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Distance Learning at the Level of Primary Education: Parents' Opinions and Reflections

Abstract

Distance learning is a type of instruction between a teacher and students separated by a physical distance where communication takes place through mediated information encompassing one or more technological media. In other words, the instruction participants stay in different places, yet take part in the same learning activities sequenced, paced and controlled by the teacher using new technologies. The paper aims to show the advantages and disadvantages of distance education during the COVID-19 lockdown at the primary level, the emphasis being placed upon, among others, the teacher–student and student–student relationships, the infrastructure and skills required for a lesson, as well as some "food for thought" in the form of possible changes and areas of improvement to be introduced suggested by the sample. The data comes from the questionnaire distributed among 60 parents of first graders. This age group is believed to be extremely demanding and difficult to teach, mainly due to the literacy and numeracy skills included in the core curriculum, falling on the onset of the first grade in a primary school.

K e y w o r d s: distance learning, primary school level, parental opinions and reflections, COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed numerous changes and restrictions on the society, especially the education systems around the world. As a result, the educational communities have made enormous efforts to maintain learning continuity during the very period, often transferring a lot of responsibilities to the part of the teachers. It was very often the case that teachers had to adapt to new modes of delivery of teaching, for which they may not have been trained (Zaworska-Nikoniuk, 2021). Also, students have had to rely more on their own resources to continue learning remotely, not to mention younger learners being supported more intensively by their parents, at least in theory.

The studies conducted so far have shown negative opinions on school relationships, namely between teachers, between teachers and students, as well as between parents and their children (Pyżalski, 2020, Łukianow et al., 2021, p. 48). What has been reported more frequently includes the necessity of parents' engagement and/or even interference in their kids' lessons and school life (PwC, 2020), teacher's complaints about ineffectiveness of remote teaching, and an alarming decrease in student distance learning involvement (Łukianow et al., 2021b, Cuprjak & Szmalec, 2021) as well as lack of digital competences observed among parents (Romaniuk & Łukasiewiecz-Wieleba, 2020). All these gaps and deficiencies have contributed to a more thorough investigation of distance learning amongst its younger participants and their parents, the results of which are presented in this article.

Distance Learning

Following Roblyer & Edwards (2000, p. 192), distance learning is "the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance." The instruction is delivered by means of a teacher who is physically located in a different place from the learner, and performs his/her role at disparate times. To be more specific, the instructor controls the instructional sequencing and pacing and all learners take part in the same learning activities. Distance learning was originally created for busy working adults or students living in remote areas. However, over the years, students of all ages and backgrounds have begun using distance learning to support or complete their education. Nowadays, at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is treated as an integral part of education in many institutions around the world.

Types of Distance Learning

Synchronous and asynchronous types are the most basic and frequent in use (Taplin et al., 2013, p. 63). A synchronous type of learning is based upon cooperative participation of students in learning activities and requires from them to be present at a given time. The tools used in this process range from online chats and videoconferences to application sharing, whiteboard, polling and virtual classrooms, to name a few, to serve the real-time ask-answer sessions. An asynchronous mode of learning, on the other hand, is time independent (Young, 2011). It means that the students work according to their own learning schedule, which due to its flexibility, allows for a more student-centred approach. The teacher/student interaction is executed in different forms, such as virtual office hours, e-mails or "check-in" online conversations once a week or month. A whole range of tools is used in asynchronous learning: reading materials in PDF files, pre-recorded lectures, presentations, Google Drive for coordinated group projects, educational games, audio tapes and videos (Taplin et al., 2013, p. 64). The huge advantage of the asynchronous method is that students can always come back to those materials in case of uncertainty or any problematic issues.

General Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Learning

There is a number of benefits of distance learning. First of all, it is its convenience, as many of the technologies are easily accessible from home. Numerous forms of distance learning allow students to participate in the school activities on an individual basis whenever they wish, because of its previously-mentioned approachability. As Isik et al. (2010, p. 218) emphasize, this kind of education is also quite affordable, very often involving low-priced equipment and materials or no cost at all. Also, some teaching aids are granted for free which, additionally, being multi-sensory are likely to meet everyone's learning preferences. On this basis, distance learning can offer increased interactions with students, particularly when it comes to introverted students who are too shy to ask questions in class. The idea of giving such a group of students an opportunity to contribute to the classes via e-mail or other personalized means is expected to lower their inhibitions. This "opening up" can also be extended to balancing inequalities between age groups, geographical expansion of education access, delivering education for large audiences, offering the combination of education with work or family life, etc.

