



<https://doi.org/10.31261/IJREL.2022.8.1.06>

Anida Szafrńska

University of Silesia in Katowice Faculty of Social Sciences

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2469-5375>

Distance Education Along with Pedagogical and Psychological Assistance for SEN Students on the Example of the City of Gliwice

Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students with special education needs, including students with disabilities, found themselves in a particularly vulnerable position. What raised concern was the organization of remote education for this group of students, the implementation of tasks in the field of psychological and pedagogical assistance, and the effective use of recommendations contained in documents (opinions, decisions on the need for special education, or individual educational and therapeutic programs). The period of the pandemic and closing schools posed new challenges for teachers in organizing education for this group of students and meeting their special and specific educational needs in the online mode. The analyses presented in the article refer to the organization of remote education for students with special educational needs (SEN) and the organization of psychological and pedagogical assistance.

Key words: COVID-19 pandemic, distance education, special educational needs, students with special educational needs, psychological and pedagogical assistance, teachers at public schools

Sweeping across the world since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions to societies and affected most of the systems operating in every country. One of the areas that has faced serious challenges is education. In order to contain the pandemic, governments of most countries decided at one point or another to close all or almost all schools at various educational levels. A report compiled by the United Nations (2020) stated that major disruptions to education systems concerned 1.6 billion learners in over 190 countries. The closing of schools and other places of education affected 94% of the world's student population and as much as 99% in less developed countries.

As of 12 March 2020, i.e., the day after the Coronavirus outbreak had been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 11 March 2020 suspended teaching and educational activities in Polish kindergartens, schools, and educational institutions (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 410). This decision meant that 4.9 million primary and secondary school students (Statistical Office, 2020, p. 29) and 1.4 million pre-school children (Statistical Office, 2020, pp. 26-28) remained at home. The introduction of distance education became a reality as early as on 25 March 2020, thus putting all participants in the educational process, including nearly 514,000 teachers (Statistical Office, 2020, p.136), in a difficult position as they needed to accommodate to the new conditions under which they were to function. The Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 20 March 2020 on specific solutions in the period of temporary limitation of the functioning of educational system entities in connection with preventing, counteracting, and combating COVID-19 (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 493) specified the school principal's tasks related to developing a model of distance education. This model was supposed to be characterized by flexibility, purposefulness of activities, a reasonable amount of communicated content as well as clearly defined objectives and requirements (Staszkiwicz-Grabarczyk, 2021). The rapid transition to a different mode of teaching and learning has raised concerns about the quality of education and, over time, the mental health of children and youth (UNICEF, 2020). In this situation, distance education has become an interesting, but also necessary research field for academic community.

The first commentaries and reports regarding online learning on such a large scale appeared as early as in the year 2020. In a short period of time, many researchers were able to conduct research and publish their results.

In an overview of literature published between 2020 and 2021 on teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers identified six key themes (Vijayan, 2021). These were as follows: the impact of COVID-19 on higher education institutions and challenges they face; the tools and strategies employed by universities to overcome difficulties; the teaching and learning experiences of

schools and teachers; the impact of COVID-19 on the training of medical and nursing personnel; patients' knowledge of COVID-19; and students' anxiety and stress levels as a result of COVID-19 and online learning. The thematic area concerning the experiences of schools and teachers included reports highlighting the problems and challenges brought about by distance education, ways of coping with the difficulties, the effort teachers had to overcome when preparing to teach using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Some of the reports dealt with the impact of distance education on the mental health of teachers, students, and parents. The issue of online education in relation to younger children and students with special educational needs was also addressed. Furthermore, the authors of the study highlight the theme of the digital divide and disparities in access to education.

In Poland, the first research reports also appeared in 2020. In relation to distance education, they mostly focused on evaluations, opinions of teachers, students and their parents, principals and directors managing educational institutions (e.g., Buchner et al., 2020; Domagała-Zyśk, 2020; Ptaszek et al., 2020; Jaskulska & Jankowiak, 2020; Plebańska et al., 2020).

Buchner et al. (2020) reported several important issues facing remote education providers. These were:

- the need to manage a new form of education for which teachers were not prepared (only 15% of teachers had had experience with remote education before the pandemic);
- the need to provide teachers and students with equal access to equipment and Internet;
- the need to build new or expand competencies, which consist of digital knowledge and skills as well as methodological knowledge and skills;
- the need to develop a formula for monitoring students from dysfunctional families;
- the need to take into account legal aspects of remote education, including issues such as online safety;
- the need to provide teachers with the necessary psychological support;
- the need to provide support for students with special educational needs.

The afore-presented list of problems related to remote education in the times of crisis is hardly exhaustive. Today it is difficult to say how this form of education has affected students, teachers, and parents. The pandemic has put us all in a unique situation and its effects may be felt much more acutely by students with special educational needs.

Special educational needs and psychological and pedagogical assistance

Appointed by the Ministry of Education in 2008, the Expert Panel on Special Educational Needs proposed two complementary definitions of special developmental needs (SDN) and special educational needs (SEN). “Children and young people with special developmental and educational needs are those with a spectrum of symptoms that impair or prevent motor, sensory, cognitive, communication, emotional, social and/or psychological functioning, which affects their quality of life and their ability to perform social roles now and/or in the future (...) [T]he group also includes those who are at risk of disability, any dysfunction, disharmony or incapacity that may have a negative impact on further development” (Zaremba, 2014, p. 15).

Irrespective of the adopted definition, a student with the above-mentioned needs is a demanding student, posing a particular challenge for teachers to recognize these needs and meet them by creating optimal conditions for his or her development. In practice, taking into account the diversity within the scope of special educational needs, teachers often face a difficult task of meeting the requirements to adapt methods, forms, means, didactic and educational activities to the individual requirements of many students at the same time.

The period of the pandemic and closing of schools presented teachers with new challenges in organizing the education of this group of students and meeting their special and specific educational needs in an online format. Hitherto, in accordance with the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 2020 on the principles of organizing and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools, and institutions (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1280), these students were able to benefit from various forms of assistance, including participation in specialized classes, support during classes through direct contact with a teacher, or a conversation with a school counselor or psychologist. In accordance with the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the conditions for organizing education, upbringing, and care for children and youths with disabilities, social maladjustment, and at risk of social maladjustment (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1578), students with a decision on eligibility for special education were able to attend specialized classes, including remedial classes, and also receive assistance from a teacher who was co-organizing the educational process. During subsequent lockdowns, these opportunities were reduced and, in the early stages of the pandemic, eliminated. The organization of education for students with special educational needs became a serious problem,

as evidenced by two addresses of the Polish Ombudsman, dated 24 April 2020 and 5 February 2021. In both documents the Polish Ombudsman drew attention to the difficult situation of children and youths with special educational needs, including those with disabilities; he emphasized that the adopted solutions for the operation of institutions during the pandemic do not secure the needs of this group of students (Bodnar, 2020, 2021).

Education of students with special educational needs during the pandemic emerges as an interesting field of research and the subject of separate analyses. In the context of the pandemic and the need to return to distance education, and teachers' experiences of organizing the process of education for students with special educational needs prove to be important. Based on the experience of nearly 800 teachers, Parmigiani et al. (2020) identified factors that support effective e-inclusion processes. According to the authors mentioned, these are strategies that use synchronous and asynchronous activities interchangeably, combined with whole class then small group and individual activities; cooperation among class teachers and special education teachers; collaboration with the family and interaction within the family; as well as appropriate training for teachers. Among the interesting methods of work one should enumerate the use of an innovative online platform for educational games together with a video-conference platform (Aloizou et al., 2001). The authors of the project discuss the positive results of this approach to remote learning with a focus on students with autism. In contrast, Lütje-Klose et al. (2021) list the barriers that teachers in inclusive schools face when organizing distance learning for students with SEN. The authors emphasize that the personal contact with a specialist teacher cannot be compensated for by digital media and that alternating distance and face-to-face instruction is particularly burdensome for this group of students.

Taking into account the general difficulties of students and the resulting tasks for teachers, this paper attempts to show the implementation of remote education as well as remote psychological and pedagogical assistance in the second stage of the pandemic.

Methodology

Purpose of the study and research questions

The research results presented in this article are part of an extensive study on remote education in Silesia, conducted by researchers at the University of Silesia, titled "Education in the situation of public health emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic in selected municipalities of the Silesian voivodeship as viewed by teachers, parents, and students."

The main objective of the research was to diagnose the quality of distance education experienced by respondents in connection with the COVID-19 public

health emergency, as seen and evaluated from their perspective, and to develop recommendations to improve the functionality of this form of education.

