Erasmus+ "Let's think about our future working life"

KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices

No. of reference: 2018-1-ES01-KA229-050307

CHANLLENGES, LIMITATIONS AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

FOR THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

UNDER THE NEW PANDEMIC CONTEXT

TIMPUL
Iași, 2021

The authors hold sole responsability for the scientific content of their papers.

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***"Teach your students to doubt, to think, to communicate, to question, to make mistakes,
to learn from their mistakes, and most importantly have fun in their learning."***

(Richard Feynman)

PLEADING FOR PROJECTS

"Let's think about our future working life"
Erasmus+ Project Romanian Teacher Coordinator
Bianca Burciu,
Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

This paper synthetically reflects on the complex overview on the effects of the new epidemiological context upon the educational systems in the partner countries of the project "Let's think about our future working life" and consequently upon the areas related to the project topic in order to fill in an empty space, to speak on behalf of every teacher from the different educational systems who have promoted through the activities they have been carrying out the students' active involvement at the social level and their openness towards partnerships with companies within their field of interest in view of choosing their future career.

In this respect one can find articles from the entrepreneurship field, an economic area undermined by the devastating effects of this pandemic which had to survive by reinventing itself in a creative way so as to teach endurance within an unpredictable social-economic dynamics.

Moreover, this guide includes opinions of teachers who have been fully affected by an unbalanced system taken by surprise more than ever by the pandemic and forced to remain sustainable due to the professionalism and humanity of truly committed teachers. Its table of contents includes a chapter with examples of good practice and lesson plans so thoroughly drawn up as to give an overview of the innovative practical solutions found by the teachers in the partner schools of the project and mirrored according to the teaching subjects.

The table of contents reflects on the project objectives and is meant to continue such European programmes as the best future strategy considering that the relationship with teachers from other educational systems is an interesting way of sharing experiences and exchanging solutions in terms of teaching students and truly invest in education.

The times we are living in have stopped people from travelling for epidemiological reasons and have made us communicate even more through partnerships. Teachers' solidarity everywhere and their common needs have helped us understand that we cannot place our children's future in lockdown. We must make them interact with children from different cultural areas and to understand that they are not alone facing the unknown.

The implementation of the new Erasmus+ programme is a consequence of reviewing educational policies by prioritising the European projects which are truly a solution in this respect because only together can we hold on as humanity to share experiences, connect to changes, and be the change ourselves.

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https://sites.google.com/view/ourfutureworkinglife
ACRONYM: OurFutureWorkingLife
Partners:
▪ Colegio Divina Pastora, Spain
▪ Colegiul Național "Costache Negruzzi", Romania
▪ Staicele Primary School, Latvia
▪ Uulu Primary School, Estonia

Period of implementation:
01.09.2018 – 31.08.2021
Short description of the project

The decision to initiate the project "Let's think about our future working life" originates in the problems and impacts resulting of the socio-economic and (un)employment crisis for students and young adults affecting European countries in different ways.

With the present project, we will try our students to reflect on the present economic situation, also on the labour market, and we will try them to produce creative and innovative ways of reacting to this situation.

Thinking about the needs of our schools, we consider that skills and competences are basics which schools should teach. Quite often, students don't know which skills are needed for their future working life. Before choosing their later profession, students have to learn what is important, what will be needed, which skills have to develop. After interviewing some local companies to know what they expect from their future workers, they told us as a conclusion that they would like us, schools, to teach more social skills (for example, to be polite with other people, to be honest, to be on time at their work, etc.).

Finally, there is an important group of students who are not interested towards the studies at school or continuing their further education to get higher qualification; they only want to finish school, with or without qualifications, work and earn money. This is something really difficult at the moment due to the lack of jbs and, by doing this, they won't be able to addapt themselves to the difficults they may face in the future in the labour market. We would like to show our students how important is to finish school and to prepare themselves for a good job.

General objectives:

✦ To learn about other countries' school systems in general and every schools' curriculum in particular;

✦ To compare and evaluate different school systems;

- To develop further, revise and adapt the existing curricula at every school;
- To install revised links between school and enterprises;
- To strengthen European and avoid nationalistic thinking;
- To improve students' and teachers' English language skills and competences, and enhance a meaningful use of the English language through interaction.

We would also like to fight against high levels of unemployment, among the youth, particularly students aged from 14 to 17, as they lack education in some aspects, experiences and certain skills and abilities.

The focuses of our project are:

- The specific promotion of knowledge the pupils need for their later work life;

- The awareness of different ways to solve existing problems, so that every student taking part in this project learns from other partners;

- The development of social competences like self-confidence and initiative;

- The promotion of their willingness for lifelong learning;

- They should be enabled and prepared to overcome the challenges of the national and transnational European labour market;

- Basic competences like self-initiative and responsibility will be sharpened.

Expected results:

- A partnership website will be created to upload all the outcomes of the project such as: good examples of presentations, lesson plans, video summaries, questionnaires, photo stories, essays, role-play simulating job interviews, school exhibitions, information walls and fairs of students' products.

- During the project, all ;progresses will continuously be published in an e-book, communication (content, results, questions, exchange of ideas and products) will be done via etwinning; all results will be shown on the partner and every school website as well.

- By doing this, students will develop certain skills – analytical thinking, problem solving, cooperation and teamwork, speaking and writing skills, creativity, enterprisingness, IT competences; they will learn about other cultures and ways of life; and work-life in their partners' countries .

- Families and school will improve their relations and cooperation via organising events or hosting guests. Local communities will be involved via the project activities as well. For example: the fair, an exhibition, job interviews, job shadowing etc.

- The project will give a professional enrichment for teachers, the exchange of good practices will give an opportunity to experience transnational cooperation work and new materials will be integrated in our curricular activities; also, better competences with regards to the use of ICT, and using the European languages.

With this project, we consider that students will be more engaged and motivated towards their studies; and this will contribute to the priorities above mentioned.

MOBILITIES:

ESTONIA: PURE NATURE (31th MARCH - 4th APRIL 2019)

LATVIA: SPORT AND IT 1(4th - 21th SEPTEMBER 2019)

ROMANIA: RECYCLING, CAREER PLANING, ENTERPRENERSHIP

(1st-7th MARCH 2020)

SPAIN: VISITS AT LOCAL COMPANIES, SIMULATION ON JOB INTERVIEWS, HANDICRAFT WORKSHOPS (virtual mobility: 10th - 9 th MAY 2021)

IN SUPPORT OF EUROPEAN TEACHING PRACTICE
TO CREATE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

HOW DIVINA PASTORA SCHOOL IN MONOVAR ADDAPTED TO COVID-19

Mónica Mas
Cristina Álvarez
Ana María Gómez
Colegio Divina Pastora – Monóvar (Alicante – Spain)

When the school year 2020/2021 started in September, none of us could think that our lives were going to experience such a huge change. We started that year with many projects to develop that, in the end, resulted impossible to carry out. After several weeks of uncertainty, the truth was that our health was in danger, so we had to close our schools and lock ourselves in our houses. All of us were afraid and felt insecure under these new circumstances.

We have a very close relationship with students and families; one of our main values as educators of the Divina Pastora school is what we call "accompaniment", the act of being close to people who need from our help and guidance. Therefore, the teachers working at the Divina Pastora School in Monóvar realized immediately that our students needed our help, now more than ever; we had to continue with our tasks, we had to continue helping our students in their process of growth. We were responsible of giving our students a certain kind of "normality" in a time when nothing could be considered as normal. This decision meant that we had to adapt ourselves and our teaching methods to the new reality that was in front of us.

The first idea to mention is that, for several years, our school has worked with an educational digital platform. It was for us a very useful tool since it allowed us to be in contact with the students. It also allowed us to organize online meetings daily with all the groups, to monitor them both academically and emotionally. Therefore, the use of this platform helped us react in a positive and fast way, at the time the pandemic was officially announced. After checking that the great majority of our students had technical devices and Internet connection that allowed them to continue with their classes from home, and after checking also that they and their families knew how to manage with technology, we took the decision to continue developing contents. This is an important point to mention, since the educational authorities in Spain considered that it was not compulsory to add more contents during the last term; on the contrary, the third term was considered mainly to revise those contents we had dealt with during the first and second terms. It is also relevant to say that, for those students that didn't have the possibility to connect to the online classes, the teachers prepared physical materials and find the ways to send them to their houses; these students were among the youngest ones in our schools.

Regarding the assessment of students during the lockdown period, we came to the agreement to modify the assessing criteria, for this period of lockdown. A higher percentage was given to the attitude and participation of the students during the online classes; also, to the handing-in of projects and class-work. And, of course, the exams were done online with forms and some applications like Kahoot, Quizlet, etc. Related to exams, we realized the importance of higher-level questions to

really appreciate the learning of our students. Of course, online teaching has its limitations mainly in compulsory stages. Therefore, in June 2020 we organized personalized reinforcement plans for those students that could need it.

Thinking about the impact of social distance in our students during the time of total confinement, it is really important for us to take into account different ideas:

- The school was close until September 2020; however, students could start going out from their houses at the end of May. From this moment, they started meeting with friends for certain activities such as doing sport outdoors.

- Monóvar is a small town; most of the students live close ones to the others, what allowed them to continue having contact with their friends, although the school was close until September 2020.

- Technology has also played an essential role in this sense. Students have been able to keep in touch thanks to technology, social media and different applications for online meeting. Something that has been considered as a threat at certain moments mainly for teenagers became, in the time of total confinement, an essential allied.

- Covid-19 infection rate was really low in the Valencian Community until October/November 2020, what allowed society here to keep a kind of normal life, of course with certain restrictions. So, in the summer of 2020 our teenage students could meet together and socialize up to a certain extent.

Therefore, by September 2020 there were not important changes related to their group cohesion due to all the points above mentioned.

One of the most significant learnings that teachers at the Divina Pastora school have acquired with all this experience is the importance of the developing of digital competences, both in our students and in the teachers. It was at first an enormous challenge; but this situation also offered us certain opportunities. It has made us awake and realize that we need our students to be digitally competent, also at lower stages. As a consequence, we have boosted the use of digital tool. Some of the actions that have been taken for the present school year related to digital competences are the following:

– We have given access to the digital educational platform to all our students, from the 1st of primary education.

– Some of the meetings among teachers are held online.

– The attention to families is also done virtually.

– Use of Chromebooks in secondary education.

– Selection of the suitable digital applications for learning, according the present lay of data protection for our students (digital educational platform and tools Office 365).

Regarding the KA229 Erasmus+ project "Let's think about our future working life", it was obviously affected by Covid-19. The transnational activity in Romania, held in the first week of March 2020, was about to be cancelled due to the unstable situation. As pandemic was not declared at that time, we decided to continue with the activity and it resulted a fantastic experience for all the participants. After that week in Romania, everything changed all of sudden.

The last transnational activity of this project was planned to happen in Spain, in May 2020; but the circumstances made us cancel this mobility. The four coordinators of the project thought the sanitary situation would be better in the following months, but all of us know that by March 2021 things are not suitable for developing an activity that involves the travelling of students to a different country. That is why we agreed on developing the activity virtually. Without any doubt, it is going to be a completely different experience from what we thought it was going to be; but at least we will be able to give an end to this fantastic project, that has allowed us to know wonderful people from three different and wonderful European countries. The fact that these activities will be developed virtually will allow us to emphasize our digital competences, both among teachers and students. And, without any doubt, we will be in contact with our project partners in Estonia, Latvia and Romania for new possibilities of working together in the future.

How has the present school year been affected by Covid-19 in our school?
The first thing to bear in mind when reflecting about this idea is that the Spanish government considered schools to be essential for our society. This means that keeping schools open for students was a priority for our government so, since September 2020, our classes have been full of students again. Needless to say that the returning to our classes was completely different and we had to take all the measures and restrictions to prevent infections. Some of the most important measures are social distancing (students cannot be closer ones to others than 1.5 m), compulsory use of facial masks (what makes communication more difficult), use of hand disinfectant, use of air purifying and keeping a good and constant air ventilation. These measures have made us reduce the use of scaffolds and cooperative learning structures; but they have also made us increase the use of IT and technology. Our meetings with families are still held online; and this also happens with talks and different activities for students.

Of course, some of our students have got infected from the virus during this school year, or they have had a contact with an infected person; this means that some of them had to keep a quarantine and staying at home for at least ten days. With them, the teachers have had a daily contact and, thanks to technology and our digital educational platform, these students have been able to continue with their learning from home, always with the support and guidance of their tutor and teachers.

Masks, physical distance, hygiene, confinements of students, digitalization, fear… If we say that this school year is being normal or easy, we are not telling the truth. But we are doing our best to provide our classes with a sense of normality, expecting real normal life to come to us the sooner the better.

THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL DISTANCE

Egle Rumberg
head teacher, Uulu Pohikool, Estonia

In my opinion is one positive aspect with COVID-19 that we can appreciate each other existence more than ever. I believe there are many students, teachers and parents who have never missed school so much before. When we collected in spring 2020 feedback to distance learning then many students and parents said that "we can do it", "I miss my school, classmates and teachers" and many students who have never confessed before that they miss school said "I want to come to school".

But of course, there are more negative aspects than positive. The main problem is the impact on mental health. I noticed last year how important is the teacher's room in our school. How much energy the possibility to drink coffee and talk with the colleague gives and how hard it is when it is not possible. On 2020 spring we couldn't go to school and had to teach from homes. That time confirmed again how important colleagues are. This year we have possibility to teach from schools also, and many teachers take this opportunity.

COVID-19 has raised also some students' anxiety. The worst is situations when it has taken so much from students to get used to with distance learning and in one day they again have to get used to with contact lessons. I have noticed that it is very hard for students whose mental health is not so strong. For students being without their classmates is also hard. COVID-19 has taught to students that school is not only learning place and how important are social relationships in our lives. They have understood that sometimes the other part of school is more important than formal education.

As a head teacher, I understand that it is harder to keep the team feeling and connection with students. When we are at school, then we see students and teachers every day and we notice when something is not so good. In today's situation, it is not so easy to understand that. It takes more effort to get that feeling and sometimes it isn't possible at all.

I believe that we can remember after the COVID also, how important we are for each others!

CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Vizma Lūse,
Staicele Primary School

Distance learning has provided new experiences and many challenges for both teachers and students and their parents - the shock and the need to decide quickly how to continue working, to ensure that students continue to learn and want to, to do everything possible, to ensure that learning in the digital environment helps to achieve learning goals and promotes both the development of metacognitive processes and the development of critical thinking, as knowledge testing and socio-emotional competence must be kept in mind to ensure that students learn to cooperate, learn to express their thoughts publicly, not to contact directly, but through the computer screen, loneliness, depression, the ability to accept diversity.

There are both positive and negative aspects to this process that every teacher has had to face, including me.

Teachers had to think about how to organize the curriculum, review the organizational forms of the curriculum, help students with poor reading skills and comprehension, read motivation to learn and reduce the desire to engage in other activities that are sometimes associated with the desire to do something, what is more interesting than thinking about learning, how to discipline students to meet deadlines for completing and sending assignments, and joining online lessons, how to make the process more active.

Distance learning required a lot of new skills and competencies in a short time - digital skills, conducting online lessons on the Google Meet platform, communicating with students and their parents, and, of course, planning one's own time.

It was very important to learn to give clear, concise and constructive instructions on what and how students should do, and to teach students to read what is required carefully and then to understand and be able to define exactly what they do not understand. Throughout this unusual learning process, I realized that it is essential to teach students time management and self-directed learning skills, because without them, distance learning is not successful.

When offering tasks online, teachers had to carefully evaluate the scope of the tasks in order not to overload the students, to think about how to provide effective feedback, and this motivated to change the ways of working, to look for a creative approach to achieving the set results.

Even before the national restrictions on the spread of Covid-19, I wanted to try new information technology tools in the classroom, but only now did I learn new digital tools through distance learning and teaching, and finally had the opportunity to try those I already knew but didn't have the opportunity or time to do. I gained confidence that I could use a variety of digital tools in my lessons, work on online platforms, and teach my colleagues, and I am pleased about that.

I have come to the conclusion that students, who are considered as a digital generation , do not really know how to use ICT, they lack the digital skills needed for learning, because their digital skills are limited to social networks, they use technology more often to watch videos and play games, chat with each other, etc.

In our school, lessons in distance learning are mostly in blocks (2 lessons in total). We inform about the planned in the next lesson (online or not) the previous day by placing the information in the class diary. In the first lesson I usually choose an online lesson, but in the second lesson the students work independently, Sometimes I also use the inverted lesson, when students have to get acquainted with the topic material (video, presentation) independently before the lesson, but in the lessons we deepen our knowledge about this topic, do tasks and analyze them.

For online use, I use the Google Meet platform, which is related to the Google Classroom, where I post materials and assignments for students, including tests. To diversify my tasks, I use such online tools as quizizz.com, kahoot.com, padlet.com, liveworksheets.com, mentimeters.com, etc., to introduce the topic- You Tube video.

I teach in Grades 3-9, so it takes a lot of time to plan all lessons, find the necessary resources, visual information, prepare assignments to be different, interesting for students to complete, videos, give feedback both online and in writing all together and each individually. On the positive side, even now, during distance learning, I can still use textbooks and workbooks for 3rd – 6th Grade students, because they are also in electronic format, they can be shared with students in class.

The most students are organized, try to follow, actively participate in online lessons, are able to complete tasks independently, seek information independently, create presentations themselves, are able to organize their learning independently, show initiative and interest, looking forward to feedback.

A great helper for teachers in creating lessons is the Project 'Tava klase' ('*Your Classroom'* project), which was created in the spring of 2020 to support students' further learning during the country's declared external situation of Covid-19 when full-time education at all educational institutions in Latvia was discontinued. The government provided funding for the creation of original audiovisual content and its transmission on free-to-air television platforms and websites. It offers 20-minute video lessons for all grades students in different subjects. These videos are viewed on the website www.tavaklase.lv. More than 100 teacher practitioners from all over Latvia were involved in the creation of the content, and these digital teaching and methodological tools continue to be developed.

I have met and continue to get to know my students from a different point of view, because the current communication is different and also more intense than in everyday work at school, I found that students are able to be creative and independent, surprisingly different than sometimes I think.

Of course, it is more pleasant to work in class with children in person. Keeping in touch with students is very important, especially in this time of distance learning. Students express an opinion due to the lack of socialization with their friends and classmates, the need for emotional connection with teachers in person is great, because communication with a living person is important for the psychological and mental well-being of both pupils and teachers, as they show emotions, a positive attitude and a supportive tone of voice, so it is important to talk to students about how they are doing, how they are learning, because unfortunately not all children have the same living conditions, family and parental support- in this situation the relationship between parents and children is very important.

Although there is a lot of work, I continue to be an optimist and I try to motivate my students to be positive too!

CHALLENGES, LIMITS, INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Francesca Neiviller,
ITC Vittorio Veneto, Latina, Italy

Covid -19, has completly changed our life!! Actually we would never espect anything like that!!. At first we all were astonished, Especially when we were in lockdown, we started realizing how fragile we are, how life is so unpredictable and how vulnerable we are. I'm starting with considering this event on the emotional side, because we really didn't know what to do !! But then we started making up our minds, we began thinking about the way we had lived our life so far, then we understood what it really matters in life: our health, our environment and our relationships with the people we love. Of course this event has affected all sectors of our communites all over the world, without any difference, we all were on the same boat!! As for education, it has been like a kind of ztunami!!. None of us was ready to face this new scenario and act properly!! Let's say that in Italy, education was already in crisis!! So the Covid19 has deeply accelerated this phenomenon. Teachers have immediately used all new tecnologies and softwares to teach in order not to lose their students, even though nobody had trained them, of cousre they weren't digital but they suddenly turned into the digital world making lots' of mistakes, but being responsible for their role in their community. We can actually say that distance or remote learning has paradoxically turned into close learning, otherwise our students would have been deprived of their right of learning !! At the same time this phenomenon has clearly sent a message to all of us that we are at a turning point, societies cannot go on living as they have done so far, we have new challenges to tackle such as, climate change, immigration and new technologies, they are the three key issues upon which the Next Generation Fund has been releaesd by EU and the Agenda 2030 has been appointed by the UNO. Both documents remind us that Education is strategic for a better world for our next generation. Teachers have to embrace this change and act properly, because the world is not the one we have lived so far, we have to provide our students with those skills so that they can be protagonist of their life and their communities.Teachers need to be trained , considering the following aspects:

- getting into the new digital mindset
- protecting the environment,
- going sustainable
- introducing a circular economy,
- founding communities on solidarty, tolerance and respect!!

Considering that our planet is not unlimited,unfortunately and we have already damaged a lot, being conscious that it's in danger and must be protected to guarantee the best future to the next generations!! It's giving for granted that Europe places a relevant role in this perspective.

More and more all European member states should work together,investing in education, it should be the motto of all Europeans. The Erasmus Plus program is the best strategy to achieve this common aim, making our students better educated, giving them the chance to study and work together will make them have a better life and be protagonist of their life.

As I said we are on the same boat, alone we would go nowhere, so sharing our experience, exchanging our good practice are the foundings to manage what we cannot still forsee.

YES TO THE EUROPEAN PROJECTS

Loredana Vitcu, Economist
Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

" It does not matter how hard one works, but how smartly one does it."
John Maxwell

We are living historical times and we are somehow aware that it is in our inner strength to trigger the change we all need.

Closing schools, along with stopping classes and activities on medium term have generated a major issue which our society has had to face: how can we continue the educational process? How can we ensure the right to education in the disadvantaged areas? Can we make a society progress only through online communication and what will the consequences of this change be? All these issues are one of the highest concerns of online education considering that there is nothing clear at present as far as coming back to normality is concerned. Online learning, teaching or communication alone would have been unimaginable lest be prepared to be turned into practice.

Nowadays the impact of digital transformation upon society and labour market aside is extremely obvious, just like upon the education and training systems. From this perspective, digital transformation in the education field goes along with the connection progress, the large usage of devices and digital apps, the need for individual flexibility, and the high demand for digital skills.

The "Covid-19" crisis reshaped the educational practice from the "face-to-face" interaction to the online environment which led to a series of reflections emphasizing the fact that teaching, learning, and the emerging technology cannot be taken separately, but wholly, thus shaping the future of digital education.

Throughout this period of time the words "project", "request for funding" or "project proposal" have become some of the most used expressions in general conversation in order for us to meet the present requirements of the European standards as concerns professional training and development, provision of equipment to support the online education, remote work (work from home), and the purchase of disinfectants. This is happening since we are witnessing a real boost of projects, a field in which it has been regular practice to attract non-refundable financial sources to solve the above mentioned issues. The projects of any kind, whether large or small, investment or soft-like, reaching high or not, are attractive for many organisations.

The word "project" is understood as a long lasting activity, formal, complex, and complicated, and also as an almost unusual kind of performance that can be achieved only by a small number of "initiated" people. I don't agree with this choice and I state that although writing projects is not a mere activity, being tackled with minimum knowledge, it can be developed so as to reach perfection and used in drawing up and implementing new projects. They cannot be carried out by a single person so cooperation between several people is necessary because **"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it." (H.E. Luccock)**

So what is team? One of the most famous definitions states that **"A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."** (**Katzenbach și Smith**)

Therefore, we must cooperate and work together to reach goals in order to get good results at the institutional, local, national or international level. It takes time to do that, and a team is built through a systematic process until it reaches a new level through synergy.

"Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success!" (Henry Ford)

THE VOICE OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS
THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS
UNDER THE PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

AGILEROO – PANDEMIC EXPERIENCES

Diana Lefter, founder

I am Diana Lefter, entrepreneur, teacher and computer programmer, founder of agileroo - coding and entrepreneurship school for kids and teens. Since the pandemic started, our school moved is operations completely online, since it is quite natural to teach kids how to code online. agileroo is a vocational school, kids and teens are coming here because they have a passion for coding – so our trainers didn't have to deal heavily with lack of attention and engagement. Many kids who are attending agileroo are gamers – they are familiar with technology and using various tools online – they are digitally fluent and tech savvy. So I would say that our online teaching experience was a bit easier than what other teachers might have been experiencing. I will share some things we do at our school and I will provide a list of digital tools that can be used for delivering remote learning experience, focusing on video content and interaction.

The tool of choice we use for teaching at agileroo is Discord – you can share files, you can video conference or audio conference – it has all the features offered by MSTeams or Zoom or GoogleMeet. Most kids are familiar with this tool, which is the platform they use for gaming. A feature I like the most and Discord provides, creating strong connections between students and between students and teacher while teaching online is "Private Rooms" (or "Breakout rooms"): you divide the kids in your class and ask them to work on different projects in these private rooms. You create 3 or 4 private rooms, where they can chat and collaborate, you can visit each room and talk to each small group, but you also make sure that they have time to interact freely. After a certain amount of time, which you communicate to your students at the beginning of the class, everybody comes back on the main teaching channel. Actually, creating a visual representation (in terms of time) of what will happen during class is something which works very well, since kids know what to expect. Using private rooms creates excellent connections between kids or teens. If you form groups which are working great together, don't change them: kids get more engaged when working with their friends. Give them some "ice-breakers" for their private room – something fun to do, with very clear instructions about what is needed, and ask them for something (a code snippet for example) to present when they return to the main room. Giving them something to finalize will keep them on-task. You will get excellent responses if the task matters to students – if you don't get the responses you are waiting for, relevance may be something you want to work on. It is important to give them their own time where they can chat - you can use Slack for this.

Everything I am describing above are ways to keep students engaged and connected in a disconnected world. We managed to build a community where kids feel that they are belonging, an environment where they feel safe and open up.

There are tools with which you can create interactive learning experiences - interactive online learning modules, where students can click through various instructional components, take quizzes, play games. Some are requiring more time to create content with – but you can offer something different and more fun than the standard: GoConqr, Deck.Toys, BookWidgets, and Wizer. My personal favorite is Genially.

My favorite way to communicate with kids and even with parents is through video content.Once you have a good video – created by your or from the internet– you can share it directly with a link or use something like Edpuzzle or PlayPosit to build a complete lesson around that video. I like to use videos created by Khan Academy (offers a massive library of videos on math, science, and arts & humanities, history) or youtube channelslike National Geographic, the History Channel, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. If you want to create videos yourself - use screencastify.com. This recorder is built right into Google Chrome, which makes it an incredibly convenient tool for creating on-the-spot screencasts. As of right now, the editing tools are still kind of rudimentary, which means you're not likely to end up with a very polished end product. Still, for many purposes, this tool gets the job done quickly and easily. Watch this video to learn how to use it.

ZERKANA

Miguel Hernández,
Director técnico Zerkana Monóvar (Alicante – Spain)

I am Miguel Hernández and since 1995, I have been a computer consultant. At the beginning, I started in a small company in Alicante that was devoted to the install computers in gaming halls around Spain, which allowed me to travel a lot when I was 18 years old. Later I set up my own company named *Zerkana*, which began serving people and companies that needed a computer, to gradually serve larger companies and other areas of Spain and around the world. Today my company maintains many thousands of worker computers and servers that store a lot of information.

Technology and computing are constantly changing, so we always have to be learning new programs and new technologies. If we want to be good at what we do and we want to still be called by our customers, we have to learn and control very well what is being installed on computers right now and learning what will arrive in few years. We like this very much because we love our job.

At the beginning, we worked for companies and people in our town, Monóvar, but soon other companies called us because they heard that we respond quickly when they called us. They knew that when we fixed a problem we did it well. Thanks to the Internet, we share in our blogs all our knowledge and everything we learned from customers. Other companies read our blogs and saw that we fix problems that they also had. In addition, people from Microsoft read me too and called me to make speaks in events throughout Spain and around world. During my speeches, I share my experiences with the public, so they ended up calling us from almost all over the world.

Sharing knowledge with the community made me receive an Award called *"Microsoft Most Valuable Professional"* (MVP) ten times in ten years. This allowed me to travel to Seattle, to the Microsoft complex! I made good friends there and I'm able to tell them what my clients in Alicante ask from me. I'm also able to learn from Windows programmers that they were students like you and me who work there after studying hard.

How was my company affected by Covid-19?

