References


Challenges Arising From Studying in Higher Education in Remote Mode

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Проблемы, вызывающие обучение в высшем образовании в удаленном режиме

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ABSTRACT
Remote learning has evolved continuously since the end of the last century. One can venture to say that it developed almost as fast as new digital communication solutions until the Covid-19 pandemic emerged. The global epidemic significantly accelerated the massive adoption of remote learning as the main form of education during the quarantine period. The paper presents the evolution of remote education due to the epidemiological situation in the world and, above all, in Poland. The fundamental differences between the full-time and remote teaching modes were presented, as well as the challenges that the entire academic society had to face with such a large reorganization of the method of conducting classes. Finally, the authors post their recommendations for the further development of remote education.

АННОТАЦИЯ
С конца прошлого века дистанционное обучение постоянно развивается. Можно рискнуть сказать, что до пандемии Covid-19 он развивался почти так же быстро, как и новые решения для цифровой связи. Глобальная эпидемия значительно ускорила массовое внедрение дистанционного обучения в качестве основной формы обучения в период карантина. В статье представлена эволюция дистанционного образования в связи с эпидемиологической ситуацией в мире и, прежде всего, в Польше. Были представлены принципиальные различия между очным и дистанционным режимами обучения, а также проблемы, с которыми пришлось столкнуться всему академическому сообществу при такой масштабной реорганизации методики проведения занятий. Наконец, авторы публикуют свои рекомендации по дальнейшему развитию дистанционного образования.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, higher education, remote education, hybrid learning
Ключевые слова: Covid-19, пандемия, высшее образование, дистанционное образование, гибридное обучение.

Introduction
Over the last few decades, major changes have been observed in higher education. Public universities were modernized, restructured and adjusted to world standards. At the same time, the growing interest in the offer of universities contributed to the establishment of private universities, with a modern and a competitive offer, tailored to working students and practitioners. The offer of both private and public universities was constantly updated, and the reforms of the ministry focused primarily on improving the quality of education, the competences of academic staff and adapting to current global standards.

The situation changed dramatically when, in the first quarter of 2020, the first indications of the beginning of the global Covid-19 epidemic began to appear. Along with the development of the Covid-19 epidemic in China and its gradual spread also in European countries and on other continents, the governments of individual countries took decisions to introduce restrictions. In March 2020, governments of individual countries began to close borders, suspend cross-border traffic, implement restrictions, and in the case of some industries, completely ban activities until further notice. On March 11, 2020, the Chancellery of the Prime Minister announced the closure of all educational institutions, nurseries and kindergarten points, emphasizing the need for social isolation and staying at home. [1] The relevant date was March 12, 2020, when the epidemiological emergency was announced, [1], and on March 13, 2020, an official regulation was published on this matter. [2] Not only enterprises and offices had to face the new organizational order and sanitary regime. Also universities, focused on reforms regarding the quality of education and improving competences, were forced overnight to switch from the mode of full-time education to the mode of total distance education. It often took place without adequate infrastructure and preparation, which was a huge challenge not only for the university as an organization, but also for students, academic teachers, and administrative and technical staff.

The aim of this paper is to identify and analyze the effects and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on higher education in Poland and the challenges of remote studying at higher education. The paper is based on a review of the literature in a given area, analysis of press releases and communications from the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Polish Government as well as data from observations and practice.

1. Education in remote mode
1.1 Development of remote education due to the COVID-19 situation

Studying with the use of modern information and telecommunications technologies has long been a constant component of the education system around the world. [3] In Poland, the first remote studies were launched in October 2002 by the Polish Virtual University (PUW), a joint venture of the University of Humanities and Economics in Łódź and the Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, and in 2005 the first graduates received diplomas in remote mode. [4] The concept of remote education has been around for a long time in the education system, but with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has taken on a new meaning. When on March 11, 2020 the Chancellery of the Prime Minister announced the closure of all educational institutions, it caused extreme emotions and many discussions, and overnight students had to find themselves in the new reality. Most universities were not prepared for this form of education, both in terms of organization and content. The situation, however, was exceptional and required immediate action, leaving no time for delay. Universities, facing the challenge, implemented procedures and tools enabling remote education - the Moodle platform, MS Teams, Zoom and others. Providers of Internet solutions, trying to follow the needs of the educational sector, have created modern
Remote education also has the essence of reorganization between teaching in a mixed mode, combining classes in the remote mode with classes in the traditional form in cases where it is not possible to conduct them outside the university, as e.g. laboratory classes or using special software. Blended learning, is defined as the resultant of traditional learning and distance learning. [3]

