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(A)media Teacher? Teachers' Media Skills in Distance Learning

ABSTRACT

In today's changing world and situations without precedent teachers need to face new challenges. One of them was necessity to start distance learning. A lot of teachers felt pressure and were afraid of using new technologies in education but the only one solution was to adapt to demands of a digital world and students—digital natives.

Effective distance learning with methods which are attractive for students means necessity of constant improving teachers' skills and qualifications to cope with dynamic reality.

In spring 2020 COVID-19 pandemic imposed changes in all areas of human activities, in education as well. Despite problems with the lack of normal classes, teachers managed to overcome a lot of obstacles. This extraordinary situation showed a lot of difficulties with using digital media among many teachers but we can be sure that, no matter what way the educational process will be organized in future, skills related with using new technologies in teaching are now one of the basic demands for teachers. In spite of many negative consequences of e-learning in new conditions, lots of teachers confronted their fear of using new media and for sure will make use of them in their future work.

KEYWORDS
distant learning, e-learning, new technologies, digital media, pandemic, teachers' media competences

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Introduction

The current reality can be described with the term "liquid modernity" formulated by Zygmunt Bauman. According to this outstanding sociologist and philosopher, the present time is characterised by permanent changeability:

> (…) today we are losing interest in what was interesting to us yesterday, and tomorrow we will grow indifferent to what excites us today. (…) Our world, full of liquid modernity, surprises us all the time: what seems to be certain and right today, may turn out to be a pathetic mistake tomorrow (Bauman 2011: 5–7).

Each generation lives in a slightly different social-cultural, technological and civilization reality which sometimes takes the form of a crisis, a threat or helplessness in achieving people's goals. An individual has to face new situations and problems and he/she has to make choices which were unknown to previous generations (Włoch 2010: 79).

Such a situation occurred in spring 2020 when the world faced a very difficult situation: the pandemic of COVID-19. Yuval Noah Harari (2015) claims that within the last decades people have managed to cope with the problem which they had not been able to solve from ancient times: epidemic (the other two problems include war and hunger). Looking from the perspective of the beginning of 2020, we can ask ourselves the question: is it really so? Although there are different views and statistics concerning this epidemic, we cannot deny that this status exerted a huge influence on all areas of human activity, including education and the way of conducting the educational process. Traditional teaching was stopped, and teachers, students and parents faced the problem with which they had never have to deal: distant learning.

In this article we are discussing the level of teachers' competences in distant education. Also, we are trying to look critically at their motivation and involvement in the process of continuous development and improvement of skills related to using modern technologies.

Distant learning: facts

According to the report from the research conducted by the Digital Centre (Polish name: Centrum Cyfrowe) among almost 1000 Polish teachers in April 2020, before the pandemic began, 85.4% teachers had no previous experience with distant learning (despite this, 48% confirmed the lack of difficulties with using digital tools). Only 9% of the teachers admitted that their main problem with distant education includes using digital tools. They also said that even if learning about such tools requires additional time and effort from them, it is not an obstacle for them. Unfortunately, only 63% teachers of classes IV–VI of the primary school decided to conduct live online classes; 26% focused on sending the children films with the classes they had recorded. Although it took more time, most teachers who participated in the research applied more than one method of distant teaching. However, at that time, most teachers believed that remote education means sending their students links to lessons and materials available in the Internet, or giving them tasks and materials for individual work. According to the report, the teachers were very stressed because of such distant education. Their level of stress was also influenced by the frustration of students and parents. Moreover, the teachers felt lonely, negatively evaluated, and exposed to difficult conditions of work without any institutional support.

The symptoms of overusing the digital media were visible among the teachers, students and their parents. Tiredness, information overload, unwillingness to use the computer and the Internet, as well as irritation caused by the increased frequency of using IT and communication technologies were the most popular symptoms of digital exhaustion described by those groups of respondents (Polskie Towarzystwa Edukacji Medialnej [Polish Associations of Digital Education], Fundacja "Dbam o Mój Zasięg" [Foundation "I Care for My Access"], Orange Foundation 2020).

The Librus portal carried out a similar research twice: in April and in June 2020. Because of this, it was possible to notice the changes in the ways of conducting distant learning. According to the research, with time, the teachers got used to using platforms for conducting online lessons, and they were more and more eager to use the available digital tools. There is no doubt that it influenced the

attractiveness of their classes and the children's independence, which, in turn, took some burden off their parents (Librus 2020).