Well, we have had to set up a lot of technology so that company workers can work from home. Before, in order to open a file or be able to make an invoice, workers had to go to the office and now, during the Covid-19, we have had to quickly make them to be able to do all their work from home. They can do all their work from home, in a safe way in order to avoid the hackers to entry in their businesses.

What did we do to adapt our company to the new situation?

In our company, we already allowed workers to work from home and although it was good to coincide during the day, we also allowed each worker to do the things they have to do at the time the want. We work with our minds, and there are people who have a very active mind at night and others have it during the day. So, it's been easy to adapt us to this new situation. We had the IT systems ready and all the workers had laptops so it was easy to be able to work from home.

Talking about schools and about the educational systems, we would recommend, above all, to work on facing new things and situations, knowing how to face and trust yourself when you are in front of a problem that you have never seen; trust yourself when confronting an opportunity that will generate fear or respect, and be able to know how to analyze and face it a safe way. I would also highly recommend working on creativity and self-criticism. We can only improve if when we are doing something for a customer, whoever pays us can freely tell us if they didn't like something. We don't have to be afraid of being told that we could have done it better and, sometimes, we are scared about that. We can only trust in our abilities.

Improvement, empathy, courage and confidence is what we think must be empowered in students. Getting everyone to listen to what they like to do, develop the capacities that each person has. Allow students to advance in their studies when in some subjects they have very notable and clear qualities despite the fact that in others the famous 5 is not achieved.

NOVAGESTIÓN asesores, SLP

Silvia Belda Mira
NOVAGESTIÓN asesores, SLP
Novelda, (Alicante – Spain)

My name is Silvia Belda Mira and I am a business economist. I studied Administration and Business Management in the University of Alicante, Spain. My first job was as an accountant at a company, for four years. After this first job, I started working at a consultancy in the accountants department. Four years ago, in 2017, one of my colleagues and I decided to start our own adventure and created the company *"NOVAGESTIÓN asesores, SLP"*, from which I am a partner and manager.

First of all, I want to say that I am a mother of two girls of 9 and 6 years old. This means that I have to find a balance between my professional career and motherhood, which is sometimes a difficult task. Therefore, working from home for me is not something new. Because of this, I was ready for the lockdown in the Spring of 2020; I was ready from a technological point of view, but also from a psychological perspective. Since my two daugthers were born, I've had to work from home, mainly when they were ill. From my house, I have a direct connection to my office, as well as my three colleagues have.

Before the pandemic, most of our customers (mainly self-employed) brought the paperwork for their accountancy physically to our office. At the time of the total lockdown, that's to say one year ago, it was a kind of "chaos" because there are a lot of customers, even young ones, that are not used to technology; but they had to adapt to the new situation and they had to send us the information for the calculation of their taxes. So, I gave them different easy options; for example, they could send us their invoices by *Whats App*, they could make pictures to the different documents and send them to us with their mobile phones. They found this way very easy and useful. To other customers, I taught them how to download invoices from web pages and how to use the e-mail to send those invoices to me. Besides, using tools for having online meetings helped me to keep the contact with my customers.

Many of these technological changes came to stay with us forever. We continue having restrictions in Spain at present; so, the attendance of customers to our office is much fewer than before pandemic. At the beginning, it was difficult to get used to the new methods; but we have checked that this new way of working has many advantages. And we have also improved our IT equipments for a possible new lockdown in the near future.

It is in schools where I found the greatest difficulties during the lockdown period. In my opinion, schools were not ready for the distance teaching and learning. As a mother, I had to download educational platforms that, at the beginning, were very rudimentary and difficult to use. At home, thanks to my job, I have the necessary devices for my daughters to work with the contents their teachers sent them at that time. However, not all the families were in the same situation to be

able to follow the online classes. This fact has to serve as a prove that the future is technological; and that we must start using technology with our kids, in the educational system.

If we want to prepare our students for their future working lives, it is essential that we help them use technology, the use of mobile devices and, above all, to make them learn how to surf the Internet properly. The future is virtual. Our kids must be able to find contents, process information, know how to use it, send it and share it. Schools should leader the use of technology so that students can be ready and well-prepared for their future. Now, it is not so important to memorize contents that you can easily find with a "click"; the question now is to get advantage of this tool and know how to use it.

We have the example in the social networks and online games. Kids use mobile phones with a large number of APPs for socializing and getting in contact with the world. This is an incomparable potential. They can communicate in real life with people in any part of the world. We know there are risks, and this is why schools and families must work together to warn about the negative consequences of a wrong use of the Internet and social networks.

Finally, I think it is essential that schools start using technology in their classes so that our kids can be ready for the present, because the future overtook because of a virus.

DETECTALIA

José Manuel Quiles
CEO in Detectalia
CEO in Aliacloud Consulting
CEO in Vinalopó Market
Inventor of a sterilizing tunk for microorganism, including Covid

All the companies and businesses have been affected by Covid-19 in a negative way, with a more or less impact. Many are the factors that have an influence on this. However, in those companies that had correctly implemented digitalization and automation processes, the impact was not so negative.

The present sanitary situation has confirmed that, in the life of a company, any unpredictable facts may happen; and these unpredictable facts may change dramatically the situation of that company and its surroundings. Being able to face these unfavourable situations in a positive way is directly related to its digitalization and automation, since these factors increase the capacity to react and adapt to a changing environment.

What I have mentioned before could easily be taught in the schools, with the study of programming, starting by something easy and simple, increasing the difficulty according to the abilities, needs and curiosity of the students. I can tell you an example of an easy task that is related to programming and that does not require important knowledge about IT. With a mobile phone, the App Alexa and some intelligent sockets compatible with Alexa we could programme that, when the teachers enters into the classroom, Alexa could detect the teacher's mobile phone, regulate the suitable temperature, switch on the light and the projector; we could even regulate the intensity of the light, when there is light enough or even switch it completely if it is not necessary. Isn't it interesting? We could reduce the expenses in electricity and we could be more efficient in tasks that are repeated daily. If we do this, we can have more time to develop other activities.

And this is the clue. The more processes we are able to automate and the easiest way we come to the information (in a digital format) we would have more time and capacity to overtake the events and react against negative situations. The relationship between automation and a quick access from any place to the information of a company (digitalization) gives us the information or us to know the past mistakes, and take the necessary decisions in the present; also, to foresee the future.

Another example related to this. Imagine a restaurant with an habitual customer. Every first Friday in the month, the customer goes to the restaurant. In most of the cases, this customer orders pizza with ham for dinner. Last time this customer went to the restaurant there was not ham, so the customer is not happy because he wanted to take his favourite pizza. It was also his birthday that Friday, so he was even more unhappy. How can automation help in this situation? If the owner had established a protocol (programming) by means of which the workers should ask the customers

certain details in a customer card, the restaurant could have had this valuable information to avoid this type of mistakes. They could even have known it was his birthday, giving him a particular present such as his favourite wine. The customer would be happy with his favourite meal and with the present, thinking he is important for the people in the restaurant. It is a way of gaining loyalty.

It seems strange, but there are many companies that do not have updated databases. If they had, they could offer their products in an easy way, even in pandemic. Database, automation and digitalization should be the present; but they will be the future for sure.

ATELIER PILAR AMORÓS

Pilar Amorós
Fashion designer
Monóvar (Alicante – Spain)

I am Pilar Amorós, a fashion designer. In our workshop, we produce artistic and slow fashion, emphasizing our own designs and the artisan work. Our pieces are unique and they contain our soul. These are tailor-made clothes, produced in an artisan way. We pay special attention to every detail and we try to transmit the legacy of the Spanish tradition and culture. We work the slow fashion because we want to respect ourselves, our customers and the natural environment. Without these values, our atelier would be inconceivable.

We produce under the philosophy "make to order". In this way, we don't overproduce with collections and stocks, knowing that the natural resources are limited. We want to offer quality and timelessness, so that our designs can last in time.

The present crisis we are experiencing due to COVID-19, has placed our modern world in front of different barriers we hadn't even thought about before. We considered our science to be able to face everything; but we have discovered that we are so vulnerable.

Among the consequences of this crisis, we have seen the shortage of protection equipment for sanitary workers. At first, these essential workers had to fight against the virus without the necessary materials and defences. Many fashion designers and sewing workshops realized of this situation and put hands on this problem. We started producing hospital gowns and masks; and we did it in a volunteer way.

Once more, we saw that we could work together against a common problem, being able to stop the situation. We were fighting against this crisis with creativity, but also with important values that were transmitted from ones to the others; and this resulted in the forming of an incredible human team. I must emphasize "human team" and "values" because it was here where we found our strengths: heart, mind, resilience, empathy, determination and reason. I consider these values should be more promoted in our educational centres in order to prepare real leaders, able to take decisions in difficult situations, but also able to have a long term vision.

From this voluntary work, in our workshops, we learnt a lot. We acquired a lot of information for the producing of masks that became later essential in our daily lives. We were concerned about the non-reusable material that started being used; those are highly polluting materials. So, we decided to make a research on how to produce sustainable, re-usable and practical masks. This fact has contributed to the survival of our atelier, so much affected by the lockdown and restrictive measures since our products are closely related to social life and activities.

In this world in which our image is so important due to the growing influence of digital platforms and social networks, highly emphasized now due to the pandemic, I think it is essential for our schools to promote the value of arts, communication and image; students should learn how make a correct reading of those images that daily come to us; and they must also learn to do a good use of their own images. Our society needs culture, arts and humanities to promote our creativity and give us all the necessary information from history, to be able to progress towards the future in a safer way. Science, technology, arts and humanities must come together.
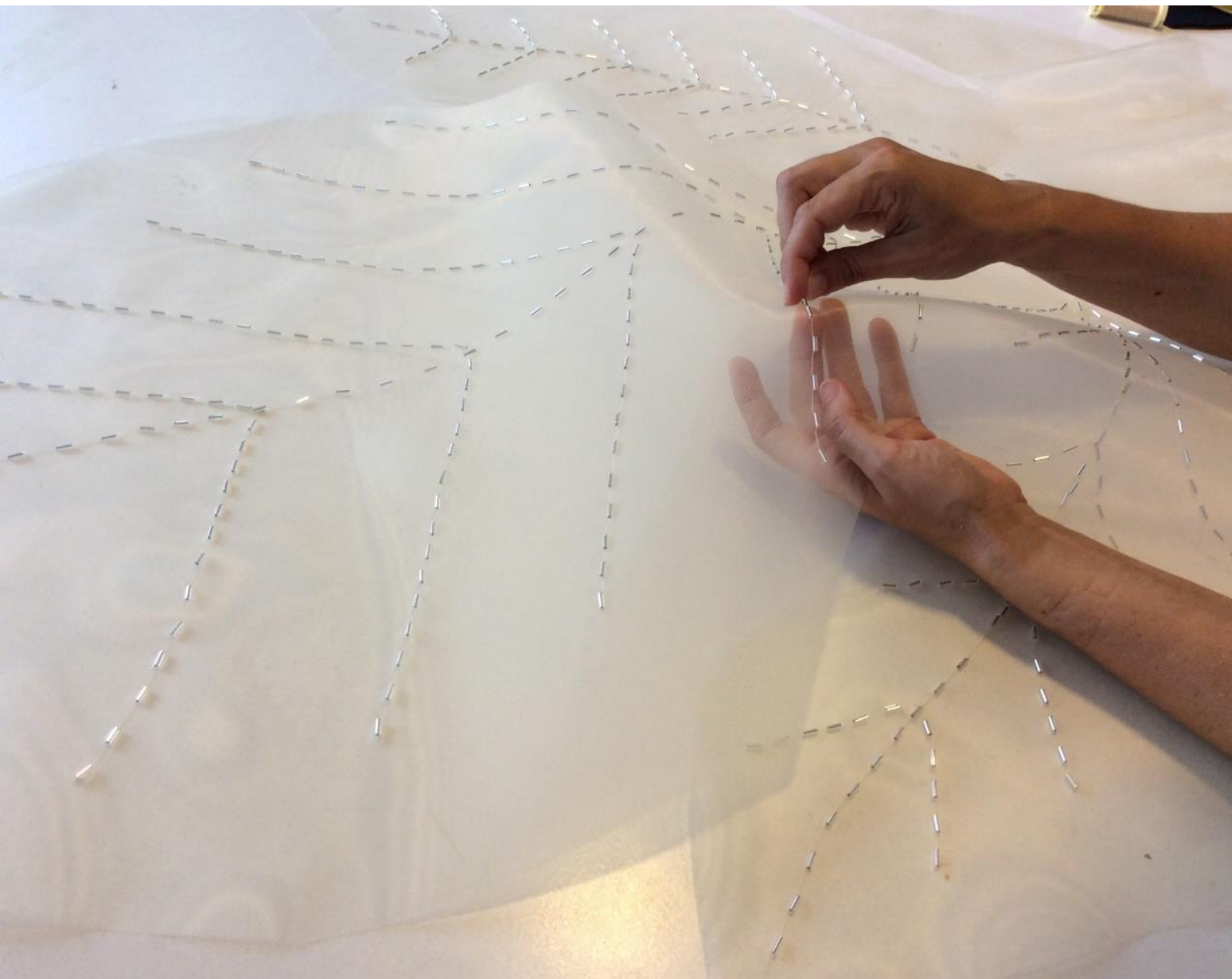
BAR-RESTAURANTE HERMANOS CALPE

José Damián Calpe Rico
Bar-Restaurante Hermanos CALPE
Monóvar (Alicante – SPAIN)

We are a family that we manage a small restaurant inherited from our parents. They started the business in 1968 and it is called "Bar-Restaurante Hermanos CALPE".

Our *cuisine* is based on typical local food from the Mediterranean diet. Our clients are basically local people that know us for a long time; they know we work with products from the area, with reasonable prices, but we also adapt our cooking to the new tendencies in cooking.

During the time of lockdown, that for restaurants was between March and May 2020, the income was nothing. Government implemented minimum economic measures for these kind of businesses. However, we still had to continue paying different expenses and taxes; this was a very difficult time. Restrictions started being not so strict in May; so we could start working again and recovering partially. We had to adjust the opening times, reduce our expenses and contract less staff.

After a year of pandemic, what I have very clear in mind is that there is nothing certain in life. Something positive from this situation? We all must enjoy more with our families, relatives and friends. Running a restaurant is a hard and demanding task. I have personally realized that it is very important to run the business in a correct way; but I must pay attention and devote time of quality to my family.

PANDEMIC IN MY LIFE

Anabel Belda Ibáñez
Agriculturist
Novelda (Alicante – Spain)

My name is Anabel Belda Ibáñez. I am an agronomist and I have developed my professional career as a self-employed in the agricultural and farming sector.

Due to my job, I have always been in contact with farmers and cattle breeders, beekeepers, gardeners, etc. All of them are fantastic people that, the same as all of us, have suffered and continue suffering the consequences of the pandemic by Covid-19. This has changed our way of living and working a lot. All these people are hard workers and they have taught us a lesson about dignity and responsibility, always thinking about the interests of society instead of thinking about their own interests. They have been exposed to the virus showing a great strength that is worth to praise. I will not get tired of thank them how they made our lives possible and easier during those difficult times.

This was considered as an essential sector, so we continued working from the very beginning. We were afraid; but we were also responsible and we continued working so that everyone could have access to the necessary products for our survival, as food.

I also work as a Technical Secretary of the Official College of Agriculturists in the province of Alicante. This job has allowed me know how pandemic has affected my professional colleagues.

With our job, we are very close to farmers; this a physical proximity that I have seen affected by the security restrictions that we have had to comply with since the lockdown. At first, we couldn't even be present, as we were used to, in the farms. So we had to advise and accompany them in the distance. This is something new for us. There were some actions that we had to do physically in the farms; during those actions, fear was present: fear to be infected and to take the virus into our houses.

When restrictions started being not so strict, and when we started getting to better know how to protect ourselves from the virus, we could restart our normal activities. This is a good thing about our profession: most of the actions take place in the open air and, as we all of us know, this is a positive situation to avoid the virus.

One of the most important changes due to pandemic has been, without a doubt, the dependency on technology. IT and online work has come into my life in a way that could have not imagined just one year ago.

My job in the Technical Secretary of the Official College of Agriculturists has changed to be 100% online, working from home and developing all the processes of official endorsement in this way. In this way, physical presence has totally disappeared. The same has happened with the enquiries and doubts from users; they are all answered by pone or electronically.

It is in this point in which I have discovered my needs: in the knowledge of IT tools and digitalization in general. I have had to learn at a high speed to use several already existing digital tools that were not necessary for me some months before. Therefore, I had to renovate my

knowledge to continue with my job. I have prepared myself, I have studied, I have asked for advice and I have updated myself.

I take an important lesson from everything I've lived in the last months; and I consider that it must be taken into account by educational authorities, schools and students: the future is digital and technological. Young people must be ready for the future; and the future is already here. The preparation of young people must come in this way, because there will be a great number of jobs related to digital life. If young people are not trained from a digital perspective, their access to the working life will be very difficult.

In the period of Secondary Education, most students get away from scientific and technical studies and subjects what results in many students not choosing these careers when they come to university. This is a terrible mistake, from my point of view because, as I said before, most of the future jobs will come from this way.

That's why I think educational centres must guide and advise students for their continuous treatment of technical and scientific subjects. Students consider these subjects as difficult or "unreachable"; schools must help them understand this idea is completely wrong. It is, of course, possible to become an engineer or a scientist. From my own personal experience, I can tell them it is something possible; and the result is a gratifying job.

Talking again about pandemic, and thinking about a positive learning I take from it, without any doubt I consider essential the value we have as human beings, the capacity we have to face and overcome difficult situations, and the solidarity we have proved to have. In this period, whenever I have picked up the phone to ask for a favour or a collaboration in some issue related to my job, I have always found positive people, even unknown, eager and ready to help me. I think this is the most important characteristic that, as human beings, we must emphasize.

HOW CORONAVIRUS HAS AFFECTED HOBBIES

Marek Sild
Entrepreneur
Marek Sild owns a company that offers young people cooking lessons in different schools.

The spread of the coronavirus has had a major impact on the cooking circles of young people in Pärnu County, as well as many other companies. The company's turnover has fallen by 50 to 60 percent. The year is full of economic downturns. At the beginning of the crisis, it was unimaginable how much it could affect the company due to the lack of information on how long the crisis will last. We have had to put in a lot of effort, both at the expense of sleep and family. There were not many events where the participation of young people had to be high in order to be able to sell their products and thus learn more about entrepreneurship. The company also deals with catering offers (catering, catering for outdoor events, equipment rental), then the decrease in turnover was the largest. Summer events were also missed.

We have had to make big changes in the company, both in the activities of the cooking groups and in the catering service offerings. From the first day of the crisis, I was already sure that I would have to go through the cooking circles of the web. Immediately, negotiations began with the people with whom the cooking states were taking place, and the result was, yes, the answers that were supper researched. Now we could start preparing the first ship cooking rounds. We made our own Facebook page for all 15 cooking rounds, where we could start doing ship cooking.

At first, it was difficult to give virtual lessons, because he was not used to performing, talking alone, filming, etc. I also involved a filmmaker who is filming a cooking spirit and later we also made instructional videos in a free style. We can say that the innovative solutions that have been invented are unique cooking lessons. Filming with the phone began and camera-making began to develop. Life became more comfortable but more expensive. In addition to cooking lessons, we also catered for summer youth camps as much as possible, we offered a catering service and the delivery of food from the store to ensure the salary of the employees.

One of the most important decisions for the company was that no one should be laid off. Since I have learned from the mistakes of my past, that was one of the reasons I was not going to lay off anyone right away, and we were looking for a way out. Of course, we found a way out of the first crisis, we worked hard to survive. I can say that I am very grateful to my staff for being on the same train as me. At the moment, the company employs two workers who have received proper training in cooking and I will definitely involve professional chefs in the youth cooking lessons of Pärnu County if possible.

Since I have lived through Estonia's first economic crisis, if I am not mistaken at the age of 26 (I did the business at the age of 24), I was already afraid of this crisis and tried to be one step ahead, immediately thinking of solutions that would help me stay afloat. And it still succeeded thanks to good employees and partners. I also knew that the economic setback would definitely come a year later, and it has arrived for me, but we are working to get out of it.

I have made it clear to myself that owning a business is a responsibility. Let's say if you can make your own business, then you have to take responsibility for it to live for you, it's not a toy to play with. The maintenance of a company can also be compared to that of your child, because both must be fed and raised. An acquaintance once told me to stop making cooking lessons, because you don't make enough money to make a living! I said ok! Yes I would earn more as a chef but here is one. I like cooking with young people, especially if they want to learn more. It gives me energy and a feeling of well-being when I can teach someone.

When I asked a friend what country have you come to with your actions? The answer is simple, I am working in the same company where I went 10 years ago and the owners are not good and the salary is poor. Then I was able to say that I like curves (as well as corona curves), that one day it goes well, then the curve goes up, the other day it goes down a bit, which makes me move like an entrepreneur. I don't like to walk one line. I like to take risks and I'm not afraid of that, and besides, I'm my own boss, and if something goes wrong, I have to go in front of the mirror.

I definitely advise for future not to rebel so that it doesn't lead anywhere. Learn a lot early to make it easier later. For example, participate in cooking lessons with your family through the web, it gives ideas for cooking. Remember what would have been done differently in this crisis to better prepare for the future.

TOURISM IN LATVIA, STAICELE DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Inese Timermane,
Head of Aloja County Tourism Information Centre

In order to deal with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Latvia purposefully create conditions in which the spread of the virus in society is stopped, museum premises were closed to visitors from March last year, but open-air trail visits were available, and outdoor expositions were opened.

In the summer, these restrictions were partially eased and a return to normal life could be made, while doing everything possible to prevent new outbreaks. Of course, travelers were much more cautious this year than before. The biggest hopes last year and this year are placed directly on local tourism activities.

As restrictions and caution have crossed the line for many Latvian residents' onward travel plans, this may have benefited Latvia's local tourism. This forces the tourism industry and, of course, us to look for new tourism products and offers. People's priority in tourism today is the desire to find peace while being in a natural environment away from the hustle and bustle of people, because now the presence of many people is the most immediate threat to everyone's health. As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, people are increasingly appreciating recreation in the outdoors and in large crowds. This is a great opportunity to develop rural tourism in Latvia.

Tourists in Latvia already have many different opportunities to relax outside the city bustle, enjoying the diversity and beauty of nature. Latvia has not only a very rich cultural and historical heritage – castles, manors and museums, complemented by beautiful parks and gardens, but also lookout towers, bird watching places, swamp and forest trails with unusual natural landscapes, wildlife paddocks, sea and dunes, lakes and rivers, interesting stretches of the seashore, big trees and boulders, rock outcrops, caves and springs, farmsteads and artisans, as well as interesting cultural monuments. We are quite rich in places that can be great for peaceful, quality rest and active adventures, as well as for supplementing knowledge and skills.

Tourism is closely linked to cultural, economic and social values, and it is clear that tourism

activities will sooner or later recover. However, the speed and quality of this will depend on the ability of the tourism industry to adapt. The desire of people to support local tourism is very important, appreciating how beautiful land we live in, how rich it is in natural resources and how important it is to preserve and nurture this treasure. Latvian rural tourism already now and also after the Covid-19 crisis can offer tourists closer to nature, healthy distance and rest in Latvian meadows, forests and farmsteads, where people can relax peacefully, quietly and undisturbed. Small guest houses, campsites or separate apartments have now become much more popular as accommodation places, where you do not have to meet as many people as in large hotels. There is already a greater demand for tourist routes in nature with tents, recreation by the water, boating, cycling, horse riding, etc. types of recreation.

The campaign 'Discover Latvia Safely' invites travelers to get to know lesser-known objects, see and experience something new, while avoiding the crowd. Hiking tourism is becoming more and more popular in Latvia and all over the world. Active recreation in nature is especially important nowadays, and going hiking is a great way to get to know Latvian nature. In Latvia, there are more and more opportunities to use the services of 'pedestrian-friendly' companies, thus making the hiking experience as positive as possible. The Aloja County Tourist Information Centre (TIC) has received the 'Hiker-Friendly' label, which is awarded to tourism service providers in the Baltic

States. It shows that the entrepreneur understands and respects the needs of hikers, that they are welcome here, offering necessary services to pedestrians, such as: route information, drinking water, first aid kit, charging of electrical equipment, possibility to dry wet and wash dirty clothes, boots and other equipment.

The most popular sightseeing objects and events in our region, in Staicele, are boating in the river Salaca, visiting nature trails, hiking in swamps with bog shoes, cycling, expeditions, visits to local gardens and farms, sightseeing in Staicele and its historical heritage- Liela Street, visits to Staicele Paper Mill, the exposition of the museum 'Pivālind', House of Weavers and exhibition 'In the Artists' Shed'.

Hiking tourism is becoming more and more popular in Latvia. People prefer to spend their holidays in the fresh air in nature. Our TIC has created several hiking routes, in which we offer everyone interested to get to know the natural and cultural heritage of our region, such as 'Aloja Cultural and Historical Trail', walking route 'Insight into the Stork Capital Staicele', 'Planchi Bog Nature Trail', Purezers Nature Trail, etc. In order to involve more and more locals in outdoor activities, various thematic games and actions are organized, for example, 'Modern cyclist'

approaching Staicele's birthday, a route with tasks – a small orienteering game in Staicele 'Stork in the Footsteps' was created. To attract people to enjoy the joys of winter in both Staicele and Aloja, cross-country ski trails of various lengths suitable for beginners, children, parents with children and adults were made.

However, to hope that everything will be as before the Covid-19 crysis would be overly optimistic. It will probably take a long time before we can return to the usual travel habits. The crucial point is – how we know how to advertise and attract visitors to these natural resources and cultural riches of our country. Everyone from the city and region is happy to welcome you!

The ability to reorient and the need to do things that have not been done before is exactly the greatest lesson and challenge of the crisis and at the same time the benefit of this Covid-19 situation.

Information about the region's sights, cafes, accommodation, recreation complexes, active recreation opportunities and tastings on the routes can be found at the TIC, as well as guided tours can be booked in advance. I believe that in the future Latvia can become more attractive to foreign tourists as well.

Information about tourist sites you can find here:
Tourist Information Points: https://www.aloja.lv/turisms/tic-punkti/
Sights: https://www.aloja.lv/turisms/tic-punkti/
Get to know different routes in Aloja region:
1. Castles and manors https://drive.google.com/.../1GNWpzn9pW4OX4drzEomn8S.../view
2. Day in Aloja region https://drive.google.com/.../1qcSLOgYJoLvEkY2QHTvYt.../view
3. Green Road (along former railway):
https://drive.google.com/.../1QHtSekQfYoSP5miEEKVJgg.../view

4. In the footsteps of the Livs : https://drive.google.com/.../1s5R.../view

5. Aloja cultural and historical trail:
https://drive.google.com/.../1PPB125rDCw7ljw8S4zRXNG.../view

HOW CORONAVIRUS HAVE IMPACTED LOCAL CULTURE AND YOUTH CENTER

Egle Vutt
Head of the Uulu Culture and Sport Center

Uulu Culture and Sports Center organizes various cultural and sports events, serves the youth of Häädemeeste municipality and provides hobby and sports activities for adults. Offers rental space for various sports and cultural groups. The municipality also coordinates ski trainings for young people in Jõulumäe and the Võiste Youth Room and Tahkuranna Open Youth Center, which are engaged in promoting youth work and hobby education in Võiste and Uulu.

13.03.2020 - 17.05.2020 All-Estonian emergency situation, where all institutions had to be closed. During this period, the first week caused uncertainty, but in the second week, online activities were started, providing both young people and adults with hobbies and sports.

During that period we have been able to renovate many rooms using our own staff. As a result, the number of gym and mirror room users has increased. The coronavirus has repeatedly impeded physical activity with young people during the year, but adult training has been able to continue within the limits.

We have find various innovative solutions because of the situation:
- We have organized overwhelmingly different competitions through different solutions. It is already new in our field when you try to cooperate and involve different parties.
- Certain web channels have developed for youth and adult hobbies and sports.
- In youth work, we have reached a common agreement that we will also cooperate more with each other, so that everyone should not develop activities separately, but can also share them with each other.

