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LIFE, WORK AND EDUCATION DURING A PANDEMIC (SELECTED ISSUES FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE)*

Introduction: The current worldwide pandemic has far-reaching and generally negative effects on the lives of individuals, economy, work, education and people-to-people contacts.

Research Aim: The aim of this article is to present and analyse the results of international research on selected issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as unemployment, remote work, and above all – to show the impact of the pandemic on broadly understood education.

Evidence-based Facts: Most of the publications relating to the issues connected with the current pandemic are fragmentary, concern one environment and generally refer to narrower issues. The available knowledge/data bases – national, regional, international – make it possible to undertake analytical studies relating to several, sometimes several dozen countries. By analysing several international studies, the article shows how the pandemic has affected life and education.

Summary: The article presents only some of the issues related to the effects of the pandemic on most spheres of life. New problems and studies are likely to arise. In the field of education these will certainly include issues relating to the quality of teaching and the perception of acquired knowledge and skills which should be analysed in particular.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, unemployment, remote work and schooling, school closures.

INTRODUCTION

The current worldwide pandemic has far-reaching effects on life, the economy, work, education and human contacts. After the first wave of the pandemic, after the restrictions and self-restraint, it was clear, for example, that the number of road

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accidents (and the victims of those accidents) had decreased, and that the emission of carbon dioxide and other production-related gases had decreased. Most countries are trying to avoid a deeper economic collapse caused by lockdowns that affect societies and individuals. There is a growing number of publications in the world, including Poland, which are related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A cursory review of those noted on the Internet indicates that there are already at least several thousand citations (author's emphasis) of studies in which the issues addressed are related to the COVID-19 outbreak. This article will highlight some of the most important themes, synthetic analyses, but will focus on several issues related to education in its broadest sense.

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

Among other things, the COVID-19 pandemic raises more and more questions, and this is often forced by the practice of everyday life. How is the pandemic affecting different parts of the world and what effects does it have? What are the commonalities and differences in the impact of the pandemic? It seems that these questions are not always easy to answer, but the article is an attempt to address this issue. The aim of this article is to present and analyse the results of international research on selected issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as unemployment, remote work, and above all – to show the impact of the pandemic on education in its broadest sense.

EVIDENCE-BASED REVIEW

The first (Chinese) studies started to appear as early as December 2019 and focused on the negative psychological impact of the pandemic on the general population and on medical personnel (Van de Velde et al., 2021). Many of these and subsequent publications from studies carried out in other countries are fragmentary, deal with a single environment and generally address a narrower issue. Studies addressing education issues tend to be dominated by those relating to well-being (generally worse), the impact of lockdowns on parent and child well-being, student well-being, the risk of infection and resilience in the family, mental health (probably the most studies/citations based on research), employee adjustment to COVID-19 conditions, implications for human resource management, a guide to applying behavioural and positive well-being strategies, the well-being and physical activity of the elderly.

However, the available knowledge/databases – national, regional, international – make it possible to undertake more ambitious analytical studies, referring

to several, sometimes dozens of countries. The choice of publications analysed in this article was determined primarily by factors such as the scope and quality of the material collected internationally and the time to which the data referred (primarily contained in reports published in late 2021). However, it was not the number of researched countries that determined the choice. For example, the UNICEF study of October 2020, whose title promises much more than its content, was not included. It is a study that is basically limited to a register in 127 countries in access to media that can be used for distance learning (UNICEF 2020-10). The studies analysed are based on the indicators of individual countries, hence their quality is not always comparable due to the sometimes differing ways in which information is collected (hence the number of countries to which the data refers varies), but even so, these studies give a significant insight into the issue from an international perspective.

It is difficult, at this stage of knowledge of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, to speak of a theory that would be relevant to this phenomenon. It seems that mathematical models predicting the development/regression of the epidemic, or trying to determine the effects that COVID-19 causes, are now more relevant. One can also try to refer to theories developed several decades ago, such as the theory of epidemic psychology, to which Strong (1990) contributed. Strong was inclined, in the model he proposed, to address the phenomenon of fear that the epidemic causes, attempt to explain these processes and initiate appropriate actions. In more in-depth studies, reference could also be made to the theory of conditions of extreme phenomena (e.g. works by Strauss [1993], which are referred to by sociologists), or theories related to public policy (Woźnicki, 2012) – which have a more practical dimension. Finally, pedagogy – at least in part – can draw on various theories relating to the determinants of pupils' school achievement. However, the author's intention is primarily to present the current data on the effects of COVID-19 and their interpretation.