The exceptional situation that occurred in the first half of 2020 also brought other good results. Paradoxically, distant learning reduced the distance between the teacher and the student. In this form education, many students (but also teachers) found the way to be more open to others. They got more involved in the process of learning about their educational partners. Moreover, in many cases, the relations among teachers got improved because the teachers' initiatives to help those who have difficulties working in the digital world facilitated their cooperation and development of their friendship (Pacewicz 2020).

There is no doubt that educational space is the idea that is being developed, as it continuously grasps new areas, including the virtual world, which is becoming more and more popular in the organization of the educational process. Electronic media, especially the Internet, created new opportunities related to mutual influence, and, at the moment, their use is becoming (or must become) necessary (Myrdzik 2015: 13).

Teachers' digital competences have certainly improved, but the new way of teaching and learning also has some negative consequences. Nevertheless, if we think about the level of media competences of a modern teacher, the general evaluation is certainly good.

Teachers and the need for lifelong learning

Everyday dynamics of changes requires that both teachers and students learn all the time. As a multi-level and complex activity, learning is based on skills, abilities and processes such as: thinking, watching, remembering, attention, focusing, and imagination (Popławska, Aniskievich 2017: 249).

Thus, it is no longer enough for a teacher to have a particular kind of knowledge in a given field of science. Living in the conditions of intensive social-economic changes and facing new problems, forces teachers to continuous learning, e.g. developing their knowledge of IT technologies and media education (including ecology, politics, economy, citizen education, health education, etc.), due to which they will be able to explain young people problems and complex processes

with which the latter already deal or may deal in future (Szot 2009: 305).

That is why, it is important for teachers to have personality traits that, when expressed in practical activity, are necessary for solving tasks that require using digital tools. Also, teachers need to be able to analyse their own knowledge and skills related to using methods and tools of IT and communication technologies (Baron-Polańczyk 2012: 178). The media became an important educational environment for a contemporary student, and a teacher has to have media competences necessary for his/her own development and for the organisation of the didactic process. Students' expectations of teachers have changed. That is why, apart from traditional competences, teachers have to improve their qualifications and media competences so that both teachers' and students' ways of learning (including the preparation for lifelong learning) are effective (Wenta 2007: 214–216).

Today's education is no longer a 45-minute lesson, but a process of constant improvement 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Students learn everywhere and all the time. New educational technologies support them in those processes. Teachers may use the sources of information available all around the world; they may cooperate with other teachers online, create their own educational resources, discover, develop and complement their competences. Digital lessons are much more than just using the proper tools. Such lessons also include using proper methods of work and planning effective online education. The way of carrying out such classes should be compliant with the didactic objectives established before such lessons, and, first of all, it should match the needs, expectations and abilities of young participants of this process. Also, digital classes should be subject to monitoring and evaluation, so that teachers can constantly analyse their quality and verify if particular methods are effective. This matter can and should be modified within the educational process, because this way teachers can make it compliant with students' educational needs (Plebańska 2020: 37–42).

The quality of the interaction between a teacher and a student is an important determinant of the effectiveness of the didactic process. This also refers to distant learning. Online communication usually includes verbal (or text) communication, but the partners of the educational process may see one another and respond to one

another's behaviours. In this way, the situation becomes similar to the one which occurs in normal, school interactions. However, in online communication a teacher has to take into account many psychological aspects related to communication processes, interpersonal perception and perception of oneself (Hankała 2005: 17–27). Thus, online learning does not have to significantly differ from traditional learning, but it requires the ability to deal with modern technologies and to approach one's work in a reflective manner.

A teacher becomes the designer of the educational process. Today's challenge, imposed on us by the exceptional and previously unknown situation, is giving up the lecturing system and taking on the role of a guide to the world of information on the basis of which it is worth building one's knowledge. In this kind of education, students' involvement, creativity, positive approach and their belief that learning is trendy, depends on the way the teacher selects and introduces information, chooses the methods of work, imposes the pace of studying, creates space for the students' independence and creativity, and finds a way to present the students' knowledge in group projects (Ścibor 2020: 63). Thus, unpredictability of the modern world and its processes requires some competences from the teacher so that he/she can face the challenges of the reality. Such competences include praxeological, communication, IT, moral, and creative skills. They should be subject to constant development and corrections, and aiming at self-improvement should be one of a pedagogue's characteristic features (Szot 2009: 304). A serious approach to lifelong learning is related to being responsible for constant development of one's skills, talents and knowledge, because learning does not only refer to children and youth, but also to other people, including adults (Holtkamp 2011: 173).