The situation have affected staff work also:
- The workload of ski coaches has increased, as with varying degrees of success you have to change the size of groups or even do individual training.
- In youth work, youth workers have to constantly reorganize their activities due to the changing constraints and the situation of the corona in the area.
- There are more areas in the house where young people can spend their free time and participate in activities. For example, a play and reading corner was created in the library for younger children, a tournament area on the hall stage, a smart corner in the lobby and a corner for games and leisure in the youth center, as well as a DJ room. Perhaps because of the corona, many opportunities have been created to disperse young people.
- In 2020, when the corona began, youth work was also approached through online mediation, which is still being tested, but it seems to be an overall weak area that needs to be developed. Namely, young people are not in the environments that are then used by youth workers or hobby counselors.
- Hobby education instructors constantly depend on various restrictions, once they can carry out activities with a larger group, then with a smaller group, then individually, then with a mask and then online, their work is the most unstable, which has also affected the number of participants.

- Administrators' working hours were reorganized to be filled with work activities.

What we have you learned from this situation:

- It is not necessary to bring everything to the web because there are not enough consumers. Maybe a youth worker / coach / supervisor, come and see for yourself - go around your area, greet your young people; you are not actually in contact with them when you carry out web activities.

When leading, it is important to find the right environments to use on the web that seem interesting to the target audience.

- The future of youth work: youth work could create and coordinate environments itself, such as TikTok at the moment, but it would then be secured by the relevant professionals.

Suggestions for young people on how to better prepare for similar situations in the future:

- I would be happy to say that they take part in the activities offered to them, but I also understand why they do not do it (wrong environments, overcrowding, leisure, comfort, activities / games online, etc.).

- There are so many calls for young people to say what they expect and how we can do our job better. Young people, be bolder to express your opinion, then we will also find a better functioning system in cooperation!

TEACHERS' THOUGHTS

SCHOOL AND THE STARRED BABY DEER. A STORY LIKE MANY OTHERS…

Mihaela Doboş, PhD,
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I certainly would not have put aside the book I am reading to open the laptop and write these thoughts, if it were not for this image having been following me for six days: thirty-two eighth graders up and standing for a few good seconds, their eyes smiling at me (the mask cancels other smiles), happier than ever to be at school, even if for studying! Forgive my joke, but I cannot keep out of my mind the rustling of papers throughout the five literature classes from this first week of onsite schooling. Naturally I let them rustle, for there can be no such a pleasant "noise" for a teacher, and let some certain "operational objectives" and "specific skills" to be ticked later… Watching their emotion and excitement, I understand again, and I am certain that I am about to live an epiphany, that school is not so much of a physical, external and conventional place, a social construct building a "human product", but more of an interior time, a duration never to be wasted, which carries within - it took a pandemic for us to realise – an array of feelings and long-term quantifiable "purchases", But more and more visible, even if through their absence.

To what extent can the literature teacher disobey "the screen logic" and reach through the delicate and vastly specific layers of profound learning and transformation of a child into an adult, still remains a question whose answer we may have in the following years, when every learner will take into consideration, will weigh, and treasure their teachers' strive during this global pandemic we are still undergoing. Until then we can offer several personal evidence, not even solutions, which can draw on a metaphoric map of learning some subjective milestones.

Pretext

The literary text that brought us together, the thirty-two people mentioned above and I, guiding us into the realm of literature, was a ballad belonging to a lesser known Romanian poet:"The stag with a star on his forehead", by Vasile Militaru. The story begins with the image of an old married couple living poor as mice churches / In the depths of the forest.". Because the old lady wanted a baby a lot - if not child, then at least "A puppy or a kitten "- The Lord did so and in the way of the old man, came out a baby stag with a star on his forehead, wounded and chased from the forest: "The arrow had pierced his neck- / From his wound blood flowed / And great tears fell from his eyes / as beautiful and round as a pearl.". His elderly couple take care of him with love, and the baby deer is healing little by little, jumping freely and happily. Moreover, his family seems to be under a spell of spiritual well-being and good luck. The two old man and woman are rejuvenating by the day and the darkness of the wood becomes brighter. One day, the peace of their modest living is disturbed by the appearance of a prince, who went hunting with a large procession. Wanting a new trophy, he asks the old man for the stag, offering in exchange fortunes and high ranks: "I will take you to my court, old man, / I will make you and your woman landowners. / Give me your stag with a star on the forehead / And I will give you honour and wealth.". Wise and worthy in his simplicity, the old man tells the prince he would not give up his "child" for anything in the world, but he admits that this is of no importance as long as the deer can decide for himself what he wants. Indeed, he miraculously starts to speak and persuades the emperor's son about the difference between him and his parents: "You want me as an ornament, /They wanted my soul.

/You hurt me while hunting, / They tended to my wounds./ In the brightness of your court / I would feel shackled.// At your court, I would be a beast, /A puppet for fools./In their lives, I am a light / that you will never know. "The prince is plunging deep in his thoughts and leaves pervaded with his own greatness; However, he seems to sadly understand, that "To be rich, fearful and eternal" is nothing compared with being loved, cherished and so needed by those around you.

Context

The teaching context in which I have suggested our students this literary text is represented by practising the interpretation strategies of figurative speech (alliteration, hyperbole, antithesis, allegory) and observing the combination of different text patterns and structures (narrative, descriptive, dialogue, argumentative) in a poetic text.

The main method based on which we deployed the activity is "the Cube" (Describe! → Compare! → Analyse! → Associate! → Apply! → Argue!), which is supposed to develop and validate students' cognitive processes, which are organized from **simple** to **complex**. The form of organization of the class was heterogeneous teamwork (socially distanced😔) and students' notes were organized in a chart, through everyone's help. The adjacent reading - necessary for logical operations such as "compare" and "associate", intensely valued by PISA tests and the new topic for National Evaluation - led to three texts from different genres, literary currents and styles: "The story of the little pig", by Ion Creangă, "The death of the deer", by Nicolae Labiș, "The wild boar with silver fangs", by Ștefan Augustin Doinaș. The syncretic and intercultural dimension of learning was achieved transversally, by presenting the symbolism of the deer in Romanian folklore and universal culture[1], as well as by listening to the musical transposition of the poem[2].

Subtext

Like any other activity from the spectrum of the subject that I teach, this one was also related to a background of values and attitudes which every Romanian language and literature teacher automatically uses, as these are deeply-rooted in our job DNA. In "The profile of the eighth grade graduate[3]" they are reduced to merely a few general phrases such as "communication in the native language", "awareness and cultural expression", "social and civic competencies" and I would add "a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial skills". All of these melt in their semantics some important benchmarks aiming at: understanding and expressing opinions/ideas/feelings , participating in verbal interactions both in indoor and outdoor school activities ("proactive dialogue"), operating with values and norms of social conduct relevant in everyone's personal life or when interacting with others, creating a positive sense of relationship , taking responsibility, expressing interest and initiative in finding new solutions for different learning tasks, valuing some defining elements of the cultural local/national/global context, taking part in project and cultural events organized in formal or informal contexts etc.

Hypertext and its lessons

During online learning, each of us was has been a "node" in a "network" which can function only if everyone contributes and which like in a cascade effect, is followed in turn by a multitude of

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[1]Cf. Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri*, vol. 1, p. 290-294

[2] Maria Butaciu, *Povestea puiului de* cerb, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS8PsBHK17s

[3] http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Profilul-de-formare-al-absolventului_final.pdf

"electronic media" that provide a substantial volume of data. They tend to be so many so that they run the risk of becoming nonsensical. Furthermore, this hypertext[4] - an omnipotent and insidious giant can fail at the smallest crack, thus being incomparably more fragile than the old-fashioned, but essential face-to-face interaction between people. I am familiar with the "experts" who are becoming increasingly outspoken- they say one thing and believe another; they display performance graphs and extol internet speed. However, I am a teacher, and my experiences in school and with children have taught me that the star on the stag's forehead has the power to turn darkness into light only if the creature on which it grows, is alive, loved, and supported by those around him.

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[4] Sabin Corneliu Buraga, *Incursiune în teoria hipertextului,* https://profs.info.uaic.ro/~busaco/publications

THE EDUCATIONAL ROLLERCOASTER: AN OVERVIEW OF THE UPS AND DOWNS OF DIGITAL TEACHING DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Being a teacher has never been an easy job, although some have often thought of it as child's play. Indeed, you might be tempted to think that since it involves children, and frequently games, it might as well be easy to handle. After all, there are millions of teachers across the globe, and they almost never complain. However, teaching has been on everyone's lips recently, albeit apparently disregarded on the job market, in the years before the pandemic.

The disruption in our lives brought about by COVID-19 involved learning in ways we had never thought of. Adapting was no longer the option to suffice, but learning new ways in which things could be done rapidly became the way to go, in order to face the challenges of a locked-down world. Grownups and children alike were looking for someone to tell them how to cope with the everchanging situation, how to process news and how to understand what was being told in the public sphere. Hence, all of us remembered the best times of our lives, when we had teachers doing all that.

In the meantime, teachers had a struggle of their own. Never before had school buildings been closed indefinitely, and teaching switched to online mode with little to no notice. They were sent home, confined to their computers and had to deal with everything everyone else was dealing with, alongside being responsible for their students' continuous education.

Child's play, they say. And indeed, it resembled a ride that most children and adults fear, and only some feel tempted to experience – the rollercoaster.

First, some teachers hopped on the laptops, tablets, phones, whatever electronic devices, as if on the rollercoaster trains, anxiously waiting for things to start moving, while others took a step back, hoping to be able to skip the ride altogether, and go back to regular classrooms, in no time. Eventually, everyone had to get on the educational rollercoaster as the pandemic was definitely there to stay for longer than expected.

As pandemic days went on, teachers were struggling with their first moves in the online education world, using *technology as medium*. This approach immediately led to an identification of the most efficient video communication tools, students were simply changing seats, from school to home, while the teacher was, most of the time, speaking to them, asking them to take notes and requesting primarily oral response. Nothing much had changed compared to regular classrooms, so the rollercoaster did not feel so frightful anymore.

But sooner rather than later, teaching turned from a private encounter between students and their teachers, to an online live show, with a large audience made up of parents, grandparents and whoever else happened to be around the room. The drop was nearing, as teachers eventually realized they were no longer in an actual classroom, however virtual it was called. The medium had changed, and it was imperative that the participants change as well, so that education could go on.

On their way down the drop, some teachers realized that in order to be efficient in their work, they had to use *technology as tool*. Finding the appropriate means to digitally interact with students and stimulate learning became the goal, as opposed to imparting personal knowledge, as it soon became obvious that the teacher was no longer the absolute knowledgeable agent and holder of information in class, but the world wide web was. Researching, selecting appropriate content, and creating suitable learning materials were among the challenges of going up the educational rollercoaster again.

Teachers felt empowered as they were able to gear towards becoming educational partners to their students, rather than supervisors. The GEAR learning model [5], though focused primarily on the learners' experience, is in fact relevant to teacher practitioners as well, as it involves *gathering* online relevant support and materials for lessons, *expanding* information during digitally organized classes, students to *applying* competences gained in the process and then ensuring feedback is *received* from students so as to constantly improve techniques. Teachers, just like the rest of the world, were thus learners themselves, during the pandemic, training on a daily basis so as to become efficient and proficient in their jobs. The ride was turning them into digital teachers. The second hill was thus more pleasant than expected. On the way up, teachers gained confidence in their skills, partnered more efficiently with their students, learned to find solutions and welcome constructive feedback.

However, yet another drop was nearing – anxiety. While caught up in their routine of trying to become better digital teachers, some ignored the fact that the pandemic had been going on for a couple of months, and that the world was not about to return to a previous state anytime soon. Slowly but steadily, they realized that however familiar with the digital world, they will not be able find any appropriate tool to overcome anxiety, not theirs, nor their students', unless they struggle to maintain the bonds created in the classrooms long before the pandemic, or to generate new ones amongst members of the different groups. At this point, teachers started to approach *technology as ally*. Seeking and providing support for other teachers in their quest for digital solutions, scheduling online tutoring hours, enhancing pair and group work during virtual classes, fostering collaboration beyond class allotted time in digital projects, have all led to an increase in emotional security while teaching online. The rollercoaster started to feel safe enough to be ridden over and over, once realizing that it only takes an open mind and a heart of gold to go through.

During the pandemic teaching is different. Being a digital teacher is not impossible, we have all survived it one way or another, but overall, it has managed to change us in ways we had never expected. Whether we are still caught up in hopes of the world going back to its rules before 2020, waiting for someone to tell us to turn off computers and go back to the school building, or we are looking forward to a new normality, built on the lessons learnt upon the digital learning interaction, the educational rollercoaster is not easy. While embracing the adrenaline rush it brings about, some of us have, however, started to enjoy the ride, and know that teaching will always be about making challenges seem child's play.

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[5] Cf. Conrad Gottfredson & Bob Mosher, 2020

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"INTERIORITY" IN OUR SCHOOL: A LIGHT IN THE DARK

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And, then, the day arrived.

After several weeks listening to different news from many different parts of the world, we were also affected by the situation. Certainly, we were all involved in this new reality that became, suddenly, a dark grey cloud we would have on top of us for very a long time.

— *How could this have happened to us? What were we thinking about? Why didn't we realize it before? Were we ready to face a pandemic? Was this really happening to us?*

Then we started feeling as tiny, fragile, suspicious and mistrustful beings.

Uncertainty and fear overwhelmed our hearts and, for a long time, we lived with anxiety and hopelessness. We, that always had everything under control, had now no power. We looked now not as strong as we seemed to be only some days before. Without any doubt, we didn't feel all right.

Mass media mentioned numbers, percentages, arithmetical measurements, probabilities, but… where was now that warm and close language we all understood? Now everything had turned cold; we even had the impression that there was nothing positive worth to be mentioned. Only some people were able to see a light in the dark; only some people were able to start working the path and change every effort into a new step towards the finding of the meaning of life. Among that small island of light, there was a place for us, for our school.

Two years ago, someone had the great idea to introduce interior reflection, mindfulness, visualization and personal growth, what we call "interiority", into our Calsanz Schools. As Saint Faustino, the founder of our school, said, *"To three aspects we must pay special attention to, in the education of our children: to their bodies, to their minds and to their hearts"*. Now, this idea is more important than ever. Interiority, as a new discipline, can bring these three learnings from the feelings of quietness and positive emotions that all our students need to acquire.

The teachers of the Divina Pastora school in Monóvar have attended several training courses on this new discipline, interiority, to learn how to integrate these routines and competences into our classes; to learn how to help our students improve using the breathing, relaxation, mindfulness, the voice and speaking, corporal position, movement, sensorial consciousness and energy, among others. We integrate them into our daily classes and lessons, so that students can develop and acquire a state of comfort and well-being.

During the long period of lockdown, we decided to continue with the project. More than ever, we had to put into practice all the resources and knowledge we had, to be able to face this situation.

It was a challenge that changed into opportunity. We felt we should light up the candle, the interior light that was so necessary and essential at that time. We should provide our students with techniques that could help them confront everything that was happening to them; and we also thought it was a good idea to have some sessions also with families. The number of infected people by Covid-19 was increasing, but the number of lights that started to shine was increasing as well.

And this is the way in which we are still today, believing that interiority is something essential for us and for our students. Pandemic is still an important threat, and we are still feeling afraid. But we continue giving our students the opportunity to find themselves everyday. We do this from our essence, from our school.

Maybe the grey cloud will be with us for a very long time. Maybe we will have to face some other grey clouds we do not expect now. But what we really know is that our students will have the opportunity for reflection and expressing their emotions. And, maybe, they will be able to change the colour of that grey cloud.

Although some realities cannot be changed, our students will have the tools to face them, always in a constant search for the sense of life.

A FEW THOUGHTS … AND A FEW LINES

Diana Grumeza
Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

March 2020 - March 2021

It has been a special year when, to quote a writer, "the man was put down by the times", as the rules of the game have changed suddenly during its course; we have been neither in an absurd theatre play nor in the augmented reality. Some people have smiled, others denied, some others simply agreed, but some "have gone to die just a little"... An endless process of closing and opening towards or into one's own house and self... Hands holding the head, on the edge of mind and soul, searching for an end, a beam of light or at least a guiding compass! An example to follow, a handbook of good practice...

However, the train of life cannot stay on a dead rail. Therefore, everyone has built up their own reality with their own instruments in hand so as to move forward. So have the teachers, managing to reinvent themselves, entering the new game, building bridges of energy, trust, emotions, and knowledge. Each one has devoted themselves to their students not for what they were, but for what they could become...

At first, I thought that the main problem of online school was related to the digital skills which had not been practised enough by most teachers, along with the lack of platforms to provide unity and data protection, known that the students are generally more skilful or at least more knowledgeable in this respect; yet, my students have helped me when necessary, have gladly guided me towards my learning a new algorithm and thus making things easier...

The most difficult thing for me has been to accept that it is absolutely necessary to reinvent myself. I knew what I had to do/teach and what results to get from and with my students. However, my way of working and all the HOWs had to be recreated. Well, this has not been my only challenge as a teacher considering that each class and generation needs adjustment. I remember a 17 year-old teenager who could not handwrite as he had been expatriated and he only learnt to write on the computer. I annoyed primary school teachers and psychologists at that time asking for solutions in that situation. I also remember the four Chinese students who, exposed to a "splash of the Romanian language" for 12 hours every day, could read and write in Romanian at the end of two months. There was once a class of Americans, Japanese, Armenians, Hebrews, Chinese, Rroma, and Romanians. I had them all in front of me, we used to shake hands, smile at each other, or pass the piece of chalk from hand to hand, a.s.o.

Everything has been a challenge. Everything has been different. Tens of questions have required an immediate response. How can I make the class attractive in the online environment?! How can I keep my students' motivation going, their attention alert, or their wellbeing? How do I deliver the learning contents?! Under what pattern?! How do I make the assessment?!

I am sure I have made mistakes. I have improvised, tried, retried, made up, and recreated everything from scratches depending on the class, the age, and the mood. I have searched for tons of patience and compassion within myself, I have also looked for flexibility, for the strength to give trust and to motivate, and for the playful side as well; besides that, I have provided my students with the opportunity to learn and do the homework at their own pace. I have given them weekly homework with a deadline at the end of the week. I have also assigned tasks at free choice: more focused and more creative, teamwork-like, allowing for teams which were personalised or randomly created to place the students in different learning and socialising circumstances. I have chosen to assess each student's most valuable topic of the week, of the month, and, in this way, the students put more efforts into it preferring one item or another; I have focused more than ever on each student's progress line. When assessing, which has been one of the most difficult things ever, I have asked for feedback, self-assessment, and cross assessment. I have taken advantage of the idea that literature is the art of the word so we have made time for the small poetical, music, and art meetings. We have organised literature meetings with cats, debates on modern journalist topics, and we have put to trial literary characters which broke various moral codes. I have discovered good radio voices, and also great screen faces, young people who have blogs, vlogs, and youtube channels. I have learnt to reset my conceitedness and accept that a student may need to turn off their camera from time to time although still paying attention. I have learnt to smile and greet naturally a parent who used to be part of our class. I have regularly created contexts to show my students how to learn, taken on improvement measures, and introduced attractive elements such as: the daily quote, the daily news, the language issue, my pet, my hobby, all about me in 60 seconds, etc. I have monitored my students' behaviour and tackled issues of great importance such as bullying and online safety.

Every week we have used digital platforms, various instruments and specialised sites. I have understood that the end of the online class is as important as its beginning. I have wanted to find out about my students' mood and opinion about the progress of our lessons. I have accepted the fact that I cannot meet all my objectives in the online environment. I have told my students that they need to continue studying at home through practice and thorough learning. I have understood that an online class has a different PATTERN (more energetic and creative), that all contents need to be presented as SIMPLY as possible by means of a good lesson organisation. I have drawn the conclusion that a class needs to come up with a different energy which allows us to break the rhythm and brings forth constant feedback and manifestation of the creative self.

What you are reading here is a mere draft of a conclusion between I WANT and I CAN which has been my everyday support. I have been lucky to have healthy students, supported by their families who happen to have a good income; furthermore, I have happened to have higher levels of students who are 14 or 15 years old and are accustomed with the classical type of education. However, I am of the opinion that my colleagues who teach at the kindergarten and the primary school have had a hard time in teaching the little ones. I have found it hard to imagine how the family with low financial possibilities are suffering throughout this period of time due to the lack of qualified teachers and Internet access. What's next? Other challenges, a resizing of normality, remedial classes, another world, and maybe a different kind of school.

DIFFERENT TIMES… DIFFERENT EDUCATION…

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Before experiencing the pandemic education, I had never thought that, after 25 years of being a teacher, almost nothing of what I used to do in class successfully and with great pleasure was about to become useless! The challenges of online school meant a fundamental reset of myself on several levels...
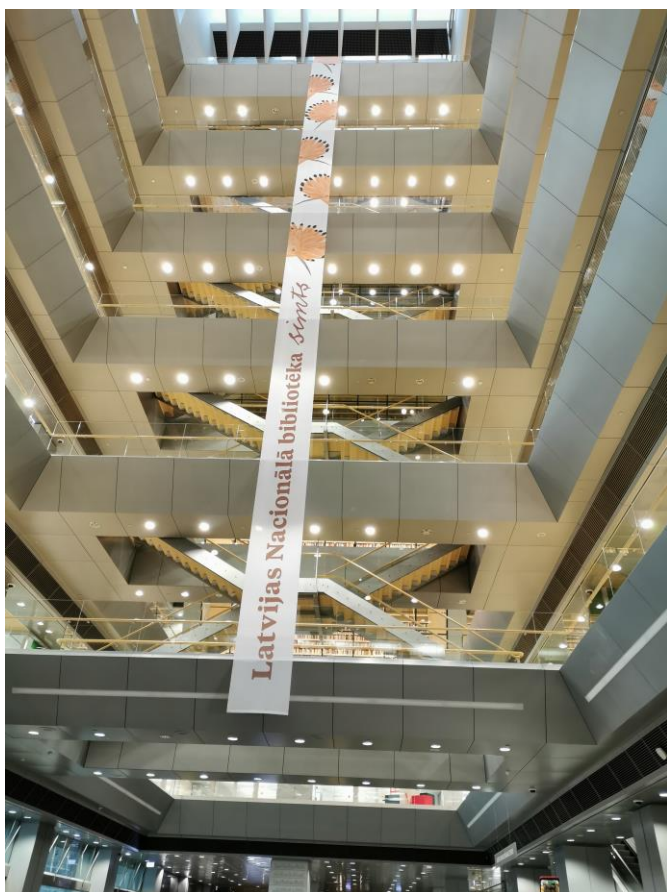
First of all, I faced a real "brainstorming" while trying to find my way, to discover a path to students' minds and especially to their hearts, a way to stay connected to them beyond the black screen, and to build up things from scratches. Together with the need to learn step by step how to use an online platform (first Zoom, then Microsoft Teams) with the help of my colleagues and my students, my biggest challenge was to rethink the didactic approach and adapt the contents of my subject to be within the limits of the virtual lesson.

What is more, I had to create a balance between the group of students who were present in the classroom and those at home during the hybrid learning, to be equally thoughtful of them all, to overcome the technical issues that used to come up especially when homework was checked (Teacher, I can't hear you! I've lost the signal! My camera doesn't work! There's something wrong with my microphone!), to always check whether they all understood the lesson which had significantly less content compared to what we used to teach under normal circumstances. In this chaos I often had the feeling that I couldn't find my place anywhere, that I was not efficient enough, that I would not become the multitasking teacher that the students, parents, and the whole society in a way had expected to (I have also counted the number of years left until my retirement!!). I was extremely disappointed for quite a long period of time, especially that I had to make lots of compromises both concerning the school subject (by eliminating or reducing certain contents) and checking the students, their involvement in each class, and especially throughout the whole evaluation process!

Gradually, things settled down so I started managing the online platform much better, I reconsidered my teaching method based on the principle "less but well done", and I tried not to give up those activities which made the literature classes simply enjoyable both for the younger students

and the older ones in high school. Thus, I kept the team projects done by the students and I invited them to include at the end of their presentation games or different activities for their colleagues in order to make them more thorough and for me to give the other students in the classroom some extra points apart from the average grade for the project team members – the project as an alternative assessment method was really successful! I encouraged the tradition of book reviews individually or in teams to stimulate reading and to have another form of assessment! I have often used the digital textbooks, films, pictures, youtube videos to support my literature classes (in this way I replaced the "story" which I used to tell my students in class). I understood that the secondary school students love being active in the lessons by raising their hand on Teams and that the high school students needed more silence, more time for reflection and meditation just for themselves because they just preferred to be uncommunicative (showing interest only to external stimuli). I learned that we can live without contests of any kind and that we, as teachers, needed our time to find our motivation and way towards the unknown.

Apart from that, there is still the impossibility to make an objective assessment of the Romanian subject, as there are limits as to the online testing in terms of project creation as well as to the way they are done by the students since they are usually helped by their families or search different sources for answers during the tests. The result is a series of grades and averages much higher than the real level of the students' knowledge and skills.

In conclusion, after almost one year of online school, I cannot say I am fully satisfied with what I am doing as a Romanian teacher, but the thought that these are only the limitations and that normality is not far or impossible gives me comfort!! I hope we will be able to make up for the lost time, that the students won't be too affected by the silence, the internalization of everything that is going on and that the desire to be together, teachers and students, in a classroom without masks and restrictions will be enough for us to find comfort and peace.

OPTIMIZATION OF ONLINE EDUCATION

"Do not limit your child to your own knowledge. It was born in other times."
(Rabindranath Tagore)

Mariana Chirilă
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Our society is rapidly developing while facing the boom of new issues and crises; however, apart from the difficulties, school must go on. To be a teacher particularly during these times requires great flexibility, ability to adapt to what is new, plenty of creativity, openness, and especially emotional preparation, active involvement in the multitude of brand new things from the technological field, understanding that the present experience will finally become a lesson which will help us reflect deeply on the past and confidently look forward towards our children's future.

The success of online education is related to the joint efforts of the teachers, computer specialists, and the education beneficiaries, namely the students and their parents; however, the communication networks, educational platforms, devices, and online instruments which support connections and interaction are equally important. This major change that has become an important alternative to overhaul the traditional educational system having brought about doubts, uncertainty, tension, and frustrations has led to numerous changes so that the teachers realized that change must start with them. Without being exclusively a teacher's skill, the optimization of distance learning aims at thorough technical abilities to use computers, apps and educational platforms, thousands of hours spent at courses/conferences/webinars, thousands of posts, messages, and links as educational resources, as well as the use of innovative didactic strategies and methods to integrate the web instruments. Thus the teacher becomes facilitator in the teaching process and a leader of didactic resources, of school progress able to inspire, to guide, and coordinate the student throughout the whole process of notion/concept input, and also counselor with psycho-social abilities in connecting students to the classroom and making them socialize through a screen.

The efforts towards making the online school more efficient include synchronous and asynchronous teaching, the teachers' permanent research for different approaches to teaching, the use of different digital textbooks, videos, files, and any virtual materials, digital resources, Power Point slides, Kadhoo tests, platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Edmodo, and apps like Quizlet, Kahoot, Forms, Quizizz, Jamboard, Miro, OpenBoard, Adservio, or Whatsapp, which have changed the teaching-learning style as well as the teachers' mentality towards a democratic and participative approach, literally changing the relationship between teacher and student, together with the one between school and family. Irrespective of the circumstance, be it green, yellow, red, hybrid, hybrid and red, education in the online environment must be based on the student's independent work, a real opportunity for the less active students to reinvent themselves and to overcome their limits in a constructive way.

This change has generated a common goal in joining the methodological aspects with the psycho-pedagogical ones in designing activities so as to provide students with different opportunities to get involved and to develop new skills. There have been lower school performances

starting from the misunderstanding of the learning tasks, the inappropriate understanding of the conveyed messages, or the students' faulty working style, as well as the delayed feedback from the teacher, misbehavior due to their lack of involvement in the activities, a low learning motivation, reduced focus, not to mention the emotional deficiencies caused by the lack of direct interaction with the classmates and the teachers which has reflected on the psychological level by increasing the level of frustration and stress. Irrespective of the subject, the teacher has become counselor by providing emotional support to the students who interacted less. Moreover, social distance affected their social relationships and socializing skills. Showing patience, empathy, and flexibility, together with a gradual and attractive approach of the scientific content, focusing on permanent awareness and communication between students, parents, and classmates, the teachers have created emotional connections, have made lessons more dynamic, have paid less attention to theory and more attention to practice, being aware that efficient online teaching means interaction, movement, exchange of opinions and experiences, games, all in all a new way of learning which can be improved for the numerous advantages it brings to the educational process. It was necessary to give continuous and varied feedback at several levels: teacher/students and teacher/parents, having positive effects on increasing student motivation, encouraging participation in the didactic activities and making online learning more efficient, thus contributing to better management of frustration or anxiety.

