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Equal Opportunities for Everyone in the Context of Teacher Competence in Academic Remote Education in the Times of Coronavirus

Abstract

The article deals with the problem of teaching competencies in distance learning at the academic level in the context of equal opportunities. In this perspective, the article shows the successes and difficulties of distance learning among teachers and students. The article presents the results of a survey conducted on a sample of academic teachers after the first semester of compulsory distance learning during the coronavirus. The research concerned the assessment of the competencies necessary for the proper conduct of the remote academic education process. The objective of the study was also to diagnose the causes of successes and failures in the process of remote education in connection with the issue of teaching competencies of academic teachers. The text also introduces in-depth and expanded empirical research on this subject in the future, offering the reader a discussion of theoretical and practical significance. Showing the implications noticed in the research opens up new paths of remote work with students and new activities aimed at improving the teaching skills of academic teachers. Systematic conclusions and reflections may be handy for academic teachers in the following years of distance learning.

Keywords: equal opportunities in distance education, competencies of an academic teacher, didactic planning, academic remote education, successes and difficulties of remote education.

Introduction

The coronavirus epidemic has marked a new perspective and the area of further research regarding equal opportunities in education. Distance learning

for the academic community has become an enormous challenge at that time, even though a part of this process has been conducted online for years. The problem revealed new questions and made teachers aware of more complex challenges and dilemmas. An in-depth analysis of the problem, research results, and systematic conclusions and reflections may be extremely useful for academic teachers in the following years of distance learning. The study aimed to diagnose the causes of student successes and failures in remote education in connection with the teaching competencies of academic teachers. In the conclusions from the literature review and my research, the sources of success and the reasons for difficulties in the course of students' work were highlighted. The necessity of making efforts of academic teachers aimed at leading students to perceived educational success and preventing educational failures in distance learning was also emphasised. The text also introduces thorough and expanded empirical research on this subject planned for the future. Already at the preliminary research stage, the article offers the attentive reader a theoretical and practical significance discussion. Showing the implications noticed in the study, it opens up new paths of remote work with students and new activities aimed at improving the teaching skills of academic teachers. The starting points for this article are based on and relate to scientific findings made by Dodge, Marzano, Firgoł and Chojnacki (Dodge, 1995; Marzano, 1992; Firgoł & Chojnacki, 2013).

Assumptions, definition tests and the current state of research

The basis of the theoretical analysis is scientific inquiry, assuming that the remote learning process does not require a different or unique didactic workshop in educational methods. It means that the current arrangements for the course of the didactic process also apply to distance learning. The remote didactic process differs from the classical one only in terms of the form of work with the student.

This other way of organisation also means that the teacher's existing competencies should be modified or enriched with new elements. These changes concern, for example, replacing a project with an e-project, a portfolio with an e-portfolio, and a discussion lecture with WebQuests. Hence, the starting point for discussing issues related to the equal opportunities policy from the perspective of a teacher's work in remote education herein are studies completed long before the coronavirus. (Dodge, 1997; Marzano, 1992; Firgoł & Chojancki, 2013).

Widely described as early as the end of the twentieth century, this way of working with students has become known as a WebQuest, which is an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet, optionally supplemented with vide-

oconferencing (Dodge, 1997). At least two levels of WebQuests should be distinguished from one another. The instructional goal of a short-term WebQuest is knowledge acquisition and integration, described as Dimension 2 in Marzano's (1992) Dimensions of Thinking model. At the end of a short-term WebQuest, a learner will have grappled with a significant amount of new information and made sense of it. A short-term WebQuest is designed to be completed in one to three class periods. The instructional goal of a longer-term WebQuest is what Marzano calls Dimension 3: extending and refining knowledge. After completing a longer-term WebQuest, a learner would have deeply analysed a body of knowledge, transformed it in some way, and demonstrated an understanding of the material by creating something that others can respond to, online or offline. A longer-term WebQuest will typically take one week to a month in a classroom setting (Dodge, 2001).

The knowledge acquisition process should be broken out into clearly described steps with some guidance on organising the information acquired. It can take the form of guiding questions or directions to complete organisational frameworks such as timelines, concept maps, or cause-and-effect diagrams, as Marzano (1992) and Dodge (2001) described. A conclusion that brings closure to the quest reminds the learners about what they have learned and perhaps encourages them to extend the experience into other domains. This structured process of acquiring new knowledge develops thinking skills in identifying and articulating similarities and differences between things, grouping things into definable categories, identifying and articulating errors in one's own or others' thinking and constructing a system of support or proof for an assertion.

Therefore, the starting point for considerations related to the issue of the quality of teaching competencies in e-learning and remote work methods in this text is the classic definition of competencies developed long before the coronavirus. The basis for these deliberations and reflections were, among others, the scientific analyses of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), Kyriacou (1991), Okoń (2003), Gajewski (2005) dealing with the problem of ensuring the achievement of educational goals also during distance learning.