Constant improvement of teachers' qualifications is also mentioned in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education (Regulation… 2019) concerning the standard of education that prepares a person for working as a teacher. The Regulation specifies which information and skills should a teacher have. Also, it includes many guidelines concerning teachers' competences related to skills and knowledge necessary for using modern technologies, i.e.: the knowledge and understanding of the methods of "teaching and selecting effective didactic resources, including the Internet

resources, that support teaching a subject or conducting the classes taking into account varied educational needs of students"; adequate choosing, creating and adjusting materials and resources (including those related to IT and communication technologies) to students' varied needs; independent development of one's own knowledge and pedagogical skills, taking into account various sources, e.g. materials in foreign languages or those related to modern technologies.

According to the Regulation in question, a graduate of studies related to teaching should know and understand:

> (…) a teacher's substantial, didactic and educational competences, including the need for professional development, also with the use of IT and communication technologies, (…) the ways of organising the classroom space, including the principles of universal designing: didactic resources (handbooks and educational packages), didactic aids—the selection and use of educational resources, including electronic ones and those in foreign languages, educational application of the media and IT/communication tools; also, a teacher should be able to think in a computing manner while solving problems related to the subject he/she teaches or the classes he/she conducts (Regulation... 2019: 17, 18).

According to this Regulation, each teacher should also "feel the need to search for, adapt and create electronic educational resources, and the need to design multimedia" (Regulation… 2019: 18); moreover, each teacher should know the methods of teaching his/her subject or conducting classes, and understand "the meaning of shaping the attitude of responsible and critical use of digital media and of respecting intellectual property rights" (Regulation… 2019: 18).

With regard to skills, a graduate should be able to "select the methods of work and didactic resources, including those related to IT and communication technologies, which activate students and take into account their varied educational needs" (Regulation… 2019: 19). As far as social competences are concerned, "a graduate is ready to promote responsible and critical use of digital media, and to respect intellectual property rights" (Regulation… 2019: 20).

Preschool and early school teachers should "effectively communicate with various recipients, including children or students, parents or guardians, and specialists, using modern technological solutions" (Regulation… 2019: 37).

Also, the Regulation emphasizes an important role of IT/communication technologies in the work of speech therapists, therapists dealing with early support of child's speech development, teachers-therapists working with children with chronic diseases, disabilities or autism spectrum disorders.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education concerning granting the promotion in rank to a teacher, all ranks of teachers: contract teachers, appointed teachers and certified teachers should be able to "use multimedia and IT tools in their work, especially during the classes they are conducting" (Regulation… 2018: 3).

One of the requirements teachers have to meet while taking exams to obtain promotion is performing a task with the use of multimedia tools. Moreover, in order to obtain the rank of a certified teacher, a pedagogue has to improve his/her work, which includes the use of IT and communication technologies.

We have to admit that, after reading those basic government regulations that refer to fundamental requirements concerning teachers, each person who performs or is going to perform the work of a teacher should be aware of the fact that he/she must be able to use modern digital solutions in the educational process. Is this truly so? The readers have to try to answer this question on their own.

Using modern technologies in education

Maciej Tanaś suggests as follows:

> (…) modern digital media should perform the following functions: tools of social communication; tools of a teacher and student in the processes of education and self-education, and in the new organisation of education called distant learning; organiser of a person's free time and space of his/her cognitive, ludic and social activity; tools and field of work (Tanaś 2015: 14).

The use of computers and IT networks in education, if it is carried out properly, is compliant with the principles of the complementarity of methods and diversification of didactic resources. *Blended learning*—a harmonious and complementary way of using traditional teaching methods combined with IT tools—is getting more

and more popular. The Internet makes it possible to overcome time and space and carry out a real-time dialogue. Such a dialogue can be carried out individually or in groups; in a written, graphic, verbal, musical, or visual form (Tanaś 2005: 36–39). However, we should remember that distant learning is not just using books (electronic or paper ones) or sending materials by e-mail. Teaching and learning with the use of IT technologies may be beneficial for both sides: both students and teachers get the access to, e.g. interesting materials, and it is possible to make the learning process more customized to individual needs (Mischke 2005: 46–51).