It seems that one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date studies, taking into account the most important areas of life, is the one published at the end of November 2021 (OECD, 2021d; 2021e), and the study on the state of education after one and a half years of the pandemic (OECD, 2021f). Furthermore, it should also be stressed that these publications, for understandable reasons (data acquisition, compilation and analysis take time), generally refer to the first waves of the pandemic and for this reason we may feel a certain cognitive deficiency, since almost all of us already know a lot about the next stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Poland, there is also an increasing number of studies based on research, and from those pertaining to education (in this case – higher education institutions) – one can mention the nationwide online study “The Academy during the Pandemic”, which was launched in December 2021, under the auspices of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP).

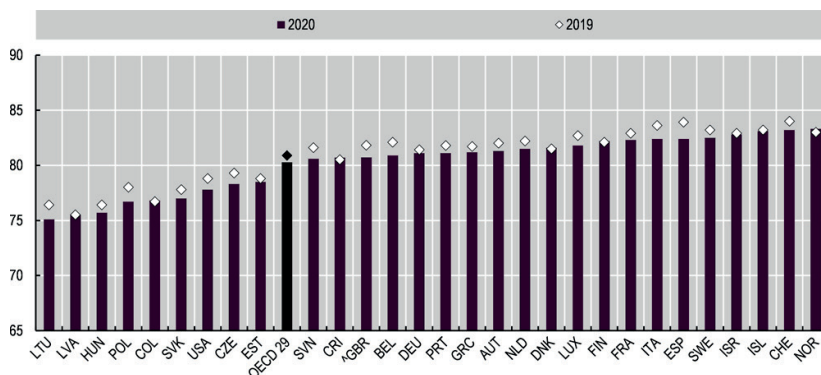
LIFE AND WORK

The newly established OECD Centre for Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE) – focuses on people. Based on data from 41 OECD member and partner countries, the Centre has published a comprehensive report on the COVID-19 pandemic in various spheres of life. It does not represent the entire world (it does not take into account non-associated countries, and, therefore, generally – the poorest countries), but with data from 27 European and 14 non-European countries (including the USA, Japan, Australia, Brazil, South Africa) it gives a good insight into the “COVID” issue. It seems worthwhile highlighting several issues from among the 11 current dimensions of well-being, focusing on material conditions, quality of life and social relations (OECD, 2021d).

It is likely that COVID-19 contributed to some extent to the revision of life expectancy projections. Analysis of these demographic indicators for 29 OECD countries shows that, on average, it has declined by 0.6 years (over 7 months). In the case of Poland, this forecast is more pessimistic – the difference between 2019 and 2020 is 12 months and is among the largest among the countries analysed (Figure 1). However, it should also be added that in many countries, even before the pandemic, the UNDP (2020) projected a reduction in life expectancy (e.g. in Poland). In addition, this was probably influenced by the economic crisis that occurred in many countries.

More measurable than these projections are the figures for the number of deaths in the first year of the pandemic, which were compared with the average for 2015–2019. It has been calculated that in 33 countries this increase was 16%, but in Mexico it was as high as 69% (compared to a 28% increase in Poland).

Figure 1.
Life expectancy in 2019 and 2020

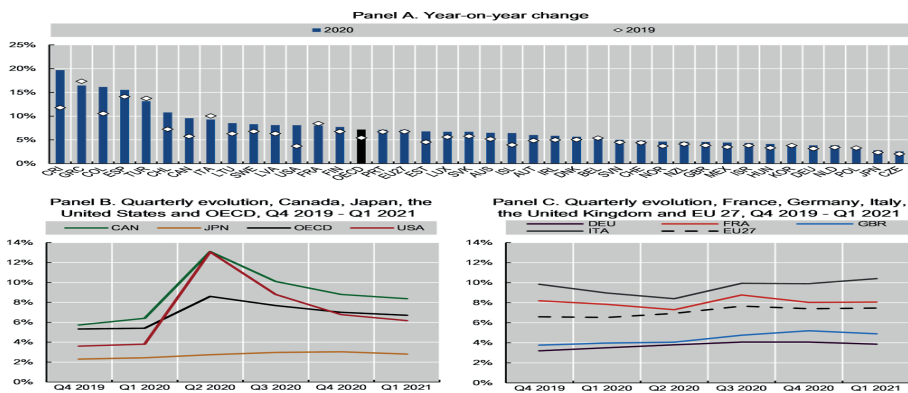


Source: *Life expectancy at birth, years 2019 and 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://stat.link/dlc501>

In many countries, because of the pandemic, gross domestic product (GDP) has fallen, unemployment has risen and some families have experienced financial difficulties. As the data in Figure 2 show – the unemployment situation varied considerably. Countries whose values were recorded on the right side of the graph were characterised by unemployment below 5% and relatively little change between 2019 and the year of the start of the pandemic; for Poland, these values were 3% each (different calculation methodology from Poland, where higher values are reported). Significantly higher values and differences between them have been recorded primarily in South American countries, or Spain.