What was of particular interest to the author of the present article were the issues related to remote education for students with special educational needs as well as remote psychological and pedagogical assistance. The research focused on the experiences of teachers who were implementing remote education for students with special educational needs and the specialist teachers who were offering psychological and pedagogical assistance online. Therefore, the research problems took the form of the following questions:

1. How did the teachers implement distance education for students with special educational needs?
2. How did the specialist teachers organize psychological and pedagogical assistance?
3. How do the respondents evaluate remote psychological and pedagogical support?

The research was conducted in a quantitative paradigm using a diagnostic survey method with a questionnaire posted on the LimeSurvey1 research platform at the turn of 2020, i.e. in December 2020 and January 2021.

This paper presents results of surveys conducted among teachers from schools in Gliwice. The choice of this group was dictated by the number of completed questionnaires returned. In Gliwice area, there were 103 teachers who took part in the survey, of whom 58 referred to those questions in the questionnaire which concerned organization of remote education for students with special educational needs. A separate questionnaire for specialist teachers was completed by 31 respondents. The teachers who participated in the research work at public elementary schools, inclusion schools, and schools with inclusion units.

Characteristics of respondent group

The analyses presented in the article refer to the organization of remote education for students with special educational needs (SEN) as well as the organization of psychological and pedagogical assistance.

Table 1 and Table 2 present the size of respondent group and the educational background of surveyed teachers, respectively.

Table 1
Size of respondent group

Group of teachers surveyed	N
Teachers participating in the general survey	103
– including teachers who declare they work with students with special educational needs	58
Specialist teachers	31

Source: Own work

Table 2
Teachers' educational background

Teachers' educational background	In total	Master's degree	%	Bachelor's degree	%
Teachers who declare they work with students with special educational needs	58	53	91.4	5	8.6
Specialist teachers	31	29	93.5	2	6.5

Source: Own work

Organization of remote education for students with special educational needs (SEN) in teachers' experience and assessment

To start with, it is important to refer to the general survey data on the use of technology solutions. As it was established, the surveyed teachers, including those working with students with special educational needs, mainly chose the electronic register from a wide range of options, i.e., a total of 97 respondents (94.2%), while 96 respondents (93.2%) chose educational platforms (MS Teams, Google Classroom), and 91 respondents (88.3%) – e-mail. 24 (23.3%) teachers used the integrated learning platform often and very often.

In the first question, the teachers were asked to identify the types of special educational needs prevalent in the students they teach remotely. The purpose of this question was to identify problems that teachers may have encountered when implementing remote education. The teachers' responses are shown in Figure 1.

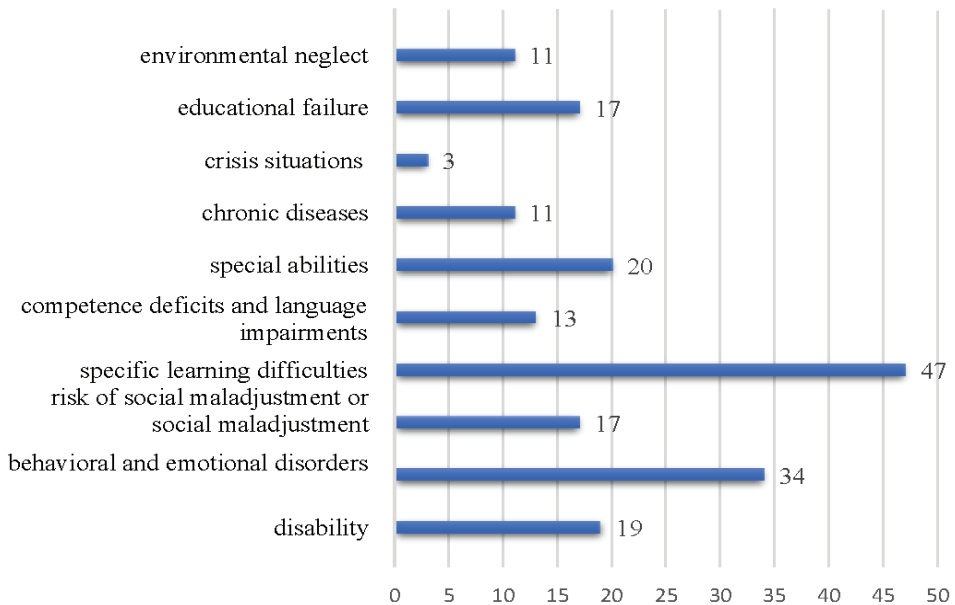


Figure 1. Groups of students with SEN identified by teachers (N=58).

S o u r c e: Own work.

The figure above shows the groups of teacher-indicated students with special educational needs for whom the respondents, 58 in total, implemented remote education. This question was of the multiple choice type.

The largest group were teachers who worked with students whose special educational needs resulted from specific learning difficulties (47 respondents), followed by a group of teachers whose students' special educational needs resulted from behavioral and emotional disorders (34 respondents). The fewest teachers worked with students whose special educational needs resulted from crisis situations.

Conducting classes in the new formula required adapting lessons to the psychophysical capabilities of students with special educational needs in terms of technological solutions, educational content (Figure 2) and organization (Figure 3).

58 respondents answered the questions regarding methods of adapting lessons to the requirements of students with special educational needs (SEN) in terms of educational content and organization. As evidenced by the survey results, teachers employed all of the methods listed in the questionnaire to adapt lessons to the needs of children and youths.

Distance Education Along with Pedagogical and Psychological Assistance for SEN Students...

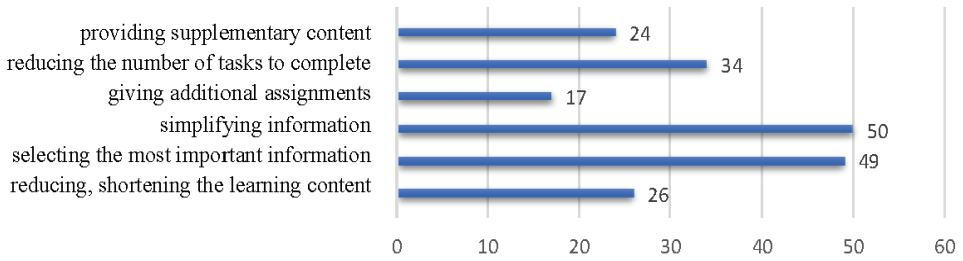


Figure 2. Methods of adapting lessons to the requirements of students with SEN in terms of educational content (N=58).

Source: Own work.

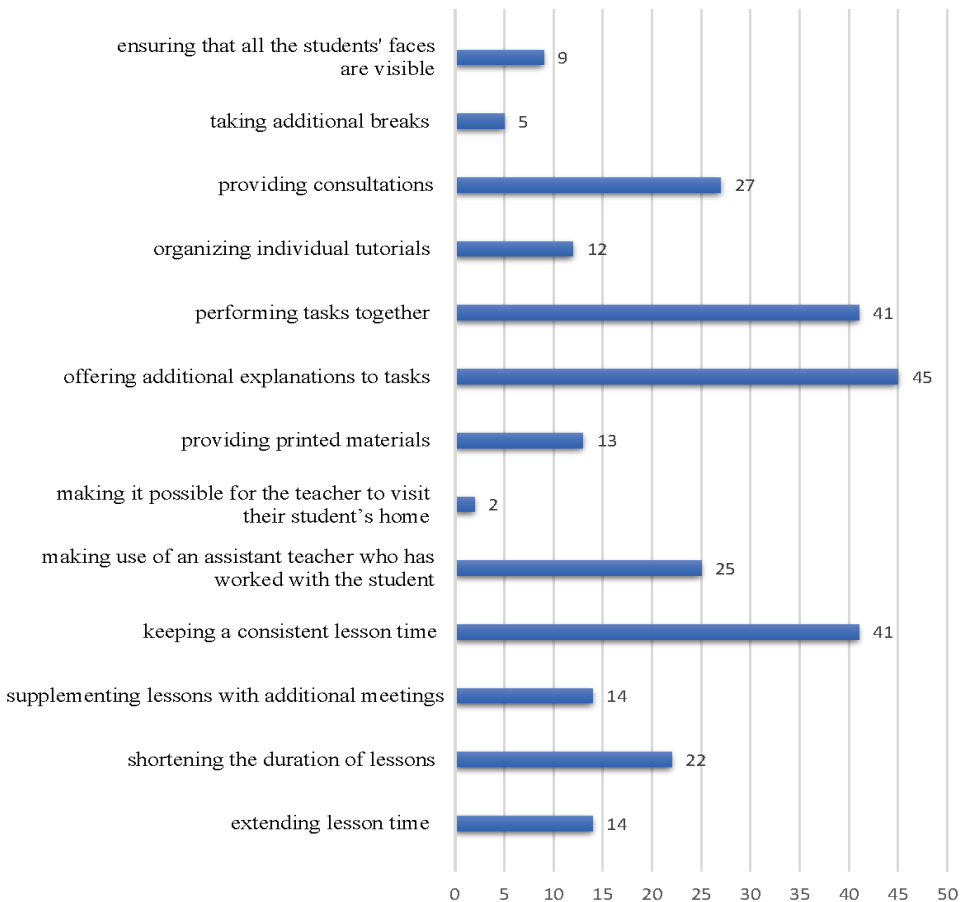


Figure 3. Methods of adapting lessons to the requirements of students with SEN in terms of work organization (N=58).