In the 21st century, the access to information is shaped by dynamic technological changes, and the development of digital techniques facilitates rapid changes in the modern person's reality. The increase in the number of generally available Internet resources, and the kind of relationships made through the Internet, imply significant changes in the perception of the role of a teacher in the educational process (Królikiewicz, Pulak 2020: 26). The development of the global network made it possible for a user to interact with an Internet application, an Internet service or another Internet user. Technology made it possible for us to participate in creating the Internet content, process it in a dynamic manner, and share information resources with others. The applications and new network services created for this purpose opened new opportunities that, in turn, resulted in the creation of new tools, along with the new techniques of using those tools. It became possible to work online in teams, in the real time. Simplified mechanisms that facilitate publishing contents in the Internet, or the new systems of comments, make it possible for users to easily interact with the recipients of published contents. Along with the development of the Internet revolution, we can notice that there are more and more applications accessed through Internet (web) browsers. Also, people are becoming increasingly interested in various social media services. Contemporary teachers are offered many IT tools that support his/her work in education and self-education, as well as the organization of his/her work (blogs, social media services, e-learning platforms, tools dedicated to education). Methods based on audio and video broadcast, which belong to exposing methods, may be an introduction to using other methods of working with children. Today's IT solutions make it possible for us

to use multimedia in a comfortable and limitless manner both locally and through the so-called streaming broadcast. In this case, a teacher's competences go beyond the ability to publish some materials on the proper platform (e.g. Youtube), and start to include recording and assembling visual material, e.g. in the form of podcasts (including screencasts, audio- and videocasts). All those solutions aim at the same objective: the provision of a complex, attractive and universal environment that gives everyone the opportunity to learn in an attractive and modern form, irrespective of whether they are applied on the traditional educational process or distant learning. Apart from technological competences (related to the knowledge of such tools as: the Internet browser, dedicated e-learning platforms, or a wide range of other specialist applications), didactic competences are important, i.e. competences related to teaching and learning with the methods using a teacher's modern tools based on modern technological solutions. This seems obvious due to the need for developing and diversifying the contents taught to students and due to the fact that students expect traditional teaching methods to be made more attractive (Muchacki 2016: 434–436).

The typical ways of using electronic devices in the educational process are as follows:

- the lecturing method is made more attractive because the teacher uses multimedia presentations, films, photos, animations, etc.,
- students are asked to search for information on their own,
- teachers use quizzes and exercises that help students to memorize the content,
- teachers and students use various tools of communication to perform tasks shared with other schools (including foreign schools),
- virtual experiments are made which, in normal school conditions, are impossible to carry out,
- teachers supervise group work in which each participant performs a piece of a larger task,
- students learn about the surrounding world through, e.g. "virtual trips" to space or into the human body,
- students prepare presentations, recordings, experiments, etc. on their own (Wronka 2018: 343–344).

Using multimedia at the early school stage makes it possible to combine learning with fun, which increases the attractiveness of classes. In early education, fun plays an important function and it is truly appreciated by children. Also, using multimedia increases children's motivation to learn and shapes their positive attitude towards education. Moreover, it facilitates the individualization of learning and makes students subjects of the educational process, which is, at the moment, really appreciated in education (Rygałło 2015: 30). The generation of contemporary students need to use technologies that they know and that are used for everyday communication or learning about the world. However, the postulated changes require teachers' agreement to give at least a part of the responsibility for learning to learners themselves. At the same time, students of the Internet generation have to accept this responsibility (Morbitzer 2011: 26–33). Thus, the teacher's necessary skill is to make a dialogue with the student, but to do this, the teacher must have proper competences in implementing modern solutions into the didactic process (Banasik 2017: 224).

Teachers and the media: everyday life or distance?

Teaching is a specific profession because its basic assumptions are rooted in building relationships with people and in the ability to work in a team. Teachers often do their job in the atmosphere of stress, focused attention and high activity. Their level of stress is also influenced by the factors such as: the sense of responsibility, time pressure, improper organisation of work, as well as high expectations and requirements of several social groups. In the Polish conditions, additional stressors include social-economic factors, such as low salaries, uncertainty concerning future employment, and increasing unappreciation of a teacher's profession (Zadworna-Cieślak, Zbonikowski 2016: 440–441).

The description of a teacher of our time suggests that he/she should be an emancipated intellectual, a person who effectively acts in practice, and a professional who loves his/her job. At the same time, it should be a caring man/woman who truly pays attention to his/her students' development. He/she should be broad-minded,

open to changes, knowledgeable and able to act properly in various situations (Kobyłecka 2010: 105).