Figure 2.

The COVID-19 pandemic and unemployment (%)



Source: *The impact of COVID-19 on unemployment has varied across OECD countries*. Retrieved from: <https://stat.link/ea502y>

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the unemployment of adults with different levels of education was more evenly distributed than during the 2008 financial crisis. However, some differences between countries have emerged, which cannot always be convincingly explained. Comparisons between 2020 and 2019 in relation to 25–34-year-olds with less than a full secondary education show that in some countries the unemployment rate did not change (e.g. Poland, Germany), in most it increased – on average by 2 percentage points, and in a few it decreased (e.g. France, Greece, Slovakia) (OECD, 2021f). Unfavourable changes on the labour market in the analysed period in relation to persons aged 25–64 concerned women to a greater extent, especially those with lower education; only in the case of persons with higher education, gender did not differentiate unemployment levels. In addition, it has to be said that regardless of gender – significantly more people with higher education could (and can) work remotely. It is also highlighted that high earners often did their work at home, while those with lower earnings stopped working. The loss of a job is not only a lack of salary, but an increased sense of loneliness, alienation from society (OECD, 2021e).

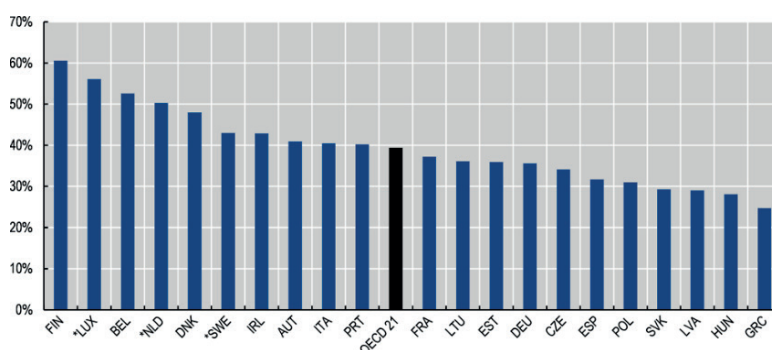
There have been new developments in the labour market – by May 2021, remote work vacancies had decreased by 20% in EU countries due to the pandemic. This decrease was to a small extent related to health care and social welfare, but in tourism and leisure organisation, the number of remote work vacancies decreased by 70%. In Canada, the UK and the US, between March and November 2020, the number of advertisements seeking employees for (direct) work – travel agents, tour guides, stewardesses – fell by 70–90% (OECD, 2021f). At the same time, a phenomenon called “the great resignation” began to grow in some countries (primarily in the US, but also in Australia, the UK, Germany) – people quit their current jobs, even when they do not have any other offer (according to press reports from late 2021 and early 2022). This can be the result of the pandemic that affects people’s attitudes, bringing changes to values.

As a result of the pandemic, there was a revolution in the way certain jobs were carried out – especially in the spheres of education, state and local government administration, the financial and insurance sectors and telecommunications. It is also noted that only 25% of jobs can be done remotely and that this applies to a much greater extent (by 14 percentage points) to large cities, regional capitals and local centres – compared to rural areas, which are less saturated with services, administration.

Based on research conducted in April–June 2020, in 21 OECD countries, an average of 39% of surveyed workers began working from home during this period due to the pandemic (Figure 3). In Finland, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands, this way of working was declared by more than 50% of the respondents (31% in Poland). It should also be added that already before the pandemic, in some countries more than 30% of workers did their work at home (the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland).

Figure 3.

Respondents who began working from home, April–June 2020 (%)



Source: Over a third of workers in 21 European OECD countries began working from home due to COVID-19. Retrieved from: <https://stat.link/ex5s1q>

It is also noteworthy that, in the light of surveys conducted between June 2020 and March 2021 among people working remotely, a significant proportion want to continue working from home (46% several times a week, 15% daily). Analysing such data, we may ask whether this will be a lasting trend and – for example – whether office buildings (those that exist and those that are being built in large cities) will be filled in the future?

In addition to only some of the issues raised about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, an important role in building a sense of security is attributed to social capital, manifested, *inter alia*, both in trust in others and in institutions. A survey (admittedly, carried out “only” in 12 countries) conducted in spring 2021, found that most adults felt that society was more divided than before the pandemic (OECD, 2021e).