There is no denying that distance learning, due to numerous benefits mentioned above, is perceived in a positive way by many, yet, as Christensen et al. claim, "it may come with hidden costs" (2001, p. 265). First of all, compared with a traditional course and method of delivery, distance learning imposes a disproportionate amount of effort on the part of instructors. Namely, distance teaching is not only limited to the lesson/session period, but also plenty of time is devoted to student support and preparation, not to mention discipline and Internet connection problems to deal with. Using technology, that is, online tools and infrastructure seems to be another important obstacle. It is proved that among both parties (i.e., students and teachers) there is a high percentage of those lacking enough skill and experience in managing or following online courses, including the extreme cases of digital exclusion most frequently identified with systemic differences in the access to and use of new technologies. Last but not least, the greatest disadvantage of distance education is social isolation observed as a result of missing the socio-physical interaction that comes with attending a traditional environment. The longer the period of off-site classes, the stronger the feeling of the lack of belonging to any social group, and no point in organizing such meetings. However, recent studies (cf. Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021, p. 319) have reported that this sense of isolation is expected to decrease slightly with the use of communication technologies in the form of video conferencing, provided it is a short-term phenomenon caused by an emergency instruction exclusively.

Distance Learning in Primary Education

So far, the research conducted on primary school distance education has revealed more disadvantages than advantages. Following Scarpellini et al. (2021), teachers' negative experiences included technical problems (e.g., with internet connectivity, slow performance on platforms), limited infrastructure (e.g., lack of tablets laptops, mobile phones) justified by the fact that families gave priority of equipment to older siblings, lack of "immediate" participation and reaction that is made possible during face-to-face classes. Also, the instructors complained about the fact that some parents could not support/help their children, and that some children were simply "lost." Teachers' positive experiences, on the other hand, involved familiarization of children with the technology and digital tools, existence of parents' help (e.g., in individual and group work, as well as creation and delivery of activities via ICT).

When it comes to parents and their views on distance learning, they are far from being satisfied. Based on Scarpellini et al. (2021), distance learning was

not well evaluated by parents because of the lack of organization and planned routine, no assessment of the children's work and the difficulty in contacting the teachers. Home confinement, due to the COVID-19 pandemic was perceived as a lesser evil for children, who were forced to drastically change their habits as a result of the lack of or minimized socialization opportunities. The lack of structured, daily school life and the absence of interactions with peers, together with an instable quarantine routine, influenced the emotional and behavioural condition of children. The observed behaviour changes among children during the lockdown period(s) ranged from increased instances of restlessness and aggressiveness, boredom, sadness, attention deficit, and hyperactivity to regression. Also, difficulties in motivating children to study in general were mentioned.

As distance education at the primary level is almost inseparable from the situation in which parents support their children, especially the youngest, in the educational process and, at the same time, work and provide home care, with negative consequences on their own distress level, the majority of parents lack time to help their child with school assignments. Some of them even complain about being forced to play the role of a teacher because of their effort and commitment required. Some other views report on the fact that grandparents and/or family friends are not ready to assist kids due to the lockdown/quarantine or other reasons, and refer to distance learning as "inconvenience" (Godawa, 2020, p. 207). This pessimistic picture of the implementation of distance teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic is complemented by the average level of satisfaction that contains appreciation resulting from teachers' work, and understanding of difficult conditions of life as well as hopes for teacher's better organization and school functioning in the future.

Early School Education in Poland

The Study

As the above-mentioned problems arise anew with every single school closure, I decided to have a closer look at the earliest sector of primary education, paying special attention to the first grade that is being ascribed a load of materials and skills to be covered. To be more specific, the primary school's task is to gently introduce the child to the world of knowledge, prepare him or her to perform the duties of a pupil and implement self-development (Surma, 2021, p. 82). The school provides safe conditions and a friendly atmosphere for learning, taking into account the individual abilities and educational needs of the student. The most important aim of education in primary school is to ensure the integral biological,

cognitive, emotional, social and moral development of the pupil. The curriculum should be implemented with respect for the dignity of pupils, their individuality and originality. The education should be adequate to the level of children's development, and specifically to their perceptual, imaginative and reasoning abilities.