The concept of competencies is used in two primary meanings: in the first one, competencies are equated with qualifications; in the second, competencies mean the scope of powers. The article deals with the competencies of academic teachers in the first sense, i.e., qualifications necessary for this profession's compelling performance. Competencies in the sense of professional qualifications are variously defined and classified (Bereźnicki, 2008; Niemierko, 2010; Okoń, 2003; Gajewski, 2005). The classifications that relate mainly to academic education and have a broad perspective of competencies necessary for academic didactic work were presented in the text.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) indicate a classification in which they distinguish five main competence areas. At the same time, this approach to the problem is closest to the authoress of the article (Kožuh 2017). One of the competencies distinguished by the researchers is knowledge of the area or subject taught. Another one is a method of transferring the acquired substantive knowledge. Equally important is a method of managing a group. Competencies in evaluating the student's work and registering his / her progress should also be highlighted, as well as a professional teacher's willingness and scope of self-improvement. A similar classification of teacher competencies by Kyriacou (1991) comes from a similar period. He formulated the professional competence of teachers in line with the presented essential skills of teachers. The first author mentions specialist competencies, which he understands as the scientific foundations of specific study subjects. In the classification, he also distinguishes psycho-didactic competencies, which he interprets as the ability to create appropriate conditions for learning and effective management of learning processes by individualising education content. As another type, the author mentions broadly understood communicative competencies, in which he points to relations outside the classroom or lecture hall. The author emphasises the importance of communicative competencies with other teachers, superiors and partners of the university and all units with which the university carries out joint tasks or projects. Kyriacou (1991) also mentions organisational and managerial competencies of adequately planning and designing teaching activities. He also indicates diagnostic and intervention competencies as well as counselling and advisory competencies, which he understands as entering into relationships with individual students to check what the student is thinking, what he feels, what problems he has and how he can be helped. In his classification, the author also included competencies in the field of reflection on one's activity, which he interprets as the ability to conclude and recognise phenomena, modifying one's behaviour, approaches and methods, both in the study and in the transfer of knowledge (Kyriacou, 1991).

An exciting look at the teacher's competencies is also provided by the classification distinguished by Kwaśnica (2003). The author distinguishes two groups of competencies. The first group consists of practical and moral competencies. They include, among other things, interpretative competencies, i.e. the ability to reasonably approach the world; communication competencies, i.e. the ability to dialogue; and moral competencies, which are understood as the ability to reflect on students' actions and behaviour morally. The second group of competencies distinguished by Kwaśnica are technical competencies. Among them, he includes competencies which he describes as postulation competencies. The author understands them as the ability to formulate goals and identify with them. In this group of competencies, the author also distinguishes methodological

competencies and implementation competencies, which he understands as the ability to select educational means and the teacher's ability to create conditions conducive to achieving the set goals in the educational process.

On the other hand, an extensive typology of academic teacher competencies can be found in Gajewski (2005) and Okoń (2003), which concern teaching competencies for academic work in university education. It emphasises the criteria and indicators for assessing pedagogical competencies (Gajewski, 2005). This typology includes competencies that cover the area of knowledge, skills and attitudes in different psycho-pedagogical areas. These are, among others, the attitude that stimulates the student's learning, the teacher's scientific approach to the process of education, the broad and in-depth subject of the teacher, knowledge of the student's learning process, knowledge of the goals and organisation of the learning process, group management and competencies in the field of organisational skills of an academic teacher and his or her striving for continuous improvement. In this approach to competencies in remote education, it is worth undertaking a detailed analysis of the quality of this process at the academic level.

For this reason, the aim of the article is also to indicate, in the area of teaching competencies of academic teachers, a broad perspective on the reasons for the success and failures of students, which most often accompany the form of remote education in an environment at the university level. Therefore, later in the article, a modification of the classification of successes and failures for this thesis is proposed. This change involves the replacement of the classic approaches to the problem of educational successes and failures, i.e. those divided into bio-psychological, pedagogical and socio-economic reasons (Kupisiewicz, 2012), with the classification of successes and failures, which are divided into successes and failures of the remote learning process, successes and failures of the remote teaching process, and successes and failures of remote education resulting from the conditions of the teaching environment. This article distinguishes three factors that comprise the sources of successes and failures in academic remote education. These factors are inherent in the student, the academic teacher, and the educational environment. In this context, the literature and research in this area are reviewed below.