Taking into account the present situation, the online school is not a purpose in itself. However, for almost a year it has been a real challenge and a way to proceed with the teaching-learning-assessing process, aiming at making the partners in the educational act creative and flexible within the inherent process of implementing new methodological approaches to meet the needs of the XXIst century. Yet a necessary negative issue, the online school has made us develop ourselves towards a certain direction. It is indubitable that virtual classes will never be able to replace the real classroom, even if there are certain unquestionable benefits of online learning. The classical and the online school can be harmoniously combined, the digitalization of education will always be a priority so that the teachers who are preoccupied with school progress could invest into their future by every lesson they hold. Thus they hold their job in respect by continuously conveying some of their skills and knowledge, always adapting, building, and shaping the didactic approach through highly efficient learning strategies and methods going towards innovating education in an efficient and balanced way.

UULU BASIC SCHOOL IN THE PANDEMIC

Ivi Korju
English teacher, Uulu Pohokool

On March 12th, Uulu Basic School teachers celebrated "the first anniversary" of COVID-related isolation and distant learning at our school. A whole year has passed and nothing will ever be the same again. Last spring, nobody thought that this period would last more than a few months. And here we are…

How we faced the new situation

The management of our school instantly made 3 super smart decisions:

1.   Assessment of the students would be nondistinctive. It meant the only marks given were "accepted" and "not accepted" during all periods of distant learning. That took off loads of pressure from the shoulders of our teachers as well as the students, actually.

2.   We moved all our most important paperwork into Google Drive service, where cooperation and exchange of information became the most efficient and operational.

3.   Every week, the new lesson plan for every class was put together by all the teachers. Again, it was done in Google Drive and all the colleagues could see each other's contribution. Very quickly, we learned how to use Zoom video conferencing and the schedule of Zoom lessons became first-to-fill part of our lesson plans.

In addition to that, it is impossible to overrate the input of our young and spirited head teacher, who has put so much effort in supporting and inspiring us by endless tutoring, counselling, encouraging as well as plain and simple teaching. In just a couple of weeks most of us learned how to use the already mentioned Zoom; how to create, fill and share various documents with students as well as colleagues, and how to use multiple different online materials, each suitable for just their subject. Last spring we had lots of drills and exercises. This spring we have all faced the 'battlefield' of distant learning with confidence and expertise.

Then and now

We certainly have developed as teachers, I have to admit. It was clever of our management to advise us to review our last year's lesson plans. There was so much groping in the dark, experimenting and learning enormous amounts of new things during April 2020. From my personal experience, it takes half the time to prepare the lessons for next week now than it took a year ago! When the 'second wave' arrived, I noticed I had grown some sort of arrogance towards the crisis - let it come, for I am ready!

Hardening the steel

Of course, the fuse has become short for all of us - teachers, students, and parents as well. Children feel restrained, bored or lost in all the new demands; parents suffer great stress because they feel helpless trying to support or just control their kids in their studies; teachers can't tell any difference from weekdays from weekends. Everyone seems to expect something from one another

and yet something is constantly missing. Children look for advice, parents long for relief and understanding, teachers dream of one duty-free day.

Luckily, in our school, relations between all three groups are foremost friendly and open minded. Children know how to express their opinion without insulting anyone, teachers are ever so understanding and give their absolute best that nobody in our school goes "missing" or remains unattended. And parents communicate with the teachers with utmost respect and sincerity while asking for advice, giving their opinion or - rather often - expressing their gratitude.

In Uulu Basic School, our strength is that the whole community is aware that we are in the same boat. And the only way we can overcome this pandemic is to stay together (while keeping distance), support each other with kind words and be there for each other.

And that is our master plan.

TEACHING DURING THE PANDEMIC
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

MEDIA EDUCATION IN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CLASSES FOR HIGH SCHOOL

The Story Behind "The Musical Story" – The Deconstruction Of A Media Product
(the video clip)
Activity Plan

Mihaela Doboş, PhD
Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

Subject: Romanian Language and Literature

Class: high school (IX-XII), regardless of academic program

Teacher: Mihaela Doboș (Romania)

Concepts/keywords specific to the media education area: types of media messages, online environment, video clip, media consumers and producers; author, pattern, audience, content, purpose; different perspectives

Key concepts of the subject area: elements of the communication situation, communication functions, "multimodal" text, global/detailed understanding of audio-visual messages, text-image proportion, verbal – non-verbal – "paraverbal", fiction, imagination, invention; communication purpose (informative, relaxing, entertaining etc.), receiver's reactions (reader, listener)

Specific skills:
▪ appropriate use of linguistic acquisitions for the purpose of understanding different texts/messages;
▪ correct and appropriate use of the forms specific to oral and written statements in different situations;
▪ comparison of different arguments used for creating personal judgements;
▪ applying linguistic knowledge for understanding oral and written messages;
▪ applying linguistic and cultural acquisitions for understanding oral and written messages; explanations of their roles in emphasizing the message.

Common points: Media education – Romanian language and literature
▪ Setting of construction/deconstruction of media messages;
▪ Use of the means of thematic, structural and stylistic analysis in order to understand various literary and non-literary texts;

Motivation (why)
▪ to create a practical side of the lessons dedicated to the elements of the communication situation and its functions;
▪ to apply the school curriculum to real life situations and thus to illustrate the importance of media education for students;
▪ to use, for educational reasons, one of the "media pleasures" of the students: the music channels.

Subject (what)

Movie: the story behind "the musical story" – the deconstruction of a media product

Description (how)

I. Evocation:

a. Introductory discussion:

▪ Do you remember the communication scheme?

▪ What functions are associated to the elements of the communication construction?

▪ Could you exemplify some "online" and "offline" communication situations?

▪ How often do you follow music channels? Do you like video clips? Why?

b. Watch the video clip of the following song: *Moldavians were born* ("Zdob și Zdub") –
4:42' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWZ_Q2PRfWI

This part of the lesson serves the purpose of introducing the theme and motivating the necessity for developing, among students, the ability to understand an audio-visual product.

c. "Innocent" understanding:

• What do you think about the video clip?

• Is it appropriate to the song?

• Did it trigger any thoughts?

• What feelings did it cause?

II. Decrypting the message

1. First step: teacher talks about the 5 basic concepts regarding the deconstruction/construction of the media messages – author, structure, audience, content, purpose – inviting the students to "decode" the text/song.

A scheme is drawn on the blackboard or shown using a projection.

2. Second step: Students are divided into 5 mixed groups. Each group chooses one of the roles from the list and analyses the video clip following the corresponding perspective. After 2-3 minutes used for getting familiar with the "role" and reading the key questions, the video clip could be watched one more time. Students work together 5-6 minutes.

A. First group – THE ACTOR

Key question: Who created this message?

Further questions:

What type of "text" is this one?; What elements create it?

How similar or different is it in comparison to other texts of the same type?

What technologies have been used for producing it?

How many people do you think were needed for creating this message? What could be their professions?

B. Second group – THE STRUCTURE

Key question: What narrative techniques are used for catching one's attention?

Further questions:

What have your observed regarding the way in which the message was created?

Colours and forms?; Sound effects? Music? Serenity?; Dialogue or narration?
Costumes, scenery?; Moves, composition?; Light?
Where is the camera?
How is the story told? What are the people doing?
Are there any visual symbols or metaphors?
How is the audience sensitized? What are the means used for persuasiveness?
What decisions could be taken differently?
What makes the video clip "real"?

C. Third group – AUDIENCE
Key question: How could different people differently understand this message?
Further questions:
Have you ever experienced something similar?; What have you learned from this media product?
What have you learned about yourself when you got contact to this media product?
Do you think there could exist other interpretations? How could we discover them?
How could you explain the different answers?; Are there any points of view as valid as yours?

D. Fourth group – CONTENT
Key question: What values, life styles and points of view are reflected or omitted in this message?
Further questions:
How is the human/character presented?; What attitudes/feelings are described?
What type of person is the receptor invited to identify?
What questions come to your mind while you are watching/listening?
What ideas or values are "promoted" through this message?
What political or economic ideas are transmited through this message?
What value judgements or assumptions regarding the way in which one sees/treats other people are suggested?; What is the main idea about world that is transmitted?

E. Fifth group – PURPOSE
Key question: Why is this message transmitted?
Further questions:
Who controls the creation and transmission of this message?
Why is it transmitted? How do you know that?; Who transmits it?
For whom is it helpful? Who benefits from this message? The audience? Private interests? Individuals? Institutions?; Who wins? Who looses? Who decides?
What decisions – artistic, social, economic etc. – could have influenced the creation and transmission of this message?
3. Third step: the observations of each group are orally presented (2-3 minutes each). Remarks are made, questions are asked etc.

III. Reflection:

1. What is now your opinion about the mechanisms used for the creation/understanding of a media product?

2. Do you think you could create such a video clip on your own?

3. Do you think you could apply the analytical instruments used today to other school subjects?

Homework:

Teacher proposes the students a "**Media Fable**": starting from a given image, the students should associate each element/detail with a "role" (individual or collective) from media and write a text of at least half a page (narration, dialogue, report, imaginary interview, description, chronicle etc.) in which they allegorically use the suggestions from the image. The text should be written on computer and have an appropriate title, images, "special effects", whatever students think is useful to illustrate their idea.

<div align="right">

Material realizat în cadrul proiectului
Predau educație media! – Laboratorul de educație și cultură media

</div>

EXPERIENCING IT TOOLS IN TEACHING THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE

Bianca Burciu,

Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași, România

This period has meant for many people a return to the self, a rethinking of the way in which we value those around us. People have suddenly and brutally found out how fragile and vulnerable are. We cannot write these unhappy moments without talking about feelings. Looking back, it was a period of living intensely every single thing or, if lucky, just listening to the misfortune of the person nearby simply to realise throughout this whole social and emotional bustle and hustle that we are human beings, parents, sons and daughters, nephews and nieces, let alone teachers. Gradually, our role has changed and we have desperately tried to adapt, to be perfect for the others, to save a bit of what we used to do before in order to feel teachers again. Hence the feeling that I should redefine my pyramid of needs and personally I would add the "need to be a teacher" so as to feel that I do not lose contact with the students I have been teaching all these years. Technology has become prevalent in my actions, a way to calm down while searching under the masks the looks of my former students in an attempt to reconnect to their sensitive souls assaulted by technology. Still, I am looking at them confidently fully aware that what I have built cannot fall down so easily despite the distance that has thrown us behind some black screens.

It is painful to find yourself in a universe in which for about 50 minutes you put every effort into triggering excitement beyond the barrier of a monitor while that *captatio benevolentiae* at the beginning of the class is turning into a permanent one. Thus I have found myself in the position of a scriptwriter and director, as well as actor waiting for a feedback from my critics behind the screens. There were only links and platforms between me and my students.

I have chosen to go on to talk about two of them which have been used constantly and which have kept my students close to me. These platforms have been recently found apart from the classical film scenes, screenings of literary works, auditions of theatre shows, and online assessment on Google Forms.
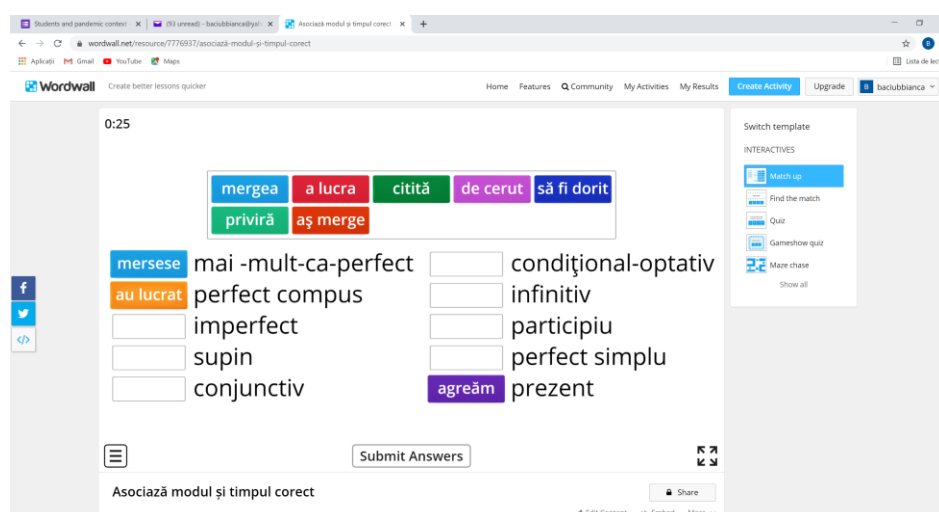
As concerns **Wordwall,** there is a wide range of choices such as *Random wheel, Find the match, Match up, Quiz, Open the box,* easy to use especially during the grammar classes at secondary school in different stages of the lesson. They allow for consolidation and evaluation of students' input in a challenging way by leading them in and stirring their interest for the lesson.

There is a subtle emotional side here caused by the tension of the educational game in which the students are involved willing to test their knowledge. Thus, they get the feeling of being involved in a competition because these options can be associated with team or group work. The items aim at associating grammar structures with proper theoretical notions, identifying the right match or writing a short answer.

The app allows for turning these games into printable worksheets thus proving their usefulness in both the online and the onsite activities.

The possibility to set a certain deadline leads to better time management so that the teacher builds on these Wordwall options at any stage of the lesson and provide the educational value they consider relevant in this respect (lead-in, consolidation, or assessment).
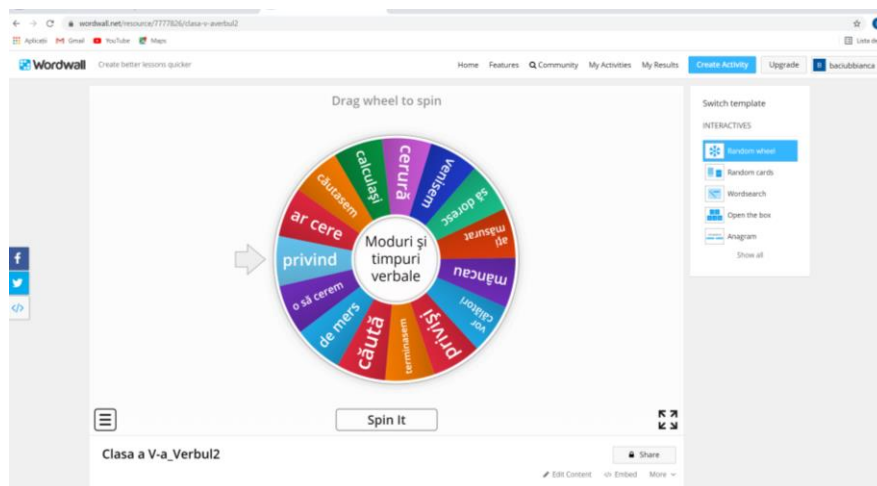
Liveworksheets provides the possibility to change the classical worksheet into an interactive one, giving the students the possibility to be permanently aware of their mistakes and to see the score after doing all the individual tasks. The only inconvenient is that the Romanian language

teacher must identify many choices in students' answers since the app will consider them invalid if they are not like the ones edited / preset by the teacher. Moreover, it is important to train students in advance about how to use diacritics in order to score their answers.

Reflections...

Life goes on, the world changes, riots, then readapts, and reinvents itself so we should find our own way in the adventure towards the unknown. We can do that optimistically because this is what we need to show the students who want us cheerful, perfect, and creative, and what is more, an inborn digitalised person.

CHEMISTRY DURING THE PANDEMIC

Daniela Iftode
Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

It has been almost a year since both teacher and students had to adapt in no time to new ways of teaching and connecting with what the education act is in reality considering that the school has turned into online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting with the 11th of March 2020.

As such, I have started hesitantly but optimistically to reinvent my strategies to teach Chemistry in a totally new way, the online one. The most difficult part was that the students could not write on the virtual board because they lacked the necessary tools despite the fact that they had access to online lessons, to the Internet, and to devices.

Many unpredictable situations have arisen in the online environment. However, we had to be tolerant, to take into account the students' needs and to do our best to establish a connection with them beyond the screens. I think the hardest part has been the fact that the teacher cannot take control of the learning input and the distractors in the online environment. Therefore, the teacher must pay special attention both to the students' learning and to their emotional needs.

Also, online teaching makes the students less motivated if they fail to understand certain things since the teacher cannot notice directly whenever the student needs guidance. Nonetheless, the teacher's verbal feedback may increase the student's trust in their own way of learning.

Since one cannot teach science only orally or using PPTs and worksheets, as a Chemistry teacher I have found myself in the position of inferring mathematical relations and laws, of drawing structures of the chemical compounds or writing chemical reactions in which they take part. Thus, after the school managing board had advised us to use Zoom, I bought myself a Wacom graphics tablet in April 2020. Together with OneNote app from Microsoft Office it helped me teach as if I were in front of the board in a real classroom, which was even more colourful and attractive because I was using colour pencils and markers. I could even insert drawings, patterns of substance molecules or save the lesson and send it to my students. "Zoom" has joined Google Classroom and Whatsapp for a better communication with my students and ADSERVIO platform (for the school students' online grade register) implemented by our school. Since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year we have all been using the Teams platform.

As a digital teacher, I used *Mozaweb* for the 3D molecular structures of organic compounds (hydrocarbon, alcohol, carboxylic acids, esters, fat acids, sucrose, cellulose, proteins, aminoacids, DNA, etc.) and inorganic compounds (nitrous acid, sulphurous acid, nitric acid, carbon dioxide, oxygen, azote, etc.), to shape certain chemical reactions of organic compounds (additions, substitutions, polymerization of ethene, etc) or inorganic compounds (reactions of combination,
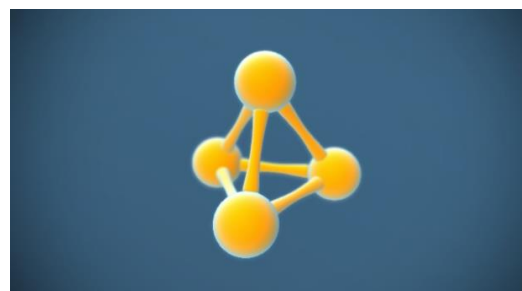
substitution, decomposition, and exchange), to study how different factors influence the chemical balance or to play videos about how an airbag works, how steel is made, etc. Using them I managed to make my lessons more attractive, dynamic, and appealing.

(https://www.mozaweb.com/ro/lexikon.php?cmd=getlist&let=MICROCURRICULUM)
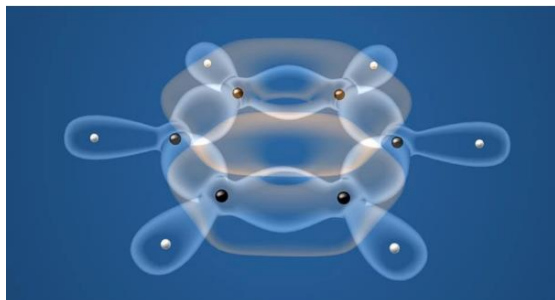
Another useful app especially at the secondary school classes and sometimes in highschool was *LearningApps.org* for practice and consolidation. It is free to access and use, easily manageable, and has a multi-language interface, including Romanian. One can create games, multiple choice quizzez, matching quizzez, fill in the blanks, video-based tests, and also crosswords. Everything aimed at making the teaching more dynamic in the online environment and keeping student motivation and attention awake.
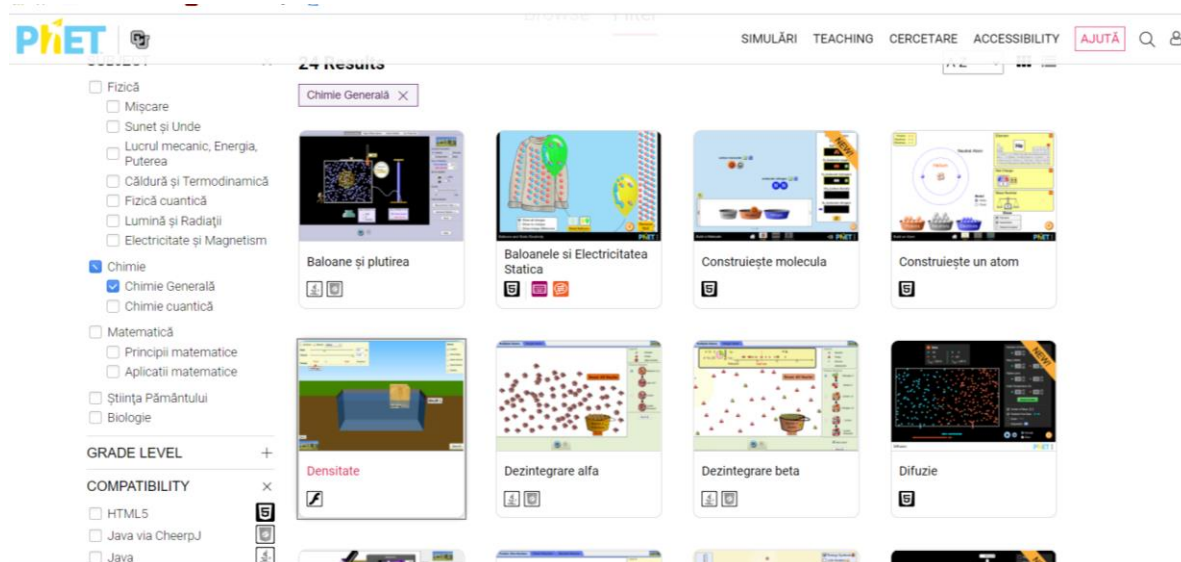
(

https://learningapps.org/index.php?category=12&s=)
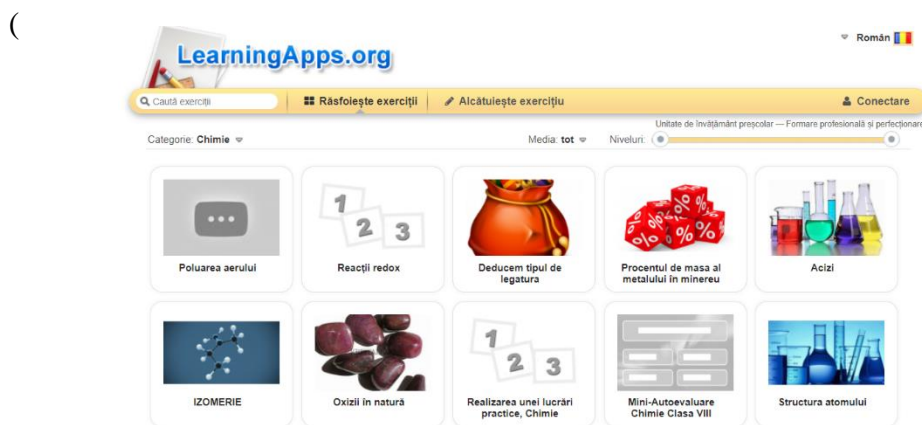
INTUITEXT- **Interactive Chemistry Lessons** proved to be extremely useful, too as it facilitates creating virtual simulations of processes and reactions which are difficult to explain by means of the classical materials such as the tridimensional picture of certain chemical compound molecules. What is more, the soft gives the opportunity to make virtual experiments which cannot be done in the lab either due to a lack of substances or because they are highly dangerous in terms of reactions between the chemical substances.

PHET was another resource. It is a free platform, available in Romanian as well, appreciated by the teachers all over the world. I have sometimes used it for the 7th graders to explore and explain different phenomena and to shape atom structures and the creation of certain molecules.

(https://phet.colorado.edu/ro/simulations/filter?subjects=chemistry&type=html&sort=alpha&view=grid)

Being an experimental science, Chemistry involves experiments for most of its lessons. Therefore, I had to use *youtube* many times to present my students with real experiments recorded by different people with a purpose to talk about them or about different documentaries.

Here are a few links to the youtube information used in my lessons:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3s3aLx3cfU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e53qCa85z1A
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6TDGRg7zg0
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKavHrpEoKvfrcJa7mYpQ8A/videos
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jBec2yBVl0&list=PL2gTEU3rrN319-1s4cOHtLZ_SXSC4ad7i&index=8
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXpDs0fd2E4&feature=emb_rel_err
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y5aCSOSQgU https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgyTIiDxqz0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Du2sOTpH3pQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovHFjtxo-D4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtsD_zD5GOM&t=63s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCzu3sCEE1c
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufec89A47uM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjhi95cOqCk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcwcI_CTQJA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoR1pLbwezc
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=La3O26Ze6aw

It has been rather difficult to assess my students because they cannot be wholly checked when they are online. Google Forms has helped me create tests but this has not happened too often because they take plenty of time and are difficult to use in Chemistry lessons since one cannot notice how students answer a question or solve a problem so I can never be sure whether it was the student's answer or a colleague's.

Considering the present situation, I can say that using the computer in the learning process is a necessity nowadays. However, even if the online materials are diverse and accessible for everybody, they cannot replace fully one class spent in the chemistry lab. Conversation, demonstration, modelling, problem-solving, lab experiment, as well as any other teaching method lose their value when delivered online. The contact between teacher and students and the class interactions create invisible bonds which cannot be replaced by the computer. Apart from knowledge, a teacher conveys empathy, courage, desire of self-development, and hope which altogether create invisible yet indispensable connections for the students' progress overall.

In conclusion, all these unlimited resources provided by the Internet will not be able to stand for the face-to-face interaction. Yet, they can help us reduce the distance that the online environment has created between people.

MUSIC LESSONS AT STAICELE PRIMARY SCHOOL DURING THE REMOTE LEARNING PERIOD- CREATIVE WORK FOR THE STUDENTS OF 5TH - 9TH GRADES, THEME – 'RAIMOND PAULS - 85'

Gundega Krogzema,
Music Teacher at Staicele Primary School

On January 12, 2021, the pride of our Latvia, the most notable composer Maestro Raimonds Pauls, turned 85 years old! Although the celebration was delayed due to national restrictions, the birthday of the Maestro was celebrated in a virtual environment. The students of Staicele Primary School also greeted the Maestro on his birthday with their creative works in music lessons.

Lesson plan: Theme: **'Raimonds Pauls 85** '
Achievable results:

- A student can tell about the biography and work of the Maestro Raimonds Pauls.
- A student recognizes, knows the Maestro songs, melodies.
- A student can highlight, tell about the most popular music genre, in which the Maestro has been most creative.
- A student can find information in mass media.
- A student is able to create project works in different programs.

Students had to show different skills:

• Listening to music - to get the student not only to listen, but also to perceive, analyze, experience, know and understand music.

• Transversal skills - in the process of learning music, the student especially develops skills of creativity, cooperation, critical thinking and problem solving, as well as actualizes the improvement of social-emotional learning.

• Research work - students acquire skills to obtain information and analyze in different ways, thus creating an understanding of the preconditions, causes, consequences and interconnections of the development of music culture, get to know the most important personalities in Latvian music, their impact on music at school and historically.

• Creative work - creating a concert, participation for all students, in class groups and individually with their own musical performance.

Students of the 5th - 9th grades had to complete various tasks: to watch programs offered on Latvian television about the Maestro's biography and creative life, to watch, on TV or on the Internet, with the family one of R. Pauls's concerts, to use the information offered on the Internet, the biography of the composer, to fill in the Worksheet created by the teacher (the Worksheet is created according to the age group and skills, upon receiving the assessment), to learn a new song of Raimonds Pauls by heart, to repeat the known songs (with the hope, when students will meet in person after restrictions, to organize a concert of songs of R.Pauls), together with the family they had to complete the task, 'Do you know R. Pauls's melody?' (a melody was recorded on Google Forms to guess and submit. This work was evaluated according previously developed criteria.)

In addition, the students in each grade also had to complete tasks created for only this grade.

