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Teachers in Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic Context of Mainstream, Inclusive and Special Education

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the results of research on distance education conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Silesian Voivodeship (Poland). The research focuses on the work of teachers in mainstream schools and those who work with students with special educational needs. The author presents: the difficulties indicated by teachers, the support they experience and the solutions they apply, especially to students with special educational needs.

The study was based on a quantitative paradigm, using a diagnostic survey method and online survey questionnaires, sent to respondents in the LimeServey system. 958 teachers representing primary and secondary schools participated in the study.

The teachers indicated the difficulties of distance learning, such as the inability to monitor the progress of students, problems with the organization of group activities and the use of activating methods in teaching. They found the support in interpersonal contacts and self-study work; they rarely used the help of specialists. Half of the respondents worked with students with special educational needs. The largest group of such students were those with specific learning difficulties. Students with disabilities accounted for about 36% of those students identified by teachers. The teachers working with students with special educational needs experienced technical problems on the part of the student and psychophysical problems resulting from the specific condition of the student with special educational needs.

The results of the research and the recommendations were presented to the school authorities in order to improve the quality of distance education and raise the standards of teachers.

K e y w o r d s: distance education, COVID-19 pandemic, teachers of mainstream schools, students with special educational needs, students with disabilities, the difficulties of distance learning

It seems that the educational consequences of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic outbreak will be noticeable long after societies free themselves from it. For now, the whole world is uncertain about the future. Nevertheless, this situation resulted in a certain amount of experience and knowledge. This includes knowledge on the use of distance education to maintain the continuity of the educational process of young generations. After all, the quality of education translates into the quality of life of future generations, and thus also for children and adolescents affected by an unprecedented situation, a situation requiring radical changes in the way of teaching and learning. Different educational solutions have been implemented in different countries during the pandemic (Bozkur et al., 2020). In most of them, where a well-developed network of IT services can be relied upon, the opportunities of distance learning have been exploited. It is safer from the point of view of the risk of infection with the virus, but it carries many challenges, including difficulties and dangers affecting cognitive, emotional, and social processes. That is why so many academics have researched education during the pandemic, focusing on aspects ranging from using modern technology to teaching and educational aspects, and to issues relating to students' and teachers' health and mental well-being (Plebańska et al., 2020; Ptaszek et al., 2020; Pyżalski, 2020; Domagała-Zyśk 2020; Daniel, 2020; Allen et al., 2020; Azorin, 2020; Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). These studies also include those carried out by Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic Research Team, established at the University of Silesia in Katowice (Poland). The Team brings together representatives of various disciplines of social sciences, such as educationists, psychologists, and political scientists. The result of their work is inter alia the report, which constitutes a small fragment of the scientific effort undertaken and includes the results of research carried out in the 8 municipalities (Dobosz et al., 2021). The tradition of such studies is associated with concern for the future of education e.g., numerous reports prepared by UNESCO including those concerning education during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO 2021a) also Polish publications of Ministry of National Education

(2020a). It is an expression of cooperation between the scientific community and the external environment.

Literature Review

The study of problems in distance education has a long tradition, e.g. Muilenburg and Berge (2001) identified 10 categories of barriers to online learning ranging from technical problems, organisation of the learning process, to social barriers, skills and support experienced. The proposed categorisation became the basis for the study of Cho and Berg (2002), who demonstrated that the main barriers to the effective use of distance education relate to the technical aspect, not only in the sense of using IT tools, but also technical knowledge and skills. An interesting study in this regard, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was undertaken by Gan and Sun (2022) – 206 students of different demographic and socio-economic status who started online, distance learning in March and April 2020 responded to a qualitative survey of 20 questions. Their data analysis revealed five technical issues arising in online learning during the COVID-19, such as slow Internet, technical problems, lack of computer resources, lack of Internet access, and skill deficiency. The experience of difficulty was complemented by an analysis of individual coping behaviors and three common strategies for coping with digital barriers, that is improvising, building technical assets, and building social assets.

It seems that research on problems, barriers or obstacles in distance education is more often conducted among students than teachers. This is understandable as the issues of education using online tools were the domain of a selected group of teachers who wanted to get students interested in this way of working. In such circumstances, knowledge of the barriers is the main factor determining the effectiveness of education. Meanwhile, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers, regardless of personal preferences, to use distance education, which opened new areas of research concerning, among others, coping with handling and using online tools by all teachers and students regardless of their interest in distance learning. However, the change in the face of school applies not only to mainstream schools but also to schools that have accommodated students with special educational needs. This has created a new context in the understanding of inclusive education and according to Love and Horn (2021) it is more the context than the place that is a potential factor influencing its high-quality implementation. Operationalizing inclusive education independent of physical placement is one of three ongoing challenges in inclusive education research. Although the

authors of the article refer mainly to early childhood education, the conclusions can be generalised to the whole range of activities promoting inclusive education. Noteworthy is the part devoted to teacher preparation, which is a key challenge to the advancement of inclusive education. Analysing different models of teacher preparation for inclusive education, the authors emphasized the importance of contact with professionals, especially when working with students with disabilities. Moreover, they pointed out the important role of co-teachers.

Method

The main objective of the research was to diagnose the nature of actions, problems, and solutions used during distance education in the case of COVID-19 threat in selected municipalities of the Silesian Voivodeship and to develop recommendations that could improve the quality of education in similar situations.

The research was carried out based on the quantitative paradigm (Atieno, 2009; Baskarada and Koronios, 2018; da Silva et al., 2014; Makombe 2017; Sousa, 2013), using the diagnostic survey method (Brewer et al., 2015; Thomson 2017; Xiao et al. 2021), with questionnaires for two groups of respondents, that is teachers of mainstream or inclusive education and of special education (Candil et al,, 2022). The questionnaires consisted of 25 and 27 items on a Likert scale, on closed questions and opened questions. The tool was available online to all respondents using the LimeSurvey system[1]. The research tools were created by the research team and are objects of copyright. The versions of the research questionnaires were consulted with the representatives of the groups, following the idea of subjectivity and the participatory nature of the research. The Ethics Committee approved of the project of the University of Silesia in Katowice.

The survey participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its subject, course, time needed to complete the questionnaire, the way of using the obtained information, and an anonymous form of participation, which was voluntary and allowed for withdrawal. Each individual consented to participate in the research. The research was conducted from December 15, 2020, to February 23, 2021; therefore, it covered significant aspects of distance education implemented during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[1] The use of the online survey system LimeSurvey was carried out under a license held by the University of Silesia in Katowice.

The article presents a small part of this project, that is the research focuses on the work of teachers in mainstream schools and those who work with students with special educational needs especially the difficulties indicated by teachers, the support they experience and the solutions they apply. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What difficulties did teachers experience while distance learning? What additional difficulties did teachers face when working with students with special educational needs?
2. What forms of support and assistance did teachers use? What additional forms of support and assistance were used by teachers working with students with special educational needs?
3. With which students with special educational needs did teachers work?
4. How did teachers adapt lessons and organisation of classes to the needs of students with special educational needs?

Demographic characteristics of the study group

A total of 958 respondents – teachers representing primary and secondary schools in 8 municipalities of the metropolis of Silesia and Zagłębie (Bytom, Cieszyn, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Gliwice, Jastrzębie Zdrój, Piekary Śląskie, Pszczyna, Ruda Śląska) participated in the research. The most numerous group comprises teachers from Ruda Śląska (Table 1).