Source: Own work.

In the case of learning content (Figure 2), teachers were mainly simplifying information, selecting and providing the most important information, and reducing the number of tasks for students to complete independently. What the respondents were least likely to do was giving students additional assignments. When it came to adjusting organization of work (Figure 3), strategies such as offering additional explanations, performing tasks together, and maintaining routine by keeping the consistent lesson time were most frequently indicated by the respondents. Nearly half of the teachers were running consultations and also used the formula developed before the pandemic period for collaborating with an assistant teacher. A large group used the strategy of shortening the duration of lessons. A few respondents also made an effort to ensure that the faces of all students were visible.

As far as technological solutions are concerned, the respondents used mainly the option of sharing content in a graphic form as well as adjusting the font and color scheme of the teaching materials.

In the next question, it was important to obtain information about the difficulties that teachers encountered from students with special educational needs when conducting lessons in the new formula (Figure 4).

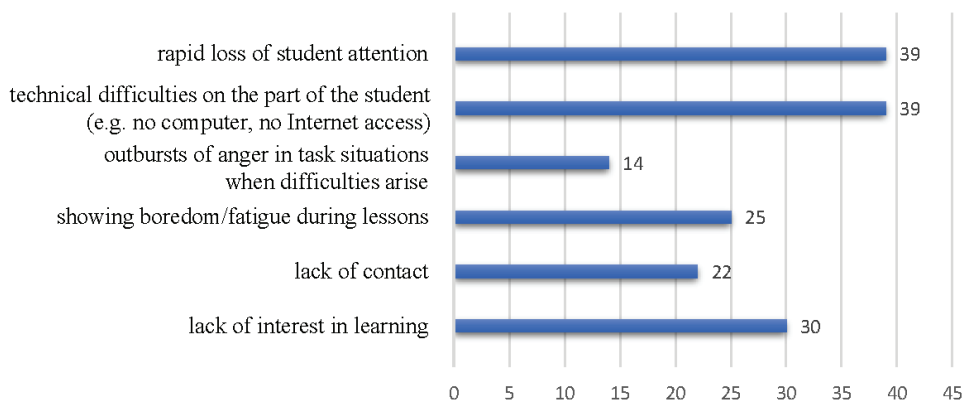


Figure 4. Difficulties students with SEN experienced during lessons (N=58).

Source: Own work.

The above question was of the multiple choice type. Respondents confirmed the occurrence of all the difficulties mentioned in the survey question. As the most frequently experienced, they indicated technical difficulties on the part of their students, rapid loss of students' attention and their lack of interest in learning. Fatigue during lessons and, most alarmingly, a lack of contact with the student were common.

The teachers who were working with students with special education needs during the COVID-19 pandemic could count on receiving support in implementing remote education. The survey results showed that 34 teachers used support when working with their SEN students. At the same time, the respondents indicated the following forms of support received (respectively, according to the number of indications):

- guidance and consultation,
- counseling in solving educational problems with students and cooperation with parents,
- assistance in analyzing and interpreting student records,
- intervention activities in case of negative student behaviors such as refusal to participate in remote education or negative attitudes of parents towards remote education,
- participation in task teams,
- assistance in developing student records and educational materials,
- participation in workshops.

As demonstrated above, the respondents received support not only in didactics but also in pedagogical work.

The responses to the question about who supported the surveyed teachers in working with students who have special educational needs (SEN) presented interesting results (Figure 5).

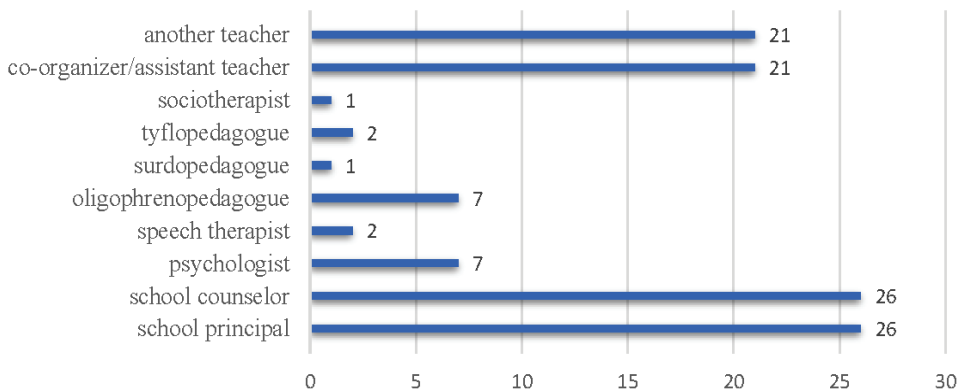


Figure 5. People providing support to the surveyed teachers in their work with SEN students.

Source: Own work

This multiple-choice question was answered by 34 respondents. When organizing remote education, the surveyed teachers could rely on the support provided by the school staff, including the principal and school counselor,

another teacher, and the teacher who co-organized special education (an assistant teacher).

In the final part of the survey, the teachers were asked to specify how their work with SEN students could have been improved during the period of remote education. Although only 11 respondents answered this question, it can be concluded that for teachers the most important thing in working with students is an individual and direct contact, working in smaller groups, and having an access to teaching materials.

Psychological and pedagogical assistance in distance education

The process of educating students with special educational needs is connected with psychological and pedagogical assistance, which involves providing support to each student who experiences temporary or permanent difficulties of various kinds as well as to teachers and parents.

One of the survey questions concerned the evaluation of how well the schools were prepared to provide psychological and pedagogical assistance. As the results of the survey showed, the majority of the respondents evaluated their schools' preparedness in this area as good or very good, i.e., a total of 21 respondents (67.7%), 7 respondents (22.6%) rated it as average, whereas 3 teachers (9.7%) believed that the school base was poorly prepared to meet the needs in this area. On the other hand, half of the teachers rated their preparedness to provide psychological and pedagogical assistance as average (51.6%) and 6 teachers (19.4%) as good. The rest rated it as poor.

On average, the surveyed specialist teachers reported having provided psychological and pedagogical assistance to 21 students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, what constituted an important point of interest in the survey was which groups of students received remote psychological and pedagogical assistance (Figure 6).

This multiple-choice question was answered by 31 teachers. As Figure 6 shows, the specialist teachers most often indicated that psychological and pedagogical assistance was provided to students with disabilities (22), followed by students with specific learning difficulties and educational failures (19 and 13 respectively). Nearly half of the respondents identified they had students with behavioral and emotional disorders. Only one specialist teacher was providing support to pupils whose special educational needs resulted from special talents. In this group, only

5 teachers indicated they were providing assistance to students whose special educational needs resulted from crisis situations.