Tasks for the 5th and 6th grade students were: they had to create a sculpture from snow or some other greeting for the Maestro's birthday. The work had to be photographed and sent to e-class. A poster had to be created for the concert of R.Pauls's music at Staicele Culture House - figuring out which artists will perform at the concert and a Test on Googles forms had to be done. (Evaluation according to the developed criteria, adding creative work: sculpture, poster, quiz 'Do you know the melody?').

The students from the 7th grade, who studies according to the new competency based approach in the curriculum during two weeks had to create a project work- presentation in PowerPoint or other presentation making and criteria both by a teacher and students.

Tasks for the students of the 8th and 9th grade had to work in groups- fill in Worksheets created by the teacher about the Maestro's work, biography, watching interviews offered on the Internet or TV, documentaries, to create Maestro works by music genres, determining the most popular genre among listeners!

As a result, the student was not only listened to, but also perceived, analyzed, experienced, known and understood music, students learned skills to obtain and analyze information in different ways, thus understanding the preconditions, causes, consequences and interrelationships of music culture development to get acquainted with the most significant personalities in Latvian music, their influence on music at school and historically.

In the process of learning music, students especially develop different transversal skills. Their creative works - creating a concert, in class groups and individually with their musical performance were presented to other students during online lessons, when students evaluated other their classmates' performances. As the students themselves admit, it was not easy, but very interesting! But it required the teacher to do a thorough job of selecting Raimonds Paul's songs, creating quizzes and other tasks, and developing assessment criteria.

ROBOTICS COMPETITION 'VENTSPILS IT CHALLENGE 2020'

Maija Andersone,
the teacher of the Interest education group "Simple Programming and Lego Robotics"

Ventspils Digital Center and the city of Ventspils invited students from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to participate in the 'Ventspils IT Challenge 2020' competition and show their skills and knowledge in the application of creative technologies. It was the 5th robotics competition "Ventspils IT Challenge 2020".

Staicele Primary School interest education group "Simple Programming and Lego Robotics'" team "Staicelieshi" ("Staicelians") - Regnārs Nerips (9th grade), Ojārs Valters Nerips (8th grade) and Niks Andersons (7th grade) also applied for the competition.

Despite the epidemiological situation in Latvia and in the world, this year a total of 280 teams - 1120 participants from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia - in four age groups had registered for the competition.

The greatest interest in the competition - to show their ICT skills and apply for ambitious prizes - was shown by Latvian schoolchildren - a total of 204 teams from all regions, 16 teams from Lithuania and the rest from Estonia applied.

After getting acquainted with the task of the competition homework -
to create a mechanism in a virtual environment - a chain of events in which a simple, everyday problem can be solved using the principle of the Ruby Goldberg machine, the participants of the team had a lot of questions, but the boys decided to try to create one. The competition regulations provided for the work to be submitted in video format in a certain size and, of course, in English. (The Rube Goldberg machine is a device that performs very simple tasks in a complex way, using various sequential operations). The homework video can be seen here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35bRpbJo5GA

It was a real pleasure for the boys to find out that the team 'Staicelieshi' in their age group (group C) were among the 18 finalist teams.

The final, due to national restrictions, took place online this year. The finalists for four days, every day a different age group, demonstrated to the jury their knowledge, skills and creativity in working with technology.

Group C students' test questions covered a very wide range of topics related to the presence of technology in all areas of life, with a particular emphasis on science, engineering, mathematics and technology.

The practical part of the final tasks was dedicated to the future Ventspils Science and Innovation Center, which is planned to open in the spring of 2022.

Pupils had to create a video in which the opening event of Ventspils' new center was creatively depicted in a virtual environment, bringing it closer to real life. The team 'Staicelieshi' created the technical solution of the task in the application unity.com .

And another task for the teams - the challenge of social networks - to reflect the course of the competition in social networks, thus showing the event from different points of view with different experiences.

On Friday, November 27, the winners of the 'Ventspils IT Challenge 2020' competition were announced. The 'Staicelieshi' won the 1st place in group C (grades 7 - 9), receiving 1000 euros in the prize. The social networking challenge - 3rd place and the prize - a bluetooth speaker.

It was an unforgettable event and experience for our school students, which proves that a competition such as 'Ventspils IT Challenge 2020', can be held remotely and we can achieve good results.

The course of the competition in photos: https://photos.app.goo.gl/ijih7SZMH7RpERh46
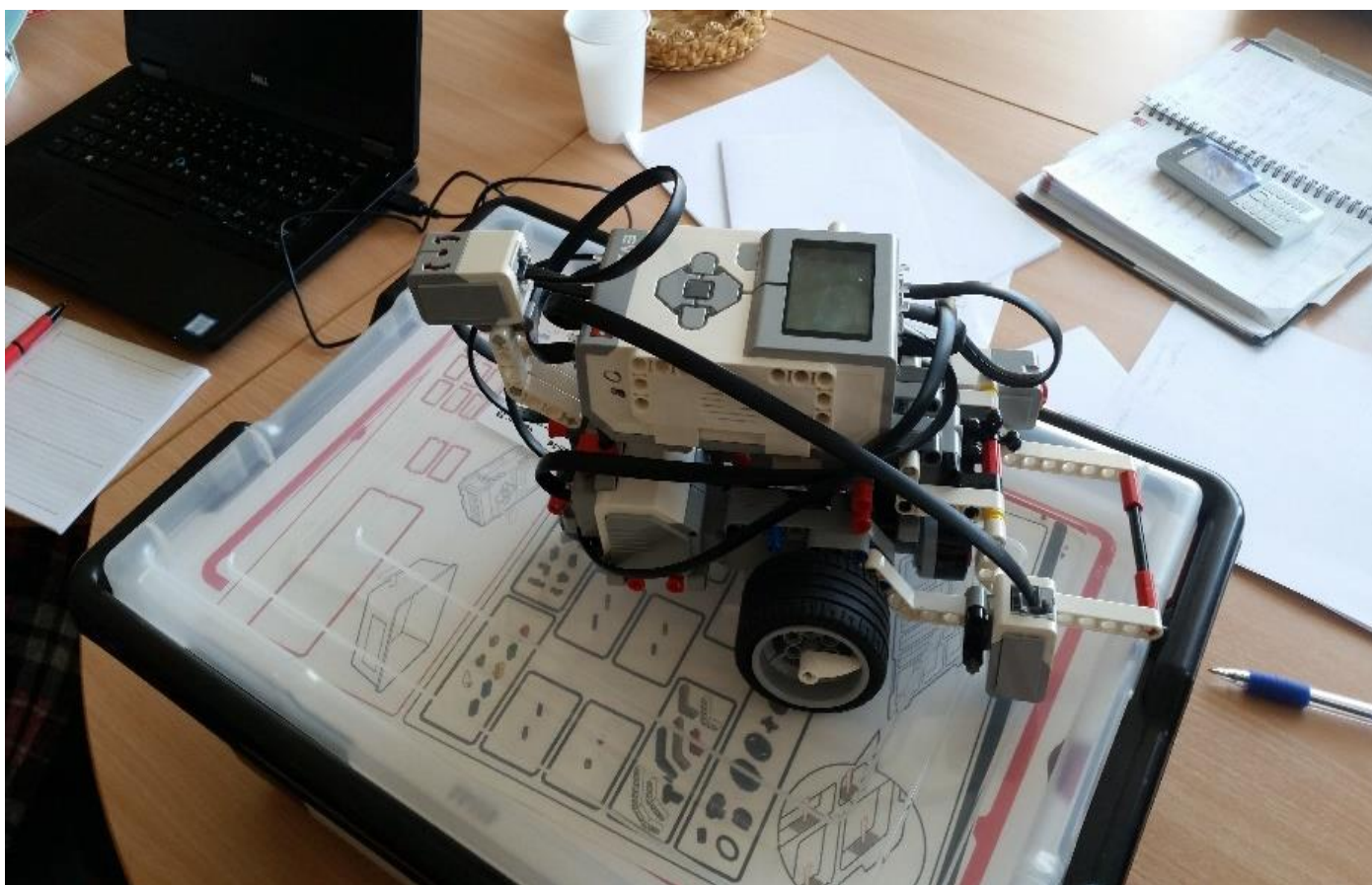
TEACHER DURING LOCKDOWN

Lucia Miron,
teacher at Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

11th March 2020

Lockdown is announced, schools are closing down. What shall I do? I am updating my blog for the Erasmus project, **Teacher in the digital classroom** (informaticamiron.wordpress.com), and adding up worksheets, tests, etc…

It's not enough as I feel like I'm losing control over my student, so I wonder how I can keep in touch with them. I give myself the answer: Google Classroom.

I create classrooms, video lessons (tutorials) so that the students watch them and answer the questions included there as homework. At that time Google didn't have the Meet option. However, **it is not enough** as the connection is weaker and weaker. How do I keep contact with my students?

I start my ZOOM online lessons. I feel that connections are being reset: Classroom homework and materials, and ZOOM online lessons: two platforms, different features. **I need improvement** so I buy a course on Edumagic: Innovative solutions for distance and classroom learning - eLearning and Webinar course.

After so much blind searching, it is necessary to choose only one platform at the institution level.

September 2020

Teams was a winning game. Course materials, homework, online classes, everything in one place. Physical activity changes into the online one. It's fine and it's different.

I am delighted to use collaborative apps – I cooperate with my students at making presentations, documents, and spread-sheets simultaneously. We use MS Whiteboard together. Everything I write on the board is sent to my students as a file, so that they have the whole lesson in that file. They become lazy, and hardly take down any information at all. The graphic tablet replaces the chalk.

I find new apps and I check them. I manage to organise Secret Santa with drawings posted on a Padlet made by the students in the class where I am head teacher (5B) and a Christmas calendar (tuerchen.com). It looks wonderful, but you don't get the same feeling like when Santa Claus gets into the classroom.

I manage to teach as if I were in the classroom. I have a group of training students and they manage to have their online classes. Things get moving, and activities like the face-to-face ones get organised.

I keep talking during my classes as I can't afford waiting times, silence becomes overwhelming, and the class is no longer alive. I ask questions, name a student, it takes time until they open their micros so until they open them another student replies. You end up hearing the same voices over and over again: those interested and motivated students.

It's difficult to follow what everyone is doing, to feel them connected to their class. Students are not machines which you start and stop whenever you want. I try to have each student answer, work, cooperate, and present their work. Students share their screen and send snapshots of what they are doing.

I ask them to keep their cameras and micros on. I get a microphonic effect so micros are turned off…sometimes cameras get turned off and then... **I feel it's not enough**, because I miss school, students' noises, and their faces.

Exam.net, manuale digitale.ro, scratch.mit.edu, educational platforms with Informatics and ICT digital resources such as: pbinfo.ro, competente[digitale.ro](digitale.ro), academy.oracle.com, altogether they help me teach, explain, get students involved in classes, make them cooperate on projects, and assess them. **I feel it's not enough …**

I will never give up anything I have been using throughout this period of time just like I will never give up school. The school!

9TH GRADE DISTANCE LEARNING PLAN IN UULU BASIC SCHOOL
Period: 15.-19. March 2021

At Uulu Basic School, teachers draw up a weekly distance learning plan, in which virtual lessons, tasks to be performed and learning outcomes are planned. Here is a sample of one of the 9th grade days.

Zoom lessons			
Aine	**Date**	**Day**	**Time**
Mathematics	15.03	Monday	9.30
English	15.03	Monday	12.30

15.03.2021 MONDAY

	Subject	Learning outcomes to be achieved	Learning activities	Monitoring and assessment of learning outcomes
1	**Biology**	How does the Nervous System Work? * Knows and can explain the concepts: nerve impulse, reflex, reflex arc * Can describe the reflex map path along which excitement moves. * Can explain the difference between the somatic and autonomic nervous systems and give examples.	1) Learn the topic from Qpiq 4.4 2) Watch videos 3) Solve all the tasks related to the topic. If not, solve it again until you get the correct answers.	
2	**Mathematics**	Knows the elements of the cone; Can find the bottom area and side area of a cone; Knows how to draw the surface area of a cone	Read the topic "Cone" (Textbook, p. 66) in the textbook; Attend the VIDEO HOUR from 9.30 to 10.00 We solve the tasks orally from the textbook: Textbook, ex. 753, 755, 757	Active participation in the video lesson and participation in the discussion
3	**Russian**	Reads poems about Estonia in Russian	There are 2 poems in your textbook (pp.18-19) about Estonia. The first is written in 2 languages, the second only	Send me a voice memo of one of your choice no later than 6 p.m. The poem does not

			in Russian. Your task is to practice them and choose one to present. nicely. The first poem h.25, the second h.27	have to be in the head
4	**Literature**	The student gets acquainted with the work of E.M Remarque "West Front without change"	Read the textbook on pages 112-115 Workbook page 55 in writing	Send picture of textbook page 55
5	**English**	The student consolidates knowledge of English-speaking countries and culture. Expands your horizons.	11:30 a.m. Be sure to take part in Zoom class - let's play Golden Wool! English Week begins and I challenge you to test your knowledge of English-speaking countries.	Participate in a video lesson.
6	**Physics**	Knows the properties of a permanent magnet, the shape of lines of force, the construction and working principle of an electromagnet, induction.	Magnetic phenomena. Please fill in the individually distributed worksheet.	Worksheet completed. Gradual work!

SPORTS AT STAICELE PRIMARY SCHOOL
DURING REMOTE LEARNING PERIOD

Vizma Tiltiņa,
Sports Teacher at Staicele Primary School

The school year began with face - to - face training, in accordance with all the requirements of the situation in the country Covid - 19, sports lessons were also adapted to the requirements, as far as possible all lessons were organized outside on the sports field. Pupils were given the opportunity to acquire basic gymnastics and athletics skills, to improve their skills to work with a soccer ball. Prior to the introduction of stricter restrictions due to the situation in Covid-19, we managed to hold the Olympic Day 2020 and the Strongest Race in September and October.

After the autumn holidays, the distance learning process started for the students of the 7th - 9th grades, but the 2nd semester started with the distance learning process for all classes.

School sports teachers believe that the most important thing in the distance learning process at the moment is for students to go out in the fresh air and move. Therefore, online lessons are not held at the computer, because children already spend a lot of time on smart devices. Of course, it also has its advantages - everyone learns how to use technology better, but there is no shortage of disadvantages - sitting back collapses, the chest is compressed, tiredness develops from monotony, overweight appears.

Teachers, especially sports teachers, need to use their imagination to make students move. And we manage with this situation in different ways.

If there are three sports lessons a week, everyone should spend at least the same amount of time on physical activity. If it is not possible to do so on working days, time for movement must be set aside on weekends, but within one or two weeks the specified norm must be met. However, it must be taken into account that in the town children can go to nature even in the evenings, because the streets are lighted, but in the countryside in the dark no sports will take place. Students are asked to complete various tasks, such as walk or run 20 km in two weeks   and sending a confirmation in the application that they have succeeded.

This winter, when nature in Latvia has richly endowed us with snow, it can also be used. Staicele Primary school students formed snowballs of a certain size and number, they thought what to build from them. Celebrating the 29th anniversary of Staicele, the students made devotions to our town from the snow.

Snowballs are also used as balls - they are thrown at the target. When the weather allowed, the time was used for skiing and skating.

Students also had to evaluate their activities. For example, they had to measure their heartbeat rate before and after physical activities, record data for several weeks, and see if there are any changes. Students had also to develop sets of exercises for the back, legs, justifying which of them

benefits, perform various tasks, such as squats, and compare if the result increases by performing them regularly for a longer period of time.

I can also mention another negative aspect of remote learning- at the moment there is no real competition atmosphere for students, which motivates them to get better results.

This time must be passed, the main thing is to maintain a positive outlook and be creative so that students do not lose their athletic spirit, health and desire to do sports.

THE PE LESSON DURING THE PANDEMIC

Mihai Burciu,
teacher at Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

The Covid 19 pandemic has been a real challenge for the PE teacher both at school and in the online environment. From this point of view, teachers have been forced to identify the most appropriate informative and digital resources so as to carry out their educational activities under the circumstances of an exclusively online teaching-learning process or, in the best case, a face-to-face one by meeting strict norms. The main issues that the Physical Education and Sports subject is facing, PE for short, include significant restructuring of the curriculum contents, of the lesson plans, and of the way in which the educational process is organised and takes place.

Like all the other subjects pertaining to its field of study, the Physical Education and Sports subject is student-centred and promotes this type of education. As a consequence, the teacher's main interest will be the student's competence by approaching its three components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Nowadays, the PE teachers are facing a series of difficulties in their activity:
- Identifying the best digital solutions to ensure continuous interaction with the students;
- Establishing the tasks that can be sent online so that the students do them safely;
- Keeping students' motivation positive to actively take part in the lessons;
- Assessing knowledge.

All these difficulties have greatly influenced the process of structuring the particular competences, impacting negatively on the physical skills specific for the different sports (athletics, sports games, and gymnastics), the organisation and the groupwork skills (team/group/pair work), and the use of physical exercise to shape students' personality.

An Official Order issued by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Health (5487/2020) has lain down measures for organising the activity of the education providers under safe epidemiological conditions in order to prevent falling ill with SARS-CoV2. The measures which concern the organisation of sports activities are as follows:

"-Only sports games allowing for physical distance can take place and only outside;

-There shall be no use of sports equipment which can be handled by all the students (it shall be handled by adults only); otherwise constant disinfection shall take place at regular times;

-The PE classes held in the sports hall must be limited to sports activities which do not involve medium/intense effort by ensuring the compulsory 1.5 m physical distance, in which case a mask is not to be worn;

-During the PE classes the students will not touch their faces, noses, mouths, and eyes without previous hygiene; they must be trained in this respect;

-At the beginning and end of the PE classes all the students must use an alcohol disinfectant for their hands;

-Cleaning, room disinfection with certified products and airing shall be done after each group of students;"

As such, the PE lesson during the pandemic must be based on little towards medium effort depending on the teacher's creativity. It is highly important for the teacher to make their lesson as attractive as possible. In relation to the measures stipulated by the Order, the PE class can take place based on the same organisational structure meeting the necessary rules such as physical distance, hygiene, and low level of effort.

"Approaching the lesson topics"

There is a wide range of scheduled topics to be approached while adapting the rules concerning the prevention against the SARS-CoV-2 infection. In order to obey the physical distance and hygiene rules without using sports equipment such as the ball, the main exercises will aim at harmonious physical workout, developing basic physical skills such as speed (reaction speed), strength in particular (the main muscle groups), and working out the body according to the Ministry of Health recommendations both concerning physical distance and the PE method. The teacher's creativity is absolutely necessary for the pupils to enjoy the PE class during the pandemic. Therefore, even the double-sided games like handball, basketball, volleyball, or football can be adapted in order to keep physical distance. In acrobatic gymnastics the mats can be easily disinfected with a spray. To prevent the use of too much disinfectant, the students can be organised in more workshops so that maximum 2 students can practice on one mat during one class.

In case of online classes, sets of exercises for harmonious body building can be done, along with free exercises or the use of different objects (dumbbells, water bottles, sticks, or scarves), exercises to develop physical strength, aerobics exercises, dance steps, and games which develop good handling and speed reaction. The pupils must wear proper equipment, the hall must be properly aired, and there must be plenty of space inside so that the pupils do not suffer any injuries, all that for the good organisation and flow of the lesson.

All in all, almost all the existing contents in the school curricula can be adapted to the current situation requiring at the same time thorough preparation and organisation of the lesson.

HOW CORONAVIRUS HAVE AFFECTED FOOTBALL CLUB

Martin Kuldmägi
CEO of Poseidon Football Club

The spread of the coronavirus over the past year has had a profound effect on the activities of our club. Many changes have been measurable and mappable, while others are more based on emotion and mental well-being, which are difficult to measure. Speaking of numbers, almost 150 children and 1 coach have left our club in the last year. As training has not always taken place, we have had to make changes to the invoicing, which has clearly affected our budget again and the club's ability to pay the coaches a stable salary (it is true that we have received and used state subsidies).

What cannot be measured, however, is the level of stress in children and coaches. The children are obviously tired of the situation, which is why their moods have been volatile, and thus the motivation to play football has fluctuated, to put it mildly. In addition, the impact of this situation on coaches must be mentioned: everyone lives in ignorance and in a world where any periodization (ie planning football activities) is completely ruled out. I have to work in extreme conditions (for example, I personally had a three-week period of 35 workouts a week after doing private training) and I am constantly adapting to new circumstances, which again makes it extremely difficult to do methodical work.

Speaking of changes, many of the ideas in the previous point also apply to this issue. I might add that, due to circumstances, we have completely changed our training and communication with children to keep them motivated and help them survive this difficult time: we conduct zoom meetings where children from different regions can talk to each other and exchange impressions; we organize various memory games and drawing battles to keep the children in touch with football and their mood fresh; we call players and parents in person and find out by phone how they are doing.

At a time when training was prohibited, we prepared separate weekly plans for each group, which the children had to complete, submit their activities to the training diary and send to the coaches. Organizationally and club-wise, the main goal of this period has been to continue the activities after the crisis (I emphasize: continuation). In other words, it is not so much a question of how we survive March and April this year, but rather of how we survive September-October, that is, the satisfaction of existing members, the addition of new members and stability on the financial side after the restrictions have eased.

The current situation has been challenging and tense for staff. True, there are fewer trainings, but we are not the kind of service providers who visit children, throw them a ball bag and start drinking coffee and browsing the newspaper. However, we exist in a sports landscape where the result matters. This is also our goal: a sporting result. In order to achieve a sporting result, there must be a vision (the club must have a decipherment of what is to be achieved) and a methodology (the club must have a decipherment of HOW to achieve it). That is why our bar for coaches and the work they do is high, and we require them to develop children methodically. In the current period,

coaches are in a situation where they cannot do their job the way they want, so they need a lot of help and support from the club. As one of the founding members of the club and also a coach, I see on a daily basis how the people and structure of our club as a whole use this situation to learn and get out of it smarter, not to sacrifice and complain about how difficult everything is. As evolution has taught us, only those who can adapt to new circumstances will survive.

The so-called zoom-out spot has been the main lesson in the ability to react and adapt quickly. In other words, we have always been aware of the changes that can and cannot be made in the sports landscape at the moment. Then we quickly set up a short-term action plan for the club and introduce it to the coaches, whose task is again to familiarize the parents and club members with the changes as soon as possible. We have been open and transparent in our activities, justifying our decisions to parents and explaining our plans. In terms of zoom-in, the main lessons have been the ability to transfer training to distance learning (or individual activities) or to adapted group training. In other words: we have learned (and are still learning) how to teach football as a sports game to children in distance learning, so that the characteristic features of this game remain and the quality of training does not decrease.

I would recommend and encourage in crisis situations to see an opportunity to learn and develop, not to panic or give up. Life is never under control or under control, and anyone who thinks the opposite will at some point find themselves in a very awkward situation. The comfort zone cannot be someone's friend, but is clearly the enemy, and from time to time it is very good if our comfort zone is shaken and turned upside down. Whoever throws up the old and simple life in the new situation and remains cursed about the new life will not get far.

THE STUDY PROCESS DURING HOME ECONOMICS/ DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY LESSONS FOR THE 5$^{\text{TH}}$ - 9$^{\text{TH}}$ GRADE STUDENTS AT STAICELE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Vizma Tiltiņa,
Home Economics / Design and Technology Teacher at Staicele Primary School

During Home Economics and Design and Technology classes at Staicele Primary School in September and October, the 5$^{\text{th}}$ - 6$^{\text{th}}$ grade students learned table-laying skills as well as cooking healthy food within the theme 'Nutrition'. The girls of the 5$^{\text{th}}$ grade learned how to cook different porridges, to make canapes on their own, but the girls of the 6$^{\text{th}}$ grade, in turn, how to cook soups, jellies and cooked desert from whipped cream and cottage cheese. The girls also learned to chop vegetables for different salads and made them.

In the autumn, before the distance learning period, the girls of the 5$^{\text{th}}$ and 6$^{\text{th}}$ grades learned to work with an electric sewing machine, iron with an iron, sew small meaningful products - face masks and cloth bags for their shoes. This was continued at the beginning of the distance learning period.

As Christmas approached, the 5$^{\text{th}}$ and 6th grade students still had lessons at school; the girls, under the guidance of the teacher, learned how to make gingerbread dough, batik cloth, from which gift bags, which the students gave to their loved ones at Christmas, were sewn.

According to the new competency program, the 7$^{\text{th}}$ grade students in Design and Technology lessons must learn a common program for both girls and boys. The month of September and October for the 7$^{\text{th}}$ and 8$^{\text{th}}$ grade students were spent repeating, strengthening and learning - sewing, ironing, sewing details, as a result, face masks were sewn for themselves - a meaningful product suitable for the current situation. It is gratifying that the girls shared their knowledge with the boys during the learning process, helping with advice and showing how to perform a particular activity.

After the autumn holiday, which was in October in Latvia, the 7$^{\text{th}}$, 8$^{\text{th}}$ and 7$^{\text{th}}$ grade students did not return to full-time studies, the distance learning process began. As a teacher, I have a lot to think about how to make the learning process interesting, creative and meaningful, but at the same time how to teach something new, the products created by the students must be applicable, but most importantly, the activities should be fun for the students.

In order to achieve the set goals, both the teacher and the students have to use their computer skills to search for and select the necessary information, create presentations that reflect their practical work and, of course, present their own work. The teacher led the work process by remotely motivating, giving advice on how best to accomplish the task, providing feedback. This is not easy at all, as the teacher cannot show individual nuances, such as the degree of craftsmanship or the cooking process. Students have to look for answers, explanations, ask for an advice to parents or older relatives at home.

The students learned the topic 'Nutrition' remotely, they had to search for recipes and prepare meals from meat, fish and dairy products at home.

The 8th grade students searched for information to understand the carving process, then did it on a piece of soap and an apple, but the 7th grade students created bird silhouettes with nails as part of the topic 'How to decorate wood products?' created the outline of the bird and then carefully projected it with the thread, pulling the thread from one nail to another, until the fantastic works were created.

The 5th and 6th grade girls learned the theme 'Embroidery' – they drew a working drawing, made sketches and then strengthened their skills by embroidering birds.

In the final work, the boys of the 9th grade made bird cages according to their own drawings, but for the final work the girls chose handicraft techniques that were closer to them and in which the practical skills were the most stable - embroidered, crocheted, knitted.

All created works were photographed, presentations on the progress of the work were made and presented to other students in online lessons.

When we return to school in person, we will create an exhibition of works created during distance learning. It will be interesting to see everyone's performance in person, and everyone will be able to make sure that it is possible to create really interesting and nice works remotely.