A review of the literature concerning the factors influencing the successes and failures of students, in general, defines them as an apparent "discrepancy between the educational results assumed by the teacher and the educational institution, and the results achieved by students" (Kupisiewicz, 1964, p. 53). Domagała-Kręcioch (2008) adopted a different view and a new position in this area. He believes that "the great failure of the school is not so much due to the students' deficiencies in knowledge and skills as to the enormous waste of their creative intellectual potential" (Domagała-Kręcioch, 2008, p. 35). The conse-

quences of this phenomenon are not only a repetition of the year of studies or drop-out rates but, most of all, "failure to undertake the professional activity of a student adequate to his or her abilities in the field of scientific or creative and work" (Kožuh, 2018, p. 166).

The successes and failures in remote education are discussed much less frequently in the literature (Hattie, 2009; Bednarek & Lubina, 2008; Słomczyński & Sidor, 2012). The problem is often analysed using two indicators in the published ones. These are the effectiveness of education and the level of drop-out from classes (Martinez, 2003; Pyżalski, 2020; Plichta, 2020). In the case of research studies focusing on effectiveness, there are numerous methodological problems, especially regarding the accuracy of controls and reliability of analyses. Different variables are taken into account in these studies. Such as, for example, exam results, students' attitudes towards remote learning and satisfaction with participation in remote learning. The measurement tools are often not well selected, and the research includes uncontrolled, disturbing variables that "lower the value of the obtained results" (Merisotis & Phipps, 1999, p. 23). It also means that it is complicated to compare the effectiveness of distance and traditional education on their basis. However, it is assumed that it is similar. In traditional education and distance learning, it "depends on the adequacy of goals, methods, forms and means concerning the proposed content of education" (Swan, 2003, p. 45). The value of the second indicator, the level of students' drop-out from classes, fluctuates within extensive limits. Research shows that the rates vary from 20% to 80%, depending on the type of distance learning being studied. The study's author (Tyler-Smith, 2006) emphasises that the analysed data are often fragmentary and do not allow reliable inference. Regardless of the differences in views on the scale of the problem, it must be admitted that the percentage of people dropping out of classes is higher in the case of distance education than in the case of traditional education (Kozłowska & Kahn, 2006; Wach-Kąkolewicz, 2007).

About the classification of successes and failures in remote learning made and adopted for this article, the last part of this article analyses the problem based on the literature on the subject. It is divided into three primary groups: successes and failures of remote learning, successes and failures of remote teaching, and successes and failures of remote education resulting from the conditions of the teaching environment.

In the first group, many researchers agree that the sources of success and educational difficulties should not be sought in the attractiveness of this form of learning or the poor quality of the courses but rather in the fact that learning outcomes depend on the learner's characteristics such as his/her ability to remember and focus attention on the studied subject, his/her motivation, interests, individual aptitudes, skills, experiences or abilities (Postman, 2004; Tap-

scott, 2010; Castells, 2010). Some authors also point to the need to provide students with these skills before or at the beginning of their studies (Słomczyński, 2009; Striker and Wojtaszczyk, 2009; Penna and Stara, 2007). Researchers try to identify the most essential learner-related factors that determine the success or failure of remote learning. Among the surveyed factors, failures are mentioned more often than successes, pointing to numerous problems affecting the resignation from such education. It is indicated, among other things, that the student's learning style does not match the nature of the classes. The reasons for failures also include insufficient contact between the student and the academic teacher, lack of support from the teacher, loneliness of the student, lack of time to participate in classes, lack of control of the teacher and low motivation of the student (Parker, 1999; Martinez, 2003; Meger, 2008). Other authors maintain that the main reason is that the content is not adjusted to the student's cognitive abilities (Lubina, 2005; Lubina, 2004; Bereźnicki, 2008; Striker & Wojtaszczyk, 2009).

Some publications in the literature on the subject describe good practices in developing remote classes. Their authors maintain that it is due to those publications that the quality of education is equivalent to traditional education (Niemierko, 2010; Dąbrowski, 2005). The practices described in the literature mainly concern motivating and involving students in the educational process by developing scenarios for academic classes (as precise as possible), appropriate preparation of teaching materials and cooperation, and support in encouraging student interaction. The research conducted and described in the subject literature indicates that the issue of self-regulation of the learning process in remote education is rarely addressed (Roffey, 2012; Słomczyński, 2009). Some works underline the role of student predisposition in the context of success in remote education (Tapscott, 2010; Castells, 2010). Castells concludes that not all students have the appropriate level of cognitive maturity for remote learning (Castells, 2010).

On the other hand, Kozłowska and Kahn (2006) consider readiness for remote learning as a critical factor in determining effectiveness in the learning process (Kozłowska & Kahn, 2006). According to these authors, readiness to learn includes the skills necessary to use remote learning effectively. They indicate that the essential ability is to manage the learning process, which consists of organisational competencies and effective cognitive strategies. Other authors emphasise the need for organisational skills (Clarke, 2004). On the other hand, Gajewski (2005) argues that the success or failure of remote learning depends primarily on the learner's learning style and that achievements in remote learning can be predicted based on the learner's preferred style Gajewski (2005). From the point of view of successes and failures in academic education, the research based on the self-efficacy theory conducted by Słomczyński (2009) is in-

teresting. The author considers the location of cognitive control (locus of control) as an essential factor determining learning effectiveness in remote education. In his research on adults, he notes that students with a strong internal locus of control are more motivated to learn and conscientious in the learning process than those with an external locus of control. Those less affected by external factors such as technical problems or time-consuming learning pressures are much more likely to stay on online courses.

