students should master and according to certain outcomes, and adapt the content and make it understandable, meaningful and challenging for students. Also, it is necessary to train students to apply effective learning strategies, to manage their learning and define academic and professional goals. It is important to pay attention to the characteristics of students and their individual differences. Such an approach provides students with a sense of security and an atmosphere that encourages their engagement.

The results confirm the need to improve the quality of faculty competencies because they correlate with teaching performance. When it comes to the connection between perceived engagement and faculty expectations regarding student commitment, faculty who consider it important to provide students with more time for studying and pre-examination duties also show a high level of encouraging reflexivity and cooperation among students in teaching.

Improving the quality of higher education institutions in Serbia insists on interactive methods and innovations in teaching. However, there are no clear incentives for faculty members to apply these strategies. The reason for this state of affairs is partly the implicit beliefs of the faculty themselves, but also the inadequate evaluation of their role in the selection procedures for academic positions. If there is an effort to develop higher education teaching in the direction of the modern paradigm, it is necessary to revise the segments of strategies related to the teaching profession, and to, on the one hand, help teachers to adopt innovative methods, but also, on the other hand, to improve their work in adequately evaluates this area. In this way, competitiveness with institutions from the wider region will be achieved to a great extent.

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NASTAVNIČKE STRATEGIJE I PERCEPCIJE ANGAŽOVANJA STUDENATA U VISOKOŠKOLSKOM OBRAZOVANJU

Cilj istraživanja predstavljalo je utvrđivanje povezanosti između nastavničkih strategija i percipiranog angažovanja studenata. Karakter angažovanja studenata operacionalizovan je putem NSSE indikatora (National Survey of Student Engagement indicators, 2018): akademski izazov (učenje mišljenjem višeg reda, refleksivno i integrativno učenje, strategije učenja), zajedničko učenje studenata (kolaborativno učenje i negovanje različitosti), iskustvo sa nastavnicima (interakcije nastavnika i studenata i efektivno podučavanje), institucionalno okruženje (kvalitet interakcija i podržavajuća organizaciona kultura). S obzirom na to da je istraživanje zasnovano na NSSE konceptualnom okviru, percepcije nastavnika prikupljene su pomoću prilagođenog FSSE upitnika (Faculty Survey ofStudent Engagement, 2020). Instrument se sastoji od 51 pitanja i primenjen je sa ciljem da pruži „širu sliku" o karakteru studentskog angažovanja i prilikama koje se u tom pogledu pružaju. Uzorak istraživanja činilo je 118 nastavnika i saradnika sa šest fakulteta Univerziteta u Nišu: Medicinskog, Filozofskog, Elektronskog, Prirodno-matematičkog, Fakulteta sporta i fizičkog vaspitanja i Fakulteta zaštite na radu. Rezultati su pokazali da nastavnici koji pokazuju izražen stepen zadovoljstva različitim aspektima realizacije nastave posvećuju vreme različitim aspektima vezanim za nastavničke uloge, učestvuju u zajedničkim aktivnostima sa studentima, iskazuju visoka očekivanja u pogledu zalaganja studenata i doprinose njihovom učenju i razvoju naglašavaju pozitivan odnos i podsticanje studentskog angažovanja.

Ključne reči: *visokoškolsko obrazovanje, nastavničke strategije, partnerski odnos, angažovanje studenata, FSSE indikatori*