LAUGHTER AND TEENAGERS' WELLBEING
TEACHER MATERIAL

Drawn by PhD *Irina Dumitru*, school counsellor at
The County Centre for Resources and Educational Support of Iasi

Field: Communication and social skills
Target group: students (middle school)

OBJECTIVES
- ➢ *Developping wellbeing;*
- ➢ *Taking on an active role as concerns personal development;*
- ➢ *The management of excitement, thoughts, and behaviour under difficult life circumstances*

ACTIVITY SCRIPT
- ❖ Brainstorming: what do you understand by 'wellbeing'? The students fill in the worksheet; we clarify the concept of 'wellbeing';
- ❖ The importance of wellbeing: 'There will always be something more urgent than protecting the children's wellbeing, but never something more important.' (UNICEF Office of Research (2013). 'Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A comparative overview', Innocenti Report Card 11, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence, https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc11_eng.pdf, apud. S. Irimie- Assessing the wellbeing of a child at school and making it a priority: file:///C:/Users/Asus/Downloads/Draguta%20O_The%20Well-being%20of%20Student%20Today%20-%20the%20Success%20and%20the%20Health%20of%20Adult%20Tomorrow.pdf.pdf
- ❖ Self-evaluation of one's wellbeing, The Life Self-Contentment Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985) https://www.all.ro/media/attachment/file/p/s/psihologia_pozitiva_pdf.pdf
- ❖ Students list the benefits which laughter brings forth in their lives. For more information, they can access https://www.descopera.ro/stiinta/8835085-rasul-bate-boala
- ❖ Students watch 'Laughter and wellbeing' and fill in the tasks in their worksheets.
- ❖ "Click my computer on your computer funny video,, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzDBitv5Yfc

ONLINE sources
UNICEF Office of Research (2013). 'Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A comparative overview', Innocenti Report Card 11, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence, https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc11_eng.pdf, apud. S. *Irimie - Evaluarea stării de bine a copilului în şcoală*
Scala Mulţumirii de Viaţă (Assessing the child's wellbeing at school - Life Contentment Scale) (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985), în C. Style, *Psihologia pozitivă*, https://www.all.ro/media/attachment/file/p/s/psihologia_pozitiva_pdf.pdf (Positive psychology)

O. Drăguţa, *Starea de bine a elevului de azi – succesul şi sănătatea adultului de mâine (The wellbeing of the present student – the success and good health of tomorrow's adult)* file:///C:/Users/Asus/Downloads/Draguta%20O_The%20Well-being%20of%20Student%20Today%20-%20the%20Success%20and%20the%20Health%20of%20Adult%20Tomorrow.pdf.pdf
Beneficiile râsului (Laughter benefits) https://www.descopera.ro/stiinta/8835085-rasul-bate-boala
"Click my computer on your computer funny video,,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzDBitv5Yfc

RESILIENT ADOLESCENTS
RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Drawn by PhD *Irina Dumitru*, school counsellor at
The County Centre for Resources and Educational Support of Iasi

Field of study: socio-emotional development
Target group: students (lower secondary school)

Objectives:
- **developing resilience**
- **taking on an active role in personal development**
- **managing emotions, thoughts and behaviour in adverse life situations**
- students read the story **"The story of the donkey fallen into a well"** http://jurnalultrezirii.blogspot.com/2009/07/povestea-magarului-cazut-in-fantana.html
- Every change or challenge affects people in different ways, creating a unique mix of thoughts, strong emotions and uncertainty. However, as time goes by, people generally adapt well to stressful situations - largely due to resilience.
- Students watch the movie "Resilient Adolescents" then they fill in the exercises on the worksheets.

What is RESILIENCE?

Resilience represents the capacity to cope with challenges, to adapt to the changes in the environment, adversities, trauma, tragedies, threats or other significant sources of stress – like family or relationship problems, serious health problems etc.

What isn't RESILIENCE?

Resilience is not a personality trait that only certain people possess! On the contrary, resilience involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

The same as building muscles, developing resilience requires time and strong will. Concentrating on four essential components – connection, well-being, healthy mindset and purpose –It can help you resist and learn from difficult experiences.

3. WHY IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE IMPORTANT?
A resilient teenager:
• is optimistic
• copes with stress
• adapts easily to challenges
• has good relationships with the people around him
• finds new opportunities for development

WAYS OF DEVELOPING RESILIENCE - Worksheets for students

- Drawing a life timeline (instructions for applying and processing the information can be found here: https://tdh-moldova.md/media/files/files/1_3_rezilienta_si_resursele_persoanei_294445.pdf)
- Identifying the factors that help them face challenges (types of factors: internal , external, personal, social, etc.)
- Differentiating the circumstances which I can control from those which I cannot control
- Adopting a more flexible outlook on life
- Developing positive beliefs about oneself and events https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DmLkugdh9s
- Building Self-Confidence 3 Tips to Increase Your Confidence - TED-Ed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_NYrWqUR40
- Recognizing and accepting emotions during difficult times
- Builiding a support network (identifying supportive people who can bring comfort in adverse situations).

Online resources:

The Road to Resilience – https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience

Rezilienţa şi resursele persoanei - https://tdh-moldova.md/media/files/files/1_3_rezilienta_si_resursele_persoanei_294445.pdf

3 tips to boost your confidence - TED-Ed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_NYrWqUR40

Partly Cloudy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DmLkugdh9s

Povestea măgarului căzut în fântână: http://jurnalultrezirii.blogspot.com/2009/07/povestea-magarului-cazut-in-fantana.html

THE IMPACT OF DISTANCE LEARNING UPON STUDENTS

Research, analyses, opinions, and support materials

RESEARCH STUDY CARRIED OUT FOR THE ERASMUS + PROJECT „LET'S THINK ABOUT OUR FUTURE WORKING LIFE"

Dr. School counselor *Irina Dumitru*
Colegiul Naţional "Costache Negruzzi" Iaşi

Aim of research: This study aims to identify the needs of highschool students nevoilor elevilor regarding their need of counseling and assistance in choosing a career path.

By *counseling and assistance* we are reffering to the ways in which students are advised and guided in getting informed about possible career prospects, understanding their own abilities, knowledge and experience, in comparison to what the work market has to offer.

Identifying the students needs regarding counseling and career orientation is a neccesary and important step for an efficient, realistic and student focused intervention.

The methodology and organization of the research

1. The research subjects: The targeted population of the research from which was extracted, through random sampling, the group of **149 subjects** is made of teenagers between 15 and 18 years old, signed up at "Costache Negruzzi" Iasi National College in 10th and 11th grade in the 2018-2019 school year. The choice of those age categories is founded on the fact that teenagers are placed– according to the theoretical model of modelului Donald Super on career development – in the exploration stage, which has as care are ca specific vocational tasks the teenagers concern to plan their professional interests, their career options and their future. At the same, the attempt to eliminate other variables that could intervene: adapting to a specific school cicle(9th grade) or the approaching of the bacalaureat exam(12th grade) is justifiable.

Thereby, according to the *biological gender* variable, the sample is formed of **87** female subjects and **62** male subjects and according to the grade variable, the sample consists of **82** 10th grade students and **67** 11th grade students.
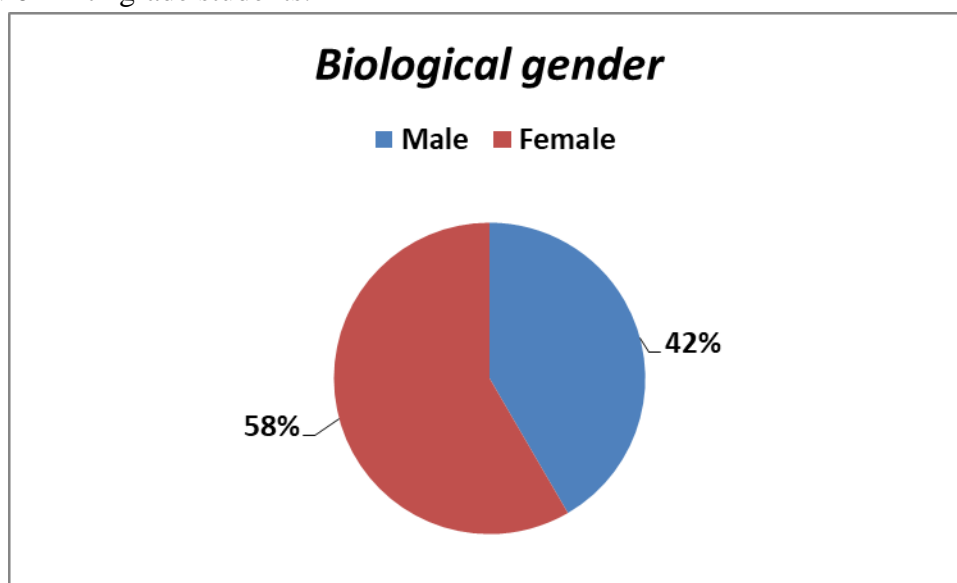

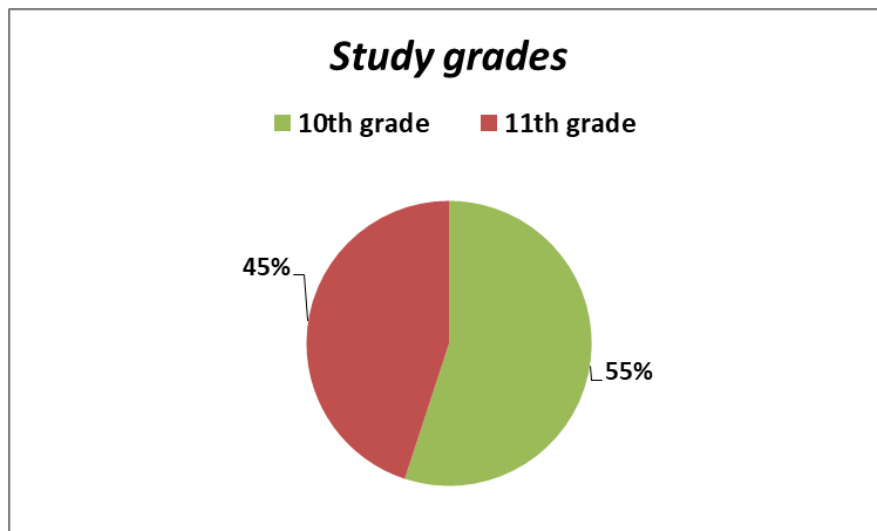**Fig. 1.** *Distribution of biological gender in the studied sample*
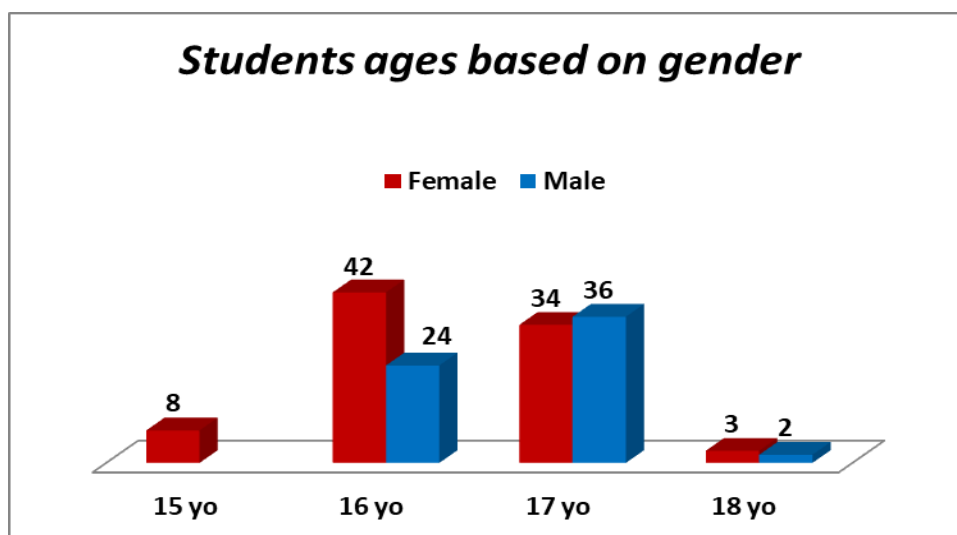
Fig. 2. *Distribuţion of study grades in the studied sample*

Fig. 3. *Distribution of students ages accroding to biological gender*

2. Method of research: Survey based on questionnaire[6];

3. Used instrument: *Questionnaire for students* (see *Annex no. 1*);

4. Date of questionnaire application: 17.12.2018 -23.01.2019

5. Methods of data proccesing: The methods used were those specific to the descriptive studies: frequency analysis and nonparametric statistics of the data obtained. The results have a definitive role.

Analysis and interpretation of results

For the first item **"***What plans do you have after finishing highschool?***"** students, regardless of age and grade, answered unanimously (97%) that they wish to further their studies, *by going to university* (from the 143 students that asnwered to this question, o girl from 10th grade specified that she

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[6] The data collected with the help of questionnaires reflect the opinions of the students from the moment of application. In addition, the results obtained are valid, to the extent that the student responds honestly to the items.

wishes to study abroad). A number of 4 students, representing 3 % of the total participating subjects (1 male from 11th grade and 3 females from 11th grade) said that they don't have a plan after finishing highschool yet.
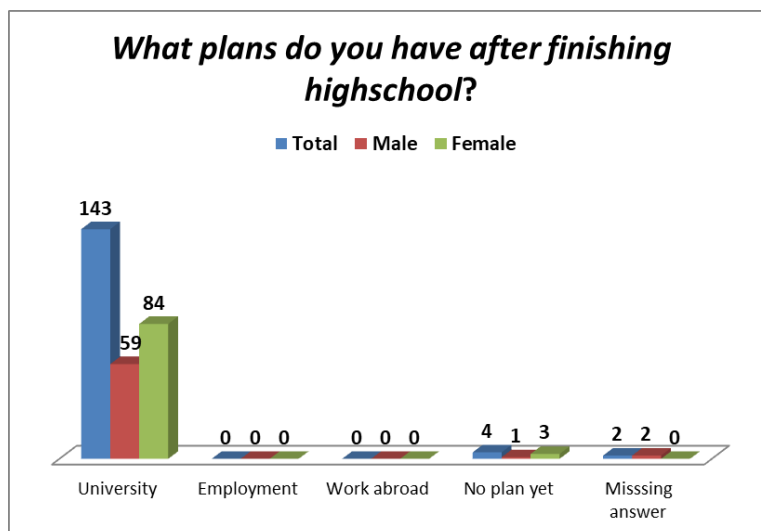
Fig. 4. *Distribuion of answers regarding plans after highschool*

For the second item („Which profession do you wish to practice after finishing your studies?") the students chose, in the descending order of preferences, the following professions:
- **medicine**: 42 choices from which 28 girls (14 from 10th grade and 14 from 11th grade), 14 boys (8 from 10th grade, 6 from 11th grade);
- **computer science**: 41 picks from which 17 girls (8 from 10th grade, 9 from 11th grade), 24 boys (6 from 10th grade, 18 from 11th grade)

The attractiveness of the computer science field remains higher for boys, compared to girls who choose medicine, a profession with a pronounced social-investigative character, according to John Holland's model of professional interests. Beyond the existence of a gender stereotype, probably another explanation for these professional choices remains the tradition of the family environment that projects on the young the parental aspirations or the family vocational and cultural model. Both fields are currently in continuous expansion, professions of the future, ensuring significant financial gains.

Half of the previous options, with 20 and 11 answers, respectively, were chosen professions in the field of economics / business administration and engineering / automation. The choice of these professional fields is conditioned by the existence of certain skills and personality traits such as mathematical analysis / calculation, organizational skills, meticulousness, attention to detail, patience, etc. which requires time to be practiced, trained.

The other fields (legal, psychology, arts, education, diplomacy, journalism, etc.) have each obtained less than 10 elections, having a reduced attractiveness for students.

A number of 19 students (15 girls, most of the X-grade and 4 boys), representing 13% of the total subjects are still undecided on the desired profession. This result is not surprising, given that at this

stage of age the professional option is being clarified, the students having two more years to crystallize their professional interests and to shape their career decision.

Profession	1.10th grade		2.11th grade		3. Total answers		
	1.1. Fem.	1.2. Masc.	2.1. Fem.	2.2. Masc.	3.1. Fem.	3.2. Masc.	3.3. Total
Medicine (with the variants: forensic, psychiatrist, pharmacy, dermatology, surgery, dentistry, cosmetic surgeon, maxillofacial surgeon, general surgeon)	14	8	14	6	**28**	14	**42**
Informatică (programmator, grafic designer, software engineer, game developer, IT tester, developnet, digital artist)	8	6	9	18	17	**24**	**41**
Economy/Business administration (antrepreneur, broker, marketing, manager, economist)	10	5	3	2	13	7	**20**
Engineering (engineer, robotics, architect)	2	2	1	6	3	8	**11**
Law (lawyer, prosecutor, notary)	6	2	0	1	6	3	**9**
Human resources/Psychology (Psychologist, psychotherapist, human resources manager)	7	1	1	0	8	1	**9**
Arts (drama, theater, acting, makeup artist, music producer)	2	1	1	1	3	2	**5**
Education (Trainer, academic teacher, researcher, mathematician)	3	0	2	0	5	0	**5**
Diplomacy / International Relations Diplomat	2	0	1	0	3	0	**3**
Journalism/forgein languages	1	0	1	0	2	0	**2**
Freelancer	0	0	0	2	0	2	**2**
F1 Pilot	0	2	0	0	0	2	**2**
Police/SRI	1	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
Air traffic controller	0	0	0	1	0	1	**1**
Fotball player	0	1	0	0	0	1	**1**
I don't know/Haven't decided yet	11	2	4	2	15	4	**19**
Missing answer	1	2	1	1	2	3	**5**

Table no.1. *Desired profession after graduation*
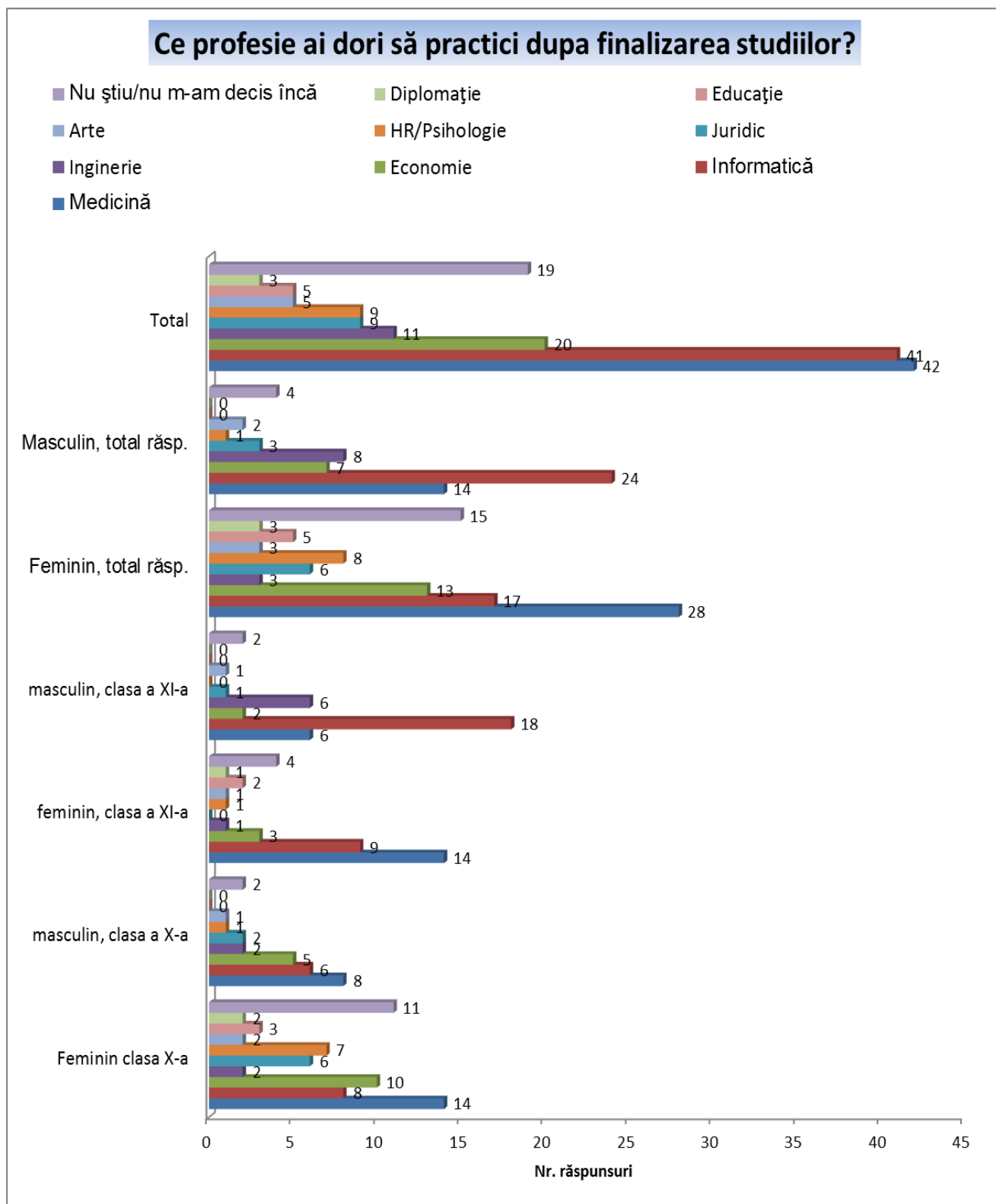
Fig. 5. *Distribuţia răspunsurilor elevilor în ceea ce priveşte profesia dorită la finalizarea studiilor*

At the third item "Do you think you have the skills necessary to practice this profession?" The students answered yes in a percentage of 70%, only 28% of the students specifying that "I do not know for sure what skills they have". This result reflects a high level of student optimism, based on a positive self-perception of personal skills, but also the efficiency of counseling activities aimed at

self-awareness - an important and necessary step for career planning. The concept of self is the basis for making career decisions, being the main criterion for analyzing the educational or occupational options and identifying the option that most closely matches the student's expectations. Information about oneself most relevant to career planning are: interests, values, aptitudes and personality. These aspects are explored in the orientation and counseling activities (individual and collective) during each school year.

3. **Do you think you have the skills necessary to practice this profession?**	1.**10th grade**		2.**11th grade**		3. **Total answers**			**%**
	1.1. Fem.	1.2. Masc.	2.1. Fem.	2.2. Masc.	3.1. Fem.	3.2. Masc.	3.3. Total	
Yes	34	19	23	28	57	47	**104**	**70%**
No	0	1	0	0	0	1	**1**	**1%**
I'm not sure what skills I have	19	6	10	6	29	12	**41**	**28%**
Missing answer	0	3	0	0	0	3	**3**	**2%**

Tab. 2. *Distribution of students' answers regarding the possession of the skills necessary to practice the profession*
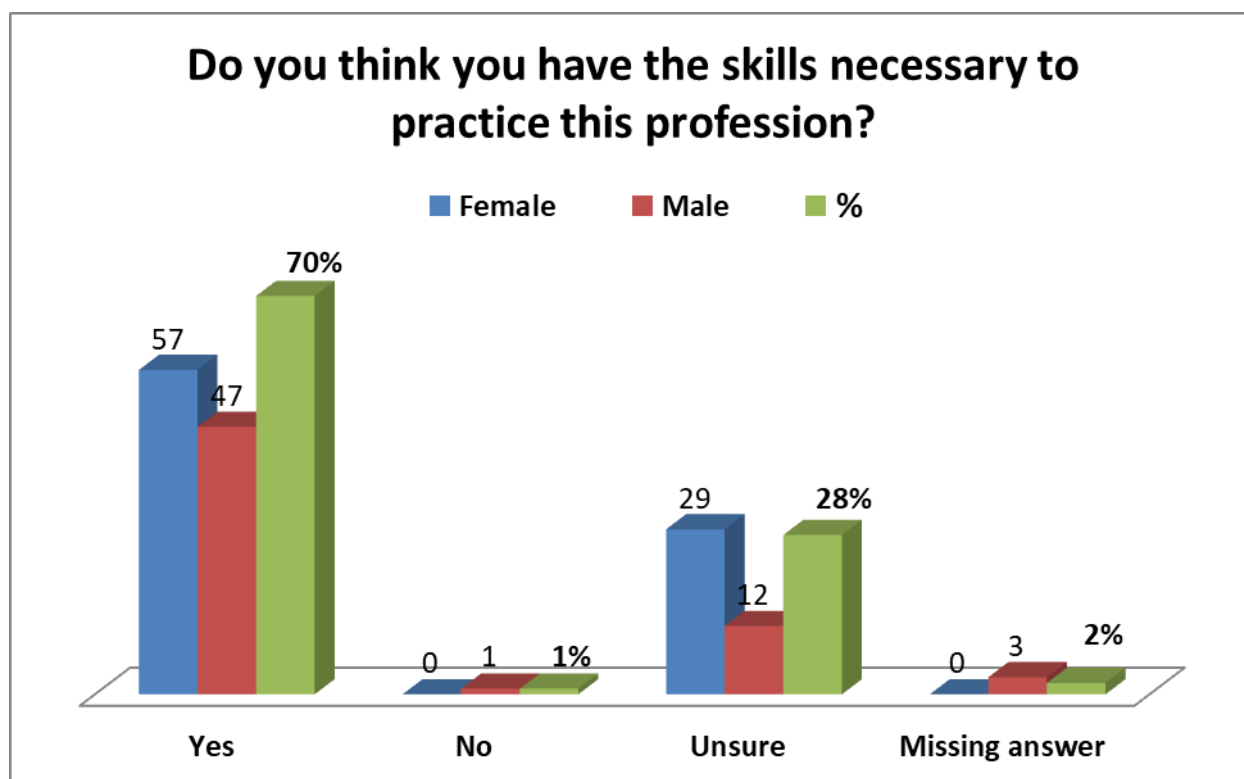
Fig. 6. *Distribution of students' answers regarding the possession of the skills necessary to practice the profession*

In connection with the main skills needed to develop the desired profession, the students named the following:
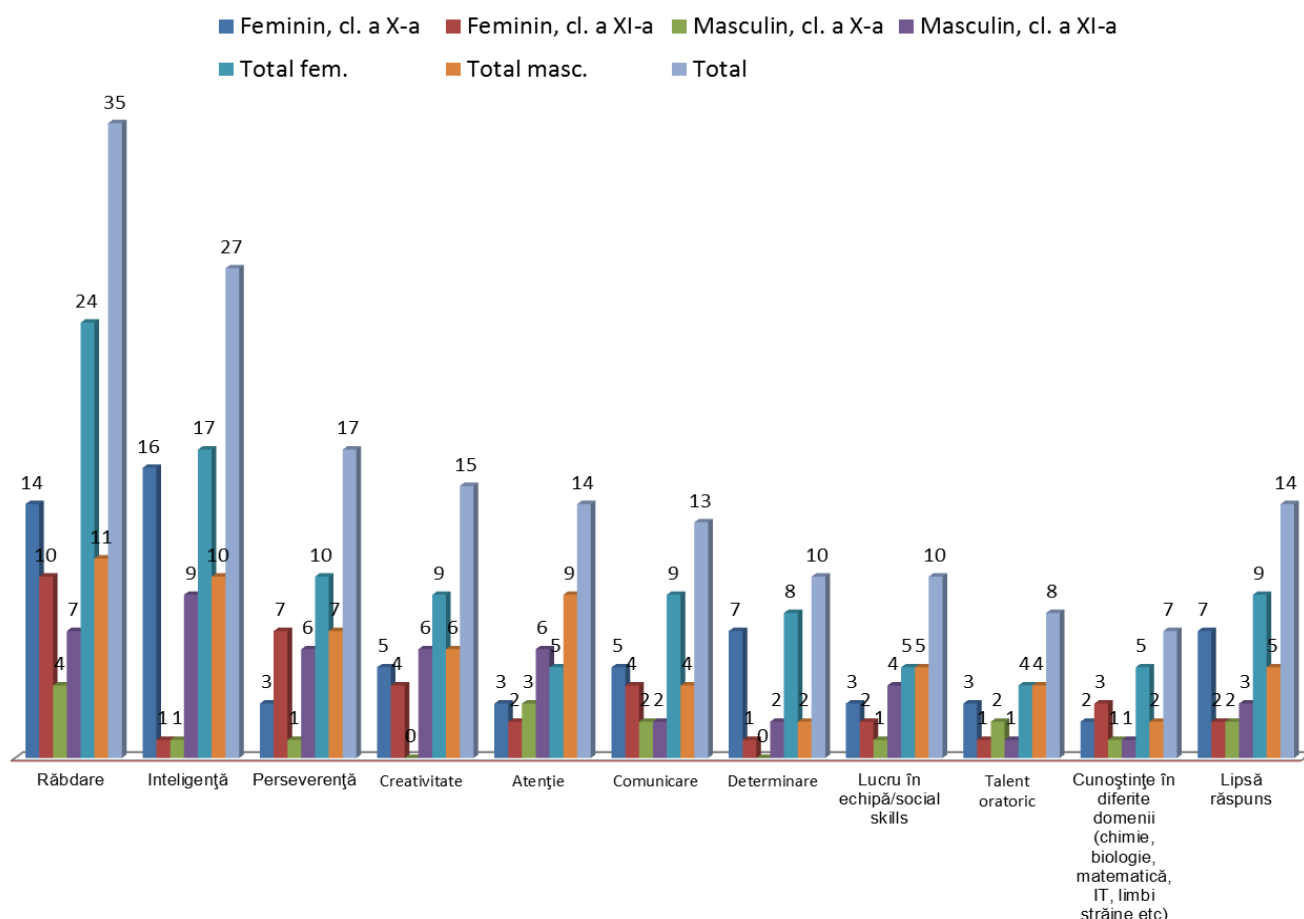
Fig. 7. *Distribution of student responses regarding the skills needed to practice the desired profession*

An ingredient of success, patience - the students' first choice - seems like a surprising choice in an age of speed, when everything seems to happen instantly. However, it positively correlates with emotional intelligence and perseverance in achieving goals. In addition, creativity needs analytical spirit, patience, perseverance, work, discipline, training.