EDUCATION

COVID-19 has brought about a revolution in many areas of social life, economic life, and most directly, tangibly, in the lives of individuals. The first half of 2020 has already seen huge changes in lecturer/student, teacher/pupil interactions. As this text is written from the position of an academic lecturer, please allow for a small digression of a personal nature. In the early days of the pandemic (before the introduction of communication via Teams, Zoom, etc.), many lecturers sent materials to students via the Internet which, in addition to being “visualised”, included text. However, it is different when you speak directly to your audience, and when you want to change the content into the written word. The online lecture itself also differs significantly from the auditorium form and – as indicated not only by the author’s experience – requires more time and preparation. Both forms of communication have their pros and cons.

We will never be able to recreate in print all that we conveyed during some of the lectures – the atmosphere, direct contact with the listeners and digressions, sometimes anecdotes, jokes, which enliven the room, but sometimes also the lecturer – “warmed up” by the good reception of his message and improvising, not necessarily speaking according to the assumed scheme of the lecture. Maybe not everything is in order and to the point, but it is well received by the audience. In a text we can no longer afford a certain freedom – what we say from memory (and we can sometimes be wrong) – some data has to be verified, checked and updated and the source has to be given, and this requires more time than a sheet of paper with instructions for a lecture and the slides we show. These remarks also apply to the later period, when the lecturer and students saw each other only on computer screens, laptops, smartphones.

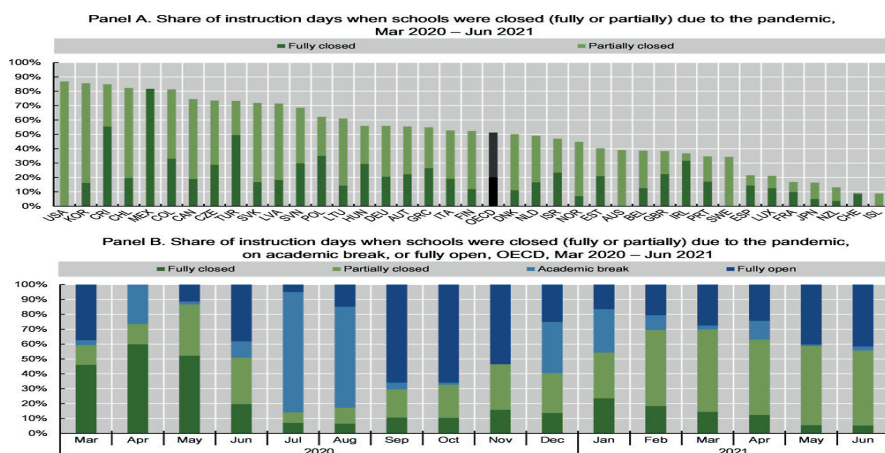
The pandemic seems to have caused (in addition to health, economic, psychological effects, etc.) a certain increase in the health consciousness of the popula-

tion. From a teaching point of view, it has contributed to an increase in the level of familiarity with commonly used communication techniques-platforms, as well as the capabilities of the devices themselves (computers, laptops, smartphones, etc.). This includes pupils, students, teachers, lecturers and also parents. On the other hand, we can observe that some people got used to these non-personal contacts, the desire to continue this way of teaching, which is largely due to comfort. However, it seems that most of the actively involved participants in the learning process would prefer to return to face-to-face contacts.

International research does not generally touch on specific issues, but it seems worthwhile to read some of the research findings from a perspective beyond one's own country, environment, or personal feelings, experiences. The pandemic has caused huge disruptions to schools almost everywhere – schools were fully or partially closed (in the countries surveyed).

Figure 4.

Percentage of teaching days when educational institutions (kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools) were fully and partially closed – excluding holidays and summer breaks (March 2020 – June 2021)