1.2 Remote education versus stationary education

Traditional teaching is understood as all didactic processes in which there is the unity of time and place of process participants, carried out using traditional didactic methods while maintaining the applicable standards of the institutions organizing them. Remote learning is understood, in turn, as one of the forms of distance learning, independent of the place and time, but with the direct contact of its participants, typical for communication via the Internet. [5] There are fundamental differences between teaching in a classroom setting and teaching in a distance learning mode. They concern not only organizational but also substantive issues, the method of communication, the assessment system, teaching techniques and the range of teaching aids available, as well as activation of the participants. [6] Until now, the vast majority of the society conducted their education in a stationary mode with the use of traditional teaching techniques supported by modern methods and teaching aids, in accordance with the 18th-century Prussian general school model. This education system was created at the beginning of the 19th century on the wave of industrialization in Prussia and is still in force today, despite the discoveries of developmental psychology and neuroscience. [7]

Overnight, due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the stationary education mode was moved to remote education at all levels of education, which entails significant changes and the need to adapt to new learning conditions.

Contrary to appearances, remote studying in higher education requires much more commitment from students than full-time education, despite all its undoubted advantages. First of all, it should be noted that remote education requires a lot of self-discipline and is largely focused on independent work at the computer. Contrary to traditional classes, where students work in the classroom, often in working groups or under the direct guidance of the tutor who, observing the group, guides the classes and adjusts the pace and level to all participants. During classroom classes, it is much easier for the lecturer to activate participants by reacting to signs of discouragement and recognizing difficulties in carrying out tasks. Another difference is the way of communication. During traditional classes, students communicate directly with each other and with the lecturer, and the tutor has the opportunity to observe all people taking part in the classes, read their reactions and the degree of commitment. Participants of the classes also have the opportunity to clarify unclear content immediately, also using non-verbal means. During remote work, the lecturer and students communicate with each other via the Internet, which is a certain barrier and obstacle in direct communication and requires both parties to acquire the ability to communicate effectively in this way. In distance learning, videoconferencing is a substitute for a synchronous face-to-face discussion. Students need to understand the importance of clearly and precisely formulating their thoughts in writing. On the other hand, asynchronous communication during remote classes allows students to rethink their answers, and those less daring, who do not like to speak out in discussions, feel more comfortable during a remote debate, especially asynchronous. Teaching in the distance and stationary mode also differs in teaching aids and the required technical skills. In the case of remote education, participants and lecturers must demonstrate fluency in using the Internet and navigate without problems through programs that facilitate learning and conducting classes, such as the already mentioned Moodle, Zoom or MS Teams, while presentations are mainly used in stationary mode. Multimedia supplementing the oral lecture, paper worksheets, films and printouts of summaries. It should also be emphasized that studying remotely requires persistence, self-discipline, meeting deadlines and systematic work. Perseverance and self-discipline are also necessary for the teachers, because they are responsible for preparing the classes. It should be emphasized that the creation of learning materials in a remote mode often requires more time and more competences than preparing classes in a stationary mode. The lecturers must demonstrate not only knowledge, but also expert knowledge of the e-learning methodology. This is because not every topic is equally suitable for implementation both in full-time and remote mode - it is up to the teacher to choose a form of presentation that is interesting and understandable in every teaching variant. During the classes in the remote mode, the text message should be supported by multimedia, but video materials should not be overused, especially lengthy ones, which may be boring and discouraging for students. It is worth emphasizing that learning in remote mode is more friendly to visual learners than to audiences and kinesthetics. There are also significant differences in the way students are assessed. In the case of remote education, passing the course often requires more careful reading comprehension and more precise compliance with instructions. Teaching a course remotely requires prior preparation of detailed scoring and determination of the conditions for passing. Platforms that offer a passing test with immediate feedback in the form of closed questions are useful, which allows you to automate the process of passing the subject. In remote and stationary teaching, one can also notice the difference in the degree of individualization of teaching. In remote learning, it is easier to create conditions for individual learning, the main one is asynchronous, which allows you to see...
each participant and some individualization of learning. [6] It should be remembered that students should not be left alone in the remote learning mode and the principle should be followed that the remote component of education should take the form of institutional activities. [8] In the times of GDPR data protection policy, students often have to accept the conditions of remote work and credits as well as the methods of processing their data.

2. The challenges of remote education

The implementation of classes in a remote mode is undoubtedly an enormous challenge for both students and lecturers and the university as an organization. The transition from stationary education to remote education took place practically overnight, without preparation, and so far only a few have had contact with this form of teaching, often to a very limited extent. First of all, the issue of digital exclusion and the need to provide academic staff and students with equal access to the Internet and computer equipment should be addressed, taking into account also dysfunctional families and less wealthy people. The problem was to ensure a quiet place to work and study, the required equipment and a good-quality Internet connection. Not all lecturers and students are equally proficient in the Internet, operate computer programs and are oriented in new technologies. The problem is also the new way of communication between students and students and lecturers, i.e. de-personalization of education, understood as the lack of direct contact between the academic teacher and the student, or a limited impact on students (including their motivation) by the teachers. The challenge is also to develop a new, appropriate methodology for remote teaching that is attractive to students and provides all the required content. In the era of GDPR, the legal aspect is extremely important, regarding network security and sharing the image of both students and lecturers during online classes and publishing materials from classes on the Internet. Another aspect to consider in the future, when continuing to study remotely, is it necessary to provide psychological support for students and academic staff particularly affected by social isolation, fears and stress related to the quarantine and the Covid-19 pandemic. Not everyone can quickly adapt to new conditions and for some it is a source of stress. In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, there is also the issue of cyberbullying, which is a type of violence using modern technologies aimed at causing emotional harm to another person. The phenomenon of cyberbullying is manifested by publishing and sending demeaning videos and photos, as well as information ridiculing a given person, and exclusion from various types of social groups online, such as group forums or Facebook groups. [9]