There are some skills that are appreciated and valued by employers and are among the students' options:
- communication: understanding of verbal and non-verbal messages, clear expression;
- intrapersonal abilities: cooperation; adaptability in teamwork; respect for colleagues; diplomacy; discretion; empathy; tolerance;
- abilities of investigation and manipulation of data: capacity of analysis, exploration of the sources of information and the efficient use of the information;
- planning and problem solving skills: ability to plan one's work alone, initiative in carrying out various tasks and actions, ability to easily acquire new skills;
- ability to make decisions;
- conscientiousness, taking responsibility for the work done;

- abilities to use information technologies;
- adaptation to change;
- orientation towards progress and self-development;
- calm, emotional stability, good mood, enthusiasm at work, loyalty, sincerity;
- -sense of observation;
- imagination, insight;
- physical abilities.

The exploration of the educational and occupational routes is carried out by collecting information on educational opportunities and occupations. It is recommended that students have as much information as possible about the nature of the work they wish to do, the educational requirements for a job, employment prospects, the work environment, earnings, etc. The accuracy of the information obtained is essential in order to make choices in accordance with the interests, values, personality traits that characterize them. In order to obtain as much information about educational and professional routes as possible, you must identify as many and varied sources of information as possible.

Regarding the information about the desired profession, the students answered 44% that "they have enough information at this time", compared to 30% who said they "do not have enough information" or 26% who answered "I don't know ".

Students who answered "yes, I have enough information at this time about the desired profession" have as sources of information:
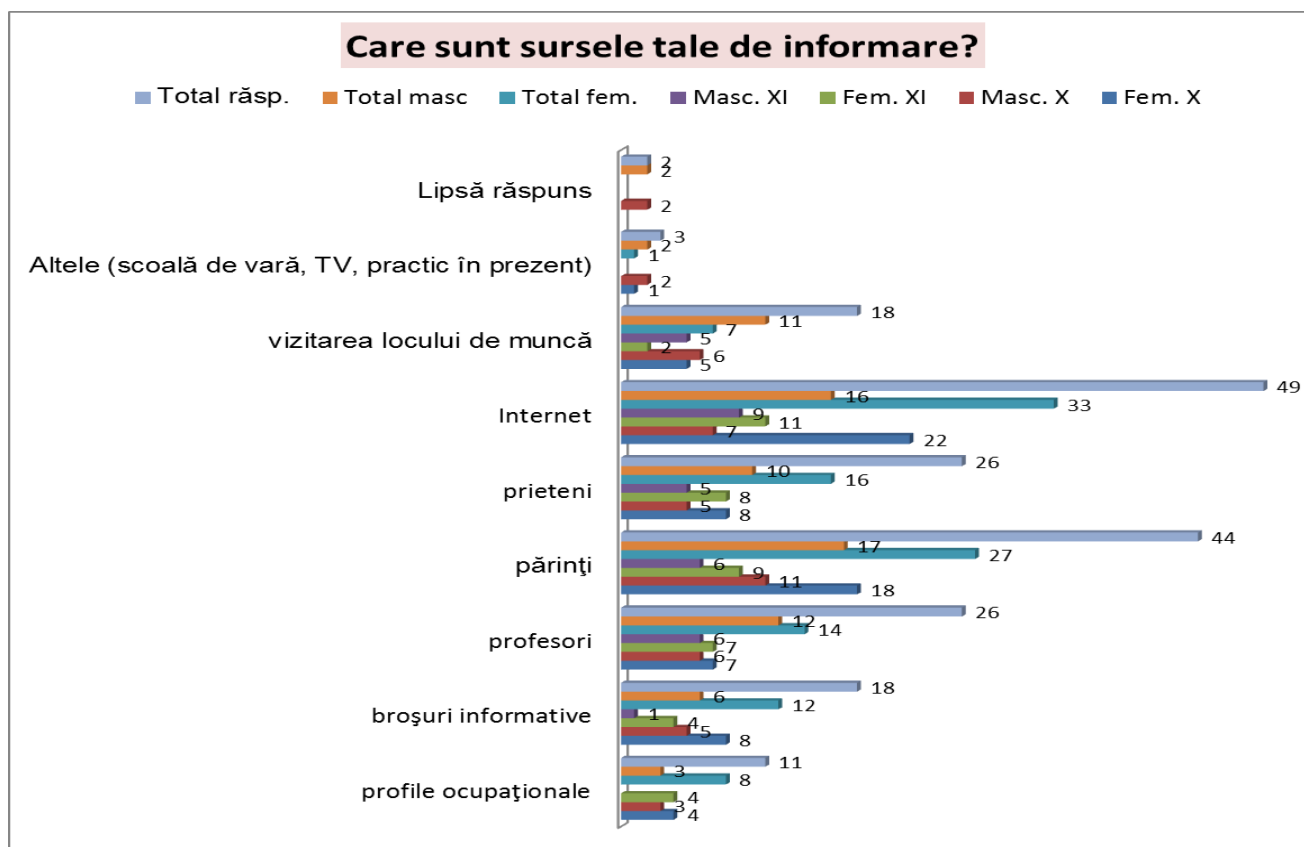
Fig. 8. *Distribution of students' answers regarding information sources*

We note that the main source of information is "the Internet" (49 answers out of 44% who answered "yes, I have enough information about the profession you want"), followed by "parents" (44 answers) and, equally, "teachers "(26 replies) and" friends "(26 replies).

There are many websites where we find information about educational and employment offers. Given that not all sources of information on the Internet are credible, it is important to ensure that students obtain information about the desired profession from multiple, validated, verifiable sources of information. In order to obtain information about the offers of the educational institutions the searches can be started by accessing the website of the Ministry of Education www.edu.ro. We can reach other important information (including on labor law issues) starting from the website of the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection http://www.mmuncii.ro. Here we find the Classification of Occupations in Romania (COR) by which students can be informed about the occupations that interest them.

Direct work experience is of great importance. We find that there are students who currently practice the desired profession or have carried out specific activities in summer schools.
The students who answered "I do not have enough information about the desired profession at this time" seek to obtain more information mainly about "specific work activities", so about the content of the work, which they will actually do in that position.
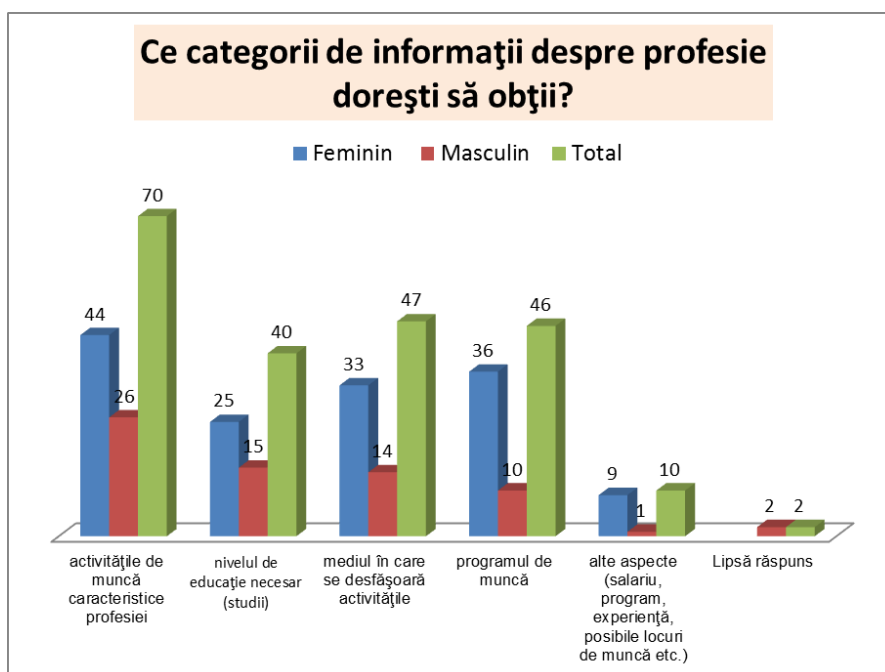
Fig. 9. *Distribution of students' answers regarding the information they want to obtain about the chosen profession*

Other information of interest to students is also those related to the professional environment in which they will carry out their activity, work program, as well as the level of studies necessary for employment. These responses outline a predominantly intrinsic profile of motivation, professional choices being based on skills, aptitudes, qualities and personality traits and less on extrinsic

components of motivation, such as salary, work schedule, professional environment in which he or she could work.
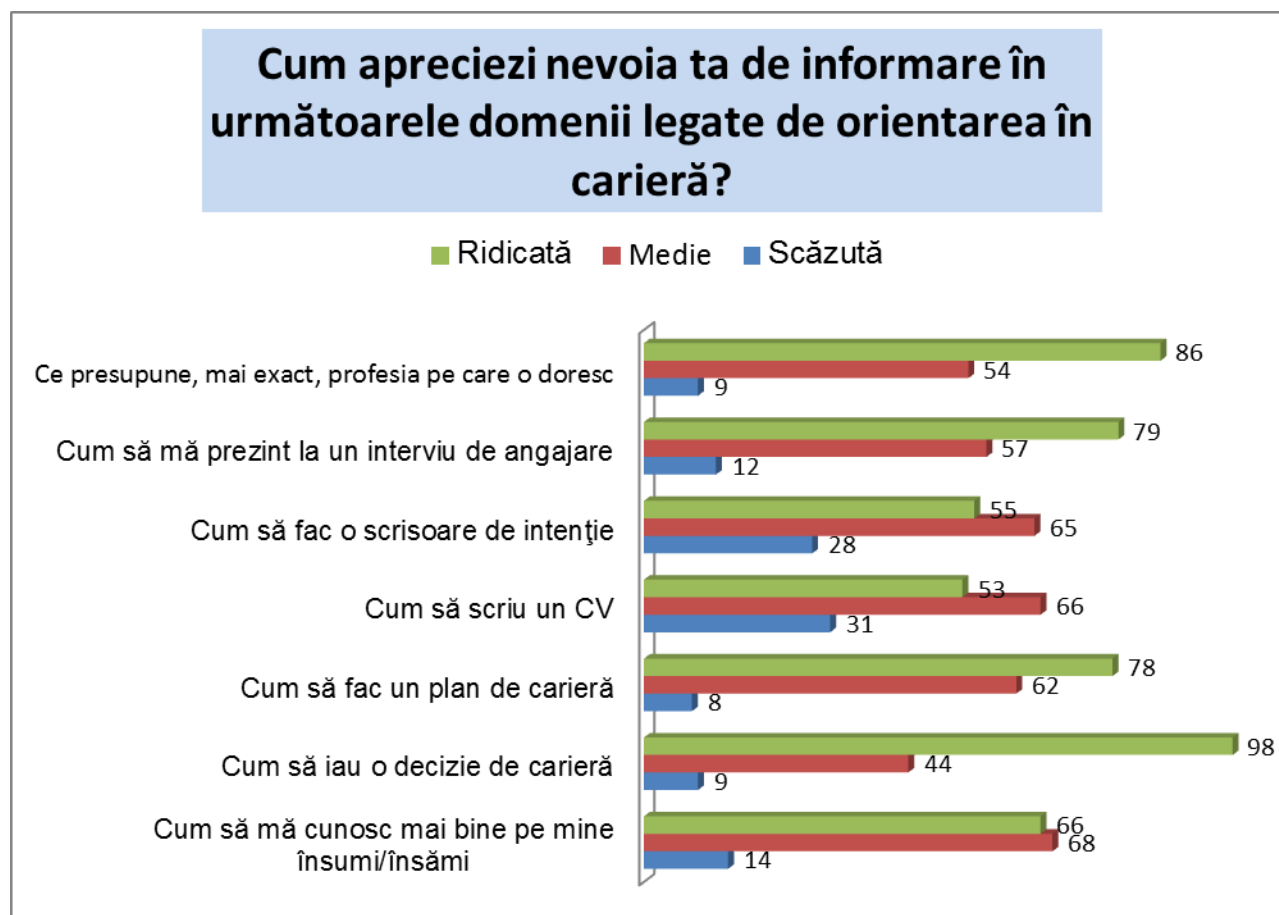

Cum apreciezi nevoia ta de informare în următoarele domenii legate de orientarea în carieră?

Legend: Ridicată, Medie, Scăzută

- Ce presupune, mai exact, profesia pe care o doresc — Ridicată 86, Medie 54, Scăzută 9
- Cum să mă prezint la un interviu de angajare — Ridicată 79, Medie 57, Scăzută 12
- Cum să fac o scrisoare de intenţie — Ridicată 55, Medie 65, Scăzută 28
- Cum să scriu un CV — Ridicată 53, Medie 66, Scăzută 31
- Cum să fac un plan de carieră — Ridicată 78, Medie 62, Scăzută 8
- Cum să iau o decizie de carieră — Ridicată 98, Medie 44, Scăzută 9
- Cum să mă cunosc mai bine pe mine însumi/însămi — Ridicată 66, Medie 68, Scăzută 14

Fig. 10. *Distribution of student responses regarding the need for information in areas related to career orientation*

The exploration of the educational and occupational routes is followed by the career decision, that is, by selecting an option from the set of variants available at a given time. In this regard (How to make a career decision?) There is also the highest need to inform students. The pressure concerns not the decision to choose a career, but the need for information on the decision-making process, so that it is as rational and informed as possible. The choice at this age is not definitive, reversible. During life, it is possible for students to identify careers that best suit them and can resume the career building process. On the other hand, the lack of professional experience, misinformation about the labor market, unrealistic aspirations can confuse the students, accentuating the indecision. The role of teachers, mentors, counselors, parents, the social network is decisive in facilitating information and ensuring the emotional stability of the student, self-confidence, anchoring it in the perennial values of the school or family ethos. At this age, students are in the process of being bullied, when they develop an exploratory behavior: they investigate their own vocational interests, they experiment with different types of activities and they observe the need to consider the balance of interests - skills in expressing an option. The choices made by the student during this period are vague and transient, and can be abandoned relatively easily when another vocational direction appears which seems to offer him more satisfaction.

Regarding the degree of matching of the class profile (real / human) with the students' aptitudes, they say (68%) that it is appropriate, compared with 11% who deny the match or 20% who offer the answer "I don't know". These answers prove a good knowledge of the personality profile, interests, values, aptitudes on the part of the majority of the students and a choice of the profile of the class based on relevant data about themselves.
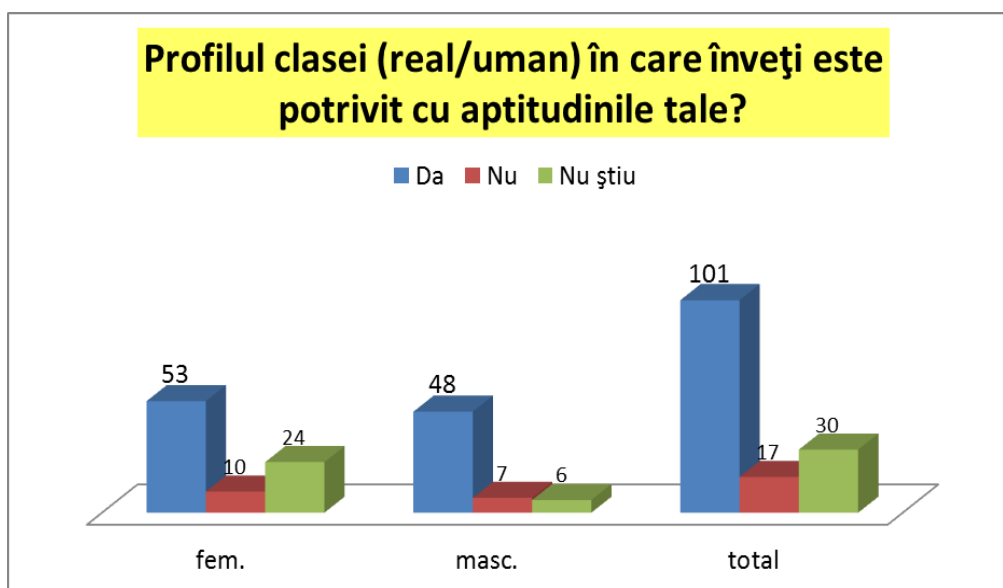

Fig. 11. *Distribution of student responses regarding profile matching with skills*

A high level of autonomy also appears in the choice of the school / specialization that the students are currently pursuing, 72% of the respondents choosing the "I wanted it" variant.
The freedom of choice must correlate with the responsibility of the option, and this fact is already confirmed by the high percentage of students (68%) who stated that there is a high degree of matching of the profile of the class (real / human) with their abilities.
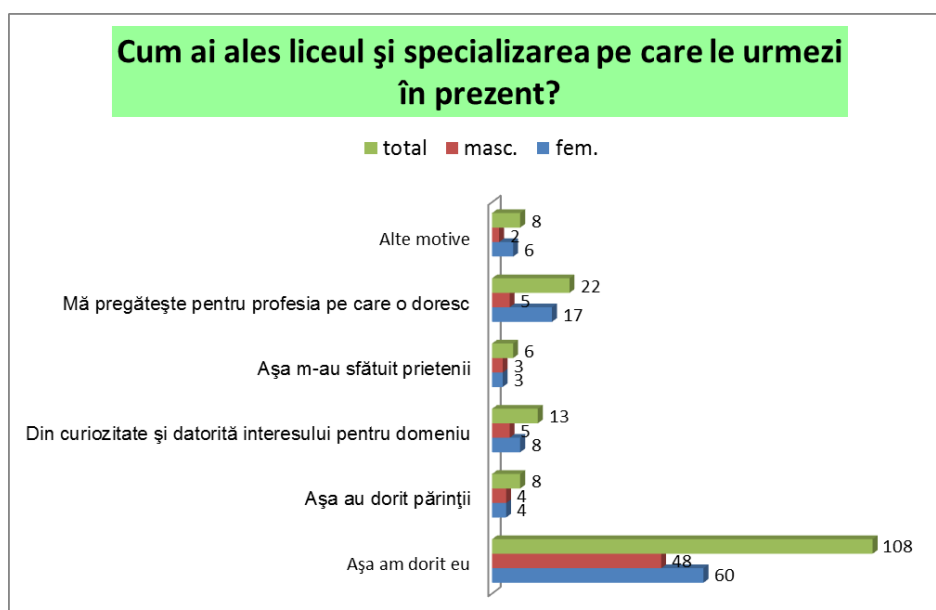
Fig. 12. *Distribution of student responses regarding high school choice and specialization*

Conclusions

The career planning process includes clear professional and academic goals for most study participants, students wishing to continue their studies in the academic environment, following a faculty, without explicitly specifying whether it will be in the national or international education system. Existence of intentionality, personal and vocational purposes denotes clear identities, an optimal maturation and development of the personality.

The attractiveness of some professional fields such as computer science for male subjects and medicine, for female subjects is noted, the students being optimistic about the abilities and aptitudes they have and which would allow them to obtain a significant performance in the field. these areas. Patience, intelligence and perseverance are the main skills chosen by students to achieve success in their professional activity. In order to be able to make choices in accordance with the interests, values, personality traits that characterize the students, they identified the existence of a greater need for information on opportunities, educational and professional routes, possible occupations, specific work activities, but also how to take a career decision or how to apply for an interview. In this sense, although the Internet remains the preferred information mode for students, it is recommended to identify as many and as varied sources of credible information sources as parents, teachers, mentors, etc. The cultural value horizon of the family and the school represent the anchors that underpin the students' choices, protecting them from the forced and clumsy assumption of consumerist ideals regarding the social self ("look good").

For most of the students of the class profile (real / human) they correlate with their abilities, a sign of the existence of a deep self-knowledge, but also of the responsible assumption of the school's choice, according to their own values and vocational interests. The high level of autonomy in the choice of school / specialization correlates positively with the level of students' confidence in their own abilities. Students show initiative in vocational exploration, courage and involvement in the commitments made, reconfirming the long-term interest for a certain profession by choosing the school / specialization according to their aptitude and value profile.

Providing relevant information regarding the aspects specified above by the students completes the intervention regarding the career orientation at this age stage. In the 12th grade the students will benefit from counseling for career planning within the compulsory curriculum of Counseling and guidance, the intervention aimed at exercising the skills of using personal marketing documents, personal promotion, in order to continue studies or insertion in the labor market.

Anexa nr. 1

Questionnaire

Please answer a few questions regarding your opinion on career counseling and counseling needs. The questionnaire is anonymous and your answers will be confidential.

1. What plans do you have after finishing high school? (Choose one answer only)

1. I want to continue my studies following an university	*2.I want to get a job*	*3.I want to work abroad*	*4.I have no plan yet*	*5. ....*

2. What profession would you like to practice after completing your studies? (Complete the answer in the space below)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
….

2.2. Do you consider that you have the skills necessary to practice this profession? (Choose one answer only)

1. Yes	*2.No*	*3. I don't surely know what abilities I have*

3. Write down who you think are the 3 main skills you need in the profession you want (Complete the answer in the space below)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
….

3. 3. Do you have enough information, at this moment, about the profession you want? (Choose one answer only)

1.Yes	*2. No*	*3.I don't know*

4. 4. If you answered "Yes" to question 5, specify your sources of information (You can choose several answer options):

Occupational profiles	*Brochures*	*Teachers*	*Parents*	*Friends*	*Internet*	*Visiting the workplace*	*Others ....*

5. If you answered "No" or "I don't know" to question 5, specify which categories of information about the profession you want to obtain. (You can choose more than one answer)

- Information about:

☐ work activities characteristic of the profession

☐ level of education required (studies)

☐ the environment in which the activities are carried out

☐ working schedule

       ☐ other aspects (*mention them*) ....

5. 5. How do you assess your need for information in the following areas of career orientation? (Check one answer option between the three, on each line)

Nr. Crt.	Domains	1 Low	2 Medium	3 High
1.	How to get to know myself better			
2.	How to take a careers decision			
3.	How to make a career plan			
4.	How to write a *Curriculum Vitae*			
5.	How to write an intention letter			
6.	How to behave at an employment interview			
7.	What the profession I want exactly imply			
8.	Other domains:			

6. 6. Is the profile of the (real / human) class in which you are learning appropriate to your skills? (Choose one answer only)

1.Yes	2. No	3. I don't know

7. How did you choose the high school and specialization you are currently pursuing? (Choose one answer only)

☐ it was my own wish

    ☐ it was my parents' wish

    ☐ out of curiosity and because of the interest in the field

    ☐ it was my friends' suggestion

    ☐ it prepares me for the profession I want to follow

    ☐ I had other reasons (*mention them*):

....

Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

Grade: ………

Age ………

Date: ....

Thank you!

CHALLENGES OF THE ROMANIAN ONLINE EDUCATION

Elena Adumitroaie
CJRAE Iaşi – Colegiul Naţional „Costache Negruzzi"

Most schools have stopped teaching students face-to-face starting with March 2020; instead, they have chosen the online education, trying to limit the virus spread. Throughout this entire period of time, schools have been balancing between the online and the classical education trying to continue it and to ensure all students' access to it. The interruption of the teaching classes has been unprecedented having such an impact upon children and the whole society that it cannot be estimated. Although the online education seems to be the key to a continuation of the educational process, we expect our students will lack important knowledge and to fall behind. Several reasons are brought forward in support of this idea.

Firstly, recent research has shown that students who study at home tend to spend less time learning compared to those who go to school. Certain research has shown a decrease to half of the time students spend studying at home. Apart from the efficiency of the online classes in comparison with the face-to-face ones, less time for study may lead to falling behind and even forgetfulness of the input knowledge.

Secondly, many home-isolated students due to the COVID–19 pandemic may feel nervous, anxious and, stressed, which might negatively affect their ability to focus on the school activities. Students need to adapt suddenly to a completely new situation (virtual lessons), to make new working routines in a rather short period of time (the way they learn, take down information, and do their homework), and to meet certain changing requirements (online assessment), everything while their minds are undergoing a full process of developing abilities such as stress resistance. The fast and unpredictable changes within the society and in the learning process may generate frustration, loss of control, and uncertainty. Irrational fears might come up and make children expect something bad. What is more, stress can be also generated while being online by a conflict between the teacher's need for visual contact with the students and the students' need for privacy, thus refusing to have their cameras on.

Thirdly, the closing of schools and the missing contact with teachers and classmates may lead to a decrease in the extrinsic motivation for learning. It is well known that students' learning scores are influenced by the group they belong to. While in the classroom, students learn from each other, learn together, clarify concepts and notions, and are motivated to work more due to competition and social influence from the good students who are highly motivated to study.

These issues are supplemented by certain measures enforced by the Ministry of Education and the teachers to help the students end the school year successfully: the averages can be generated only out of two grades, assessment through tests has been considerably reduced in favour of more accessible assessing methods (projects or portfolios), some topics have been taken out of the national exam curricula, and the exams have become easier. These measures, although useful and purposeful, lead to a decrease in the students' extrinsic motivation for learning. The specialized literature clearly shows that the students are more motivated to learn when they know someone will

assess their knowledge and grade them. Grades can motivate students into learning. Homework, for example, must be thoroughly checked and assessed in order to stimulate learning; otherwise, it loses efficiency (this is impossible during online classes).

What is more, activities carried out in the classroom help students develop a set of skills necessary for their personal and professional training. Interaction with teachers and classmates is essential as well for developing self-esteem, self-confidence, and the concept of self.

Despite all this, it is important to state that the online learning platforms provide numerous opportunities for socialisation and interaction. One of the advantages of online socialisation is that social barriers between students are eliminated or considerably removed. Although some people argue that there are no major differences between online socialisation and the one in the traditional kind of education, this might not apply to the primary school students or kindergarten pupils. Evidence shows that the primary and kindergarten school pupils need direct contact with their teachers and classmates for socialisation and harmonious progress.

The shift from offline education to the online one negatively impacts on the students who have difficulties in adapting to the new reality, irrespective of their nature: lack of technology and infrastructure (a laptop or tablet, and Internet connection), difficulties in creating favourable environment for learning at home (a desk or a peaceful place for learning), low learning motivation, insufficient previous learning input, a.s.o. Vulnerable students, such as those from the social and economic disadvantaged groups run a higher risk of falling behind. They lack access to necessary digital learning resources and their parents' support which is so important at this age and during this period of time. It seems that online school increases educational disparities.

Digital education favours those students having an independent type of learning and who are extremely motivated. The higher level students can make their learning more personal. Up to a point, they can take control over their own learning, can understand better what they want to learn, what they are keen on, and the kind of support they need to succeed. The online educational platforms allow them to learn at their own pace and provide them with more flexibility throughout the day.

The opposite side includes those students who are addicted to learning. Smaller children who are less organised do not have such strong intrinsic motivation and lack time management skills which allow them to enjoy the distance learning benefits. Furthermore, the teachers' professional development and positive attitude are key elements for the success of the online learning platforms. In the online environment teachers should be able to make up for the lack of physical presence by creating such conditions in which all the students can feel comfortable and ask for help whenever it is necessary. Even if school closing can negatively impact on the learning process, the online education is essential to ensure follow-up throughout this difficult period of time.

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STUDENTS AND THE PANDEMIC CONTEXT
Research within Erasmus+ Programme "Let's think about our future working life"

Bianca Burciu,
teacher Colegiul Național „Costache Negruzzi" Iași

Aim of the research: Identifying the way in which the students in the partner schools have experienced the new pandemic situation.

Date of survey: March 2021

Research period: March 2020 – March 2021

Methodology and organisation of research

1. **The research subjects:**

The target population from which the set of 84 subjects have been taken out randomly is made up of teenagers aged 15-18 (53 girls and 31 boys) attending Colegiul Național "Costache Negruzzi" Iași, Colegio "Divina Pastora" Monovar, Spania, Uulu Pohikool, Estonia, and Staicele Primary School, Letonia.

Item 1 *How would you define in one word or sentence this pandemic school year?*

The students' answers are various, but they mainly felt this pandemic year as being *"tough", "difficult", "tiring", "bad", "stressful" (16 answers), equally "unusual", "weird", and "crazy" (16 answers).*

There is also the third category of students who felt it like "boring" (5 answers). Forty respondents think this year has been "frustrating", "lacking perspective", and even "chaotic", some being aware of the importance of human contact (2 answers).