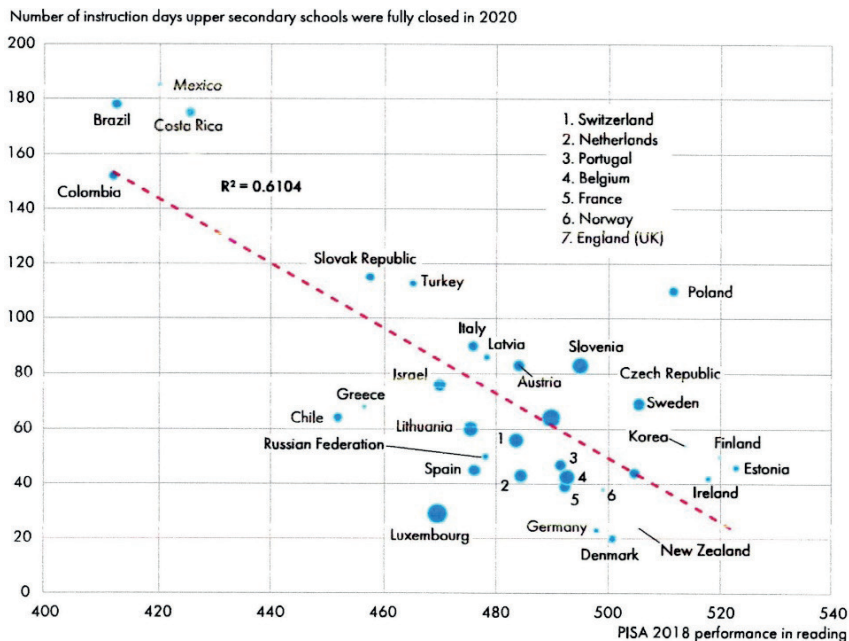


Source: *Millions of children across OECD countries had their schooling interrupted*. Retrieved from: <https://stat.link/txz1f5>

The educational policy towards the pandemic, in the light of OECD data, is very diverse. On average, in 37 countries during the period from March 2020 to June 2021, 20% of educational establishments were fully closed and 31% partially closed. In Poland, at that time, 35% of establishments were fully closed and 27% partially closed (Figure 4). There were also countries where educational institutions were not fully closed (0% – Australia, Sweden, Iceland, the USA) and those where most schools were fully closed (Mexico 82%) (OECD, 2021d). The greatest restric-

tions resulting in school closures occurred at the start of the pandemic. In general, the higher the organisational level of the facility, the longer they were closed. On average, between January 2020 and 20 May 2021, the following establishments were fully closed: kindergartens 55 days, primary schools 78 days, lower secondary schools 92 days and higher secondary schools 101 days (OECD, 2021f). In the case of kindergartens, national governments generally pursued policies consistent with the fact that the pre-school age of a child is particularly important for the child's cognitive and emotional development, and that providing effective means of remote teaching, remote play, etc. is extremely difficult for this age group and requires the participation of parents/guardians. For these reasons, kindergartens were closed shorter than schools, and 5 countries did not close them at all (January 2020 – 20 May 2021: Austria, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden). At the same time, Polish kindergartens were closed for 50 days, primary schools for 96 days, and secondary schools for over 190 days (this was one of the highest rates among the 30 countries surveyed – this type of school was closed longer only in Mexico).

Figure 5.
Full school closures and (reading) scores PISA 2018



Source: (OECD, 2021f).

It is worth noting that an analysis of COVID-19 infection rates by country shows that they are not related to the number of days that schools were fully closed,

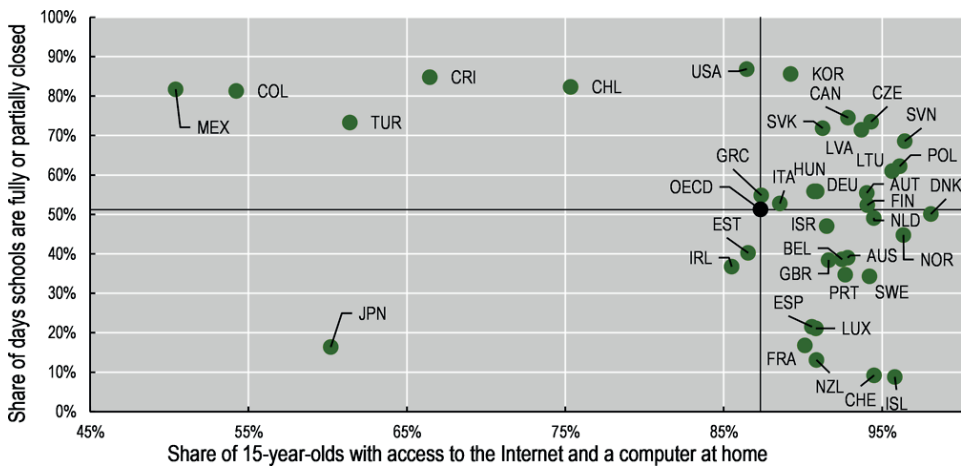
and that the number of COVID-19 infections varies significantly among countries with similar infection rates (but these differences may also be due to different numbers of tests performed). It was also found that the results of the 2018 PISA reading and reading comprehension test explain 61% (R square = 0.6104) of the variation in the number of days when upper secondary schools were fully closed in 2020 (Figure 5). It is clear that in countries with the longest school lockdowns (about 150–180 days – Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica), student achievement was the lowest among the 30 countries compared. In the group of countries whose 15-year-olds achieved more than 500 points in the PISA test (including Poland), i.e. above the average – there were 10 countries (including Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Korea – about 520 points), in which schools were closed for an average of several dozen days. Poland's position is slightly different in this respect: the good PISA score is 511 and in 2020 secondary schools were closed for 110 days. Of course, the different circumstances and political motivations in each country may have contributed to this varied situation. Where poorer results have been recorded – direct teaching was lost due to the lockdown to a much greater extent than in countries with “better” educational results. It is also likely that in the 4 countries of the Americas mentioned above, the provision of adequate conditions to reduce the effects of COVID-19 was more difficult than in other researched countries, and the school infrastructure and teachers were not fully prepared for hybrid teaching. This may mean that the epidemic not only causes educational inequalities between countries, but also widens these gaps. World Bank estimates indicate that the disruption of schooling caused by the pandemic may have led to an increase of 25% in the proportion of students scoring below level 2 in PISA (levels 1 and 2 being the worst among the 6 levels of achievement) (OECD, 2021e). Because of the pandemic, not only schooling was disrupted, but also the current methods of conducting examinations and tests, which forced changes – primarily in terms of form, but sometimes also in terms of content, scope of material, number of questions, etc. monitoring student achievement on an ongoing basis. In some countries, especially in 2021, additional teachers and other staff supporting pupils were employed (temporarily) (this was not applied in Poland). Teachers were also (in 18 out of 30 countries surveyed, as of May 2021 – including Poland) the occupational group prioritised for COVID protection/suppression vaccination.

