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## IMPACT OF DISTANT TEACHING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CIVIC AND FINANCIAL LITERACY\*

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**Abstract.** The global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 resulted in the most significant disruption to school attendance in the history of humanity. Subsequent anti-pandemic caregivers demanded a shift to distance learning from kindergartens to higher education. Slovakia was one of the European Union countries with the most extended closed schools – 28 weeks. The main aim of the research was to analyze the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in the Slovak Republic by teaching civic and financial literacy in secondary schools in 2020-2021. In the form of in-depth interviews with selected teachers, the authors analyzed the actual state of education during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Among other things, the research showed that Slovakia was not prepared for the distance form of teaching. As a result, some children were educated in the form of self-study, some online, others combined, and some were not educated at all. Teachers used different didactic aids in online teaching; the competent state institutions published online textbooks only with hindsight. The global pandemic thus demonstrated shortcomings in the digitization of regional education. In the paper, the authors offer solutions for the future.

**Keywords:** civic education; financial literacy; Slovak Republic; secondary education; COVID-19; distant learning; distant teaching

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## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic was confirmed to have spread to Slovakia on March 6, 2020. Shortly after the confirmation of the first positive case, the Slovak government, as the first in Europe, adopted some of the most substantial restrictions for the whole country. These preventative and emergency anti-epidemic strategies aim to save the health and lives of the population's most vulnerable or high-risk groups. All educational institutions, business offices, and event venues were closed. The public transport schedule was reduced. Only essential shops and facilities such as grocery stores remained open; mandatory 14 days of quarantine for everyone returning from abroad and compulsory use of face masks were introduced (Izakova, et al. 2020, p. 460)

According to the Institute for Strategies and Analyses of the Government Office, in Slovakia, schools were partially closed on 9.3.2020. Their closure was in response to the first case of a new coronavirus discovered on our territory. It was one of the fastest reactions to school closures in Europe, even though the numbers infected during this period did not indicate that it was an epidemic. The blanket closure of schools in our country with a relatively meager number of infected persisted until the end of May, 2020. As of 25.5.2020, almost a million pupils and students, i.e., a fifth of the population, were remotely educated (or not educated at all). The most affected group is high school students. (Gardoňová, Rybanská, 2021; Canals-Botines et al., 2021)

Due to restrictive measures, Slovakia had to use the distance form of education much more than before, from kindergartens to university students. We consider "distance learning through correspondence, telecommunications media and other means, without direct contact between the pedagogical employee and the self-studying pupil" (Act No. 245/2008 Coll., 2008, § 54 article 10). Some schools started using electronic information systems, but communication was intended mainly for parents. Ensuring an online teaching system with a timetable, dividing pupils into smaller groups and coordinating teachers, acquiring platforms for teaching, and forwarding teaching and educational materials have become a challenge for all schools. (Tomšík et al., 2020)

According to data from the Analysis Unit of the Supreme Audit Office, Slovakia had the most extended closing period of schools in the European Union – 28 weeks. Pupils only started returning to schools more than a year after the first Covid-19 case in Slovakia. Up to 128,000 children, representing more than 18% of whom did not learn online. (Vítáloš, 2021)

**The main research goal of the article** was to analyze the state of teaching of selected disciplines in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. **The secondary research goal** was to look for possibilities of streamlining lectures for pupils at secondary schools in the Slovak Republic.

## 2. Theoretical background

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Slovakia hardly used a distance learning form of education. One of the reasons was the absence of available technical equipment (computers, internet access, etc.) not only on the part of pupils but also on the part of educators. Based on the decision of the Government of the Slovak Republic in spring 2020, Slovak education (primary schools, secondary schools, higher education institutions (universities)) went from classical attendance form to a distance form of education from day to day. Based on the above facts, neither the student nor the pedagogical component of Slovak education, not even the state institutions themselves, were prepared for this educational type at the time. Gradually, however, all schools in Slovakia have adapted not only in technical terms but also in terms of knowledge. In the spring of 2020, almost all countries had to move from a full-time form of education to distance learning.