Educational goals are general requirements of early childhood education. In the curriculum, they are described in relation to four areas of child development: physical, emotional, social and cognitive. The set of general objectives specified in the curriculum represents the foundation on which the initial work at educational level II in classes IV–VIII will be based, and it covers such areas as behaviour, skills, abilities and initial knowledge.

In terms of content of teaching, the curriculum outlines specific requirements in the form of a list of general objectives of pupils' development, to be achieved at the end of early childhood education. Pupils should achieve them by completing tasks that require multidirectional activity. The scope of this activity is determined by educational results listed in the core curriculum, which are assigned to individual scientific disciplines. The disciplines are as follows: Polish language education, mathematical education, social education, environmental education, visual arts education, technical education, computer science education, music education, modern foreign language education, and regional language education. However, in the curriculum it is emphasized that the presentation of the educational results in relation to the scientific disciplines is a kind of convention, which is necessary for the clarity of the description, and not an organizational directive. The educational process at this stage is integrated, not subject-related.

The curriculum also provides detailed specifications concerning the conditions and methods of implementation of the educational content. In this section, specific requirements regulating the circumstances of the learning environment, teachers' roles and tasks, as well as classroom conditions are set out. In the curriculum, it is emphasized that the early childhood education is characterised by calmness and regularity of the learning process, multi-directionality, and adaptation of the pace of work to the psychomotor and perceptual abilities of each pupil. Education at this stage requires great care in the selection of content, means, strategies, methods of education, in order to show pupils an integrated image of the world and facilitate its understanding. Education in classes I–III is implemented in the form of integrated education, which includes functional, methodical, organisational and content integration. The integrating element of the educational directions is language in its semiotic aspect.

Teachers in grades I–III, recognising the possibilities of learners, including those with special educational needs, use their own creative solutions in the implementation of the content of the core curriculum of general education for primary school. They have to take into account the three natural learning strategies of children: perceptual-reproductive (the pupil learns according to a presented model – imitates), perceptual-explanatory (the pupil learns partly according to

a model, seeks explanations and prompts) and perceptual-innovative (the pupil transforms information and creates innovations, including his/her own thinking strategies). It is also crucial that teachers at this stage use a variety of educational methods, including organisational methods. The class teacher knows the functions of the methods used and adapts them to the learning style of his/her pupils. A detailed description of teachers' tasks and roles is presented in the curriculum for each subject separately.

The classroom in early childhood education should be a space enabling free movement, work in diverse groups, at tables, and also on a suitably prepared floor (e.g. carpet). Classroom furniture should not restrict pupils' ability to adopt a variety of body positions during learning and play. Chairs, tables and furniture, as well as blackboards, carpets and rugs enable both full group work and small group work with the possibility of individualisation and adaptation also for pupils with special educational needs. The layout of the space allows the pupils to focus their attention, to develop a variety of activities, and to relax. The classroom should be equipped with all the necessary technical devices, tools, and aids that support the learning process. Among these, the curriculum lists a blackboard, balls, skipping ropes, bags, poles, rattles, etc. Moreover, the equipment in the room should enable the presentation of pupils' work, for example easels, screens, installations, cork boards, etc. The arrangement of the room, starting with the arrangement of the furniture, as well as the elements of the decoration, allows for work with the method chosen by the teacher.

The Study Area and Objective

In general, the aim of the study was to examine parents' views on distance education delivered at primary schools during the COVID-19 lockdown in Poland, an emphasis being put on what is widely referred to as the classroom management, including conduct and content management. More specifically, it focused on all the classroom routines and procedures implemented through distance learning, involving observed behavior and relationship patterns, as well as the materials offered and practised with students. Additionally, the intention of the research was to check if the private school does better at distance learning than a public one, as widely-expected.