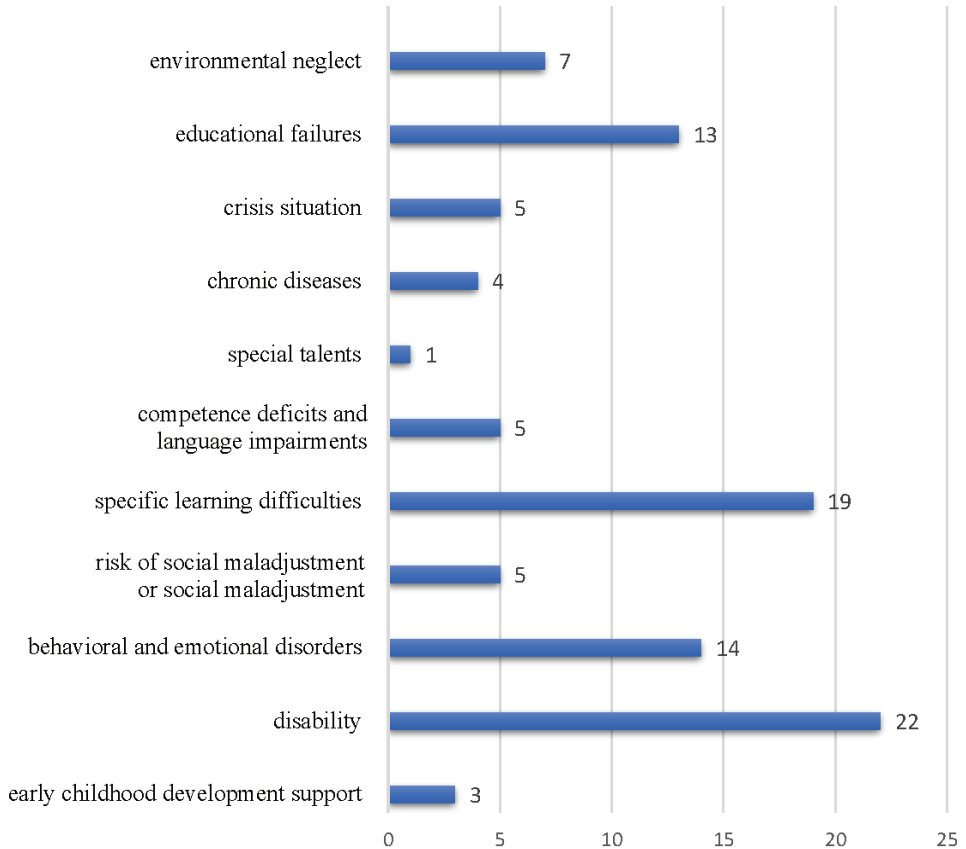


Figure 6. Groups of students with SEN identified by specialist teachers.

Source: Own work.

The next survey questions concerned the forms of psychological and pedagogical assistance provided remotely to students (Figure 7), teachers (Figure 8) and parents (Figure 9).

Questions regarding the psychological and pedagogical assistance provided remotely to students, teachers, educators, and parents were of the multiple-choice type.

Supporting students remotely (Figure 7) was most often accomplished by providing counseling, organizing specialized classes, arranging remedial activities, and undertaking educational interventions. Teachers and tutors (Figure 8) most

often used the assistance in analyzing and interpreting the records contained in opinions and decisions, advisory and consultations on how students function, implementation of learning content, educational problems, undertaking interventions in the event of behavioral problems. Assistance to parents (Figure 9) consisted primarily in counseling and consultation, in arranging specialized care for the child by scheduling visits to counseling centers and other facilities. Assistance to teach-

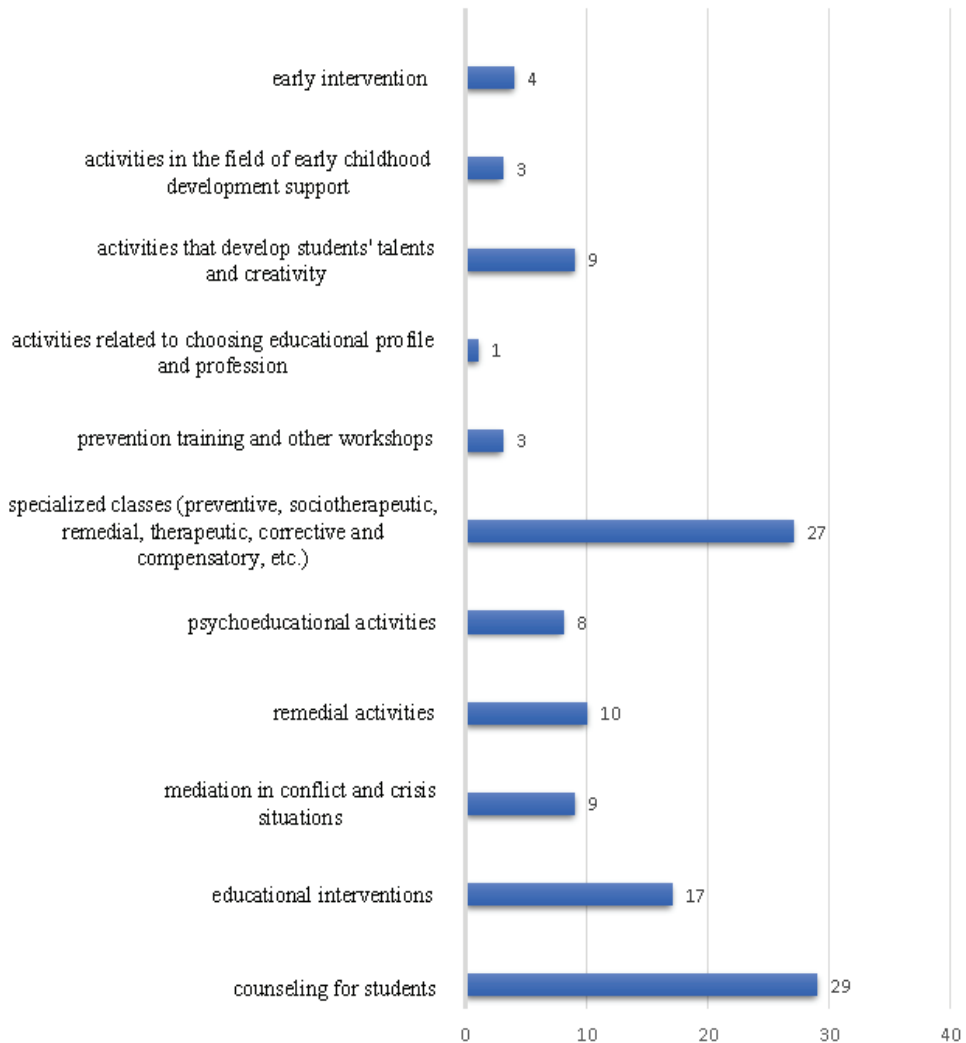


Figure 7. Forms of psychological and pedagogical assistance provided remotely to students.

Source: Own work.

ers and parents in early childhood development and early intervention (Figures 8 and 9) included providing advice and support.

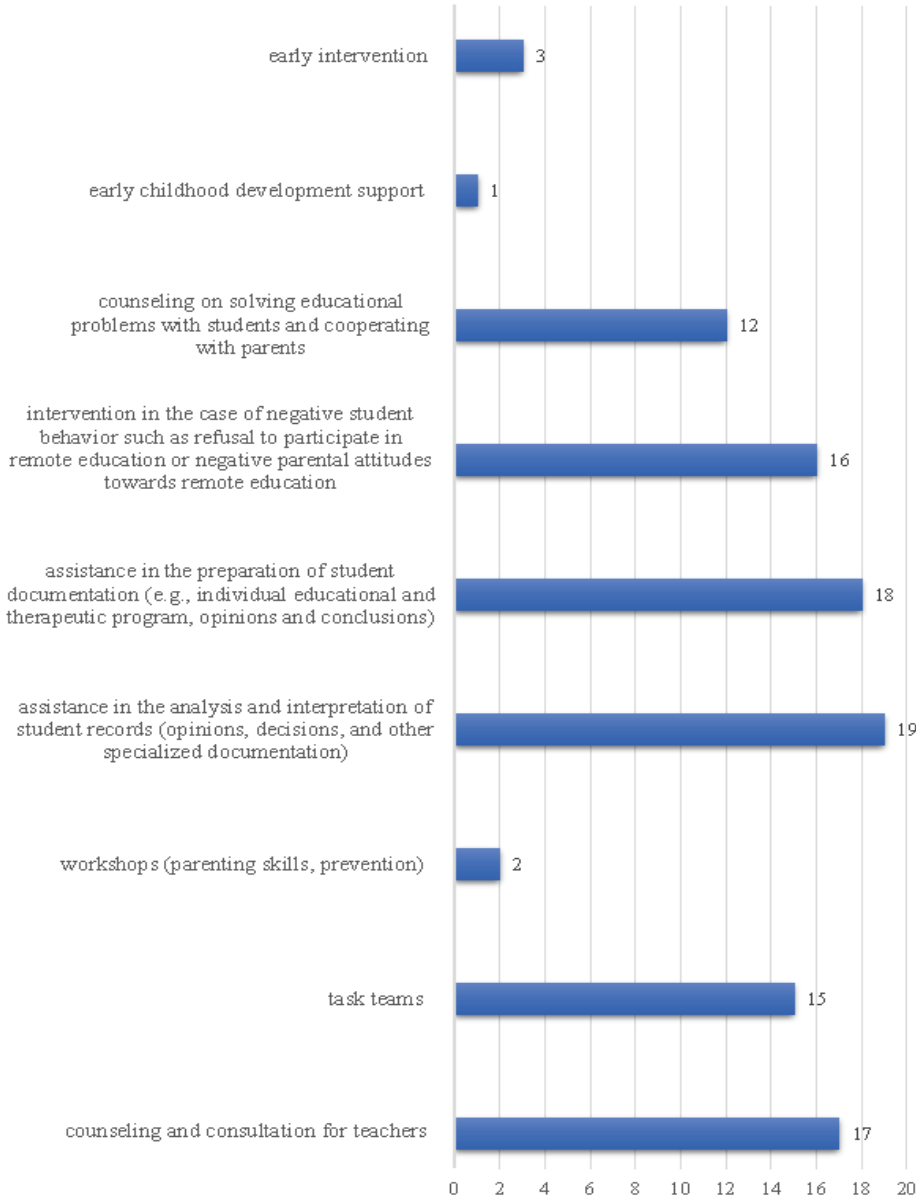


Figure 8. Forms of psychological and pedagogical assistance provided remotely to teachers and tutors.