Teachers are aware of the fact that the digital world is very broad and offers unlimited opportunities. They notice some negative consequences of the virtual reality (undesired contents and contacts, hate, plagiarism of the Internet resources, user's passiveness, thoughtless acceptance of unverified information), but they also appreciate free access to information or the ability to learn about places and phenomena that are otherwise inaccessible. In other words, they appreciate the potential of the virtual reality (Krzyżanowska 2018: 213).

However, it seems that, at the moment, we can speak of a competence asymmetry of students and teachers.

> There is no doubt that the former are better at using modern technologies, and the latter have deeper knowledge of their fields of science, as well as proper pedagogical and psychological skills. When young people are teachers of adults, even if it only refers to using a computer connected with the Internet, we can talk about the phenomenon of pedagogical inversion (Mead 2000: 86).

Students are getting more and more creative, mobile and open to technological novelties, so they seem to function better online than offline, because they quickly acquire the abilities that make it possible for them to use the new media. They are usually better at this than their teachers (Huk 2019: 37). However, wise adults-immigrants should accept the fact that they do not know the world of their students or children, and they should use young people to help them understand this world. Adult immigrants, including teachers, who are not so wise (or, perhaps, not so flexible) in this respect, will waste their time for pondering on how good the world used to be (Prensky 2001: 3).

Contemporary students are often called digital natives because they grew up in the world of multimedia, as a result of which modern technologies are a natural environment in which they function without any difficulties (Prensky 2001: 1–6). Digital natives belong to the generation of the image culture, while digital immigrants (people who grew up with books; who were not surrounded by the world of digital technologies; who have to learn how to use IT and communication technologies) prefer text to image and sound (Morbitzer 2012: 138). Digital natives evaluate information and make decisions

faster; they prefer multi-task approach; they expect quick changes and effects; their visual-motor coordination is very good, which is why they are able to notice more details; they are open to innovations (Rygałło 2015: 30). At the same time, they have problems with the proper interpretation of the information they memorize, which is a necessary thinking process that results in building knowledge. They are not good at creative thinking, formulating conclusions and generalizations, and these are not generation differences but changes in the functioning of the brain which determine the fact that the contemporary student is completely different than that of the past (Morbitzer 2011: 26). Manfred Spitzer, the author of many books on the functioning of the brain of people who use digital media, claims that—due to overusing the media—the representatives of the digital natives' generation use their brains less frequently and have a lower intellectual potential and limited cognitive skills (Spitzer 2013: 280). Therefore, how can we reconcile those two different ways of perceiving, functioning, thinking or learning? The pedagogical critique of the media, based on the assumption that they are unable to replace natural phenomena and things a student experiences in direct contact, may result from some teachers' low level of awareness and their low level of competences in using IT and communication technologies (Huk 2019: 69). Many teachers still stick to the methods they used to learn and apply because they believe they are good. They do not try to adjust those methods to the contemporary needs and expectations of their students. The traditional, linear model of teaching is still followed by them. However, more and more teachers are trying to develop their media competences and use the media, e.g. by creating channels of communication such as blogs or Facebook groups, or by getting knowledge, inspirations and news from the Internet (Brzyszcz 2017: 33). They understand that the newest technologies perform important tasks in teaching and promoting education. The fulfilment of such tasks is only possible when both learners and teachers are able to use these technologies equally well.

In each of five groups of media competences mentioned by Wacław Strykowski (2004: 35–37) (competences concerning the theory of the media; competences concerning media language and communication; competences related to the reception of media messages; competences related to using the media; and competences

related to the creation of media messages), we may specify those that are the most useful from a teacher's point of view. The most important competences concerning the theory of the media include the ability to notice and analyse the directions of the media development and their consequences, as well as the ability to identify and justify the influence of technology on various aspects of human life. In case of the competences concerning media language and communication, what is particularly important for a teacher is the ability to specify the meaning and purposefulness of using certain forms of expression (e.g. colour, shape, graphic sign), and the knowledge of the basic techniques of direct and media communication. Within the area of the reception of media messages, teachers should pay attention to the knowledge of the mechanisms of exerting psychological influence on the recipient, the ability to indicate media threats for a person's psychological and educational development, as well as the ability to notice the role of the media in developing a young person's personality, shaping their attitudes and creating their authorities. A teacher who is competent in using the media perceives them as sources of knowledge and tools used to shape various skills; he knows the methods and tools of searching for information in the media; he/she uses different media devices and materials; he/she is able to categorize, select and evaluate the information he/she finds; and he/she can use media devices to record, process and give others the access to media messages. As for creating media messages, the skills that are the most important for teachers include: the ability to speak properly in front of a microphone or a camera; self-presentation skills; the knowledge of tools and process of constructing messages; and the ability to prepare, fulfil and carry out multimedia presentations with the use of materials and stimuli adequate to the recipient's perceptive skills.