The Study Participants

The study participants consisted of 60 parents of first-grade primary school students (see Table 1). The three groups they were divided into reflected the three schools under investigation, namely Szkoła Podstawowa nr 2 (Primary School no. 2) in Będzin (school A), Szkoła Podstawowa nr 9 (Primary School no. 9) in Katowice (school B), and Salezjański Ośrodek Szkolno-Wychowawczy (Silesian School and Education Center) in Tarnowskie Góry (school C). The first

two schools were public institutions while the third one was run by a private owner. The lessons covered by the study included the early education conducted by one teacher referred to as the form teacher, offering the elements of (http://www.podstawaprogramowa.pl):

- Polish language,
- Mathematical education,
- Social education,
- Environmental education,
- Visual arts education,
- Technical education,
- Computer science education,
- Music education,
- Physical education.

Table 1

The Participants of the Study

	Age range		Sex		Education		Participation	
School	25–35	36–45	F	M	Secondary	Higher	Full	Partial
A	1	19	19	1	3	17	15	5
B	3	17	18	2	2	18	12	8
C	5	15	18	2	–	20	15	5

S o u r c e: author's own work

As seen from Table 1, the vast majority of the participants were females, aged between 36 and 45. What is more, most of them completed higher education, including biology, sociology, economy, as well as Polish philology and IT studies, and admitted full support given to their children throughout distance education.

The Study Tool

The parents involved in the study were given a questionnaire in January 2021, which fell on the end of the winter semester, being, at the same time, the first distance learning period which the participants experienced. Graphically speaking, the questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first three took the form of closed-ended entries. The first was designed to check if certain classroom management components appeared in a lesson. These, in turn, ranged from the quality of lesson planning and organization and the teacher's ability to maintain discipline among children to specific patterns of teacher interactions, both teacher- and student-initiated ones.

The second one was to measure parents' satisfaction with teacher's organizational skills, and infrastructure observed betweenwhiles. Here, it was mainly time management and common computer skills that were taken into account.

The third section was devoted to the course contents, and the frequency of skills being introduced into the classroom and mastered among the students.

The fourth part was open in nature and conclusive to some extent. It was closely related to parents' opinions and asked for the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning taking place in their children's virtual classrooms.

Presentation of the Results

Table 2
The Results. Part 1. The Appearance of Class Organization Skills and Behavior During Distance Learning

Criteria	Yes			No			I don'tknow	
The quality of lessons	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B
Punctuality	3	18	20	17	2	0	0	0
Netiquette rules	2	14	20	13	1	0	5	5
Well-organized classes	11	18	20	9	2	0	0	0
A logical layout of the contents	7	15	20	13	5	0	0	0
Variety of tasks	18	16	20	2	4	0	0	0
Clarity of instructions	10	15	20	10	5	0	0	0
Discipline	5	15	20	15	5	0	0	0
Learner's activity in the lesson	10	12	20	10	8	0	0	0
Engaging selected learners in the lesson	2	5	15	18	15	5	0	0
Engaging all learners in the lesson	5	10	20	15	10	0	0	0
Learner's response to teacher's command	10	12	18	10	8	2	0	0
Teacher's response to learner's answer	10	12	18	10	8	2	0	0
Teacher's answer to learner's question	6	12	18	14	8	2	0	0

S o u r c e: author's own work

School A

Table 2 clearly shows that the representatives of this school have noticed the biggest problems as regards the teacher's general and specific organizational skills as well as teacher-student-student interactions. The greatest complaints cover very poor punctuality referred to as beginning and finishing classes on time, and the lack of netiquette understood as a set of rules for acceptable online behavior. Accordingly, a vast majority of the sample complain about students' constant misbehavior, and chaos resulting from an illogical layout of the lesson contents. The group points out ambiguity of task instructions, too much task variety as well as infrequent teacher's reaction to learner's questions. The teacher seems passive and does not really involve learners into the lesson.

School B

The group of parents representing School B, pictured in numbers in Table 2, have created a more positive picture concerning class organization and interaction. According to the majority of the respondents, the teacher respects punctuality and netiquette rules. Each class conducted is considered to be well and logically organized with varied tasks provided with clear instructions. What they have observed less frequently, though, included learners' engagement in the lesson, and teacher-student interactions bringing about either a handful of children taking an active part in the class, or a teacher remaining silent and unresponsive to kids' requests and questions.

School C

The sample evaluating School C made the most positive observations regarding both the teacher's managerial skills and the behavior—related atmosphere in the lesson. Following the figures presented in the table, it can be assumed that all lessons are marked by punctuality. What is more, each day and each lesson is conducted with the use of netiquette rules. When it comes to the lesson management itself, all the parents admit to have observed well-organized lessons, with the materials presented logically to the learners. As regards the materials themselves, these are believed to be diversified, and simple in their form thanks to clear instructions. As a result, the whole group of respondents ascertains that the teacher keeps discipline in the classroom and all the students actively participate. This impression is slightly modified by parents when asked about the children's even participation in an activity. What we learn is that the teacher tends to engage only selected students in a task (see Table 2).

Table 3
The Results Part 2.Satisfaction with the Following Managerial Skills Observed During Distance Learning

Criteria	Yes			No		
The quality of lessons	A	B	C	A	B	C
Time management	2	10	18	18	10	2
Pace of work	5	10	15	15	10	5
Number of exercises done per lesson	3	10	18	17	10	2
Teacher's ability to use the Teams application	10	10	15	10	10	5
Child's ability to use the Teams application	10	10	10	10	10	10
The quality of Internet connection	10	10	15	10	10	5

S o u r c e: author's own work

Comparing the data from Table 3 with the previous cases, the group of the School A parents evaluating the level of their satisfaction with the class managerial and ICT skills appeared most pessimistic. When it comes to the former, the majority of parents make complaints about the teacher wrongly dividing time between different activities, and working with children at the same tempo all day. Subsequently, it gave rise to an unsatisfying number of activities introduced during a lesson. The latter, namely, the computer skills, are much more positively viewed by the sample. Half of them is satisfied with teacher's computer competence, and children dealing with the Teams application in particular. Also, the same number of respondents voiced their satisfaction with the Internet quality

As far as the School B is concerned, all the answers received from the parents are equally positive and negative. It means that half of the group represents advocates of the teacher's way of managing time and pace of work, which immediately translates into the appropriate number of activities introduced each lesson. The same is with the computer-related aspects, including both teacher's and learner's skills assessed positively by 50 per cent of those under investigation.

School C

Again, the results obtained from this group show more confidence about class management than the previous ones. The highest ratings go to the teacher's time and task control. Slightly less satisfying are the computer skills both the teacher and the children have shown during classes.

Table 4
The Results Part 3. The Frequency of Skills Practised During Distance Learning

Skills	Always			Often			Too often			Seldom			Too seldom			Never		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Reading skills	0	5	18	3	15	0	0	0	0	17	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
Writing skills	0	0	0	5	18	18	15	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Numeracy skills	0	2	20	5	18	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social skills	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	10	15	15	10	0	0	0	0
Art/craft skills	0	0	0	0	10	18	0	0	2	3	5	0	16	5	0	1	0	0
Music skills	0	0	0	4	20	20	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

S o u r c e: author'sown work

The type of skills practiced during distance learning can be seen in Table 4. Based on the data, it is evident that the representatives of the School A point out two types of extreme situations, namely the teacher paying too much attention to writing, numeracy skills and music on the one hand and spending too little time exercising reading on the other. Also, the majority of the sample complain about under-developing manual and social skills.

In the case of school B, most of the parents claim that the teacher devotes the same amount of time to reading, writing and numeracy skills, and treat them as "often practiced ones." All of the sample agree on practising musical skills frequently, and half of the examined consider social skills as being not developed enough among the class.

The group of parents from the School C are slightly more ahead of the previous groups, having observed reading and numeracy skills practiced whatever the circumstances. The second most frequent in their opinion are writing, craft/art and musical skills. And, as it was formerly stated, social skills are thought of as neglected because rarely developed in the classroom.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Finally, when asked about the advantages of such classes, the parents touched upon several issues that can be grouped into[1]:

- climate (less stressful, convenience, flexibility, individual work),
- organization (saving time, good pace, task variety, good level of instruction, well-organized work, more free time, effectiveness, good level of instruction, no need to get up early in the morning),
- safety and parental control (insight into the lesson, no contact with the virus, no need to go out, kids' safety),
- new experience (individual work, gaining technical skills, gaining new experience).

All the information obtained is juxtaposed in Table 5, which is subject to comparison and further evaluation.

Table 5

The Results. Part 4: Advantages

School A	School B	School C
1. parents insight into the lessons	1. **kids' safety**	1. **no need to go out**
2. parental control	2. saving time	2. **kids' safety**
3. individual work	3. good pace	3. well-organized work
4. saving time	4. task variety	4. effectiveness
5. **kids' safety**	5. **no need to go out**	5. flexibility
6. no contact with the virus	6. good level of instruction	6. **individual work**
7. no need to get up early in the morning	7. gaining technical skills	7. more free time
8. **no need to go out**	8. **individual work**	8. gaining new experience
9. less stressful		9. convenience
10. gaining technical skills		

S o u r c e: author's own work

On the basis of information presented in Table 5, what parents from school A value most is their control over the lesson, its content and management. Further come the conditions allowing the learners to save time, and the circumstances guaranteeing safety on the road as the kids do not have to commute to school.

[1] The statements underlined are shared by the representatives of two schools; the ones in bold reflect the opinions observed among the three schools.

Accordingly, children are granted health safety, at least to some extent, which makes the whole situation less stressful for all the household members. And, finally, the group lists promotion of technical and IT skills fostering the children's digital competences. A slightly different hierarchy of values can be read from school B data and parents prioritizing kids' safety deriving from isolation, and well-managed classes over the development of learners' individual work. Likewise, the group of parents representing school C puts their kids' virus protection first, followed by the qualities contributing to a good lesson organization, and new experiences (new tasks and new skills).[2]

As it was the case with the advantages of distance education, the drawbacks enumerated by the three groups of parents have a lot in common, though follow a different order, and, thus, can be encapsulated under the following headings:

- management (chaotic organization of a lesson, doing everything at once, slow pace of work, discipline problems, table work, too much for learners to do, too few activities done per day, "poor level," teacher selectivity, lowered teaching standards),
- social aspects (a limited contact with a teacher, no contact with classmates, isolation),
- technology (technical problems, ineffective),
- health issues (no physical education classes, lack of physical activity, too much time in front of the screen, isolation),
- home environment (lack of conditions for learning at home).

The data concerning the type of parents' choices and the seriousness of the disadvantageous situation at the same time are displayed in Table 6. Based on the findings, the school A parents treat poor class management as the main disadvantage of distance learning. Their second major concern is reflected in technology-related problems making the whole learning ineffective, and the computer itself hardly ever replacing face-to-face contacts in a satisfactory way. Thirdly, the subjects mention no physical education classes leading to different health issues. When it comes to school B and its representatives, kids' isolation is considered to be the greatest disadvantage of distance-based instruction. Then, the group gives several characteristics of observed distance classes that are typical of poorly managed classrooms, such as discipline problems, table work or slow pace, and raises the issue of substituting physical education classes with mathematics or Polish resulting in an alarming lack of exercise among children. Finally, the subjects refer to the lack of dedicated IT skills as a substantial disadvantage. In a similar vein, the third research group starts their list from the teacher's unskillful lesson planning and no face-to-face interactions to technical problems and health disorders caused by physical strain as a result of extended screen time in place of physical classes.

[2] The statements underlined are shared by the representatives of two schools; the ones in bold reflect the opinions observed among the three schools.

Last but not least, the sample mentions no conditions for remote learning, whether it be housing conditions or the equipment responsible for partial or full exclusion.

Table 6

The Results. Part 4: Disadvantages

School A	School B	School C
1. too much for learners to do	1. isolation	1. „poor level"
2. chaotic organization of a lesson	2. ineffective	2. **slow pace of work**
3. **technical problems**	3. chaotic organization of lesson	4. **no contact with classmates**
4. **slow pace of work**	4. **no contact with classmates**	5. a limited contact with a teacher
5. **discipline problems**	5. lack of physical activity	6. too few activities done per day
6. **no contact with classmates**	6. **"table work**"	7. **technical problems**
7. doing everything at once	7. lowered teaching standards	8. too much time in front of the screen
8. teacher selectivity	8. **discipline problems**	9. lack of physical activity
9. **"table work"**	9. **technical problems**	10. no physical education classes
10. no physical education classes	10. **slow pace of work**	11. lack of conditions for online learning at home

S o u r c e: author's own work

Discussion of the Results

Taking into account all the data collected from parents of first-grade learners, it is clear that the *classroom management* matters a great deal to them, and is widely-criticized for teacher's inability to control the learners' behavior, and prevent them from being so undisciplined (mainly because of the lack of netiquette rules or breaking the rules already introduced). The second most disputed issue concerns time management, and teacher's problems with delivering classes on time, as well as shifting from one task to another. Yet another complaint is issued with regard to teacher's insufficient IT skills, more often than not resulting in screen sharing difficulties.

Following the results of the study, it is legitimate to say that the *classroom climate* matters a lot for the sample, especially the so-called mental space involving

"interaction between the teacher and learners, and between learners themselves, individual learner autonomy." (Gabryś-Barker, 2016, p. 164). All the groups under examination complain mostly about the teacher being very selective in his/her choice of learners to be active and responsive in the lesson. As a result, it is very often the case that a dozen of children never answer and remain passive, often overlooked by the teacher.

Accordingly, *the classroom content* that is under special parental supervision in a distance mode of learning leaves much to be desired. Based on the parents' opinions, the material presented in the lesson is not well-balanced. The teacher is believed to overdo writing and numeracy skills at the expense of reading considered fundamental in the first grade of primary education. What is neglected and devoted too little time to, on the other hand, refers to manual and social skills. However possible it is to first explain, and then, improve the very situation, nothing seems to justify the absence of physical education classes in distance learning that all the parents are so critical about.

The advantages of distance education at the primary level are the *atmosphere* considered less stressful and more friendly than in a traditional classroom, *children's safety* consisting in no exposure to the COVID-19 virus, and road hazards, as well as *new experience* involving a lot of individual work and decision making with gaining new computer skills.

The drawbacks, on the contrary, apart from the afore-mentioned *management failure*, range from the *lack of socializing* (exemplified by no face-to-face contact with the teacher and fellow colleagues) to *health problems* involving backaches, headaches or eye pain/strain at the end of a virtual lesson day/week.

Finally, the public vs private school comparison tends to lean slightly in favour of the former, both at the level of conduct and content management. The areas of parental dissatisfaction translating, at the same time, into disadvantages of off-site classes in a private sector involve a complete lack of physical activity and isolation that directly influence children's health condition and social skills respectively. It is evident that even better-funded and better-equipped institutions do not offer physical education classes to young learners, which seems to indicate the subject being a great challenge for schools.

Conclusion

To conclude, a lot has to be done to warm up the image of distance education at the elementary level. Based on the findings of the study, there is a great need to pay more attention to creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

Studies show that taking care of virtual classroom environments entails creating settings organized around the integration of social presence (the extent to which learners feel socially and emotionally associated with others in an e-learning environment), teaching presence (the plan, implementation, control and support for the achievement of individually meaningful and educationally valuable learning outcomes), and cognitive presence (the degree to which learners can verify meaning through supported reflection) (Banks, 2014; Banayo & Barlet, 2021). Second of all, more attention should be focused on developing teacher's and student's computer competence, understood as an ability work on computers as a means to communicate with others and obtain information, to make both sides of distance learning satisfied and convenient in operating computers (Banayo & Barlet, 2021). Third, professional development courses should be offered for teachers, such as distance learning courses in teaching, to name an example.

Implications

So far, I suggest paying attention to the ways that might improve the quality of distance education where it needs urgent response. What is at issue concerns promotion of training courses in classroom management using interactive, engaging techniques and reflective methods or a Teams application course for teachers.

Another suggestion is to prepare teachers for PE classes or short periods of in-class gymnastics/games to be delivered whilst lockdowns. An example could be a wheel of fortune fitness or a newspaper ball activity. The former consists in spinning the wheel to find out what exercise the whole group or an individual student is going to do, and performing it. The latter, for instance, might take on a form of a challenge of getting learners to scrunch a piece of paper into the palm of a single hand or simply a practice of children's throwing skills.