In all the countries surveyed by the OECD, the education systems – when schools were closed – switched to distance learning. This was done using online learning platforms in primary and secondary schools (except in Sweden and Russia, where these solutions were introduced only in secondary schools). Other commonly used teaching methods included special educational packages to be used at home (student, teacher) and television. Both forms (platforms and packages + TV) were primarily used at primary and lower secondary school level – this was reported by 84% of the countries in the OECD study.

In parallel to the introduction of these teaching solutions, individual countries took steps to increase Internet access – including increased subsidies for the expansion of digital infrastructure and support for low-income households. Networks, social networks were also developed (often spontaneously, grass-root initiatives).

Figure 6.

Internet and computer access in the homes of 15-year-olds during school closures



Source: *Remote learning can be difficult if students lack access to digital tools*. Retrieved from: <https://stat.link/pnzm9d>

Figure 6 is an interesting illustration of two pieces of information: the vertical axis is the percentage of schools that were fully or partially closed, the horizontal axis is the percentage of 15-year-olds who have access to a computer and Internet at home (the graph is also very similar, when the notions “computers and Internet” were replaced by “a desk and a quiet place to study”). Both the lack of access to electronic tools, partly replacing face-to-face teaching, and the lack of one’s own desk – when schools are closed – create a much greater risk of deepening educational inequalities. It is easy to see that the parameters for the vast majority of countries exceed 90% of 15-year-old pupils having access to a computer and the Internet at home (including Poland: 96%). Several countries have rates of 50–60% in access to new electronic technologies for 15-year-olds (Mexico, Colombia, Turkey, Japan) and, apart from Japan, these are the countries where schools have been closed the longest. It may come as a bit of a surprise that in Japan “only” 60% of 15-year-olds have a computer and access to the Internet at home, and only a few per cent of schools were closed – one explanation comes to mind: learning took place directly and young people there no longer use computers, only the best smartphones. In Poland, students also often “connect” with lecturers via smartphones rather than computers.

The pandemic has particularly affected vocational education, where a significant part of learning is hands-on, often difficult or impossible to replace with online transmissions. Distance learning was widely used here, but it had its limitations. In 2020, in most of the countries surveyed (out of a total of 33), vocational/technical secondary schools (VET *matura* exam) and general secondary schools were closed an equal number of days (this was also the case in Poland). However, there were also countries where this type of vocational school was closed for a shorter period than general schools. These included Slovakia, Hungary and Latvia, while in the Netherlands secondary technical schools were not fully closed at all. Some parts of the practical learning were carried out in schools (while they were closed), through direct contact with students – this was the case, for example, in Latvia, Poland, Slovenia and other countries that used a hybrid teaching model (theoretical subjects – remote teaching, practical subjects – direct contact with students). Because of the pandemic, changes were made to the organisation of the school year and curricula in secondary vocational education. These included extending the school year, prioritising certain areas of the curriculum, practical skills. In the school year 2019/2020, such changes were not introduced by 13 countries (including Poland), in 2020/2021 – by 9 (including Poland) (OECD, 2021c).