In the second group of successes and failures they are referred to as the successes and failures of the remote teaching process. Problem researchers in the literature point to the essence of teacher competence, and they believe that a decrease in student motivation in remote learning may be, among other things, a consequence of improperly conducted performance control (Rawa-Kochanowska, 2012; Kožuh, 2019; Niemierko, 2010). Proper control and evaluation should be relevant, reliable, adequate and objective (Niemierko, 2010). Errors in the control of remote learning achievements are closely linked to the quality of the testing tasks. The achievement of high marks by the student often indicates his or her ability to search for information and not his or her actual assimilation of knowledge. Teaching materials sent or used during remote learning can be motivating or de-motivating. The researchers emphasise that the competence to agree and adopt the rules of organisation and passing the course at the beginning of the semester is also very important (Niemierko, 2010; Meger, 2008; Wieczorkowska, 2004). This group of reasons for educational successes or failures related to the process of remote education also includes the teacher's competencies in the field of didactic design, competencies in the field of creativity, supporting innovative and motivating activities, as well as communicative competencies understood as the ability to convey even complex content, operating with numerous examples referring to the discussed area and students' interests (Kožuh, 2020; Wieczorkowska, 2011).

The third group, described by the authoress of the dissertation as successes and failures of remote learning, concerns both students and teachers. It is a group of elements resulting from the conditions of the didactic environment related to information and communication technologies. These conditions are understood not only as access to infrastructure, i.e., computers and software but also the quality and capability of the computer equipment and the efficiency of the Internet connection. This group of conditions also includes skills in efficiently using information and communication technologies. This group of elements also includes social conditions for teachers and students, which should be understood as the possibility of remote work without disturbing their home environment. Researchers of the problem in this group of reasons for the successes and failures of the remote education process also point to problems related to the uncertain legal status regarding the use of IT technology (Pyżalski,

2020; Plichta, 2020). Teachers, at least some of them, are concerned about, among other things, the illegal recording of classes and the use and publication of compiled excerpts from the classes in the form of mocking videos and other publications on YouTube. An additional problem indicated by teachers is the concern about the legal consequences of conducting classes with the use of "unofficial tools" such as Messenger or WhatsApp. The research shows that the lack of legal regulations in this area indicates a strong sense of insecurity among teachers.

The research presented the problem of teacher competence in the context of equal opportunities in education from the perspective of distance learning during the coronavirus. The study attempted to establish the most significant successes and failures of remote education at the academic level during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to conduct the research, research questions were formulated and presented along with the answers and their interpretation in the "results and discussion" section. The questions concerned the time effort of academic teachers devoted in preparation for remote work, commitment to improving cognitive skills in the work performed, commitment to improving technical competencies in the work performed, involvement of students in remote work, support received in the field of remote work and methods of independent acquisition of teaching skills required to conduct remote classes with students. The research questions of the prepared questionnaire also concerned successes and failures encountered during distance learning during the coronavirus.

Methods, results and discussion

A detailed analysis of selected competencies of an academic teacher in remote education was made possible by an empirical study conducted by the author. The survey was conducted in June 2021 by a group of academic teachers. The research used a descriptive and non-experimental causal method. The research was divided into ten (10) research questions. The data was collected through a questionnaire tested in a pilot study on 25 academic teachers. Based on the random diagnostic survey method, the authoress chose 80 universities all over Poland. Not all the target teachers answered, but as many as 306 questionnaires were returned. The survey contained 10 questions: 4 questions concerned the determination of teaching skills on a scale from 1 to 5, three subsequent open questions concerned the type of expected and received support for improving competencies, and the last three open questions of the survey examined the most significant successes and failures of remote education at the academic level during COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents' answers to individual survey questions and their interpretations are presented in the "results and discussion" section.

The research results are presented in the following part of the article.

The first question in the questionnaire concerned how much time academic teachers spend preparing for work. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
How do you rate your commitment regarding time and effort in the performed work? 1 means the least workload, 5 is the most workload

contribution of time	1	2	3	4	5	together
A – before the coronavirus epidemic	10	16	130	102	48	306
B – during coronavirus epidemic	0	6	19	30	251	306

Source: Authors' research.