Only 2 of the questioned students associated this period of time with a break to direct their energy towards a passion they had neglected by that time or that they had just discovered.

Item 2 *Which has been the greatest difficulty related to learning?*
- 67.9% of the respondents underline the low interest in distance learning;
- 25% note the lack of digital resources for each subject which led to a lower degree of understanding certain contents;
- 11.9% experienced the inconvenient of low digital skills which made harder their adaptation to the new learning style;
- 19% mention limited Internet access;

2. Which were the main difficulties that you had during this period?
84 de răspunsuri
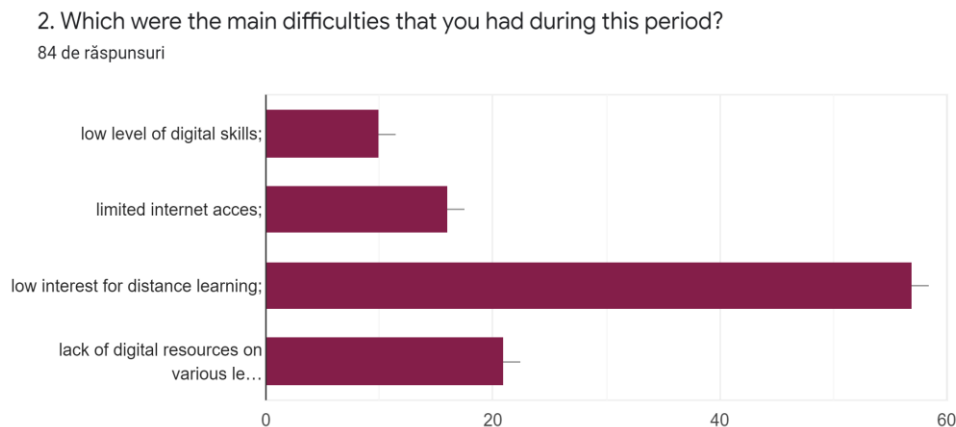
Item 3 *Name three digital resources/ platforms used for learning, preparing lessons, or assessment.*
Google Classroom and Google Meet – 22 answers
TEAMS – 21 answers
ZOOM – 14 answers
E-Klase – 13 answers
Uzdevumi.lv - 12 answers
Soma.lv - 10 answers
Skype – 3 answers
Educamos – 4 answers
One Note – 5 answers
Whats App – 1 answer
Other platforms and digital tools are also mentioned, such as: Kahoot (3 answers), Blinklearning (4 answers), Microsoft Forms (4 answers), Fizmiz.lv (3 answers), Prezi, power-point, word (one answer, each).

The digital resources they have used are phones, laptops, or personal computers.
Item 4 *Has school ever given you the feeling of trust throughout this period of time? Explain!*
The students appreciate the teachers' interest, trust, care, empathy, and support in adapting to the new lifestyle. Many of them take into account the personal motivation to go on and not to give up despite distance communication and technology which have made their adaptation difficult and brought forth some lack of comfort.

Eighteen students gave a negative answer. Their reasons are that the work at home is much more difficult than the work at school because they have to study more than before for the tasks they get.

Item 5 *In your opinion, is the educational system in your country ready enough for online education? Give details.*

Students' answers prove maturity, critical thinking, understanding of the difficult aspects of the present social situation, awareness of the fact that children in the disadvantaged areas have limited access, as well as absenteeism caused by such circumstances. From their point of view, the measures taken by the local authorities are "unreal" and "insufficient" since social differences have made their point. The students' answers emphasize the need for platforms where digital contents are integrated alongside with improvements in the existing ones. They appreciate the fast adaptation of teachers having digital competences and notice that the benefits of technology for the practical subjects have been obvious.

Item 6 *Are you worried about the choice of a future career considering the fact that the society has faced difficulties in many fields lately?*

Yes (54 answers) – for certain jobs in the fields which are currently affected by the pandemic (pilot, acting, cultural fields, or economic fields) – distance learning has impacted upon their training. They give up doing a certain job, so they are forced to adapt and find solutions.

No (30 answers) – having a more flexible programme allowed them to organise better for individual study, flexibility, and personal improvement.

Conclusions

It has been stated that suspending face-to-face school has led to a decrease in the learning motivation among the surveyed students since the new situation is a major inconvenient in this respect thus creating the grounds for affective support and validation of interactive and efficient methods and strategies in teaching and working with students.

As a conclusion, a series of activities to be implemented both in the classroom and at home by the parents have been created. These reference points are to be found in this guide and have been drawn up with the help of the school counsellor, a constant presence throughout this period when thorough counselling was necessary due to the new pandemic context.

TOPIC: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Activity: Resilient teenagers

by *Irina Dumitru*,
PhD teacher,
school cousellor at The County Centre for Educational Resources and Assistance, Iași

Let's begin with a story!

The story of the donkey fallen into a well.

One day, a peasant's donkey fell into a well. The unfortunate animal screamed for hours as the peasant was looking for a way to get him out. Eventually, the peasant decided that the donkey was too old and that, the well being dry, had to be covered once and for all.

Thus, he came to the conclusion that taking the donkey out was not worth the effort.

So, the peasant called his neighbours for help. Each of them grabbed a shovel and started throwing dirt into the well.

The donkey immediately understood what was happening to him and started screaming as loud as he could. To everyone's dismay, after a few shovels filled with mud, the donkey calmed down and kept quiet. The peasant looked deep into the well, amazed by what saw. With each shovel, the old donkey did something unexpected: he shook the ground and stepped on it. Soon, everyone saw with surprise how the donkey, reaching the mouth of the well, jumped over the edge and came out lively.

What do you think is the lesson? Write it down, as you understand it:

_____

_____

_____

Life may throw mud and all kinds of hardships... But the secret of getting out of the well is to shake off the mud and use it to go one step higher. Each of the difficulties we face is an opportunity to take a step forward. We can get out of the deepest depths if we do not give up. Only those who give up finding a solution, lose !

Use the difficulties that your life throws at you to move forward.

Stress, change, daily challenges, traumatic events with a more lasting impact, such as a serious illness, an accident, or the death of a loved one, seem to be part of everyone's life and they can get out of our control. Each change affects people differently, bringing a unique mix of thoughts, strong

emotions and uncertainty. However, as time goes by, people generally adapt well to stressful situations - largely due to resilience.

What does resilience really mean?

Resilience is not a personality trait that only certain people possess! On the contrary, resilience involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

Are you curious to know how a teenager can become resilient?

Why is it important to be resilient?

Becoming more resilient not only does help you get through difficult situations, but also empowers you to develop and improve throughout your life.

Resilience represents the capacity to cope with challenges, to adapt to the changes in the environment, adversities, trauma, tragedies, threats or other significant sources of stress – like family or relationship problems, serious health problems etc.

The same as building muscles, developing resilience requires time and strong will. Concentrating on four essential components – connection, well-being, healthy mindset and purpose.It can help you resist and learn from difficult experiences.

A resilient teenager:
1. Is optimistic
2. Copes with stress
3. Easily adapts to challenges
4. Has good relationships with the others
5. Finds new opportunities for personal development

**Are you curious to discover some ways
in which you can develop RESILIENCE?**

Draw a horizontal line and write on it the most important experiences in your life, the happy moments, but also the difficult and challenging ones. Illustrate which has helped you overcome every difficult situation. Was there something or someone who supported you?

Fortunate events

___

Unfortunate events

Group the factors that helped you face the challenges written above and comment the image:

Sometimes, you feel that what happens in you life it is no longer under your control…It is possible that some goals are not to be reached as a result of some adverse situations from your life. Accepting the events that cannot be changed can help you focus on those you can change. Learn how to make a difference between the circumstances you can modify and those you can! The next animation will help you in this direction:
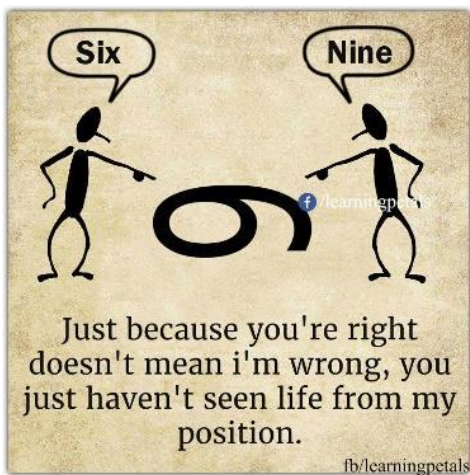
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DmLkugdh9s

Check all the aspects that you can control:
- How I treat the others
- How I perceive a situation
- A friend's illness
- The way I think
- The birth of a sister or a brother

Thinking moderately and realistically!

Observing the other's perspective!

How do I make my mind more flexible?

Family

…

…

Resilience

…

…

…
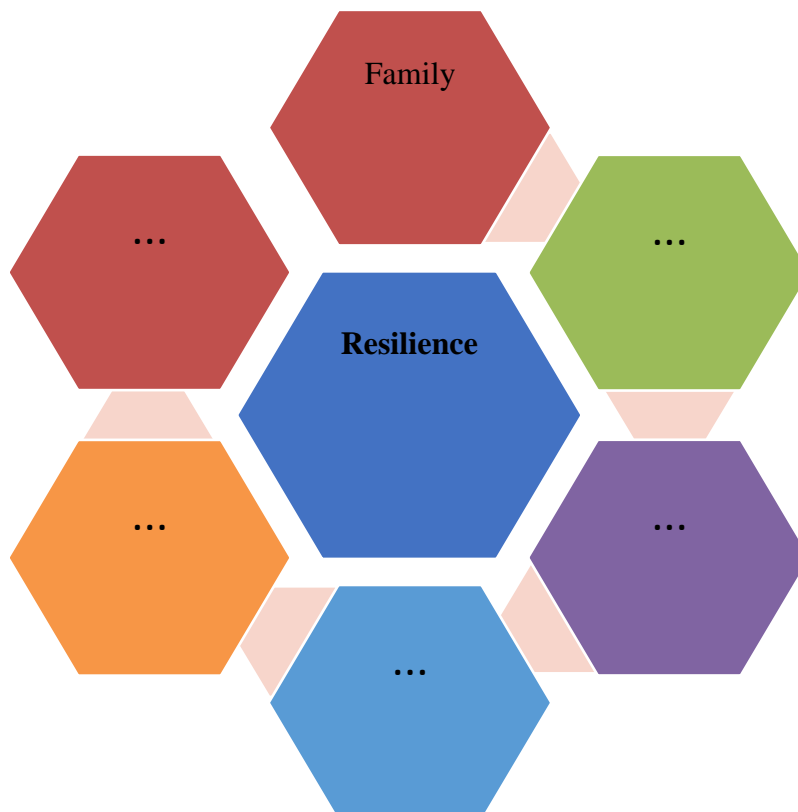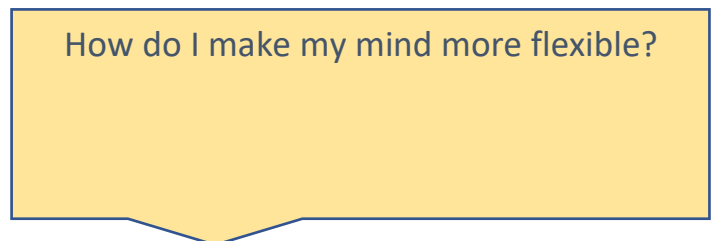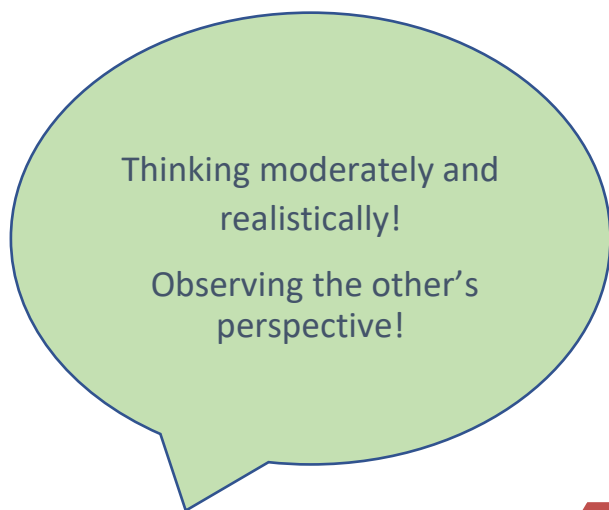
It is useful to recognise and accept your emotions during difficult times!

Six   Nine

Just because you're right doesn't mean i'm wrong, you just haven't seen life from my position.

fb/learningpetals

If you ever feel overwhelmed by a challenge, remind yourself that whatever happened was neither an indicator of what your future will be nor that you are helpless. It is possible that you cannot change a stressful event, but you can change the way you understand it and how you respond to it.

Now it is your turn to fill in:	Everything that happens to me represents a lesson from which I can learn something.
Develop positive beliefs	
There is no failure, just feedback.	Every problem has at least one solution.

Resilience

Adjust the intensity
of emotions

Express your feelings in a
constructive, assertive way

Learn to communicate with people

Be calm and try to adopt a friendly body position
(arms next to the body)

Choose the right approach in a difficult situation: for example, it is OK to get angry when someone insults you, but we cannot react the same about hitting

Use a calm tone and words to show that you are listening and understand what the other person is feeling: "I see you are angry, what upsets you?" Offer help: "Let's find a solution together", "How can I help you?

If the problems seem too big, divide them
into smaller pieces that are easier to solve.

For example, you may not be able to learn
Luceafărul, by M. Eminescu, in one day, but
you can learn 4 stanzas per day, until you
manage to know everything.

I can find my own support and allies when faced with life's hardships

I know that I am not alone!

I can always ask for the help of a friend, teacher or family member.

Write the name and contact details of the people you rely on in times of need.

Name and surname   **Contact details**(phone number, adress)

_____

_____

_____

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Online bibliographic sources:
The Road to Resilience – https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience
Rezilienţa şi resursele persoanei - https://tdh-moldova.md/media/files/files/1_3_rezilienta_si_resursele_persoanei_294445.pdf
3 tips to boost your confidence - TED-Ed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_NYrWqUR40
Partly Cloudy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DmLkugdh9

Learn to believe in yourself!

Watch the next video and find out how it can work for you:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_NYrWqUR40
Write down something you found out:

………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………

Povestea măgarului căzut în fântână: http://jurnalultrezirii.blogspot.com/2009/07/povestea-magarului-cazut-in-fantana.html

By PhD *Irina Dumitru,*
School Counsellor CJRAE Iaşi

Activity: Teenagers' laughter and wellbeing

Write down all the words that come to your mind when you hear the concept of "wellbeing".
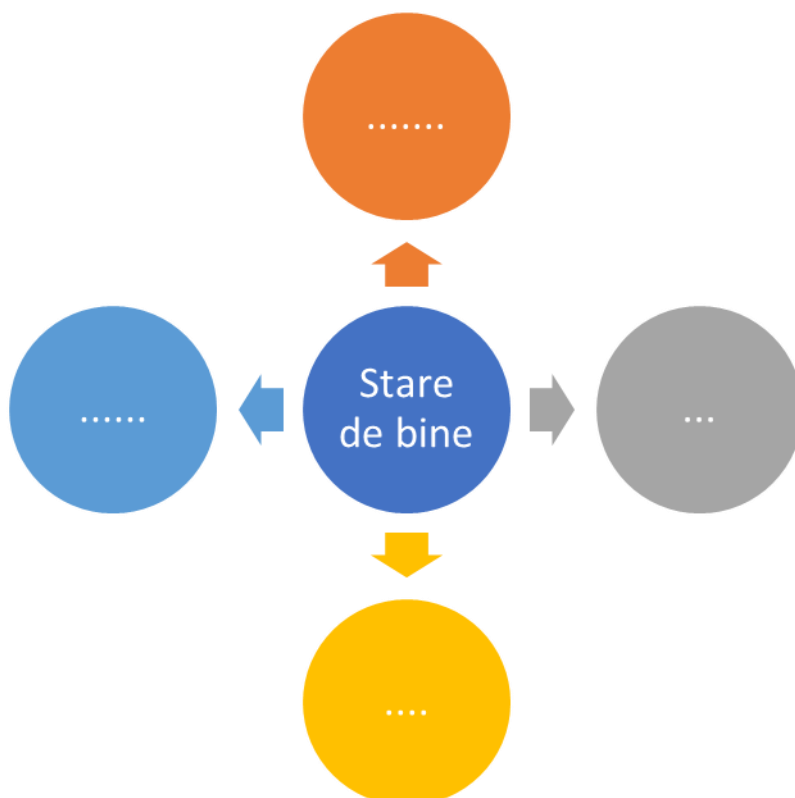
The psychological wellbeing (individual wellbeing) refers to a person's perception of their life quality and the emotional experiences they live (how happy / satisfied they are).

The wellbeing is associated with positive feelings (happiness, contentment, self-acceptance) and with a satisfying and efficient social condition.

One's good relationship with the others has an influence upon their wellbeing and satisfaction in life.

This is a dynamic state and it can be improved if people manage to achieve their personal and social purposes by taking on healthy behaviour and skills.

Evaluate the individual wellbeing

Read the 5 statements below and answer to each of them by assigning a number whether you agree or disagree with them:

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Dezacord puternic
2
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7 Acord puternic
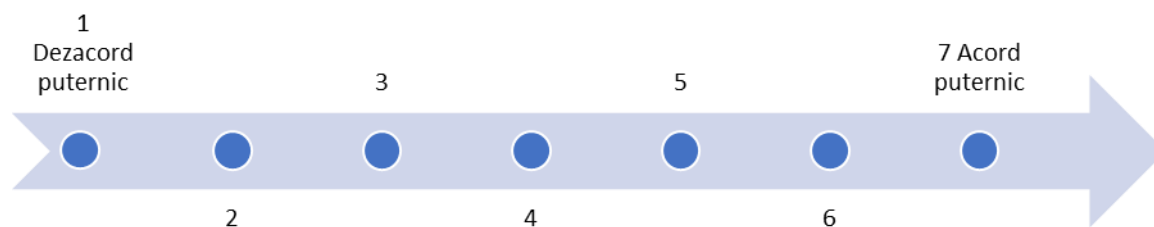
1. In general, my life is almost ideal. ☐
2. My life conditions are almost excellent. ☐
3. I am satisfied with my life. ☐
4. So far I have accomplished the most important things I have wanted in my life. ☐
5. If I could take it all over again, I wouldn't change anything. ☐

    Sum up the numbers which assessed the following 5 statements.
    See below:
    31-35 Extremely satisfied
    26-30 Satisfied
    21-25 Partly satisfied
    20 Neutral
    15-19 Slightly dissatisfied
    10-14 Dissatisfied
    5-9 Extremely dissatisfied

Scala Mulţumirii de Viaţă (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985)- *Apud* C. Style, *Psihologia pozitivă*, https://www.all.ro/media/attachment/file/p/s/psihologia_pozitiva_pdf.pdf (Life Contentment Scale, Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985)- *Apud* C. Style, Positive psychology)

Maybe you heard the saying **laughter is the best medicine**! Research has shown that laughter stimulates the immunity system, decreases blood pressure, reduces the level stress hormones (such as cortisol and epinephrine), and lowers the level of blood cholesterol thus reducing the risk of heart diseases and diabetes. Laughter has such a positive effect on our body as physical exercise does, contributing to a balance in the functions of our body. You can find out more from: https://www.descopera.ro/stiinta/8835085-rasul-bate-boala

In conclusion, laughter is a type of behaviour which helps you feel good, be optimistic, and be healthy. Write **some more benefits** of laughter in your life:

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Answer the following questions:

❖ Who is the funniest person you know?

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❖ What did this person say or do that made you laugh?

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❖ Which is the most amusing thing that has ever happened to you?

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❖ Describe the most amusing thing that has happened to your friend.

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❖ Has anything happened today that made you laugh? If yes, what specifically?

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❖ What are you thankful for today?

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❖ Think for a few minutes of how the best day in your life would look like. Write a story, giving details about that day.

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❖ Draw yourself under the form of a cartoon character during your childhood, teenage hood, adulthood, and old age.

❖ Find out how you can say serious things using LAUGHTER! Despite difficulties, has the online activity made you laugh at least once? Tell us an amusing event and/or watch the video "Click my computer on your computer funny video" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB_Hi7R0Ybk

SUPPORTING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS

By PhD *Irina Dumitru,*
School Counsellor, Centrul Judeţean de Resurse şi Asistenţă Educaţională Iaşi
(The County Centre for Resources and Educational Support of Iasi)

PARENTS' WORKBOOK
Field - *Communication and social skills*

Activity: Teenagers' laughter and wellbeing

The psychological wellbeing (individual wellbeing) refers to a person's perception of their life quality and the emotional experiences they live (how happy / satisfied they are).

The wellbeing is associated with positive feelings (happiness, contentment, self-acceptance) and with a satisfying and efficient social condition.

One's good relationship with the others has an influence upon wellbeing and satisfaction in life. This is a dynamic state and it can be improved if people manage to achieve their personal and social purposes by taking on healthy behaviour and skills. Laughter is a type of behaviour helping the teenager feel good, be optimistic, and keep fit.

Suggestions of activities which you can do together with the teenager in order to help him/her develop a psychological wellbeing:

☑Talk to the teenager about their pleasant experiences. This will help them feel emotionally well and build up a positive relationship with you. Research[7] has shown that we need 3 pleasant experiences to counteract a negative one. To develop **a positive mood,** proceed to the following exercise entitled „**The best of myself"[8]** and do it together with the teenager:
Stop for a moment and imagine your future life. Which life could be the best in this respect? Take into account all the relevant fields of your life such as school, relationships, hobbies, and/or health. What could arise here in relation to the best choice of your future? For the following 15 minutes, write about your way of seeing your best future. Use the following suggestions for guidance through the exercise:
1. You could go deep into what's missing from your life now compared to the one in a better future. You might try to think of the things that prevented you from meeting your objectives in the past or the financial/time/social issues. To reach the target of this exercise I encourage you to focus on the future – imagine a brighter future where you are at your best and circumstances would change so as to make all these things possible.
2. This exercise is more useful when you are extremely accurate;

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[7]http://www.psiwell.eu/images/io3/LUMEN_Manual-parinti_2019.pdf
[8]Aurora-Adina COLOMEISCHI - CONSTRUIND PODURI: PROMOVAREA STĂRII DE BINE ÎN FAMILIE. MANUAL PENTRU PĂRINŢI (Building Bridges: promoting wellbeing in the family. Parents' textbook) http://www.psiwell.eu/images/io3/LUMEN_Manual-parinti_2019.pdf

3. Be as creative and imaginative as possible.

☑ Together with the teenager watch comedies, read riddles and sayings, and talk about their meaning for his/her personal life.

☑ Encourage him/her to discover a hobby.

☑ Maintain positive relationships within the small and extended family.

☑ Make sure the teenager sleeps well, eats healthily and takes physical exercise every week. You can cook together a special meal, by preparing your favourite food, go cycling, or play, as "childish" as it might seem.

☑ You should become models for teenagers as concerns the building of a psychological wellbeing. Stay connected with your own needs and be aware of the fact that sacrifice is never a solution! In this respect, watch "Good parents sacrifice", available at: https://www.aspireteachers.ro/noutati/2019/11/21/wellbeing-cu-domnica-petrovai

Your reflection corner:

Write down all your moments of discovery, your thoughts, your success in connection with your teenager and the solutions turned into practice. What went well? What didn't? How could you do differently in the future?

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PARENTS' NOTEBOOK

Area- *Socio-emotional development*

by *Irina Dumitru*,
PhD teacher, school counsellor, The County Centre for Educational Resources and Assistance, Iași

Activity name: Resilient adolescents

Stress, transitions, daily challenges, and traumatic events which have a longer-term impact, such as a medical condition, an accident, or the loss of a loved one, are all part of life and can often be beyond our control.

Each transition has a different impact on people, bringing with it a unique combination of feelings, intense emotions, and apprehension. People, on the other hand, respond to tough situations reasonably well over time, owing to their resilience.

From the start, explain to your children that resilience is the ability to deal with challenges, to adapt at environmental changes, adversities, traumas, tragedies, threats or significant sources of stress- such as family and relationship problems, health afflictions etc.

Resilience is not a specific personality trait! Contrariwise, resilience involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that everyone can learn and develop.

Resilience enhancement, alike muscle development, requires time and intent. The concentration on four essential components- connection, well-being, healthy thinking and meaning- can help you to resist and learn from difficult experiences

A resilient teenager:

is optimistic

easily cope with stress

adapts to the challenges

has good relationships with others

Suggestions for activities you can do with your child to help them develop resilience:

☑ Discuss stories, books, and movies in which the characters show resilience. You can start with the example below!

The story of the donkey that fell into the well

One day, a peasant's donkey fell into a well. The unfortunate animal screamed, for hours, while the peasant sought to see what to do. Eventually, the peasant decided that the donkey was old anyway, and the well, being dried up, still had to be covered someday.

Thus he came to the conclusion that it was no longer worth the effort to get the donkey out of the depths of the well.

So the peasant called his neighbors to give him a helping hand. Each of them grabbed one shovel and began to throw soil into the well.

The donkey understood what was happening and started screaming even harder. But to our surprise, after a few good shovels of soil, the donkey calmed down and fell silent. The peasant looked deep in the well and was amazed at what he saw. With each shovel, the old donkey was doing something unexpectedly: he shook the ground and stepped on it. Soon everyone saw with surprise, how the donkey, reaching the mouth of the well, jumped over the edge and came out alive ...

Life may be hard on you... But the secret to getting out from the fountain is to shake off this soil and use it to climb one step higher. Every difficulty of ours is an opportunity for a step forward. We can get out of the deepest depths, if we do notgive up. Only the one who gives up looking for another solution, loses! Use the hardships that life throws at you, to move ahead stronger.

☑ Compose your courageous stories together, enriched by attention, active listening and respect: Each family member writes on a piece of paper a pleasant memory, a happy event or a funny anecdote. The papers are folded and mixed. In turn, each family member takes a sheet, reads it and then completes it with other memories about that event. Read, in turn, the new stories, enriched by the special contribution of each one.

☑ Go out together in nature and observe the sun, clouds, plants, trees - how they change their appearance as the seasons go by. Talk to your teen about accepting the inevitable changes and how plants and animals adapt to weather adversities.

☑Encourage your adolescent to take on more responsibilities, even if it is beyond the comfort zone, to develop self-efficacy, self-confidence: for example, to take care of the younger sister, to get involved in the community by doing various volunteer activities.

☑ Nobody is perfect, so allow your adolescent to make mistakes, to learn to do things differently next time.

☑ Teach your adolescent to look at the unpleasant event from broader perspective, focusing on what he or she can control, on solutions, not just the problem. Nurture an optimistic attitude towards problems, courage and personal responsibility.

☑ Encourage them to explore different life experiences, to make decisions in aspects regarding themselves, to gradually take risks, by supporting them in developing their critical thinking, self-control, communication and emotional control.

✅ Tolerate the different rhythm of emotional regulation that your teenager has. Do not rush their getting back to "better feelings" after a traumatic experience. Respect the fact that during this time, they are learning a lesson about personal power, perseverance, authenticity, patience, resilience

✅ Discuss with your teenager about your support system the family and friends they can lean on when needed. Make together a list with names and email addresses..

✅ Solve conflicts, disputes by communicating respectfully, paying attention to others' needs and feelings. Offer constructive and assertive feedback so that you can reconnect in a healthy way with your teenager.

✅ Be a model for your teenager when it comes to solving difficult situations or finding ways to cope with stress.

✅ When it gets tough remember the word of L. Megginson "It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive, but those who adapt to change the best".

Your moment of reflection, think about what you have learnt:
Write down here your newest discoveries, your thoughts, your accomplishments regarding the parent-teenager relationship that you have now consolidated, and last but not least, the solutions that worked best. How did it go? What didn't go as planned? What aspects would you change in the future?

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S U M A R

THE IMPACT OF DISTANCE LEARNING UPON STUDENTS
Research, analyses, opinions, and support materials

SUPPORTING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS