

Introduction

If in a crisis one can recognize the character of people and their personal qualities, then the past year has provided us all with sufficient opportunities to obtain such knowledge. The exceptional conditions set by the prolonged state of emergency in the Czech Republic not only in education, but also in other fields, such as healthcare, have required self-denial and determination of all those struggling with the new issues. Teachers, parents, students as well as professional public have been forced to think about the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on education at all school levels. The new coronavirus has become a part of our lives and has affected the societies all over the world more than we could or dared to imagine. The COVID-19-caused problem in our society has not become a health issue only, but also a social one.

In education, it has been affecting schools of all levels, pupils of all ages, their teachers as well as people's family lives. In spring 2020, most teachers, pupils and their parents had been unable to imagine teaching and learning online and it eventually had taken them several weeks to cope with the new digital environment. Later, after the closure of schools in October 2020, we were already better prepared for all of this when we were forced to switch to online teaching once again.

Perhaps the biggest changes were experienced by the older generation of teachers who had to supplement their long-term practice with the ability to teach using ICT and were often compelled to ask their younger colleagues for help. The more technically and digitally literate teachers praise the possibilities of online teaching and say that it is a good opportunity and preparation for teaching in the future. While online teaching is more challenging for teachers and pupils than face-to-face interaction, it is probably the best possible solution to ensure that teaching is implemented, at least partially.

Gradually, however, the issues arising in online teaching are being revealed. The disruption of the usual daily routine of pupils is a serious problem as well as the fact that they are gradually losing their working habits or are not able to develop them at all. What is more, the decrease in physical fitness due to long stays at a computer, tablet, or mobile phone in online lessons is another pandemic-connected problem. It results in the inability of pupils to focus during online lessons and to understand and

remember what was discussed in the lessons. The negative consequences of online teaching also include the absence of social contacts, resulting in feelings of loneliness and abandonment of some pupils, insecurity and fatigue accompanied by health problems, such as headaches, migraines, or defective posture. In the latest issue of this journal, we highlighted the widening social disparities between pupils and, as a result, the impending social exclusion.

The current situation generates research activities with topics focused mainly on the development of digital literacy, reflection on the consequences of online teaching and innovative or unconventional approaches in education. Despite the fatigue that manifests itself throughout the whole society, it is to be hoped that the situation will gradually improve, although it would be naïve to assume that life will fully return to its previous course.

Editors