The results in the table illustrate the time teachers spend preparing for classes. The research results indicate increased time needed for teachers to prepare for the tasks associated with work performance during the coronavirus epidemic. In the remarks (there was such a possibility in the survey), some respondents added that the increased time is due to the acquisition of competence to work on specific platforms and concerns only didactic work, and the research work time remained unchanged. Respondents also indicated in their comments that preparing material for their classes with students takes several hours a day. These results, together with the comments, do not mean at all that teachers were not prepared for work before the coronavirus epidemic. The results indicate that what academic teachers have so far presented with great freedom without the preparation of written content was suddenly sent to students in the form of lecture materials in most universities. It was particularly the case, as the respondents stressed, in the first phase when the universities failed to develop a system of work on the platforms. The results in the table perhaps also show that, in fact, the preparation of extensive materials for students required at least some academic teachers to systematise the content provided. Lecturers conducting workshop classes also found themselves in a difficult situation. Especially in the first weeks, when they did not learn all the possibilities of educational platforms (e.g. the possibility of dividing participants into groups – rooms in the Zoom application), the preparation of materials for classes, which usually took place as a simulation of certain events or situations, certainly proved to be a severe challenge for them.

The second question in the questionnaire concerned the involvement in improving cognitive competence enriching the knowledge passed on to students. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
How do you rate your commitment to improving cognitive skills in the work performed? 1 means the least workload, 5 is the most workload

improvement of cognitive competencies	1	2	3	4	5	together
A – before the coronavirus epidemic	0	19	251	23	13	306
B – during coronavirus epidemic	0	17	240	34	15	306

Source: Authors' research.

The results of the study indicate a fundamental lack of difference in the amount of time spent exploring cognitive competence. There is even a slight decrease in time, most likely due to the overload of responsibilities in other areas of academic competence during the coronavirus epidemic. In their answers to the other survey questions, the respondents complained about the enormous time it takes them to prepare for classes. At the same time, this may explain the decrease in cognitive activity in most of the surveyed teachers. However, some respondents described their cognitive competence during coronavirus as higher than before. It may have been due to new tasks such as, for example, systematising content and searching for articles for students' work in meetings that could not take place in real time. It should be mentioned that most students were not ready to carry out all the activities on the timetable in the form of meetings on online platforms in the first weeks of the epidemic. Thus, when preparing links to interesting articles or problematic discussions for students, lecturers automatically reach for new content and discover unknown research or thoughts about it.

The third question in the questionnaire concerned technical competence, and its results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
How do you rate your commitment to improving technical competencies in the work performed? 1 means the least workload, 5 is the most workload

improvement of technical competencies	1	2	3	4	5	together
A – before the coronavirus epidemic	153	69	35	43	6	306
B – during coronavirus epidemic	20	42	22	15	207	306

Source: Authors' research.

The answers to this question showed an evident increase in the involvement of academic teachers in improving their technical skills. It should be stressed here that the respondents to the survey were also lecturers at technical universities, but the majority of the respondents were from university environments. Therefore, it is likely that for most respondents, the operation of the e-learning platform and its efficient movement was a great difficulty and a great challenge requiring an express but also an intensive process of improvement in this respect. The results gathered in the survey prove that academic teachers were very seriously involved in improving their technical competencies during the coronavirus epidemic. Additional comments stressed that this improvement occurred until the examination session's end. Respondents shared their opinions that once they had started to move around the e-learning platform tools quite freely in lectures, a new challenge appeared in the form of an examination on the platform. As the respondents emphasised, it was arduous and time-consuming, especially introducing individual questions into sections on the educational platform.

The fourth question of the questionnaire concerned the evaluation of students' involvement in classes conducted in a remote form, and the answers provided by the respondents are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
How do you rate students' involvement in the classes? 1 means the least involvement of students, 5 represents the most significant involvement of students

involving students in classes	1	2	3	4	5	together
A – before the coronavirus epidemic	16	35	109	101	45	306
B – during coronavirus epidemic	38	57	157	41	13	306

Source: Authors' research.

The results collected in the study indicate different experiences and, at the same time, different opinions on this issue. Most respondents show that the student's involvement during the coronavirus era is lower. In the additional comments, respondents had many opinions that student involvement was very high during the first weeks of working on educational platforms. This type of knowledge acquisition was a novelty for most of them. According to the respondents, it was motivating. When, after a few weeks, online classes became routine, the majority of the respondents stressed that the involvement of students in active participation in discussions during the online meetings was much lower. Students faced with a specific task, unable to cope with it, often finished their sessions explaining their exit with a break in the Internet connection. Per-

haps a certain degree of relaxation in literature studies was greatly influenced by most universities, which, as the respondents indicate, offered classes in asynchronous time. This most often consisted of sending materials for students' work. After a few weeks, when the work on e-learning platforms started, students had a backlog due to the lack of systematic literature study. Perhaps this was the reason for their low involvement in current classes.

The fifth question was: *what kind of support for remote working have you received?* The surveyed academic teachers formulated their answers to this open research question themselves. The answers were primarily such statements as staff training on how to work on Zoom, Teams, Vox, etc. Many respondents also indicated support in the form of instructional videos sent by the IT centres operating in universities, explaining how to operate particular platforms. Unfortunately, a significant number of academic teachers indicated zero support for remote work (42 respondents), especially in the first two months after the outbreak of the epidemic was announced. This result is saddening and should be highlighted in research so that the authorities of individual departments or universities can notice it.

On the other hand, the respondents who received help and support from universities pointed to various training courses and conferences developing their competencies in using the e-learning platforms. As the respondents claimed, help and support were also provided by the faculty or university IT specialists and the office staff of individual faculties. Only a few respondents indicated help from the university by purchasing a package allowing unlimited access to work on a selected platform, such as the Zoom platform.

The sixth question in the study was: *what kind of support for remote work did you expect?* The respondents answered this open research question as in the previous question. Among the answers, the surveyed academic teachers indicated their expectations concerning support for remote work with their students. Most answers included the purchase of a personal computer by the university for the teachers to work from home, the purchase of a faster computer to work remotely from home, the purchase of a computer with more significant memory to work remotely from home and a better camera, greater availability and better contact with administrative staff and IT specialists, and purchase of a package on a platform that allows conducting classes without division into 40 - minute sessions. A large group of respondents (about 21%) expected support from junior academic staff and assistants. The surveyed academic teachers also pointed to the need to have more influence on the choice of contact form with students and the platform. The Teams platform was highly criticised as being non-intuitive, too complicated to use and preventing visual contact with a larger group of students. Many respondents also pointed out the lack of support and straightforward and quick decisions of the universities concerning possible

forms of examination. The lack of official decisions related to the final form of the evaluation process disturbed the correct course of meetings with students. In the face of this confusing situation, some respondents attempted to change the content and manner of presenting new content. Those procedures aimed to enable the tremendous success of students following the decision of the university authorities to change the previously adopted arrangements between the students and the lecturers concerning the form of taking the examination. The respondents also stressed that this sluggishness in decision-making by individual universities concerning the method of taking the final exam caused uncertainty among academic teachers and students. As a result, this state hindered achieving some of the educational process's assumed and previously adopted objectives.

The survey's seventh question was: *how did you acquire the skills necessary to conduct classes with students remotely?* The respondents constructed the answers themselves as in the two open survey questions. Most academic teachers pointed to the Internet and various instructional videos as a source of independent acquisition and complementation of skills for remote working with students. Some respondents also mentioned support in coping with more advanced communication and information technologies provided by their university colleagues as a helpful source of self-improvement in didactic work on individual e--learning platforms. This assistance was precious in moving around the new educational platforms and preparing invitations for their students to attend such virtual meetings. The colleague's assistance was also a form of support during their attempts to conduct lectures on the chosen platform. Some respondents also indicated helpful family members as a source of support as the first listeners to the rehearsal meetings. In search of the most effective ways of working remotely, about 21% of the respondents contacted their colleagues from other universities in Poland and abroad. Only a few per cent of the respondents indicated literature in the form of articles in specialist scientific journals and compact publications published in print or placed on websites as the source of such knowledge. In this respect, the literature published on websites was much more helpful for the respondents. Due to closed bookshops and libraries, the availability of printed sources consisted only of a friendly exchange of books.

The last three questions of the survey concerned the successes and failures of the education process, which in the first part of the article were analysed based on world literature. The successes and failures in the survey questions were divided, as the authoress suggested in the theoretical part. Therefore, the eighth question concerned the *successes and failures of the remote learning process, i.e. the successes and failures of the instructor – the person managing the learning process.* Among the answers on the side of successes, the respondents most often indicated mastering the remote teaching method's basic and partially advanced skills, enabling the successful conduct of various classes with stu-

dents. As a success, academic teachers also pointed to the acquisition of the ability to conduct exams on the platform, as well as to master the stress associated with speaking in front of the camera with the awareness that among the recipients of their lectures are not only students but sometimes their parents, wives, husbands, children or friends and acquaintances. In turn, the surveyed academic teachers considered the time spent mastering the efficiency of using educational platforms as a failure as well as the time spent preparing the materials they sent out before they started to conduct synchronous classes on educational platforms. Respondents also mentioned a failure in the time needed to perform other work-related duties, such as participation in conferences, meetings, gatherings and training sessions on different platforms. Almost all respondents indicated insufficient competence in remote teaching skills, especially in the first weeks of the coronavirus.

