

Academic Teachers about Their Productivity

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The situation of the COVID-19 epidemic in the world, as well as in Poland, forced changes in the functioning of many professions, including academic teachers. Taking classes online has forced many of them to acquire new digital competencies. Competence of this type implies a construct related to the cognitive sphere that allows the use of the various tools of telecommunications technology to handle information that can be obtained from training in the use of electronic devices and the software used. For this reason, it can be said that a kind of experiment was undertaken. Currently, they were assigned to a specific social group, e.g., IT specialists, but along with their functioning in the information society, they have become one of the elements of social life.

remote teaching

digital competences

academic teachers

COVID-19

1. Teachers in the Situation of the Coronavirus Epidemic

Within just a few days Polish universities were forced to take decisive action and implement the so-far unused on such a large scale core curriculum using online learning. The workload of academic teachers increased significantly, especially related to the preparation of classes and their introduction to educational platforms and educational applications, which was contrary to the already proven methods of knowledge transfer and its verification. However, not only academics but also universities, especially in terms of technology and fundings, were not ready to cope with the new conditions, specifically regarding having educational platforms, procedures, and technology related to GDPR compliance. This situation required a multiplication of efforts to overcome the existing problems, including increased effort and excessive workload on the part of academic teachers, multiplied openness to the needs of students, and greater determination to achieve the desired goals.

Consequently, the work life of the study group, relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and others in their work environment changed. Hence, at times, a shift in the professional hierarchy has become noticeable. In contrast, the restrictions put in place due to the epidemic contributed to a metamorphosis in the psychosocial functioning of university teachers. This became particularly difficult for extroverted individuals, where unprocessed traumas at home or work exacerbated intra-group conflicts, thus collapsing the boundaries between work and life ^{[1][2]}.

The occupational situation of university teachers in relation to their relationship with the environment can be analyzed similarly in terms of popular stress theories ^{[3][4]}. However, it must meet the criteria for the sake of digital competence, which may be too difficult in the current situation of the epidemic and the conditions created by it ^[5]. Hence, every employee should receive support from their supervisors and colleagues at work. However, during the necessary remote work, such an opportunity was significantly limited. Additionally, there was also an imbalance

between the effort put into the work and the possibility of obtaining a certain reward for it ^[6] and, on the other hand, there was an imbalance between the demands at work and the expectations of reward for them ^[7].

The situation of the studied group was aggravated by the fact of discomfort with health security, which, on the one hand, was intensified by the flow of information coming from the mass media or from people in the closest environment, presenting a situation of threat to health and sometimes even life.

2. Theoretical Considerations and Definitional Arrangements

To conduct relevant analyses in the presented study regarding the functioning of university teachers in Poland during the COVID-19 epidemic and the necessity for them to undertake remote work, two categories were created, i.e., teacher productivity and sense of psychological well-being ^[8]. Accordingly, two concepts were created:

- teacher productivity: a Level of Productivity (LOP);
- mental well-being: Mental Well-Being (MWB).

2.1. Teacher Work Productivity (LOP)

The results are presented as a learning outcome, where students or teachers achieve their goals ^[9].

Conducting a study on teacher performance evaluation is not an easy task. For this purpose, appropriate categories were created. However, when describing teachers' productivity, some researchers refer to several significant factors such as preparation time, students' competencies, and teachers' level of preparation for teaching ^{[10][11]}. On the other hand, as individual researchers point out, there is a significant difficulty in defining teacher work. This is because, on the one hand certain institutions set standards and legal rules related to teaching. On the other hand, there is also a certain mission associated with this profession. However, many researchers also focus on subjectivity in defining the above criteria ^[12]. Therefore, in this publication, productivity will be understood to mean its sense as popularized in OECD countries, where it means: An assessment of the percentage of time or number of days one has (or has not) been productive or functioning well while at work, which could include a specific connection to health (i.e., problems with reduced productivity/functioning due to health problems) ^[13]. The above definition of productivity is far from its original understanding grounded in economics already known since 1766 and which É. Littré (1883) directly related to the ability to produce ^[14]. A similar understanding of productivity could be found in the thought of D. Sumantha, D.S. Sink ^[15], or A. Lawor ^[16]. Such an understanding of productivity would be too narrow for the phenomenon under study. Consequently, a much more subjective and broader definition was adopted, referring to the environment (as a whole) in which respondents live, and in relation to their health, as pointed out by, among others J. W. Frank ^[17]. As the COVID-19 epidemic has necessitated the need for academics to work remotely, subcategories of self-reported knowledge regarding the use of information and communication technology by the respondents were used in the study presented here. For this reason, the

assessment of self-competence in the use of digital tools was in the next stage of the study as an indicator of the work of the studied social group.

2.2. Mental Well-Being (MWB)

When referring to describing the issue of health, it is impossible to refer to its definition. According to the world health organization, health is: a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or disability" [18]. The relationship between physical and mental health according to the aforementioned aspects can be characterized as a systemic approach, where each single factor influences the next, both as cause and effect [19]. According to many psychologists, psychological well-being involves the study of the growth of factors such: optimism, courage, work ethic, appearance, anticipation, interpersonal skills, and others more than it relates to the elimination of specific social problems.

This type of approach was represented by humanistic psychology, initiated by A. Maslow and later developed by M.E. Seligman [20]. This field of psychology focuses primarily on subjective feelings of well-being related to past achievements, as well as hope and optimism related to the future and experience of the present [21]. For this reason, in studies dedicated to the study of well-being, less emphasis is placed on specific disorders or dysfunctions and more on psychological well-being [22].

Referring to the assumptions of positive psychology (including eudaimonism) represented by M.E. Seligman [20][21][22][23], well-being is a balance between work and private time, acting in accordance with one's self, psychological balance, and self-actualization based on a recognized value system [24][25]. The best-known model of mental well-being is the six-dimensional C.D. Ryff model [26]. It consists of the following elements:

- self-acceptance;
- positive relations with others;
- autonomy;
- environmental mastery;
- purpose in life;
- personal growth.

In the model presented above, it is important to note the existing relationship between sense of psychological well-being and quality of work life. It is difficult to unambiguously determine the relationship between these phenomena, although most often the two coexist. Moreover, according to some psychologists and other researchers, mental well-being refers to a subjective sense of happiness, including job satisfaction, which is a causal dimension of well-

being [27]. On the other hand, a factor that increases employee productivity is often job satisfaction as an expression of psychological well-being [28][29].

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