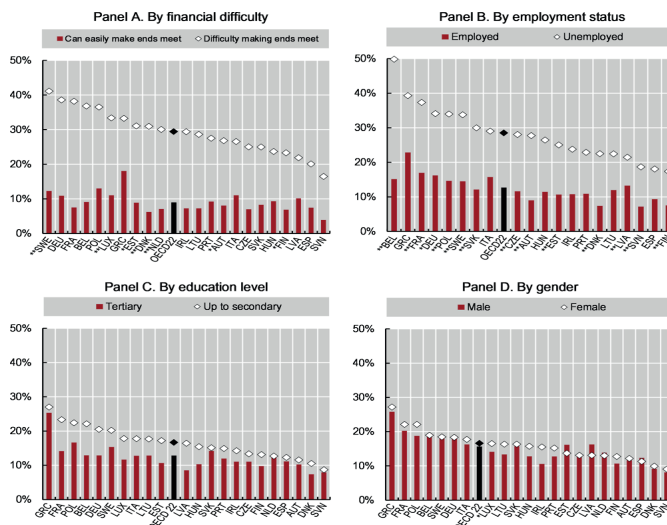
In a similar but later study (1 February 2021) involving 36 countries, only in 3 countries (Japan, New Zealand and Norway), both types of secondary schools were fully “open” with no hybrid teaching. In most countries (17), including Poland, secondary vocational schools were partially open. The partial opening of vocational schools for practical classes was linked to compliance with pandemic-related restrictions, but also to the possibility of compliance due to the convenient space of school buildings. In Poland, for example, practical classes were limited to 10 hours per week, in the Netherlands they could take place wherever a 1.5 m “social distance” was maintained. However, not all countries introduced countermeasures to close curriculum gaps in vocational education. Poland belonged to 15 of the 28 countries that implemented certain solutions, as well as to the group of countries (9) that applied the existing standards of assessment and examination.

So far, there are no international, more comprehensive studies on higher education, students, and if there are, they focus on the impact of COVID on the psyche and well-being of students during the pandemic. These issues are the subject of a survey conducted between 27 April and 7 July 2020 in 75 universities from 26 countries (21 from Europe and 5 from outside Europe; no Polish university took part in the survey) – these were countries described as at least moderately rich (Van de Velde et al., 2021). However, focusing on students only in terms of their well-being, their mental health, is valuable for several reasons. Students, according to the authors of the quoted article, belong to risk groups with psychological

problems – for various reasons. These include the steadily increasing pressure to study in recent decades and the declining social support of peers at the same time. In addition to national restrictions related to the pandemic, students were additionally bound by the regulations of university authorities. As in the case of lower levels of education – there was a reorganisation of teaching (face-to-face lectures were replaced by online contacts, research internships were partly abolished, the course of diploma thesis was adjusted, the mode of assessment and examination was changed, etc.), which caused a lot of uncertainty among students. Many student social activities were stalled, most were terminated; many students returned to their parents' homes (Van de Velde et al., 2021). Some students lost their part-time jobs that allowed them to at least partially pay for their studies or living expenses. The authors of the cited article, despite the still rather scarce data at the time, rightly claim that the group of young people aged 16–30 is one of the most affected in terms of psychological well-being. Despite the fact that the quoted text is only a methodological proposal (how to study student well-being – in terms of 7 modules and 67 indicators) addressed to university authorities, institutions responsible for higher education – it can and should be of interest to researchers addressing issues related to minimising the impact of the pandemic on mental health, especially of students.

Figure 7.

Percentage of people experiencing loneliness by educational level (tertiary – post-secondary school and higher – up to secondary)



Source: *Socio-economic risk factors for loneliness during COVID-19 are similar across European OECD countries*. Retrieved from: <https://stat.link/a29w34>

The comprehensive report (OECD, 2021d), discussed earlier, reported on the feelings of the respondents in terms of several risk factors causing loneliness during the pandemic: financial hardship, unemployment and education level, among others. Figure 7 panel C is an illustration of the latter factor (average of three surveys between April 2020 and March 2021). It is easy to observe that in all 22 countries studied here, the percentage of people feeling lonely, who have at most a secondary education, is higher than that of people with more than a secondary education. The OECD average is 17% for those with first-level education and 13% for those with third-level education. In Poland, these figures are higher – 22 and 17%, while Greeks felt the most lonely during the pandemic (27 and 25%, respectively). In light of this data, it can be concluded that higher education contributes to a larger extent to people feeling less lonely.

SUMMARY

The article presents only some of the issues related to the impact the pandemic has had on most spheres of life. There are many indications that we will continue to face COVID in the near future, but there are also signs that, despite the many uncertainties that still remain – as countries, as societies, we are at least partly able to cope with the pandemic, or are we simply getting used to it? New problems and new studies are likely to emerge, and these in the educational sphere will certainly include issues relating to the quality of teaching and the perception of acquired knowledge and skills which should be analysed in particular. Many teachers and lecturers perceive unfavourable changes, but these are individual perceptions – therefore, it is worth undertaking research in this area on a larger scale. And finally, a small hint of optimism presented during a jointly organised webinar (but based only on research conducted during the first wave of the pandemic) by AERA (American Educational Research Association) and the OECD – the society and education is becoming more resilient rather than confused, and schools should remain open as long as possible (AERA & OECD Forum, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

In many countries, because of the pandemic, gross domestic product has fallen, unemployment has risen and some families have experienced financial difficulties – for this reason, social policy should be reoriented.