The last, ninth question of the survey concerned *the successes and failures of the remote learning process, i.e., the successes and failures of students* (*from the lecturers' point of view*). As a success of the learners, academic teachers indicated above all the easiness of students to master the skills of working on various platforms and quick adaptation to the new form of teaching. However, the greatest failure of students mentioned by respondents was the communication culture during classes and in e-mails. Among students' annoying behaviours, the teachers complained of, for example, the lack of silence in the students' rooms, i.e. listening to conversations in the students' homes for a whole year, e.g. about dinner, barking of a dog, screaming of children or younger siblings. The respondents also pointed to situations when their students forgot they could be seen on camera during the lecture and/or took strange positions, e.g., lying on a couch or in bed or sleeping during classes. Another example of the poor communication culture of students in e-mails mentioned by the respondents was the style of writing or the lack of writing style and typing skills in students' e-mails. Previously, in indirect contact, students asked many questions during the class. In the first weeks of the coronavirus epidemic, many more e-mails were addressed to the teachers than usual, which revealed the students' lack of skills in this area. Respondents pointed to a frequent lack of polite greetings, lack of student's signature, and addressing the lecturer by name instead of title (for example, Mr Paul but not Professor or Doctor). The style of writing also elicited many negative remarks. Respondents pointed out that the sentences in the e-mails often lacked punctuation marks, and sometimes, regrettably, they were also meaningless.

The last, tenth question of the survey concerned the *successes and failures of remote learning resulting from the conditions of the teaching environment.* Among the answers to this open question, the respondents mentioned more failures than successes. They pointed to the simplicity and intuitiveness of some educational platforms as successes. In the conducted survey, the Zoom platform

turned out to be the most appreciated in this respect. Respondents valued it not only for its readability and transparency of the possibility of visual contact with large and very large groups. The possibility of simple division into smaller groups and working in teams (rooms), offered by the Zoom platform, was also significant. The respondents showed much more commitment to formulating failures in the teaching environment. The respondents considered an insufficiently well-functioning network a fundamental failure of remote education from the point of view of the conditions of the teaching environment. At the same time, most of them pointed to poor equipment or shortages of equipment at home (laptop, camera, printer, scanner, etc.) and shortcomings in the equipment of individual classrooms at the university. Some lecturers who could not teach from home intended to give lectures online from the university. Unfortunately, the first weeks proved that most universities did not have adequate classroom equipment, such as computers with a camera and a permanent Internet connection. Some also indicated a failure in the lack of a licence purchased by the university to run classes on the platform. As a result, the lack of a licence interrupted meetings, for example, at Zoom after 40 minutes. Return to the lecture or meeting was possible only after a few minutes. Respondents complained that after such a break, it was difficult for them to return to the thread of the lecture or discussion they had started earlier. Problems were also caused by the absence of some students who had problems reconnecting with the platform. The trainers took much time to reintegrate the students after an interrupted lecture.

The respondents also pointed to poor contact and unsatisfactory support from computer scientists, automation specialists and technical support centres on the premises of the university as a failure of remote learning from the point of view of the teaching environment, especially during the first weeks of classes in a changed from by coronavirus. Regarding failures of the teaching environment, the respondents also mentioned the unregulated legal situation concerning the use of technology. Despite their competence in working on Zoom, Moodle and other platforms, some university teachers did not take up this challenge initially, fearing for their image. The reason for the inactivity of some respondents was the fear of illegal recording of classes by students and the use of compiled fragments of a lecture or other classes as a mocking video on YouTube. Many respondents (about 35%) commented that the classes were conducted in a "safe" form for themselves, i.e. they sent a list of tasks and links to additional materials. The respondents maintained that this did not result from their reluctance to conduct the remote education process. The reason was also not due to a lack of appropriate competencies. The choice of such a form of classes among the respondents resulted from the threat of "appearing on the Internet as a negative hero or a laughing stock of the Internet". A significant group of respondents formulated such a position, and indeed, this research element showed

a severe and disturbing problem in the academic teaching environment. Another issue outlined in the research was respondents' fears about the legal consequences of conducting classes using "unofficial tools" such as Messenger or WhatsApp, used mainly during the seminar and consultation sessions.

Conclusion

The results of the research and their detailed analysis have both theoretical and practical implications. The respondents' answers demonstrate the importance and necessity of theoretical changes, indicating academic teachers' lack of satisfactory skills in using information and communication technologies. An additional advantage of this finding is that the respondents assessed their competencies in this area and pointed to the lack of skills in the examined area. Thus, the respondents' statements prove the need to change the curricula of future teachers. The need to introduce theoretical changes in the form of modification of the content of education of pedagogical students also results from the speed of changes and development of this department of didactics. Due to the pace of development of information and communication technologies participating in remote education, we should strive to develop a system for modernising the content syllabuses of academic teaching. The method of acquiring and improving didactic skills in this area should also be widely discussed. Perhaps it should be a process organised on the premises of every university in the form of public, cyclical or even permanent training sessions.