Another important area in which a computer can be used in education is pedagogical diagnosis and therapy. Computer software that is helpful in pedagogical therapy includes perceptive-motor, sight, hearing, intellectual, and emotional sphere, and, because of the attractive form of the classes in which such tools are used, children's emotions and motivation are stimulated, and their fear of failure or the lack of progress is reduced. Moreover, a computer gives us many opportunities to educate and rehabilitate people who have problems

with their hearing, eyesight, as well as motor or intellectual development (Gajda 2010: 141).

Devices of the newest generation are suspicious to teachers who have not been made familiar enough with today's technologies. Such teachers are often unwilling to give up the tools they know in order to use the potential of digital media. They are also afraid that new technologies cannot be tamed (Cyrek 2019: 291). There is no doubt that some teachers are careful or even reluctant to use the new media or distant learning, which may be explained by the fact that this solution is new or seems threatening to some of them. However, we should assume that distant learning will become a permanent element of the contemporary educational reality (Łaszczyk 2005: 57).

Many teachers have had contacts with new technologies just because of the requirements they had to meet in their professional environment. Even if they learnt about such technologies in the process of formal education, media education was just developing at that time. However, teachers' positive motivation should refer to the fact that satisfactory use of new technologies is based on the same intellectual principles as satisfactory activity in other aspects of life, such as maturity, criticism, good communication skills, as well as the ability to build and maintain interpersonal relationships (Bierówka 2019: 257–260). Due to the fact that a teacher's work requires social skills on a high level, teaching with the use of the new media, based on similar foundations, should also bring good results.

Jacek Pyżalski (2020: 25–26) certainly provides us with support saying that, until now, in good education, relationships have always been the most important thing. Thus, it is worth emphasizing that nothing has changed here. It is only a bit more difficult because, in the situation in which we are forced to distant learning, the risk of losing such bonds is higher. It is necessary to work out, get to know and implement the solutions that will help us build and reinforce those relationships, because, without wise solutions in this area, the achievement of valuable educational objectives will be difficult or even impossible. Educational interpersonal relationships are the basis on which it is possible to carry our distant learning effectively.

Conclusion

One of the tasks of a 21st-century teacher is to show students how to learn; how to reach credible and reliable information, and how to help them prepare for functioning in the modern society in which they will live and work (Kołodziejczyk, Polak 2011: 53–55). The contemporary young generation includes people who, perhaps, in future will do jobs that are still unknown, and such future will certainly be more and more based on modern technologies (Królikiewicz, Pulak 2020: 37). Thus, teachers' mission today is preparing students for the role of knowledge creators, which includes helping them build knowledge on their own using the data they mainly obtain from the Internet. It is because an easy access to information is not the same as obtainment of knowledge, and each medium requires preparation and effort from the user because the stronger the user is intellectually, the more advantages he/she gets from using digital technologies (Morbitzer 2018: 16–17). The advantages of using such technologies include: greater attractiveness of classes; stimulation of creative thinking; increased motivation and involvement of some, previously passive, students; development of digital competences (which are now specified as key competences) among both students and teachers; exchange of experience, mutual learning; integration and cooperation between teachers and students; adjustment of tasks to students' individual needs (including those with developmental deficits or disabilities); students' positive perception of a teacher who can use digital tools very well; interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Also, we have to remember about various traps and dangers, such as: thoughtless using of the Internet and information, intellectual laziness, improper contents or addictions, etc. However, if digital tools are used in a wise manner by properly prepared teachers, there will be more advantages than disadvantages. Technology is to support and not replace a teacher. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the use of technologies matches the good quality of the educational process in which a teacher is a necessary link.

The author of this article emphasizes the requirements and challenges faced by teachers using new tools in the educational process, in order to indicate how important these competences are nowadays and, perhaps, convince those who doubt this, that these skills are

necessary in the contemporary world and that they require not only technological knowledge, but also a thoughtful approach.

As a summary of the above considerations, let us quote Umberto Eco. In his last work, this extraordinary philosopher and media expert claims that "a good lesson is the one during which we make a dialogue, confront opinions and discuss on what is taught by the school and what we learn from outside" (Eco 2017: 105). We wish all teachers to be able to conduct exactly such lessons.

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