Table 1
Location of the school where the teachers worked

Location	N	%
Bytom	100	10.44
Cieszyn	55	5.74
Dąbrowa Górnicza	105	10.96
Gliwice	105	10.96
Jastrzębie Zdrój	69	7.20
Piekary Śląskie	72	7.52
Pszczyna	26	2.71
Ruda Śląska	355	37.06
No answer	71	7.41

S o u r c e s: own work

The majority of them were employed in primary schools (61%), secondary schools (14%), vocational schools, and technical secondary schools (16%). The detailed structure of employment is presented in the chart below (Table 2).

Table 2
Type of school where teachers worked

Type of school	N	%
kindergarten	2	0.21
special kindergarten	0	0
integrative kindergarten	0	0
elementary school, grades I–III	114	11.90
primary school, grades IV–VIII	359	37.47
special elementary and primary school	11	1.15
integrative primary school or a primary school with integrated classes	41	4.28
preparatory school	0	0
upper secondary school	39	4.07
upper secondary special school	4	0.42
high school	122	12.73
technical school	96	10.02
others	68	7.10
no answer	102	10.65

S o u r c e s: own work

The dominant group consisted of teachers with extensive experience and seniority over 20 and 25 years (Table 3). The vast majority of them have a master's degree, merely 2% of the respondents declared a bachelor's degree, and 1% were people with a different level of education. These professional characteristics of the environment stem from the formal requirements for Polish teachers, especially those working with students of the older grades of primary schools, special schools, and secondary schools (Ministry of National Education 2017a, 2019).

Table 3
Number of years of teachers' service

Number of years of teachers' service	N	%
up to 5 years	66	6.89
above 5 to 10 years	58	6.05
above 10 to 15 years	110	11.48
above 15 to 20 years	135	14.09
above 20 to 25 years	190	19.83
over 25 years	373	38.95
no answer	26	2.71

S o u r c e s: own work

It is worth paying attention to the fact that the seniority of teachers and their complete university education suggest that a large group of respondents had received their degrees even before the Bologna process (Wesołowska, 2013) was introduced in Poland[2]. The age structure of the respondents also confirms this; the average age of the respondents was 47.1 years (median 48.00 SD 8.55), the youngest declared 23, the oldest 74; as well as the level of professional advancement; 75% of the respondents are chartered teachers, 10% appointed teachers, 10% contract teachers, and only 3% are teachers in training (Table 4).

Table 4
Professional advancement level

Professional advancement level	N	%
trainee teacher	26	2.71
contract teacher	91	9.50
appointed teachers	98	10.23
chartered teachers	717	74.85
no answer	26	2.71

S o u r c e s: own work

[2] The Bologna Process is a term used to describe a series of higher education reforms in European countries. The reforms were being prepared and implemented between 1999 and 2012. Its consequence was creating the European Huger Education Area (EHEA) and thus the introduction of, inter alia, the two-stage model of higher education and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). These changes aimed to create structures of qualifications in higher education that would be comparable and complementary in different European countries and circumstances favourable for the international exchange of students and academics.

To complete the characteristics, it should be noted that over 80% of the respondents who provided information on their gender were women.

Results of Research

Difficulties in teaching in distance education

The pandemic situation that society has been facing since March 2020 is a challenge for all education entities. A particular responsibility fell on the teachers, who were forced to change their way of working overnight. This is an unprecedented challenge in the history of education. Technology has become, as never before, the fundamental tool of work, the use of which at a distance generates various types of difficulties, from technical to didactic (Table 5, Figure 1).

Table 5
Difficulties in teaching in distance education – context of mainstream education

Difficulties in teaching in distance education – context of mainstream education	definitely not	rather not	a little yes, a little no	rather yes	definitely yes
1	2	3	4	5	6
lack of access to equipment	43%	30%	16%	6%	4%
no Internet access	38%	34%	18%	6%	4%
inability to implement the material according to the plan	27%	36%	20%	10%	7%
problems with the place to do work at home	37%	30%	15%	11%	7%
lack of technology skills	37%	34%	22%	5%	2%
difficulties with preparing materials for classes	32%	41%	19%	6%	2%
lack of access to online teaching materials	33%	40%	17%	7%	3%
inability to monitor the student's progress	10%	21%	28%	25%	16%
inability to assess students' work	15%	29%	32%	17%	7%
inability to verify the presence of students	20%	30%	26%	13%	11%

1	2	3	4	5	6
inability to document your own remote work	36%	43%	14%	5%	2%
difficulties with the organization of group work	12%	23%	25%	23%	17%
difficulties with the use of activating methods	8%	21%	30%	28%	13%

S o u r c e s: own work

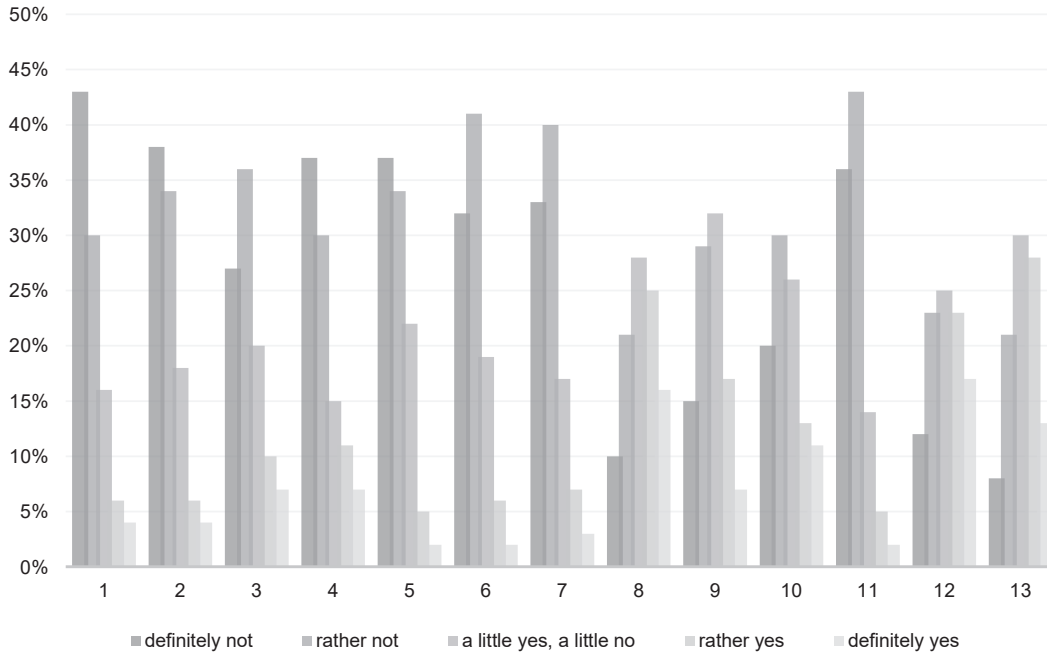

Figure 1. Difficulties in teaching in distance education – context of mainstream education

1 – lack of access to equipment, 2 – no Internet access, 3 – inability to implement the material according to the plan, 4 – problems with the place to do work at home, 5 – lack of technology skills, 6 – difficulties with preparing materials for classes, 7 – lack of access to online teaching materials, 8 – inability to monitor the students progress, 9 – inability to assess students' work, 10 – inability to verify the presence of students, 11 – inability to document your own remote work, 12 – difficulties with the organization of group work, 13 – difficulties with the use of activating methods.