3. Recommendations for distance learning

Quoting a definition from a dictionary of the Polish language, studying is thorough cognition, research, inquiry based on a scientific analysis or by looking at, reading, checking. [10] This description indicates that studying includes the element of independent learning - own work, which should be one of the key pillars of a student's education. It plays an even more significant role in distance learning than in the traditional method of education. This is mainly due to the limitations resulting from this form of teaching, and presented in the earlier part of the work. However, these challenges can be significantly mitigated thanks to:

**Long-term change in the course of study**

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the development of distance learning, bringing this form of learning into widespread use almost overnight. The pace of changes we observe in the world today will only continue. Such a changing reality forces an even greater ability to adapt. Universities, wishing to prepare graduates to operate in a more and more dynamic labor market, should start developing new competences among their students, in particular the ability to use them in the field of information technologies. Interdisciplinary teaching is also gaining more and more importance, which should facilitate the potential professional transformation of the graduate. The progressive mobility of the population is also important, as it forces greater flexibility, also in education. These changes should be taken into account when creating student curricula by governing bodies. A long-term strategy for the transformation of higher education is necessary, taking into account the development of e-learning, also in a mixed form (blended learning, b-learning). [11]

1) Development of competences of academic teachers:

One of the key pillars of changes in the education of students are undoubtedly academic teachers, which is why, apart from the transformation of the curricula, it is also necessary to constantly develop teachers' competences, especially in the field of modern information technologies. Knowledge of the necessary Internet services and the related principles of synchronous and asynchronous communication, or fluent remote work software use, are important skills that should be mastered by the instructors who are to educate students remotely. One of the proposed solutions may be the remote education of academic teachers, e.g. through workshops, courses, webinars, online conferences, or discussion groups where the instructors could exchange their own experiences together. Ultimately, this element should be developed as part of training new academic staff. [12]

2) Assertion of appropriate technical infrastructure

The first recommendation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education regarding education conducted with the use of distance learning methods and techniques, prepared in the event of an extraordinary suspension of classes caused by the threat of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is the organization of the technological structure. However, the ministry does not explicitly indicate what such an organization should look like, [13] therefore the authors prepared their own recommendations in this regard. In the first place, the university should confirm the availability of the required tools to work with academics. In the absence of appropriate infrastructure, the university should
either rent computer equipment and / or provide a room where the teacher can conduct classes. The situation becomes more complicated when such assistance is provided to students. In this regard, the university may present the minimum equipment requirements that will enable smooth self-study, or, at a later date, build a database of computer labs that enable remote learning (for example: a student performs a specific module of classes). Another equally important point is the provision of appropriate software. Fortunately, its selection is now very wide [14] and tailored to specific needs. The most popular programs and platforms for distance learning include MS Teams, Google Classroom, Google Hangouts Meet, Quizlet, and the popular in Poland Moodle platform. In addition to the choice of software, the implementation for its users seems to be even more important, enabling the use of all the possibilities prepared by programmers, therefore the key form of preparing the right infrastructure is also the preparation of training, instructions, technical support in the form of consultants, for the teachers and their participants. At this point, it is also worth mentioning the launch of the 5G network in Poland, i.e. the fifth generation mobile technology, which almost coincided with the outbreak of the pandemic. For now, this network is available only in larger Polish cities, but gradually its coverage is to be extended to the entire country. Thanks to the 5G network, the speed of transmission lines will be significantly improved, which will certainly positively affect the comfort of remote work as well as the quality of data transmission. [15]

Summary
During the pandemic, the academic community had to face the enormous challenge of the rapid pace of transition from traditional to online learning. The staff of universities that coped best in this situation were those for whom e-learning and b-learning were already a permanent element of the organized teaching process, and not only a method for potential development in the future. A group of leaders unprepared for such a sudden change had to face the challenges by experimenting to a previously unknown extent. Perhaps this "experiment" will convince a wider group of its current opponents to e-learning. The global epidemic, however, has radically accelerated the development of this teaching method, which, despite still many limitations, will undoubtedly be one of the key methods of educating students.

References