Theoretical changes should also apply to study programmes in educational didactics. The richness of forms and systems of working with students should be presented with greater attention, pointing out the possibilities and weaknesses of the hybrid remote teaching system. It is worth making future teachers and university teachers who are already working aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the synchronous and asynchronous forms of working with students. A detailed analysis should be made of the practical ways of developing teaching materials, using previously recorded lectures, the possibility of supplementing and modernising them on an ongoing basis, and making recordings on the premises of the university in television studios specially established for this purpose and other units on the premises of the university. An issue requiring legal arrangements also concerns the ownership of materials and copyrights, as well as ways of protecting the content and image of the lecturers. The lack of a sense of security in this matter reduces the level of teaching activities due to the choice of non-interactive forms of work with students.

Therefore, the results of the research point to several fundamental problems of remote education at the academic level from the perspective of equal

opportunities. It concerns equal opportunities for students to access this form of education and equal opportunities for students resulting from the quality of such education. The quality of teachers' work at the academic level is, in turn, closely linked to equal opportunities for academic teachers. This problem is particularly evident in the area of competencies of academic teachers and their access to technical databases when working remotely with students. There is a need for both remote and direct academic teaching centres of excellence. Research has also shown that in the process of teacher training and in preparing students for the teaching profession, greater emphasis should be placed on showing the relationship between digital tools and network resources and specific substantive, media and informational competencies. These should not only be seen in preparing future teachers but should be regularly improved and updated, given the rapid development and dynamic changes in this area. Research shows that many academic teachers are unprepared for remote education. Respondents often carried out the process of remote education during coronavirus in a transmission and non-interactive way. They passed on their knowledge through materials sent or placed on the e-learning platform for independent student work. Numerous teachers took advantage of the educational opportunities offered by various e-learning platforms.

There are also implications for further research. In the future, the successes and failures of remote education should be more detailed and deeply investigated in terms of the teaching environment. Respondents have pointed out that many premises require legal regulations. They also mentioned the necessity and urgent need to modernise network access. The solutions adopted in universities in the second wave of coronavirus may prove essential and interesting for research in the future. It is hoped that subsequent phases will be eliminated because of the effective vaccine. Everything that happens to that point in academic teaching in remote education should be examined in detail and used in subsequent research findings. Remote working at the academic level has become a fact and an indispensable area of work with students in the future, regardless of the reasons for its use. Therefore, to ensure equal opportunities in distance learning at academic and other levels of education, this education field should be examined thoroughly. The research should concern the educator's teaching competencies and the recipients of this process, i.e. students of all ages. Teachers' high teaching competencies facilitate a good quality of education. Therefore, the better-educated teachers in various institutions, the better the quality and equal opportunities for student-learners to receive a good education, regardless of the prestige of a particular academic centre or school at each level. Equal opportunities in distance learning also relate to students' skills in using communication and information technologies. They are also determined by students-learners' access to the network and the technical base of a particular uni-

versity or school. The latter correlations challenge further research and studies in equal opportunities from a distance learning perspective.

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Równe szanse dla wszystkich w kontekście kompetencji nauczycieli w Akademickiej Edukacji Zdalnej w dobie Koronawirusa

Streszczenie

W artykule podjęto problematykę kompetencji dydaktycznych w ramach kształcenia na odległość na poziomie akademickim w kontekście równych szans. W tej perspektywie tekst ukazuje sukcesy i trudności wynikające z nauczania na odległość zarówno wśród nauczycieli, jak i uczniów. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badania przeprowadzonego na próbie nauczycieli akademickich po pierwszym semestrze obowiązkowego kształcenia na odległość w dobie koronawirusa. Badanie dotyczyło oceny ich kompetencji niezbędnych do prawidłowego przebiegu procesu kształcenia akademickiego na odległość. Jego celem była także diagnoza przyczyn sukcesów i niepowodzeń w procesie kształcenia zdalnego w powiązaniu z problematyką kompetencji dydaktycznych nauczycieli akademickich. Tekst stanowi również wstęp do pogłębionych i rozszerzonych badań empirycznych na ten temat w przyszłości, oferując czytelnikowi dyskusję o znaczeniu teoretycznym i praktycznym. Pokazując implikacje dostrzeżone w badaniu, otwiera nowe ścieżki pracy zdalnej ze studentami oraz nowe działania mające na celu doskonalenie umiejętności dydaktycznych nauczycieli akademickich. Systematyczne wnioski i przemyślenia mogą okazać się niezwykle przydatne nauczycielom akademickim w kolejnych latach kształcenia na odległość.

Słowa kluczowe: wyrównywanie szans w kształceniu na odległość; kompetencje nauczyciela akademickiego; planowanie dydaktyczne; akademickie kształcenie na odległość; sukcesy i trudności kształcenia zdalnego.