S o u r c e s: own work

The presented research results indicate that the latter turned out to be the greatest challenge for teachers. Almost half (40–41%) of the sample indicated **difficulties related to work organization, especially the inability to monitor students'**

progress or to use activating methods and group work (Table 5, Figure 1). In retrospect, it can be stated that the last two difficulties can be overcome by acquiring skills, expanding the competencies of using online tools, and discovering new possibilities during webinars, online training, and teachers' work. Self-education in such skills becomes the fundamental task of the modern teaching staff, just as it has mainly been the case with the methodological skills. In other words, developing the ability to use distance education tools is no longer a necessity but a norm.

Nevertheless, monitoring the progress of students remains one of the most challenging issues to solve. This problem seems to be the first concern of people responsible for developing online tools that verify knowledge and skills. Teachers' creativity in inventing forms, ways, or conditions of examining is limited by the tool's features and does not reach the sphere of student and parental ethics.

Difficulties in working with students do not seem particularly acute. **50% of the respondents declared that they do not experience problems in not being able to verify the students' attendance** (Table 5, Figure 1). However, about a quarter perceives this as difficulty. At this point, it should be noted that in distance education, the only form of effective verification of students' presence in classes is their participation with the use of a webcam. The responses to the difficulties related to the inability to evaluate students' work were similarly distributed. More than half (54%) of teachers rather do not or definitely do not see any difficulties in this matter; however, 24% assess this difficulty in quite the opposite way.

The teachers reported no problems documenting their work (36% definitely not, 43% rather not) (Table 5, Figure 1). It seems understandable, after all, the classes themselves, lessons, assigned tasks, students' work, and various forms of verification of learning outcomes can be archived in an electronic (digital) version. **They did not experience difficulties in preparing materials for classes (73%)** (Table 5, Figure 1). However, it is impossible to determine how involved the teachers were in the preparation of such materials, going beyond the work with textbooks, workbooks, and methodological materials developed for them. It cannot be assessed whether and how they adapted the classic work methods to the requirements of distance education. These doubts are not unfounded in the context of one of the survey questions, which concerns access to teaching materials in digital form since **the teachers declared that they had no difficulties in accessing online help**. However, in the context of the above analysed questions concerning the frequency of using technological solutions, few use electronic resources prepared for the needs of approved education programs. **On the other hand, 63% of the respondents stated that the inability to implement the didactic material according to the plan was problematic.** The probable reason

for this is that the distance classes are more time-consuming than those conducted traditionally.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the technical problems suggested by some did not affect teachers to a large extent. Over 70% of the respondents did not have problems with access to the equipment necessary to work in distance education (Table 5, Figure 1). The same was valid for Internet access and technology skills. About 2/3 of the respondents rather do not or definitely do not have any problems finding a space to work at home.

Forms of support used by teachers

The assumption about the difficulties experienced by teachers also raised questions concerning how to deal with them by using various forms of help – both formal and informal (Table 6, Figure 2).

Table 6
Forms of support used by teacher

Forms of support used by teachers	no	don't know	yes
on-line training	3%	1%	95%
instructional videos	5%	2%	94%
consultations and conversations with other teachers	3%	2%	96%
support of specialists employed in the school	40%	6%	54%
consultations, talks with the management	11%	4%	85%
making available, renting equipment from the facility	63%	3%	34%
use of information and communications on the Ministry of National Education website	29%	8%	63%
use of information on the Educational Research Institute website	68%	17%	15%
consultations, talks with technical staff/IT specialists	36%	6%	57%
help from family members or friends	27%	5%	68%

S o u r c e s: own work

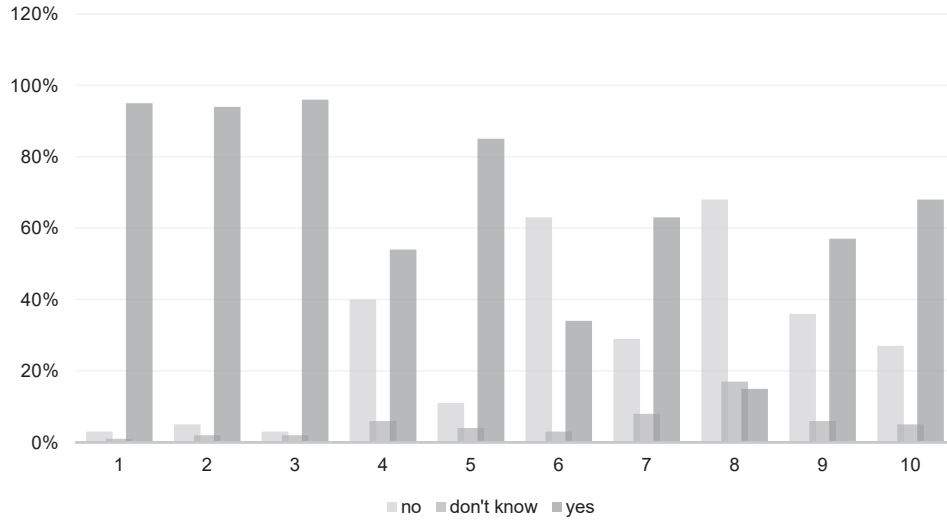

Figure 2. Forms of support used by teachers

1 – on-line training, 2 – instructional videos, 3 – consultations and conversations with other teachers, 4 – support of specialists employed in the school, 5 – consultations, talks with the management, 6 – making available, renting equipment from the facility, 7 – use of information and communications on the Ministry of National Education website, 8 – use of information on the Educational Research Institute website, 9 – consultations, talks with technical staff/IT specialists, 10 – help from family members or friends.

S o u r c e s: own work

The results obtained suggest that the informal ways of dealing with difficult situations are the best. **The vast majority of respondents (over 90%) benefited from consultations and conversations with other teachers** (Table 6, Figure 2). The support of friends and family members also turned out to be significant (68%). The type of assistance based on interpersonal relations also included consultations and interviews with the school management (85%).

An equally important role was played by the self-education work of teachers who used instructional videos (94%) and online training (95%) (Table 6, Figure 2). The latter data is related to previous information on the difficulties encountered by teachers. The use of activating methods, the organisation of group work, and monitoring students' progress were identified as the most problematic. These issues can be solved in a minimum way, thanks to training and instructional videos. In their own opinion, the teachers dealt with the remaining issues well, including reaching for help with technical difficulties. Just over half of them used consultations and interviews with technical (IT) employees (57%) and specialists employed in the facility (54%). This only confirms the difficulties declared by

teachers in the sphere of didactic work with the student rather than searching for technical solutions.

In comparison to the provided assistance, the use of the information available on the website of the Educational Research Institute looks unfavourably. Only 15% of the respondents made use of this option (Table 6, Figure 2). However, it should be noted that even those looking for help on these websites will not find support, specific solutions, or tips that could be used in teaching. For over half of the surveyed teachers (63%), it was essential to follow information and statements on the Ministry of National Education website.

