

## Education in Poland during the Covid-19 pandemic

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### Abstract

Introduction and purpose. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic Polish government in March 2020 decided to direct students to remote learning. This condition lasted -with minor exceptions- one and a half year.

Material and method. The aim of the study was an evaluation of public experience and attitude towards online learning.

Results. All the respondents between March and May 2020 learned via online devices. The average note for e-learning was 2,99 in a 5-grade scale, while a score for stationary learning was 3,84. Students' motivation, engagement and stress level decreased during remote-learning. 43% of students claimed that their marks improved during that time. The main disadvantages of online school were too much time spent in front of the screen and monotony of the lessons. Among the advantages was for example time for additional hobbies. Realisation of practical activities was more difficult or impossible for 74,9% of the respondents. Almost one quarter of the people did not have adequate home conditions to study online. Practical activities were often difficult or impossible to realise.

Conclusions. Online learning was a necessity during the pandemic, however this type of gaining knowledge has both advantages and disadvantages. It influenced not only scientific issues, but also students' motivation and sociopsychological aspects. To conclude, twice as many students prefer stationary than online learning – respectively 39,7% vs 21,1%.

**Key words: education; online learning; distance learning; stationary learning; Covid-19**

## Introduction

First case of coronavirus infection in Poland was discovered on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2020. Since that time, Sars Cov-2 virus caused a lot of changes in people's lives, including education.

On March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 prime minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki informed that from then all schools and universities will be closed for 2 weeks, though due to the serious situation schools remained closed till September. In the next school year some facilities worked in the same way as before the coronavirus pandemic, some had to introduce hybrid learning, where some of the lessons took place in the building of the school, but the rest had to take place at home. There were also schools where only e-learning took place, due to the large amount of infected people in that regions.

In October 23<sup>rd</sup> classes from 4 to 8 and students from secondary school transitioned to e-learning, then on November 4<sup>th</sup> also younger pupils started learning via Internet. Those restrictions last till the end of the school year in June.

Activity of higher schools and universities depended on university authorities. Most of them remained closed from March 2020 until today. All lectures take place remotely using a bunch of programmes such as Classroom, Skype, Teams. Very few universities in Poland decided that students would learn in a hybrid way, which meant that they had to participate in some of their classes in the building of the university and some of them at home via Internet programmes.

Situation is dynamic and even though the Polish government announced that from September 2021 every student will go back to school and learn in the same way as before the coronavirus pandemic, we cannot be 100% sure that the situation will not change again and that we will not come back to learning via the Internet.

## Material and method

To analyse the topic of e-learning in Poland during Covid-19 pandemic, a 18 question questionnaire was prepared. The survey was created using Google Forms programme and

disseminated by Facebook groups and other Polish fanpages between May 23<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. It was eventually properly filled in by 247 people.

The first part of the survey aimed to gather elementary information about respondents such as their age, gender and place of study. In the second part, respondents answered questions specifically related to the topic, describing their experiences and attitude towards online education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Purpose of the first three questions was to gather general information about the respondents. The first one was an open question about the age of the respondents, while the second one referred to the gender (female or male). The last question of the first part of the survey aimed to gain information about the recent place of study (primary, secondary, technical, trade school or university).

The second part of the survey began with a question about predominant type of learning in recent months. In the fifth question respondents could choose which way of learning (online, hybrid or stationary) last the longest in their whole life. Question number six gave respondents a choice to estimate stationary learning from 1 to 5 (where 1 was very bad and 5 was very good). The following question was similar to the previous one, but gathered opinions about e-learning. The eighth question was designed to examine if students' motivation to learning during e-learning increased, decreased or stayed at the same level. Questions from 9 to 12 also referred to the issue of motivation, though they were more specific and addressed to the following: engagement, level of stress, marks at school and physical activity.

Respondents in the thirteenth question answered whether realization of practical activities was difficult to accomplish. Question no. 14 checked if the frequency of meeting with friends decreased, increased or did not change. Respondents were also asked to mark the predominant way of staying in contact (online or face to face chats). The next question was designed to determine how often technical problems occurred during e-learning. Question no. 16 checked if home conditions were favourable and adequate to remote learning.

In open question number 17 respondents could choose statements they agree with or write their own opinions about learning during pandemic. The last, 18<sup>th</sup> question, sought an answer to which form of learning suits respondents best.

## Results

Two hundred and forty-seven people took part in the survey. Most of the respondents were women (89,1%), men for comparison were only 27 (10,9%). In the survey age ranged from 13 to 34 and the average age was 20.6. 161 respondents attended university, 29 secondary school, 25 primary school, the same number as technical school and 7 people attended trade school.

E-learning as a predominant type of studying in recent months was chosen by 87.9% of respondents, then hybrid (8.5%) and in the end - stationary learning with 3.6%. Stationary learning as the longest way of education chose 100% of respondents.

In the five-grade scale 2.5% people choose option 1 (very bad), 5,7% option 2 (bad), 22.7 % number 3 and stayed neutral, 44,9% choose option 4 (good) and 24.3% option 5 (very good), as an answer to how high did they rate stationary learning. An average score was 3,84. In the

next question about rating e-learning in the 5-grade scale 12.6% respondents gave the lowest note 1, twice as many (24,7%) number 2, 27.5% chose a middle score, 22.3% marked number 4 and 13% gave the highest note. The average note was 2,99.

Motivation during e-learning decreased among 71.7% of respondents, stayed at the same level among 19.8%. Motivation of only 8,5% people increased during the pandemic. Comparable results were obtained in the next question. 70.4% of people claimed that their engagement decreased, 11,3% said that it increased and 18.2% that it didn't change. Quite different results gathered question about level of stress during e-learning. Almost half of the respondents (47%) claimed that the stress level decreased. Very similar results are for increase the level of stress (25,9%) and option 'stayed at the same level' with 27,1%. 42.9% of respondents' marks improved during e-learning, 47,8% respondents claimed that their grades didn't change and only 9.3% said that their school grades worsened.

Almost 6 out of ten respondents (58,7%) admitted that their physical activity during e-learning significantly decreased. 28,7% of people taking part in the survey chose the option that their activity didn't change due to e-learning and 12,6% of respondents noted an increase in their activity. According to 52,6% of the respondents, realization of practical activities was difficult to accomplish and 22,3% claimed that it was completely impossible to do. Not much over a quarter of the respondents claimed that practical tasks took place in the same way as pre-pandemic.

Next question was a multiple choice one where 159 (64,4%) of the respondents had less meeting with their friends due to lockdown. According to 36 (14,6%) of the respondents, the frequency of their meetings did not change. Only 18 (7,3%) people claimed that they were meeting with their friends more often. 30,4% of the respondents communicated with their friends mostly by SMS and internet communicators, such as Messenger, Whatsup, Facebook and so on. Meetings in the same way as hitherto declared 48 people (19,4%).

We also asked if any technical problems took place and the results are following: 3,2% of respondents had some kind of problem every day, 19, 8% claimed that they often experienced problems, 43,7% declared that they sometimes had some technical complications, 32% rarely had them. Only 3 of 247 respondents never experienced any problem. Almost a quarter (24,7%) of the respondents did not have appropriate home conditions to learn online. Rest of the people (75,3%) did not submit to such inconveniences.

The main problems reported by students regarding remote-learning were mainly: too much time spend I from of the screen (75,7%), lack of lessons diversity, monotony (58,3%), skipping part of the classes (32%), becoming progressively worse in knowledge (31,2%). On the other hand, students admitted that remote learning had some advantages as well. The main benefit, according to the respondents, was the fact that they had more free time (64,4%), that could be used to develop passions (28,3%) or to catch up with work (23,5%).

We asked our respondents which form of further education they prefer. Almost the same results were obtained for stationary learning (39,7%) and for hybrid form of education (39,3%). 21,1% of the respondents want to learn online in their further education.

The last question was for additional remarks, but it was not obligatory.

## Discussion

Apart from the impact of Covid-19 restriction on education results, its influence on mental wellbeing is important. In our study a decrease in motivation, engagement and psychical activity among young people. These results correspond with other study [1], which proved that home confinement due to pandemic had a negative effect on mental-wellbeing, mood and feelings. A Polish study [2] showed that both students and their parents' mental and physical wellbeing is worse than in pre-pandemic time. The study also showed that time spent in front of the screen substantially increased during online learning, which correlates with our results. The report [2] showed that main methods of conducting classed are monotonous and less attractive than before. According to another Polish survey study [3] from April 2020, 88% of students had problems with internet connection and 36% of students claim that hardware deficiencies were their main problem during e-learning. Such problems were also observed in another report [4]. Despite the fact that students' marks improved during remote education which was showed in our and other studies [1,2,3] the report [3] draws attention to an important issue that the marks may not correlate with the actual knowledge and might result from cheating or parents' help.

## Conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic changed many aspects of our lives, including education. Students of all educational levels – from kindergartens to universities were directed to online learning. This type of gaining knowledge had both advantages and disadvantages. It had impact not only on scientific issues, but also students' motivation and sociopsychological aspects. Though students had more time for themselves, for passion or relax, they could not fully participate in psychical activities, as their realisation online was often impossible. However, stress level had decreased in majority of students. Respondents could not meet with friends face to face due to closed schools and governmental ordinances. What is important, many students had problem with their devices or internet connection or a quiet place at home to participate in lessons. To sum up, almost twice as many students prefer stationary than online education – respectively 39,7% vs 21,1%.

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