Further Studies

Taking into account the ideas for future studies, it is recommended to extend the research to cover more schools. Also, an interesting perspective would be to examine different types of schools as regards the level of education (a primary versus secondary and tertiary level), as well as compare schools referred to as the public and the non-public ones. As a result, the picture of distance education shown

in the present study may either be followed and/or elaborated on with the new data or rejected and/or approached in a totally new way.

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Marzena Wysocka-Narewska

Edukacja zdalna w szkole podstawowej – opinie i refleksje rodziców

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

Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje wyniki badań kwestionariuszowych przeprowadzonych wśród rodziców uczniów pierwszych klas szkół podstawowych. W badaniach wzięło udział łącznie 60 osób z trzech szkół podstawowych zlokalizowanych na Górnym Śląsku (w tym dwóch szkół publicznych i jednej niepublicznej). Głównym celem zaprojektowanych ankiet było zebranie informacji dotyczących szeroko pojętej organizacji lekcji zdalnych podczas pierwszego lockdownu w czasie epidemii COVID-19. Ocenie rodziców podlegało m.in. planowanie zajęć, zarządzanie klasą, realizacja materiału z uwzględnieniem wszystkich składowych edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, zachowanie uczniów oraz sposoby radzenia sobie z sytuacjami problematycznymi pojawiającymi się podczas nauki na odległość. W części finalnej ankietowani zostali poproszeni o wytypowanie korzyści, które niesie za sobą praca z pierwszoklasistami w systemie zdalnym oraz mankamentów nauki zdalnej. Autorka, w odpowiedzi na refleksje badanych, proponuje kilka wskazówek, które mogą pomóc w rozwiązaniu najbardziej problematycznych kwestii w obu typach szkół.

S ł o w a k l u c z e : nauka zdalna, etap szkoły podstawowej, opinie i refleksje rodziców, COVID-19

Marzena Wysocka-Narewska

Educación a distancia en el nivel de educación primaria: opiniones y reflexiones de los padres

Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados de una encuesta realizada entre padres de alumnos de primer año de primaria. Un total de 60 personas de tres escuelas primarias ubicadas en la Alta Silesia (incluidas dos escuelas públicas y una privada) participaron en la investigación. El objetivo principal de las encuestas diseñadas fue recopilar información sobre la organización ampliamente entendida de lecciones remotas durante el primer confinamiento durante la epidemia de COVID-19. La evaluación de los padres estaba, entre otras cosas, sujeta a planificación de clases, gestión del aula, implementación de materiales teniendo en cuenta todos los componentes de la educación infantil, el comportamiento de los estudiantes y las formas de enfrentar las situaciones problemáticas que se presentan durante la educación a distancia. En la parte final, se pidió a los encuestados que seleccionaran los beneficios de trabajar con alumnos de primer grado en el sistema remoto y las deficiencias del aprendizaje remoto. El autor, en respuesta a las reflexiones de los encuestados, sugiere algunos consejos que pueden ayudar a resolver las cuestiones más problemáticas en ambos tipos de escuelas.

Palabras clave: educación a distancia, etapa primaria, opiniones y reflexiones de los padres, COVID-19

Мажена Высоцкая-Наревская

Дистанционное обучение на уровне начального образования: мнения и размышления родителей

Резюме

В данной статье представлены результаты анкетирования, проведенного среди родителей первоклассников начальных классов. Всего в исследовании приняли участие 60 человек из трех начальных школ Верхней Силезии (включая две государственные и одну частную школу). Основной целью разработанных опросов был сбор информации о широко понимаемой организации дистанционных уроков во время первого карантина во время эпидемии COVID-19. Оценка родителей, в частности, планирование занятий, организация занятий, реализация материала с учетом всех составляющих дошкольного образования, поведения учащихся и способов выхода из проблемных ситуаций, возникающих при дистанционном обучении. В заключительной части респондентам было предложено выделить преимущества работы с первоклассниками в дистанционной системе и недостатки дистанционного обучения. Автор, отвечая на размышления респондентов, предлагают несколько советов, которые могут помочь в решении наиболее проблемных вопросов в обоих типах школ.

Ключевые слова: дистанционное обучение, начальная школа, мнения и размышления родителей, COVID-19