Working with students with special educational needs

Another issue that was addressed in the survey was working with students with special educational needs. As a reminder, this group consists of students who have difficulties in functioning at school, including pedagogic as well as didactic challenges, which is manifested by, inter alia, problems with mastering the core curriculum (Kupisiewicz, 2013, pp.337–338). The reasons for this situation can be seen in various conditions, based on whether it was possible to distinct 12 groups listed in the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education (2017b; 2020b). Students with special educational needs require both psychological and pedagogical support, for which not only school head teachers are responsible, but above all, teachers who are in direct contact with students. This allows for the recognition of the pupils' abilities, quick response to difficulties (also those of an external and environmental nature), and, consequently, to support the developmental capabilities of students and such an organization of pedagogic and didactic processes to minimize the risk of educational failure and contribute to the full use of opportunities inherent in the education process by children and adolescents. It is easy to notice that the introduction of distance education disrupted providing psychological and pedagogical help at its initial stage, which is related to the recognition of students' needs. For the implementation of psychological and pedagogical assistance, with few exceptions, no prior diagnosis from a psychological and pedagogical counselling centre is required. Therefore, the teachers continued distance education with the special educational needs students, being obliged to adapt the work forms, methods, and organization. Only half of the respondents declared to work with this group of students.

Table 7
Students with special educational needs as indicated by teachers

Students with special educational needs as indicated by teachers	%
disabilities	35.81
behavioural and emotional disorders	41.48
risk of social maladjustment or social maladjustment	22.71
specific learning difficulties	76.86
competence deficits and language impairment	15.72
special aptitudes	20.96
chronic diseases	21.83
in a crisis	7.21
educational failures	31.88
environmental negligence	17.47
not applicable	1.31

S o u r c e s: own work

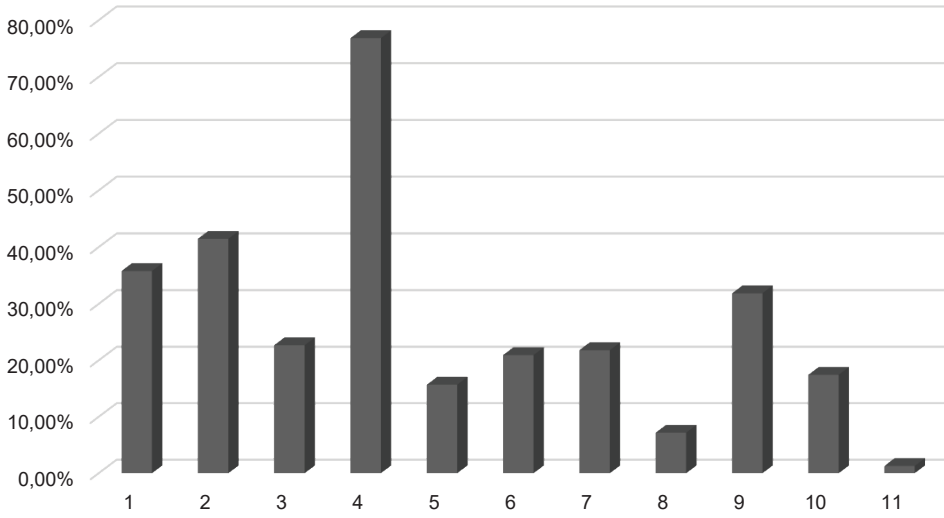

Figure 3. *Students with special educational needs as indicated by teachers*
1 – disabilities, 2 – behavioural and emotional disorders, 3 – risk of social maladjustment or social maladjustment, 4 – specific learning difficulties, 5 – competence deficits and language impairment, 6 – special aptitudes, 7 – chronic diseases, 8 – in a crisis, 9 – educational failures, 10 – environmental negligence, 11 – not applicable.
S o u r c e s: own work

The obtained data indicate that the largest group of students with special educational needs were those with specific learning difficulties (77%), i.e., the group of students with developmental dyslexia, dysorthography, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia (Table 7, Figure 3). It should be added that these are most often students who have an appropriate opinion from a psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, who need support in the field of perceptual-motor and verbal processes. For this target group, teachers can find a significant number of online resources that can be used during lessons and specialised classes.

From the formal point of view, the situation regarding **students with disabilities (36%)** (Table 7, Figure 3) is somewhat similar. In that case, an opinion on the need for special education is required. Psychological and pedagogical counselling centres issue the document. Thus, in the first instance, it is necessary to respect the individual educational and therapeutic program that is created on the basis of a multi-specialist assessment of the student's functioning and introduce revalidation classes. The diversity of causes of disability, and hence the application of special education to students, makes them a heterogeneous group; therefore, it is difficult to draw any unambiguous conclusions.

However, it should be noted that in the surveyed group of teachers, 6% were employees of special schools or inclusive schools and classes (Table 2). At the time of the closure of the institutions in the 2019/20 school year, they did not have the opportunity to carry out any activities at school, even with students with profound and complex disabilities. This situation had changed since September 2020, when most special schools adopted the face-to-face mode of classes. Therefore, working with students with disabilities in the inclusive (public), integrative and special education system during the pandemic would be worth a more detailed comparative analysis. Students with disabilities attending public schools did not have or had limited opportunities to work in direct contact with their teachers.

The group of students with behavioural and emotional disorders (41%) also deserves attention. It appears that the percentage of students with this type of problem is relatively high (Table 7, Figure 3). The number may be worrying, especially in the context of research on the harmful effects of excessive Internet use and behavioural addictions of children and adolescents caused by the abuse of digital technologies. On the other hand, this group of students includes those with school phobia, social phobia, or other disorders manifested by social anxiety. For them, remotely conducted classes could have a positive dimension.

The numerous minor group was students in a crisis (7%) (Table 7, Figure 3). It seems understandable and stems from the nature of the crisis, which is defined as a sudden, breakthrough state, more frequently associated with a change for the worse resulting from external events, affecting life, health, and the material situation (Kupisiewicz, 2013, pp. 164–165). Crisis situations are rather not long-term;

they require rapid and appropriate material intervention, and if needed, emotional support as well as psychological help often related to coping with the imbalance caused by severe stress.

In the students with special educational needs group, no students with adaptation difficulties related to cultural differences or a change in the school environment, including prior education abroad, were identified. This group of students is relatively small, and in the situation of closing the borders and the inability to travel, the obtained results seem to be even more coherent.

The remaining groups of students with special educational needs received indications at the level of 15% to 32%, which suggests that they constitute about a quarter of students with whom teachers work. It is worth noting that some of these students may be attending specialised classes organised outside school, such as speech therapy classes. Then the work of the teachers is limited to teaching school subjects without corrective intervention.

Ways of adjusting lessons to the needs of SEN students

Conducting classes in the new formula required adapting the lessons to the needs of students with special educational needs. This adaptation takes place in three main areas, that is adaptation of teaching content (Table 8), organisation of learning (Table 9), and changes to the duration of lessons (Table 10).