Source: Own work.

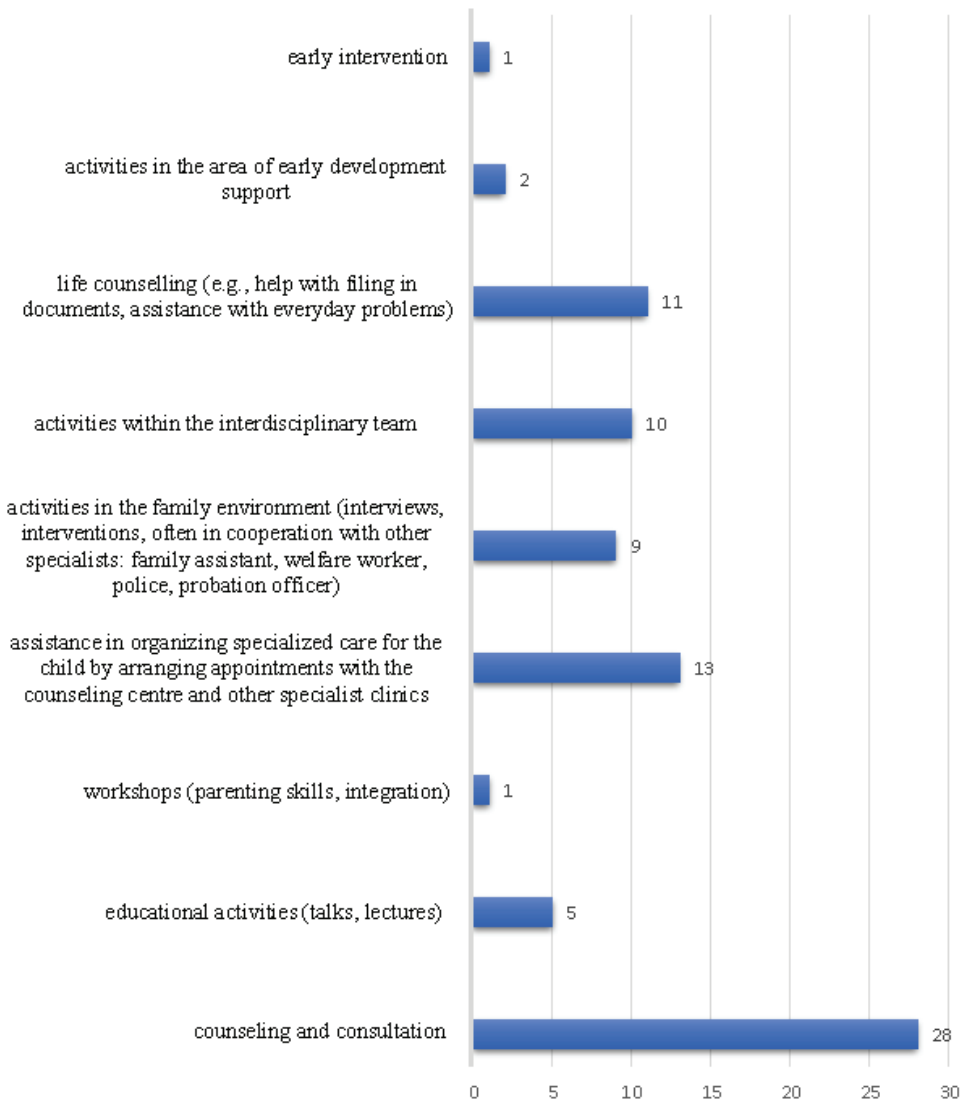


Figure 9. Forms of psychological and pedagogical assistance provided remotely to parents.

Source: Own work.

The researchers were also interested in assessing the degree to which individual tasks undertaken by specialist teachers were completed (Figure 10).

Distance Education Along with Pedagogical and Psychological Assistance for SEN Students...

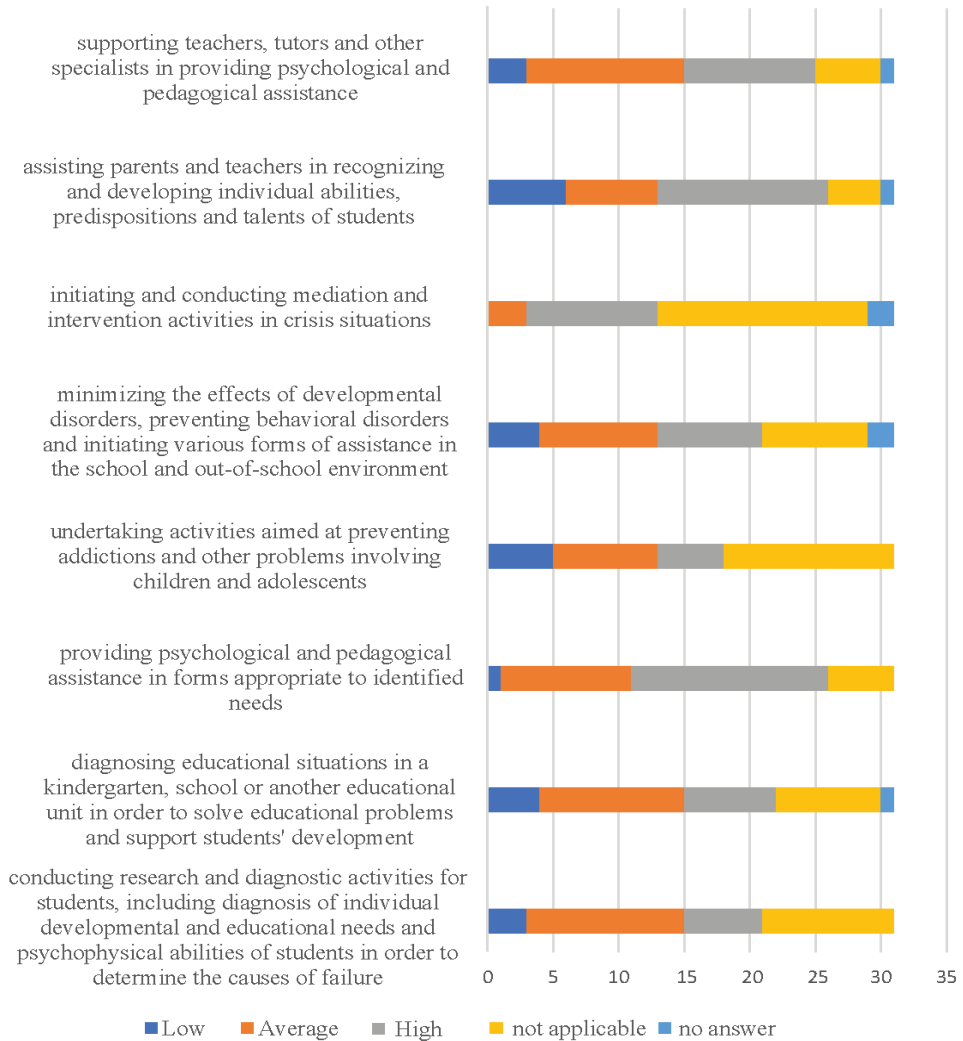


Figure 10. Evaluation of the degree to which tasks resulting from psychological and pedagogical assistance were completed (N=31).

Source: Own work.

The categories in the questionnaire were developed according to the tasks contained in the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education on the principles of organizing and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools, and institutions (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1280).

As the results show, the respondents evaluated the level of implementation of individual tasks resulting from the psychological and pedagogical assistance as average or high, and such evaluations dominate. The “not applicable” answer in Figure 10 suggests that the respondents either failed to undertake all the activities specified in the regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic or that they were not part of their duties. It should also be noted that the respondents used the Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts Meet platforms as well as the telephone to conduct the tasks of psychological and pedagogical assistance.