Changes in the labour market and in the way some jobs are carried out require constant monitoring and decision-making to redress the imbalances that have arisen because:

- unemployment affected women to a greater extent, especially the less educated; only in the case of people with a university education gender did not differentiate unemployment levels,
- significantly more people with higher education could (and can) work remotely,
- high earners often did their work at home, while those with lower earnings stopped working,
- as a result of the pandemic, changes of attitudes towards values have been observed – people quit their current jobs, even when they have no other offer.

The pandemic has caused (in addition to health, economic, psychological effects, etc.) a certain increase in the health consciousness of the population.

From a teaching point of view, the pandemic has contributed to an increase in the level of familiarity with commonly used communication techniques-platforms, as well as the capabilities of the devices themselves (computers, laptops, smartphones, etc.). Huge changes have taken place at all levels of education. The “international” education policy towards the pandemic has both common and significantly different features:

- the higher the organisational level of the school, the longer they were closed,
- COVID-19 infection rates by country shows that they are not related to the number of days that schools were fully closed, and that the number of COVID-19 infections varies significantly among countries with similar infection rates,
- in countries with the longest school lockdowns and the lowest prior attainment of pupils, time was lost to improve these attainments, hence the epidemic not only causes educational inequalities between countries, but also widens these gaps,
- individual countries took steps to increase pupils’ Internet access (increased subsidies for the expansion of digital infrastructure and support for low-income households); networks, social networks were also developed (often spontaneously, grass-root initiatives),
- the pandemic has particularly affected vocational education, where a significant part of learning is hands-on, often difficult or impossible to replace with online transmissions.

Higher education to a greater extent contributes to the fact that people feel less lonely during the pandemic (lockdowns, quarantines).

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Annex – designation of abbreviations used in the graphs

AU Austria, AUS Australia, BEL Belgium, BRA Brazil, CAN Canada, CHE Switzerland, CHL Chile, COL Colombia, CRI Costa Rica, CZE Czech Republic, DNK Denmark, DEU Germany, ESP Spain, EST Estonia, FIN Finland, FRA France, GBR Great Britain, GRC Greece, HUN Hungary, IRL Ireland, ISL Iceland, ISR Israel, ITA Italy, JPN Japan, KOR Korea, LTU Lithuania, LUX Luxembourg, LVA Latvia, MEX Mexico, NLD Netherlands, NOR Norway, NZL New Zealand, OECD OECD average, POL Poland, PRT Portugal, RUS Russia, SVK Slovakia, SVN Slovenia, SWE Sweden, TUR Turkey, USA United States of America, ZAF South Africa (RSA)

ŻYCIE, PRACA I EDUKACJA W CZASIE PANDEMII (WYBRANE ZAGADNIENIA Z PERSPEKTYWY MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ)

Wprowadzenie: Obecna na całym świecie pandemia ma daleko sięgające i na ogół negatywne skutki dla życia jednostek, gospodarki, pracy, edukacji i kontaktów międzyludzkich.

Cel badań: Celem artykułu jest prezentacja i analiza wyników międzynarodowych badań dotyczących wybranych zagadnień związanych z pandemią COVID-19, takich jak bezrobocie, praca zdalna, a przede wszystkim – ukazanie oddziaływań pandemii na szeroko pojętą edukację.

Stan wiedzy: Większość publikacji odnoszących się do problematyki związanej z obecną pandemią ma charakter wycinkowy, dotyczy jednego środowiska i na ogół odnosi się do węższej problematyki. Dostępne bazy wiedzy/danych – krajowych, regionalnych, międzynarodowych – umożliwiają podjęcie opracowań analitycznych, odnoszących się do kilku, niekiedy kilkudziesięciu państw. Analiza kilku międzynarodowych opracowań pozwoliła ukazać, w jaki sposób pandemia oddziałuje na życie i edukację.

Podsumowanie: W artykule przedstawiono tylko niektóre kwestie związane ze skutkami, jakie pandemia wywarła na większość sfer życia. Prawdopodobnie pojawią się nowe problemy i nowe opracowania, a do takich w sferze edukacyjnej z pewnością będą należały te, w których analizie powinny być poddane przede wszystkim zagadnienia dotyczące jakości nauczania, percepcji przyswojonej wiedzy i umiejętności.

Słowa kluczowe: pandemia, COVID-19, bezrobocie, praca i nauka zdalna, zamknięcie szkół.