Table 8
Adjusting lessons in terms of educational content to the needs of students with special educational needs

Adjusting lessons in terms of educational content to the needs of students with special educational needs	N	%
reducing, shortening the content of education	216	47.16
selecting key information	360	78.60
simplifying information	332	72.49
giving additional tasks	133	29.04
fewer tasks to perform	280	61.14
providing supplementary content	162	35.37

S o u r c e s: own work

In the educational content, nearly half of the surveyed teachers, first of all, simplified information, selected and passed on the most essential information, and every third respondent reduced the number of assignments. The ways of adjusting the organisation mainly included providing additional instructions to the tasks and solving them collectively (Table 8). It should be noted that the ways in which

lessons were adapted were not specifically due to the use of e-learning but to the demands of the students with special educational needs.

Table 9
Adjusting lessons in terms of work organisation to the needs of students with special educational needs

Adjusting lessons in terms of work organisation to the needs of students with special educational needs	N	%
extending the lesson time	108	23.58
shortening the lesson time	129	28.17
supplementing lessons with additional meetings	108	23.58
maintaining a consistent class time	333	72.71
use of a support teacher who has worked with the student according to teachers' instructions	104	22.71
possibility for the teacher to come to the child's home	11	2.40
feeding printed materials	106	23.14
additional task explanation	344	75.11
joint execution of tasks	290	63.32
individual lessons	157	34.28
consultations	202	44.10
additional breaks	51	11.14
visibility of all pupils' faces	50	10.92

S o u r c e s: own work

The almost equal number of indications of extending the duration of lessons and additional lessons with additional meetings is one of the main arguments confirming that lessons conducted online require a different organization, i.e. more time for realization of topics/curriculum contents, even more so if it concerns students with special needs (Table 9). It was also essential to maintain the routine by keeping the time of the lessons constant. 44.1% of the teachers offered consultations, and nearly 23% used the pre-pandemic formula of cooperation with a support teacher (Table 9). A large group of the surveyed teachers decided to shorten the duration of the lessons. As can be seen, 9,61% of respondents made efforts to ensure that the faces of all students were visible (Table 9). Perhaps the vast majority of teachers have not encountered such a situation. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the transmission of content only in the form of sound hinders interaction with the teacher and understanding the topics discussed, which may result in various difficulties during distance lessons, especially in the case of children with special educational needs. The survey results indicate that the

vast majority of teachers complied with the recommendations of the Ministry of National Education and conducted shortened classes following the plan adopted for the time of the pandemic (Table 10).

Table 10
Organization of lesson time working with students with special educational needs

Organization of lesson time working with students with special educational needs	N	%
according to the pre-pandemic timetable	104	22.71
according to the pandemic plan	126	27.51
full-time lessons (45 minutes or 60 minutes revalidation)	54	11.79
shortened lessons during a pandemic	166	36.24
no answer	8	1.75

S o u r c e s: own work

According to the respondents' indications, the most characteristic feature of time organisation was the shortening of lessons, although this was not a common practice, despite the recommendation of the Ministry of Education (Table 10). Perhaps this was due to the necessity to implement the curriculum. It is worth noting the slight difference in declarations about changes in the organisation of the timetable or lack thereof. However, it should be taken into account that such changes affect not only pupils with SEN but the whole school community.

In undertaking the study, we also wanted to obtain information on the difficulties faced by the teachers with the new formula on the part of students with special educational needs (Table 11).

Table 11
Difficulties experienced by teachers of students with special educational needs

Difficulties experienced by teachers of students with special educational needs	N	%
lack of interest in learning	228	49.78
lack of contact	163	35.59
showing boredom/fatigue during lessons	189	41.27
outbursts of anger in task situations where difficulties arise	73	15.94
„technical" issues on the part of the student (e.g., no computer, no Internet access)	256	55.90
rapid loss of student attention	287	62.66

S o u r c e s: own work

The difficulties experienced by teachers can be divided into two main groups, that is those of a technical nature and those arising from the special needs of pupils. The first of these represents more than half of the cases. Certainly, some of them are due to a real lack of equipment for pupils. It should be added, that schools were obliged to provide students with access to education, which they did either by making school computer labs available or by renting laptops to students. This standard procedure, however, did not solve the problems concerning the quality of Internet connections at pupils' and teachers' homes and the special technical equipment and software necessary for some pupils with SEN. The most significant number of indications concerned rapid loss of concentration and attention, technical issues on the part of the students, as well as lack of interest in learning. Weariness during the lessons and, particularly worrying, lack of contact with the student were frequently observed. That loss of attention, rapid fatigue, boredom and lack of interest are a group of difficulties that are difficult to cope with using remote education. They are conditioned by the specificity of the pupils' disorders and disabilities.

Teachers working with special educational needs students during the COVID-19 pandemic could experience many difficulties related to the implementation of distance education, but, importantly, they could count on support (55.44%). At the same time, the respondents indicated the following forms of received support (according to the number of responses, respectively), advice and consultation (88.31%), assistance in the analysis and interpretation of student documentation (opinions, judgments, other specialised documents) (71.43%), advice on solving pedagogic problems with students and cooperating with parents (66.67%), interventions in the case of negative student behaviour, such as refusal to participate in distance education or negative attitudes of parents towards distance education (60.61%), assistance in the preparation of student documentation and teaching materials (56.28%), task teams (49.78%), workshops (37.66%) (Table 12).

Table 12
Forms of support received by teachers of students with special educational needs

Forms of support received by teachers of students with special educational needs	N	%
1	2	3
advice and consultation	405	88.31
assistance in the analysis and interpretation of student documentation (opinions, judgments, and other specialised documents)	327	71.43
advice on solving pedagogic problems with students and cooperating with parents	305	66.67

1	2	3
interventions in the case of negative student behaviour, such as refusal to participate in distance education or negative attitudes of parents towards distance education	278	60.61
assistance in the preparation of student documentation and teaching materials	258	56.28
task teams	228	49.78
workshops	173	37.66

S o u r c e s: own work

It is undeniable that teachers need support in their work. The profession predestines this group to one of the most vulnerable to professional burnout. However, Polish teachers perceive the highest value of support in consultations and advices (88.33%) and much less in practical activities – workshops (37.66%) (Table 12).

By organizing distance education, the surveyed teachers could count on the support of other people, including the school head teacher and school counsellor, another teacher, and a teacher co-organizing special education (a support teacher). The remaining specialists were indicated by a much smaller group of people, which probably results from a small percentage of employment of the specialists mentioned above in schools (Table 13).

Table 13
Persons from whom teachers received support concerning work with pupils with special educational needs

Persons from whom teachers received support concerning work with pupils with special educational needs	N	%
headmaster	188	81.39
pedagogue	196	84.85
psychologist	109	47.19
speech and language therapist	35	15.15
special educator for students with intellectual disabilities	28	12.12
special educator for deaf students	13	5.63
special educator for blind students	12	5.19
social therapist	4	1.73
support teacher	68	29.44
co-organiser of the activities	24	10.39
another teacher	119	51.52

S o u r c e s: own work

Among specialists supporting teachers, headmasters, pedagogues and psychologists come to the fore. This is probably due to the fact that they are most often present in schools. Specialists in special education constitute a much smaller group. This is due to their less frequent employment in mainstream schools.

Summary of results, answers to research questions

Answering the questions about experienced difficulties during distance learning, all teachers indicated problems with using active teaching methods, working in small groups and monitoring students' progress (Table 5, Figure 1). On the other hand, teachers working with SEN pupils experienced difficulties due to the pupils' own difficulties, such as rapid loss of attention, boredom and fatigue of the pupils, lack of interest, and technical difficulties, which they did not point out when working with pupils without special educational needs (Table 11).