In the survey, the researchers also asked about the problems, risks, and advantages of providing psychological and pedagogical assistance remotely. The most frequently mentioned challenges included: motivating students and parents to work remotely, establishing and maintaining contact with students and their parents. Most often the surveyed teachers indicated the following threats (listed here according to the number of responses):

- disturbances in social relations – 24
- reduction in quality due to the lack of direct contact with the child – 23
- addiction to the Internet and digital tools – 21
- limitations on cognitive, emotional and social development – 18
- difficulties in recognizing children’s abilities and needs – 17
- difficulties in adapting educational materials and forms of work to children with special educational needs – 15
- reluctance to comply with compulsory schooling – refusal to participate in remote education – 12
- lack of insight into family environment – 9.

As for the advantages of providing psychological and pedagogical assistance remotely, only four respondents perceived the positive aspects of this activity, indicating such arguments as: flexible working hours and convenience for those who receive such assistance; facilitation of communication between students, parents, and teachers; better adaptation of the means of intervention to the students’ needs; greater variety of support through the use of multimedia and non-verbal presentation of the provided content; and time-saving.

The specialists were asked to share examples of their own initiatives or those of their institutions that can be used by teachers involved in the implementation of psychological and pedagogical assistance. This question was answered by only a few people. Primarily, the respondents mentioned initiatives aimed at students including: counseling for adolescents who were able to talk about their problems in a safe environment, promoting activities such as sharing nice messages with classmates in a forum, writing and reading stories, editing an online journal called “School Specialists Make Suggestions,” and recording therapeutic activities.

In conclusion, the specialist teachers were asked to evaluate the psychological and pedagogical assistance provided (Figure 11).

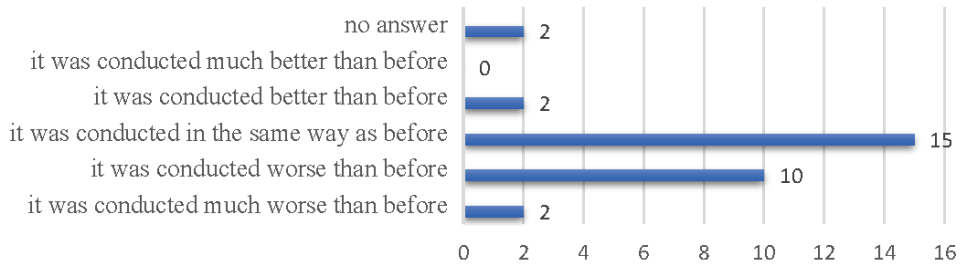


Figure 11. Evaluation of psychological and pedagogical assistance (N=31).

Source: Own work.

The questionnaires show that a little over half of the respondents gave a positive evaluation to the assistance provided in this form, but 12 teachers reported that its quality was worse. At this point it is worth noting that although it was possible for this group of teachers to receive support from external institutions in order to improve the quality of psychological and pedagogical assistance, only one third of the teachers surveyed reported that they had actually taken advantage of such support. The institutions supporting teachers were mainly In-Service Teacher Training Centers.

Discussion of results

As mentioned in the first part of this article, students with special education needs, including students with disabilities, found themselves in a particularly difficult position during the COVID-19 pandemic (López-Noguero et al., 2021; Parmigiani et al., 2021; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021; Lütje-Klose et al., 2021; Koceljko, 2021). What raised concern was the organization of remote education for this group of students, the implementation of tasks in the field of psychological and pedagogical assistance, and the effective use of recommendations contained in pertinent documents (opinions, decisions on the need for special education, individual educational and therapeutic programs). Over time, questions started to emerge about the physical health and mental well-being of teachers, isolated students, and parents. This issue resounded in the statements made by teachers

participating in a study conducted by Centrum Cyfrowe (Buchner et al., 2020, p. 35) as well as in the research conducted by Ptaszek et al. (2020).

Implementing remote education is a complex and multi-stage process involving activities in two complementary areas of technology and competence. In order to carry out this type of education, an equal access to computer equipment and Internet connection must be provided to all participants in the process. The competence area includes digital knowledge and skills as well as didactic and methodological knowledge and skills (Ptaszek, 2020, pp. 33–34). Meanwhile, the introduction of online education meant that both teachers and students had to change their previous methods of working regardless of their competence.

In the course of the research, it was ascertained that the teachers – in compliance with the recommendations of the Ministry of Education – were conducting lessons reduced in duration and according to the plan prepared for the period when schools were closed. Such recommendations were in line with the principles of hygiene of remote work including the time when the computer equipment was used. This issue was highlighted by Bigaj and Dębski (2020, p. 110), who stated that prolonged screen time, information overload, and social isolation may lower the psychological well-being of students, teachers, and parents. When interpreting the data collected during the study (Figure 2), it can be concluded that during the second period of the pandemic, teachers tended to focus on imparting knowledge by selecting the most important content while simplifying the information given to students. Although it increased screen time, the practice of extending lesson time, introducing consultations, or supplementing lessons with additional meetings for students with special educational needs served the purpose of supplementing educational content with additional information for better understanding. The teacher remaining in an explanatory and supportive role (Figure 3) may have been one of the elements in creating an optimal environment for inclusive education delivered remotely (cf. Parmigiani et al., 2020).

Few teachers from both study groups indicated they were working with a student in a crisis situation. Meanwhile, the difficult, dynamic, and complex pandemic state in the country may have increased the number of students experiencing crisis situations. Additionally, the prolonged duration of the pandemic may have revealed that such situations occurred. It is worth reflecting on this problem, as the pandemic state has proven to be a complicated situation to many people, triggering a crisis (Bilicki, 2020). At this point, the general survey results should be referred to since they show that about 90% of the surveyed teachers, as part of their educational activities, often and very often kept their students' spirits up, talked about their well-being and problems brought about by the pandemic (Bobik et al., 2020, p. 17)

When it comes to the evaluation of remote psychological and pedagogical assistance, the respondents perceived problems and threats to this form of support. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the average and high ratings given by the research sample to the implementation of the tasks comprising this activity were prevalent. According to Ptaszek (2020, p. 73), despite the effort made and hardship experienced by the teachers, they are the most satisfied group, which is evident in the evaluation of the remote form of instruction and learning.

Another researcher who highlighted the benefits and risks of remote education in addition to remote psychological and pedagogical assistance is Górnicka (2020). The authoress lists the risks indicated by teachers in the area of learning, health, including addictions, the effectiveness of education and therapeutic activities. Among the positive aspects of this form of education the teachers enumerate the opportunity for the child to benefit from parental support, an increase in the student's independence, the acquisition of time management skills and the security of learning in the family home.

From among the difficulties registered by the teachers, attention is drawn to the problems of technical nature (Figure 4), which include the lack of equipment and lack of access to the Internet. This problem resounded in many reports from Poland (e.g., Buchner et al., 2020, pp. 11–14; Plebańska et al., 2020; Ptaszek, 2020) and from other countries (e.g., López-Noguero et al., 2021; Parmigiani et al., 2021; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). While reviewing the literature on the situation of children with disabilities, Kocejko (2021, pp. 80–81) also highlights the mismatch between educational platforms and the abilities of students with special educational needs. Other problems mentioned by the teachers surveyed included the lack of contact with students, rapid loss of attention, as well as boredom and weariness with lessons. Similar data was obtained by Ptaszek (2020, p. 67), who found that more than a quarter of students had difficulty concentrating and the same number of students had difficulty understanding online content. Therefore, it is necessary to educate teachers to develop creative and interesting activities that engage and motivate students, as well as to use attractive materials and resources, create personalized materials, apply group, team, and individual learning activity strategies (cf. Parmigiani et al., 2021). No less important issue is to develop a way to monitor students' attendance in class. What is noticeable among the collected data are the teachers' efforts to ensure that the faces of all participants are visible. Such actions are important because transmission of content only in the form of sound makes it difficult to interact with the teacher and to understand the discussed issues, which may result in various difficulties during the lessons run remotely, especially in the case of children with special educational needs.

Due to a variety of factors, the pandemic period may have resulted in a greater need for various forms of psychological and educational support. Here it seems

worthwhile to cite data obtained in the general survey addressed to parents (Bobik et. al., 2021, pp. 28–30). The parents surveyed indicated the occurrence of all forms of assistance included in the regulation on the principles of organizing and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1280), although not all of them made use of the entire scope offered. During this period, only 30% of the respondents used the assistance of specialists employed at schools. And here the respondents most often indicated the use of the support provided by a pedagogue, a speech therapist, a specialist in revalidation, an assistant teacher, and a school psychologist. While analyzing the type of activities conducted and the range of topics covered within the framework of assistance provided to parents, it seems that teachers and specialists may have performed caregiving tasks towards some parents (cf. Marcieca et al., 2021).