In terms of help and support, teachers used mainly peer support and self-study work, the support of the headmaster, to a small extent they used the support of specialists (Table 6, Figure 2). On the other hand, teachers working with students with special educational needs more often used the help of specialists, especially pedagogues and psychologists employed at schools (Table 13).

In the surveyed schools the largest percentage of students with special educational needs are students with specific learning difficulties, i.e. (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthography, dyscalculia), while students with disabilities constitute less than 40% of students indicated by teachers (Table 7, Figure 3). These are mostly pupils in integrated schools or classes. Pupils with severe disabilities attend special schools which, as of the school year 2020/21, i.e. as of September 2020, have abandoned distance education and have returned to the form of face-to-face work.

When working with students with special educational needs, teachers used different forms of adaptation of activities; most often they selected and simplified, reduced the information provided to students, they prepare printed materials for pupils, they give fewer tasks to be completed but to supplement them with additional explanations or to do them together with pupils, they use consultations, individual lessons or suggest additional meetings, they use a help of support teacher, they shorten the duration of lessons (Tables 8, 9, 10).

Discussion

The presented research shows the differences experienced by teachers working with different groups of students during distance education. Students with special educational needs place additional demands on teachers. Their participation in distance education and the quality of this education may be conditioned not only by the state of health but also by socioeconomic factors. Technical problems that

arose in the work of teachers of students with special educational needs suggest such a dependence, pointed out by Gan and Sun (2022).

Although Polish teachers coped well with the challenges of distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic, the difference in the use of professional support and assistance by teachers working with students with special educational needs and those who did not work with such students is noteworthy. This confirms the general principle that teachers practicing in different contexts have different in-service professional development and support needs, especially in professionals focused on implementing inclusive practices (Muccio et al., 2014). However, in addition to the support of special education professionals – as highlighted in our research – and administrative and infrastructural support worthy of further research and practice development are issues of adapting commonly used distance learning tools to the needs and abilities of students with special educational needs. Statistical data showing the third largest number of indications given by other teachers as persons from whom teachers received support concerning work with pupils with special educational needs, confirm that the co-teaching service delivery model used to support inclusive education is in the opinion of Polish teachers the most useful. This is consistent with research by Shim et al. (2004) indicating that classrooms led by co-teachers scored higher compared with a hierarchical two-teacher structure (i.e., teacher and assistant teacher) or a single teacher. It may be worth organising education in such a way that the co-teacher is also a person with strong IT skills and knowledge. Education based on the European Framework for Digital Competence for Educators can help in this regard. As reported Walter & Pyżalski (2022) DigCompEdu are adequate in preparing teachers for the use of IT in education but there are issues that need to be changed that arose as a consequence of research on education during the pandemic and that may be relevant for their implementation after COVID-19. The co-teachers could then play the role of a facilitator in the use of distance learning applied to students with chronic diseases or social disorders that significantly limit the possibility to come to school and learn face-to-face. This would be one of the arguments for organising hybrid learning for students with special educational needs. And it should be noted that organisational issues are among the most uniquely important to inclusive education that utilises a co-teaching service delivery model (Kohler-Evans, 2006).

We cannot forget about students with extensive support needs who require special help from not only teachers, co-teachers and also para educators. In the Polish education system such a function is performed by support teachers. In the surveys conducted, approximately one third of the respondents indicated that they use their assistance. The question arises why so few teachers used such assistance? The more so as the tasks they perform are difficult to replace and fulfil by other staff mem-

bers. The explanation can be sought in systemic solutions. After all, only a small number of pupils with disabilities attend mass and integrated schools; in the case of our study, pupils with disabilities constituted almost 36% of pupils with special educational needs and only pupils with disabilities are entitled to teacher support. The majority of students with disabilities, especially with extensive support needs attend special schools, which, after the experience of distance education during the first wave of the pandemic, have been providing face-to-face teaching since September 2021. Meanwhile, attention should be paid to para educators working in inclusive schools (Walker et al., 2021) as it was on their shoulders that the burden of educating pupils with disabilities during remote education fell, which could not be applied in a form typical of other pupils.

The teachers who participated in the research used a variety of forms to adapt their organisation and ways of working to the circumstances of distance education and the needs of students with specific and special educational needs (Tables 8, 9, 10). In contrast to special education teachers who work with students with specific disabilities (Hurwitz et al., 2021; Algraini, Alasim 2021), mainstream school teachers had to use more universal arrangements that were comfortable for different students with special educational needs. On the other hand, shortening and simplifying the content, selecting information or even giving additional tasks, which are used by teachers teaching students with special educational needs, is/should be implemented regardless of the form of direct or remote education.

Teachers of pupils with special educational needs sometimes used extra tasks for them. This is an interesting point. We do not know whether these were on-line or traditional assignments; what was the extent to which the on-line formula was used for these assignments? This is an important issue which raises questions about the validity of using the online formula for working with students with special needs. This is because any additional tasks in the online formula place an additional burden on these students. On the one hand, it is appropriate to give additional tasks, but is it appropriate to give them remotely? We should bear in mind the problem/disability of the pupils and the desirability of limiting their contact with computers. A kind of solution could be a combination of assignments made with traditional materials and an on-line formula for submitting them.

It is not a solution that opens up the possibility of creating new technical options. Quite the opposite. But it should be taken into account that in the case of some disabilities, learning on a computer may be particularly inadvisable, e.g. when working with students with neurodevelopmental or neurological disorders, exposure to blue light from a monitor may be particularly problematic. Moreover, as Batubara (2021) points out the obstacles faced in implementing this learning method, were namely the unpreparedness of students in the online teaching and learning process.

The results of the research indicate a kind of paradox that the teachers had to face; on the one hand they needed more time to complete the topic, on the other hand, due to special educational needs and hygiene this time was reduced. Moreover, despite the use of remote education, some teachers (23.14%) prepared the materials in printed form and even visited their students at home (2.4%), which in itself has nothing to do with remote education. Apart from the lack of direct contact between teacher and student. Meanwhile, it must not be forgotten that there are two different shared approaches in the use of e-Learning and ICT in the promotion of learning for students with SEN, that is the use of ICT as assistive technologies, aiming to increase specific cognitive/academic abilities and to guarantee "reasonable accommodation" according to Convention of the Right of People with Disability; the use of e-learning platforms and other tools with the aim to increase accessibility to information and learning materials, and with the aim to promote participation, inclusion and to keep in contact with other students and with teachers (Bjekic et al., 2014).

A question worth considering is whether the difficulties of students with special educational needs noted by teachers during distance education, such as lack of intimacy in learning, lack of contact, boredom or fatigue, anger, loss of attention (Table 11) are a consequence of the general situation caused by the pandemic or are they related to the situation of online learning itself? If we juxtapose the results of our study with others on the general psychological well-being of students with special educational needs during the pandemic of COVID-19 (Asbury et al. 2021) we find that few of them are shared with the learning situation. However, noteworthy is the sense of loss declared by children and parents „these losses were organised into four sub-categories: loss of routine, loss of support network and structures, loss of specialist input and, for a minority, financial loss" (Asbury et al., 2021). According to this research children indicated feelings of boredom, communication and motivation problems but in much lower intensity (e.g. anxiety 106 frequency; change in routine 84; boredom 14; communication 11; motivation 11).

It can be said that the situation of the pandemic was not conducive to practical forms of teacher support, however, this does not seem to be a sufficient explanation of the results obtained. After all, a large number of institutions, including psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, organised practical forms of support for teachers, including the use of tools for remote education (O'Connor, 2020). The reason for the lower interest in workshops and task groups should rather be seen in the school's work culture and the fact that teachers are accustomed to traditional forms of support based on oral forms such as training. This is in line with the results of the survey of all teachers presented above, for whom the main forms of support were consultations and talks with other teachers and self-training in the use of tools for remote education. However, it does not change the general

tendency of teachers to work on their own professional development, which is confirmed not only by Polish but also foreign research (see Kalman et all, 2022).

It should be noted that the pedagogue, psychologist or headmaster cannot solve the specific problems encountered by teachers in their work with pupils with special needs. For example, it is significant that more than 60% of teachers indicated problems with pupils' behaviour, but only less than 2% received support from socio therapists (Table 7, Figure 3, Tables 12, 13). This may be due to the low number of such specialists employed in schools. Thus, among specialists, teachers working with pupils with SEN could count more on supportive teachers and co-organisers of tasks than on specialists. It is remarkable that in the context of remote education, teachers did not indicate support from IT specialists. This may be due to the low knowledge of both teachers working with students with special needs and IT specialists regarding the use of remote education with this group of students. More attention should also be paid to the individualisation of distance learning for pupils with SEN, according to their needs and abilities, and this requires closer cooperation between different professionals (Pirani, Sasikumar, 2013). It also seems possible to adapt the community of inquiry (COI) model, through which the determinants of student satisfaction with online learning can be identified through the mediating mechanism of student readiness for online learning, in the context of students with special educational needs. Research conducted by Amka &Dale (2022) has shown that teacher presence, cognitive and social presence and content quality, directly and indirectly, influence e-learning satisfaction.

Conclusions

In terms of mainstream education, the results were consistent with others obtained in national surveys (Plebańska et al., 2020; Ptaszek et al., 2020; Pyżalski, 2020). The teachers confirmed their active approach to using various forms of help, especially in overcoming technical difficulties. Cooperation with other people, especially teachers, exchange of experiences, and the use of distance forms of training for own work turned out to be crucial. It turned out to be more popular than using the help of specialists employed in the facility. Most of the surveyed teachers did not experience any problems related to the lack of computer equipment or the Internet connection.

Teachers have worked with students from almost all categories of special educational needs. However, since this group is heterogeneous and very complex, moreover, since the work can be implemented in various forms of special educa-

tion, the research requires further analysis in at least two aspects, that is analysis of the situation of students with disabilities in various forms of special education; paying attention to the group of students for whom distance education could or may have a positive dimension due to the type of special educational needs.

Teachers working with students with special educational needs experienced additional difficulties during remote teaching due to the specific psychophysical functioning of these students. Consequently, after the experience of the first wave of the pandemic, teachers working in special schools returned to working face-to-face with their students, but teachers in mainstream and integrative schools had to adapt the whole remote education process to the individual needs of students with SEN.

Remote education has further highlighted students' problems with motivation to learn, maintaining interest in lessons, loss of attention and even boredom. This does not imply a need to abandon the use of remote tools for educating pupils with SEN, but rather to develop a different method of organising lessons e.g. by using more specialised tools (by which I mean both equipment and software) in shorter but more frequent lessons and rather in individual work as this allows for longer contact and responds to signs of tiredness or loss of attention or interest, which is difficult to monitor and control when working with a group of pupils. It is important to provide clear instructions (explicit and well-organized information) aiming to prevent students' cognitive overload or difficulty in comprehension and to overcome the difficulties of some specific students (mainly students with SEN) and to provide first basic information, then to provide more advanced information and respecting the individual's pace and rhythm (the "gift of time") (Petretto, 2021). The implementation of such recommendations would require a radical change in the organisation of school work, which was impossible in the reality of the time, when successive decrees of the Ministry of Education introduced overnight either distance or face-to-face education. On the other hand, it is worth using these experiences as an alternative when organising distance learning with students who, for health reasons, cannot attend their classes and when organising individual teaching. However, these are solutions that require additional working hours from teachers.

Most teachers need help in understanding and interpreting the records of pupils with SEN and consulting with parents and more than half need assistance in compiling documentation. This suggests that they are highly concentrated in administrative duties. However, it seems that more attention should be paid to the training of practical skills of teachers, especially working in task teams, assistance in creating interdisciplinary teams consisting not only of teachers but also parents (Trzcińska-Król, 2020; Cahapay, 2020; Cahoon et al. 2020; Schuck et al. 2021; Soltero-González, and Gillanders, 2021) other specialists, e.g. therapists and IT

specialists (Ocal et al., 2021) and programmers who, having their knowledge and skills, would enrich the solutions used in work with students with SEN, especially the use of Internet tools.

As far as supporting teachers is concerned, it is advisable to be more active; both in the form of training, further education and creating their own solutions, especially as regards the use of IT technology in working with students with SEN. It is known that often special educational needs of students require the creation of unique and innovative solutions. In this area teachers did not receive any assistance, and this is one of the important needs that should be met (Bali, 2020).

Limitation

The research presented a general picture of the use of remote education during a pandemic. Although it presents problems for teachers working with pupils with and without special educational needs, it should be borne in mind that it does not present specific solutions for narrow groups of pupils with SEN, e.g. only for pupils with behavioural disorders or only for dyslexic pupils etc. Obtaining such information would require the development of a survey instrument only for teachers working with SEN pupils. However, it should be noted that most teachers work simultaneously with pupils with different educational needs and, as a result, they often apply the same teaching and organisational solutions to all pupils with SEN. This need is underlined by, inter alia Petretto (et al. 2021), when they write that in this field it is mandatory to pay great attention to students with SEN and to their individual and specific needs.

Future research

As mentioned above, the research presented is part of a larger project on the use of remote education in the work of schools. In the second part, a qualitative study is planned, based on the technique of focus interviews with teachers and parents of students in order to learn more about the wider context of issues related to e-learning. The small group research may be helpful in exploring the specifics of remote working of different groups of teachers (subject teachers, support teachers,

therapist teachers, specialist teachers) with identified groups of pupils with SEN. It is also worth exploring parents' views on the applicability of remote education to their children's learning when they are forced to stay at home. The role of teachers and parents or other family members is extremely important in monitoring students' online activities (Petretto et al., 2020; 2021)

Significance

The need to use remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic showed how useful this form of education is in emergency situations. However, the research has uncovered a number of challenges for teachers wishing to use e-learning to work with all students and not, as was previously the case, with selected groups of interested students and teachers. The research shows that e-learning may be an effective way of securing the continuity of education. "Some of the main purposes of the e-learning process are to guarantee continuity in learning, to keep in contact with all students, and to guarantee information also about some coping strategies to adapt to the current pandemic emergency and its consequences (Petretto et al., 2021, p.2). But it also indicated areas for further work, that is the need for better preparation of teachers, assistance in changing students' attitudes towards this form of education (in particular, treating the media as a place for learning and not only for fun, contact, and free search for information), and finally adapting the very tools and methods of remote work to the needs of students with SEN. All the more so because, as we read in the UNESCO report: The Ministry of Education, with support from development partners should provide accessible learning materials to children with various types of disabilities, so that they can continue learning during the COVID-19 period and should invest more in e-learning while ensuring that persons with various types of disabilities including those with visual and hearing impairments are taken care of (UNESCO, 2021b).