What draws attention during the pandemic period is the organization of teachers and mutual support. While working with SEN students, the surveyed teachers benefited mainly from the support of other teachers, the school counselor, the school management, and one-third of the surveyed specialist teachers – from the help of teacher training institutions. Supporting the work of teachers by arranging collaboration among them, short online meetings, working remotely in smaller subject teams, or learning together how to use remote education tools helped to lay the foundation for effective remote learning experience (Śliż, 2020, p. 114; Witkowski, 2020, pp. 90–91; Parmigiani et al., 2021; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021, pp. 90–91).

Conclusions

Overall, both the teachers' educational work online as well as the psychological and pedagogical support they delivered remotely became a reality in which they had to get actively involved mostly without prior preparation. In the second pandemic period, the teachers who participated in the study focused on the most important problems of organizing the educational process and remote assistance. The respondents primarily adapted their methods and forms of work as well as the forms of assistance to the new formula of running classes. However, the online education of students with SEN as well as the psychological and pedagogical assistance require teachers to be better prepared in terms of both technological skills and the ability to apply diverse methods of remote education and assistance, to use digital materials, and to improve cooperation with parents and other teachers.

The newly gained awareness of what needs are emerging should therefore give an impetus to participation in specialized trainings.

The analyses presented in this paper, despite their limitations, such as a small research sample and the participation of volunteers, provide information about the ways in which students with special educational needs are educated remotely and how psychological and pedagogical assistance is provided remotely. The results indicate issues that may inspire further research. First, it is important to identify areas that were not addressed in the study. Students with special educational needs are a diverse group within the school system, so it would be advisable to extend the research to gather detailed information about the strategies used by teachers in carrying out the recommendations contained in opinions, decisions on the need for special education, and individual educational and therapeutic programs. In order to evaluate the remote education of students with SEN as well as the psychological and pedagogical assistance provided to them, it would be advisable to survey the students and their parents to obtain information on the biggest problems they experienced and the most positive practices implemented by their tutors during this period as well as information on what the school can do to best meet the needs of this group of students. The aforementioned research should be conducted in a qualitative paradigm, too. Concluding the discussion, it should be added that although the analyses are based on only 89 survey questionnaires, the voice of teachers matters greatly in the context of emerging difficulties as well as opportunities for the development and application of remote education.

References

- Aloizou, V., Chasiotou, T., Retalis, S., Daviotis, T. & Koulouvaris, P. (2021). Remote learning for children with Special Education Needs in the era of COVID-19: Beyond tele – conferencing sessions. *Educational Media International*, 58 (2), 181–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2021.1930477>
- Bigaj, M. & Dębski, M. (2020). Subiektywny dobrostan oraz higiena cyfrowa w czasie edukacji zdalnej. [Subjective Well-being and Digital Hygiene during Remote Education]. In G. Ptaszek, G. D. Stunża, J. Pyżalski, M. Dębski, M. Bigaj, *Edukacja zdalna: co stało się z uczniami, ich rodzicami i nauczycielami?* [*Remote Education: What Happened to Students, Their Parents, and Teachers?*] (pp. 75–111). Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne. ISBN:978-83-7489-867-6.
- Bilicki, T. (2020). Jak pracować z uczniem w kryzysie w czasie pandemii COVID-19? [How to Work with a Student in Crisis during a COVID-19 Pandemic?] In J. Pyżalski (Eds), *Edukacja w czasach pandemii wirusa COVID-19. Z dystansem o tym, co robimy obecnie jako nauczyciele*

- [*Education in the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Distanced View of What We Do Now as Teachers*] (pp. 16–19). EduAkcja. ISBN: 978-83-957316-0-0
- Bobik, B., Młynek, P. & Szafrńska, A. (2021). *Szkola w wirtualnej rzeczywistości: raport z badań dla miasta Gliwice* [School in Virtual Reality: A Research Report for the City of Gliwice] Towarzystwo Inicjatyw Naukowych. ISBN: 978-83-65247-09-4
- Bodnar, A. Polish Ombudsman's Address of 24 April 2020 regarding remote education. Retrieved from <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Ponowne%20WG%20do%20MEN,%2024.04.2020.pdf> (accessed on 4 October 2021).
- Bodnar, A. Polish Ombudsman's Address of 5 February 2021. Retrieved from <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Wyst%C4%85pienie%20do%20Sekretarz%20Stanu%20Ministerstwa%20Edukacji%20Narodowej%20-%20Marzeny%20Macha%C5%82ek.pdf> (accessed on 4 October 2021).
- Buchner, A., Majchrzak, M. & Wierzbička, M. (2020). *Edukacja zdalna w czasie pandemii. Raport z badań* [Remote Education during the Pandemic. Research Report]. Centrum Cyfrowe. Retrieved from <https://centrumcyfrowe.pl/edukacja-zdalna/> (accessed on 4 October 2021).
- Domagała – Zyśk, E. (ed.) (2020). *Zdalne uczenie się i nauczanie a specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne* [Remote Learning and Teaching for Special Educational Needs]. Wydawnictwo Episteme. ISBN 978-83-65172-55-6
- Education in the 2019/2020 school year (2020). Statistics Poland, Statistical Office in Gdańsk. Warszawa, Gdańsk. <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/>
- Górnicka, B. (2020). „W trybie zdalnym...”. *Nauka – wychowanie – opieka* and uczniami ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi w czasie pandemii. Refleksje i rozterki pedagoga [“Online...”: Science – Education – The Case about Students with Special Education Needs during a Pandemic: Reflections and Dilemmas of a Teacher]. *Kultura – Przemiany – Edukacja*, VII, 91-105. <https://doi.org/10.15584/kpe.2020.8.7>
- Jaskulska, S. & Jankowiak, B. (2020). *Kształcenie na odległość w Polsce w czasie pandemii COVID-19. Raport*. [Distance Learning in Poland during the COVID-19 Pandemic. A Report]. Wydział Studiów Edukacyjnych UAM. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lYprhMptB3p6AnMeh8WzfZLNvihfY_HF/view (accessed on 4 October 2021).
- Kocejko, M. (2021). Sytuacja dzieci z niepełnosprawnościami w czasie pandemii COVID-19 – analiza intersekcyjna [The Situation of Children with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. An Intersectional Analysis]. *Dziecko krzywdzone. Teoria, badania, praktyka*, 20(2), 76-91. ISSN: 2545-3475. <https://dzieckokrzywdzone.fdds.pl/index.php/DK/article/view/803>
- López-Noguero, F., Gallardo-López, J. A. & Garcia-Lirazo, I. (2021). The Educational Community in the Face of COVID-19. Discursive Analysis on Vulnerability and Education. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18, 6716. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18136716>
- Lütje-Klose, B., Geist, S. & Goldan, J. (2021). Schulschließung während der COVID-19-Pandemie. Perspektiven auf Schüler*innen mit sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf [School closure during COVID-19-pandemic – Perspectives on students with special educational needs]. *Psychologie in Erziehung und Unterricht*, 68 (4), 292–296. <https://doi.org/10.2378/peu2021.art25d>
- Mercieca, D., Mercieca, D. P. & Ward, K. (2021). Teachers Working in Special Schools in Scotland Acting with Practical Wisdom: Supporting Children with Additional Needs in COVID-19 Lockdown. *Education Sciences*, 11(10), 569. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11100569>
- ONZ (2020). Policy Brief: Education during COVID-9 and beyond. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-education-during-COVID-19-and-beyond> (accessed on 4 October 2021).