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Edyta M. Nieduziak

Nauczyciele w kształceniu na odległość w czasie pandemii COVID-19 Kontekst edukacji ogólnodostępnej, integracyjnej i specjalnej

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja wyników badań dotyczących wybranych aspektów edukacji zdalnej prowadzonej w czasie drugiej fali pandemii COVID-19 na terenie wybranych gmin województwa śląskiego. Badania koncentrują się wokół zagadnień pracy nauczycieli szkół ogólnodostępnych oraz tych, którzy pracują z uczniami o specjalnych potrzebach edukacyjnych. Autorka przedstawia: najczęściej wskazywane przez nauczycieli trudności, doświadczane wsparcie oraz stosowane rozwiązania, zwłaszcza wobec uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi.

Badania opierały się na paradygmacie ilościowym, wykorzystano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego i przygotowane przez zespół badawczy kwestionariusze ankiety on-line przesłane do respondentów w systemie LimeServey. W badaniu wzięło udział 958 nauczycieli reprezentujących szkoły podstawowe oraz średnie.

Wśród największych trudności nauczania zdalnego nauczyciele wskazywali: brak możliwości monitorowania postępów uczniów, problemy z organizacją zajęć grupowych oraz z zastosowaniem metod aktywizujących w nauczaniu. Największe wsparcie upatrywali w kontaktach interpersonalnych oraz pracy samokształceniowej; rzadko korzystali z pomocy specjalistów. Połowa respondentów pracowała zdalnie z uczniami ze specyficznymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi. Największą liczebnie grupę takich uczniów stanowili uczniowie ze specyficznymi problemami w uczeniu się. Uczniowie z niepełnosprawnościami stanowili ok. 36% uczniów wskazanych przez nauczycieli – część z nich uczęszczała do szkół specjalnych, w których proces edukacji podczas pandemii przebiegał inaczej niż w szkołach ogólnodostępnych. Wśród trudności, jakich doświadczyli nauczyciele pracujący z uczniami ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi, wymieniano problemy techniczne po stronie ucznia oraz problemy psychofizyczne wynikające ze specyficznej kondycji ucznia ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi.

Wyniki badań i zawarte w nich rekomendacje przedstawione zostały organom prowadzącym szkoły w celu poprawy jakości kształcenia zdalnego uczniów i podwyższenia standardów pracy nauczycieli, zwłaszcza tych pracujących z uczniami ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi.

S ł o w a k l u c z o w e: edukacja zdalna, pandemia COVID-19, nauczyciele szkół ogólnodostępnych, uczniowie ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi, uczniowie z niepełnosprawnością, trudności edukacji zdalnej

Edyta M. Nieduziak

Эдита М. Недузяк

Учителя в условиях дистанционного обучения во время пандемии COVID-19 Контекст общедоступного, инклюзивного и специального обучения

Аннотация

Цель статьи – представить результаты исследования по выбранным аспектам дистанционного обучения, реализуемого во время второй волны пандемии COVID-19 на территории отдельных гмин Силезского воеводства. Исследование сосредоточено вокруг вопросов работы учителей общеобразовательных школ и тех, кто работает с учениками с особыми образовательными потребностями.

Исследование было основано на количественной парадигме, использовался метод диагностического опроса и подготовленные исследовательской группой анкеты для онлайн-опроса, отправляемые респондентам в системе LimeServey. В исследовании приняли участие 958 учителей начальных и средних школ.

Среди самых больших трудностей дистанционного обучения учителя указывали на: отсутствие возможности контролировать прогресс учащихся, проблемы с организацией групповых занятий и с применением активизирующих методов обучения. Наибольшую поддержку они усматривали в межличностных отношениях и самообразовательной работе; редко пользовались помощью педагогов. Половина респондентов работали удаленно с учениками со специфическими образовательными потребностями. Наибольшую группу таких учеников составляли ученики со специфическими проблемами в обучении. Ученики с инвалидностью составляли прибл. 36% учащихся, указанных учителями, – часть из них посещали специальные школы, где процесс обучения во время пандемии протекал иначе, чем в общеобразовательных школах. Среди трудностей, которые испытывали учителя, работающие с учениками с особыми образовательными потребностями, упоминались: технические проблемы со стороны ученика и психофизические проблемы, связанные со специфическим состоянием ученика с особыми образовательными потребностями.

Результаты исследования и содержащиеся в нем рекомендации были представлены руководящим органам школ для повышения качества дистанционного обучения учащихся и стандартов работы учителей, особенно тех, кто работает с учениками с особыми образовательными потребностями.

Ключевые слова: дистанционное обучение, пандемия COVID-19, учителя общеобразовательных школ, ученики с особыми образовательными потребностями, ученики с ограниченными возможностями, трудности дистанционного обучения

Los profesores de la educación a distancia durante la pandemia de la COVID-19 El contexto de la educación general, inclusiva y especial

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es presentar los resultados de los estudios relativos a determinados aspectos de la educación a distancia impartida durante la segunda ola de la pandemia de la COVID-19 en determinados municipios del Voivodato de Silesia. Los estudios se centran en los problemas del trabajo de los profesores de centros educativos generales, así como de aquellos que trabajan con alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales.

Los estudios se basaron en un paradigma cuantitativo en el que se empleó el método de sondeo de diagnóstico, así como en un conjunto de encuestas online preparado por el equipo investigador y enviado a los encuestados en el sistema LimeSurvey. En el estudio participaron 958 profesores que representaban a colegios de primaria y centros de secundaria.

Entre las mayores dificultades de la enseñanza a distancia los profesores indicaron: la imposibilidad de monitorizar los progresos de los alumnos, los problemas con la organización de las actividades en grupo y la aplicación de los métodos de activación en la enseñanza. Buscaron un mayor apoyo en los contactos interpersonales y en el trabajo autodidacta, raramente utilizaron la ayuda de especialistas. La mitad de los encuestados trabajó a distancia con alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales. El grupo más numeroso de estos alumnos eran alumnos con problemas específicos de aprendizaje. Los alumnos con discapacidad suponían aproximadamente el 36% de los alumnos indicados por los profesores: una parte de ellos asistía a centros educativos especiales, en los que el proceso de educación durante la pandemia discurrió de manera diferente que en los centros educativos generales. Entre las dificultades que experimentaron los profesores que trabajaron con alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales se mencionaron problemas técnicos por parte del alumno y problemas psicofísicos derivados de la condición específica del alumno con necesidades educativas especiales.

Los resultados de los estudios y las recomendaciones contenidas en ellos han sido presentados a los organismos que dirigen los centros educativos con el fin de mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza a distancia de los alumnos y elevar los estándares de trabajo de los profesores, en especial de aquellos que trabajan con alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales.

Palabras claves: educación a distancia, pandemia de la COVID-19, profesores de centros educativos generales, alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales, alumnos con discapacidad, dificultades de la educación a distancia