- Parmigiani, D., Benigno, V., Giusto, M., Silvaggio, Ch. & Sperandio, S. (2021). E – inclusion: online special education in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 30(1), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2020.1856714>
- Plebańska, M., Szyller, A. & Sieńczewska, M. (2020). Edukacja zdalna w czasach COVID-19. Raport z badania [Remote Education in the Times of COVID-19. Research Report]. Warszawa. Retrieved from https://kometa.edu.pl/uploads/publication/941/24a2_A_a_nauczanie_zdalne_oczami_nauczycieli_i_uczniow_RAPORT.pdf?v2.8 (accessed on 4 October 2021).
- Ptaszek, G. (2020). Przygotowanie oraz realizacja edukacji zdalnej: sprzęt, metody kompetencje cyfrowe [Preparation and Implementation of Remote Education: Equipment, Methods, Digital Competences]. In G. Ptaszek, G. D. Stunża, J. Pyżalski, M. Dębski, M. Bigaj, *Edukacja zdalna: co stało się z uczniami, ich rodzicami i nauczycielami?* [Remote Education: What Happened to Students, Their Parents, and Teachers?] (pp. 32–74). Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne. ISBN:978-83-7489-867-8
- Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 11 March 2020 on temporary limitation of the functioning of educational system entities in connection with preventing, counteracting, and combating COVID-19. *Journal of Laws of 2020*, item 410.
- Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 20 March 2020 on specific solutions in the period of temporary limitation of the functioning of educational system entities in connection with preventing, counteracting, and combating COVID-19. *Journal of Laws of 2020*, item 493.
- Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the conditions for organizing education, upbringing, and care for children and youths with disabilities, socially maladjusted, and at risk of social maladjustment. *Journal of Laws of 2017*, item 1578.
- Regulation of the Ministry of National Education of 9 July 2020 on the principles of organizing and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools, and institutions. *Journal of Laws of 2020*, item 1280.
- Staszkiwicz-Grabarczyk, I. (2021). Edukacja w czasie pandemii COVID-19 w świetle aktów prawnych [Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Light of Legal Acts]. *Rozprawy Społeczne/Social Dissertations*, 2021 Tom 15(2), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.29316/rs/138205>
- Śliż, K. (2020). Doświadczenia nauczycieli w edukacji zdalnej podczas pierwszego etapu pandemii [Teachers' experiences in remote education during the first stage of the pandemic]. In E. Domagała-Zyśk (ed.) *Zdalne uczenie się i nauczanie a specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne* [Remote learning and teaching and special educational needs] (pp. 95–27). Wydawnictwo Episteme. ISBN 978-83-65172-55-6
- Tabatadze, S. & Chachkhiani, K. (2021) COVID-19 and Emergency Remote Teaching in the Country of Georgia: Catalyst for educational Change and Reforms in Georgia? *Educational Studies* 57:1, 78–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2020.1863806>
- Vijayan, R. (2021). Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Topic Modeling Study. *Education Sciences*, 2021, 11(7), 347. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11070347>
- Witkowski, J. (2020). Organizacja edukacji zdalnej [Organization of Distance Education]. In J. Pyżalski (Eds.), *Edukacja w czasach pandemii wirusa COVID-19. Z dystansem o tym, co robimy obecnie jako nauczyciele* [Education in the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Distanced View of What We Do Now as Teachers] (pp. 86–92). EduAkcja. ISBN: 978-83-957316-0-0
- Zaremba, L. (2014). Specjalne potrzeby rozwojowe i edukacyjne dzieci i młodzieży. Identyfikowanie SPR i SPE oraz sposoby ich zaspokajania. [Special Developmental and Educational Needs of Children and Youths. Identifying SDN and SEN as Well as Ways of Addressing Them.]. ORE. ISBN: 978-83-62360-43-7

Anida Szafrńska

Edukacja zdalna uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi oraz pomoc psychologiczno-pedagogiczna na przykładzie miasta Gliwice

Streszczenie

W trakcie pandemii COVID-19 w szczególnie trudnej sytuacji znaleźli się uczniowie ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi. Celem artykułu było ukazanie wybranych problemów edukacji zdalnej skierowanej do uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi oraz zdalnej pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej. Przedmiotem badań były poglądy nauczycieli realizujących edukację w nowej formule oraz poglądy nauczycieli specjalistów na temat pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej realizowanej online. Badania prowadzone były w paradygmacie ilościowym metodą sondażu diagnostycznego za pomocą kwestionariusza zamieszczonego na platformie badawczej LimeSurvey.

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki ankiet przeprowadzonych wśród nauczycieli szkół z terenu Gliwic. W badaniu wzięło udział 103 nauczycieli, z czego 58 odniosło się w ankiecie do pytań dotyczących organizacji edukacji zdalnej dla uczniów ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi. Osobny kwestionariusz ankiety dla nauczycieli specjalistów wypełniło 31 osób.

Uzyskane wyniki pokazały, że biorący udział w badaniu nauczyciele skupili się na najważniejszych problemach organizacji edukacji i pomocy zdalnej. Badani przede wszystkim dostosowywali metody pracy, formy pomocy do nowej formuły zajęć. Dla nauczycieli poważnym problemem były braki sprzętowe, brak dostępu do internetu, brak kontaktu z uczniem, utrata koncentracji uwagi, znużenie lekcjami. Specjaliści udzielali pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej uczniom, rodzicom i nauczycielom, dostrzegali zagrożenia. Badani nauczyciele korzystali z różnych źródeł pomocy, jednak uwagę zwraca współpraca nauczycieli i wzajemne wspieranie.

Słowa kluczowe: pandemia COVID-19, edukacja zdalna, specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne, pomoc psychologiczno-pedagogiczna, nauczyciele szkół ogólnodostępnych i integracyjnych, uczniowie ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi

Анида Шафранска

Дистанционное обучение учеников с особыми образовательными потребностями и психолого-педагогическая помощь на примере города Гливице

Аннотация

Во время пандемии COVID-19 в особенно сложной ситуации оказались ученики с особыми образовательными потребностями. Целью статьи было показать выбранные проблемы дистанционного обучения, ориентированного на учеников с особыми образовательными потребностями, и дистанционной психолого-педагогической помощи. Предметом исследования стали взгляды учителей, реализующих процесс обучения по новой формуле, и взгляды

педагогов на психолого-педагогическую помощь, предоставляемую онлайн. Исследование проводилось в количественной парадигме методом диагностического опроса с использованием анкеты, размещенной на исследовательской платформе LimeSurvey.

В статье представлены результаты опроса, проведенного среди учителей школ, расположенных на территории города Гливице. В исследовании приняли участие 103 учителя, из которых 58 отнесли к вопросам, касающимся организации дистанционного обучения учеников с особыми образовательными потребностями. Отдельную анкету для педагогов заполнил 31 человек.

Полученные результаты показали, что участвующие в исследовании учителя сосредоточились на наиболее важных проблемах организации обучения и дистанционной помощи. Респонденты в первую очередь адаптировали методы работы, формы помощи к новой формуле занятий. Для учителей серьезными проблемами были: нехватка оборудования, отсутствие доступа в Интернет, отсутствие контакта с учеником, потеря концентрации внимания, утомляемость уроками. Специалисты оказывали психолого-педагогическую помощь ученикам, родителям и учителям, выявляли опасности. Опрашиваемые учителя пользовались различными источниками помощи, однако, обращает внимание организованность учителей и взаимная поддержка.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а: пандемия COVID-19, дистанционное обучение, особые образовательные потребности, психолого-педагогическая помощь, учителя общеобразовательных и интегративных школ, ученики с особыми образовательными потребностями

Anida Szafrńska

La educación a distancia de alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales y la atención psicopedagógica en el caso de la ciudad de Gliwice

R e s u m e n

Durante la pandemia de la COVID-19 se encontraron en una situación especialmente difícil los alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales. El objetivo del artículo era mostrar determinados problemas de la educación a distancia dirigida a los alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales y la atención psicopedagógica a distancia. El objeto de los estudios fueron las opiniones de los profesores que ejercieron la docencia en esta nueva fórmula y las opiniones de profesores especialistas en el tema de la atención psicopedagógica a distancia. Los estudios fueron llevados a cabo en un paradigma cuantitativo por el método de sondeo de diagnóstico, con ayuda de un cuestionario incluido en la plataforma de investigación LimeSurvey.

En el artículo se han presentado los resultados de las encuestas realizadas entre profesores de centros educativos de la región de Gliwice. En el estudio participaron 103 profesores, de los cuales 58 se refirieron en la encuesta a preguntas relativas a la organización de la educación a distancia para alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales. La encuesta independiente para profesores especialistas fue cumplimentada por 31 personas.

Los resultados obtenidos demostraron que los profesores que participaron en el estudio se concentraron en los principales problemas de la organización de la educación y la atención a dis-

tancia. Los participantes en el estudio principalmente adaptaron los métodos de trabajo, la forma de atención, a la nueva fórmula de las clases. Para los profesores fueron problemas graves la falta de equipos, la falta de acceso a internet, la falta de contacto con el alumno, la pérdida de concentración de la atención, el cansancio por las lecciones. Los especialistas prestaron atención psicopedagógica a alumnos, padres y profesores, advirtieron los riesgos. Los profesores utilizaron diferentes fuentes de ayuda, aunque llama la atención la organización de los profesores y el apoyo mutuo.

P a l a b r a s c l a v e: pandemia de la COVID-19, educación a distancia, necesidades educativas especiales, atención psicopedagógica, profesores de centros educativos generales y de integración, alumnos con necesidades educativas especiales