Nevertheless, several years before the onset of Covid-19, distance education form was known. According to Turkish authors Nazime Tuncay and Zehra Özçınar, students in some schools perceived online courses, or distance learning forms, as a "valuable delivery" of various and useful information. As they further state, such a form of education has changed the dynamics of access to teaching materials that have become accessible from anywhere on the globe. They add that the distance form of education, or the online learning environment, can help build a community of students who would coordinate with each other different ideas, knowledge, or opinions. Based on the experience so far in the conditions of Slovak education, we can confirm their original hypothesis. The authors also rightly argued that the distance form of education is much more different from full-time classical teaching. (Tuncay, Özçınar, 2009) Other Turkish authors Semih Caliskan, Sibel Suzek, and Deniz Ozcan characterize the distance form of education as a specially developed system for students transitioning from solid educational practices (a full-time form of education) to mobile and flexible (distance form of education) in terms of time and space. In general, the authors define the distance form of education as interactive data exchange based on web and advanced technological tools and devices among students of pedagogical employees who are distant from each other. In their opinion, the use of technology within the distance form of education is a planned teaching system in which the pedagogue and the student meet in different ways in a mutually distant educational environment. (Caliskan, Suzek, Ozcan, 2017)

On the other hand, the distance form of education also brings many negatives. Its specificities and characteristics cannot fully replace the classic full-time form of education. A similar view is shared by most Slovak primary, secondary, and higher education teachers. However, the continuous development of information and communication technologies offers scope for reconsidering conventional teaching methods and gradually replacing classic didactic digital aids. In 2005, the Israeli author Sarah Guri-Rosenblit (2005), on the example of higher education, pointed out that the advent of new communication technologies would put pressure on the coming years to replace the classical attendance form of schooling with distance learning. We also accepted this reality. Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, a distance form of education has taken place for some time in primary and secondary schools. In her article "Distance education" and 'e-learning': Not the same thing", Sarah Guri-Rosenblit quoted author Soren Nipper, who identified three generations of distance learning in his classical analysis in 1989. He ranked correspondent teaching among the first generation. The advent of multimedia characterized the second generation, i.e., integration of print use with broadcasts (media, cartridges, and, to a certain extent, computers). He identified the last third generation with the development of new interactive communication and information technologies. (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005)

The onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 replaced the classic attendance form of education by distance one (primary schools, secondary schools, universities, and universities) in almost all countries of the world, including the Slovak Republic. At the same time, it has led to significant global changes in the field of education. (Bida et al., 2021) Turkish authors Furkan Tüzün and Nilay Yörük-Toraman also highlighted possible factors influencing the distance form of education during the pandemic, which included factors related to the standard of living of individual students during this period. They rightly recalled that students who did not have adequate means of communication and information could not be involved in the proper teaching process in the distance form of education. Although even if the scientists' research targeted just Turkish students, it does not mean that the findings could not be implemented in Slovakia. Notable that in the territory of the Slovak Republic, a certain part of the students did not have access to communication and information technologies during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Furkan Tüzün and Nilay Yörük-Toraman also found that students' lack of access to these technologies could affect their mental health and well-being. (Tüzün, Yörük-Toraman, 2021) Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of worldly life, judging from a social, economic, and psychological point of view. (Kaya, 2020) In the Kingdom of Spain, on March 15, 2020, according to the authors Marta García-Sampedro, Elsa Peña Suárez and Lucía Rodríguez Olay, 8 276 528 students and 724 803 teaching staff switched to distance learning. Similarly, as in the Slovak Republic, the education system in Spain was not prepared for distance education. Almost all the countries in the world fit the

same situation. (García-Sampedro, Peña-Suárez, Rodríguez-Olay, 2021) Iranian author Helia Nodeh adds that distance learning disrupted students' performance, education, and personal life during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Nodeh, 2021) Therefore, in 2020, The International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) declared the importance of addressing the primary personal needs of students through a comprehensive set of extracurricular student services. These services were designed to enable and strengthen students to focus more on their studies and personal growth, both cognitively and emotionally. (Bouchey, Gratz, Kurland, 2021) In addition to many positives, online teaching as part of the distance form of education has its negative aspects. As part of his research sample of university students, Turkish author Huseyin Kaya concluded that online education had a significant impact on the health of their eyes. (Kaya, 2020)

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about far-reaching changes in our social life. To this day, these consequences are difficult to predict and control. During this period, global social processes are constantly gaining their specific expression in all areas of social life, and in particular in the field of education. Adjusting and adapting the educational process during a pandemic requires new practical solutions. From this point of view, we can therefore identify three fundamental challenges for the distance form of education. Firstly, we include technical requirements that can be overcome by purchasing better technical equipment, provided this is financially possible. Secondly, the impossibility of a 'direct transition' from physical to virtual classroom due to a lack of contact with other students and educators is very complex and challenging to overcome. Thirdly, this includes the need to involve the students and their educators to find the best possible method for obtaining and understanding teaching materials in the digital environment. In the era of digitization, it is, therefore, possible to see the distance form of education as one possible solution to the problem of ensuring that students, on the one hand, remain healthy (physical distance) and, on the other hand, comprehensive digital didactic aids are provided at all levels of education. (Marković Krstić, Milošević Radulović, 2021; Kurbakova, 2021) The paper's authors are members of the research team KEGA No. 009 TnUAD-4/2021 "Creation of digital didactic aids to the subject "Civics" for the needs of secondary education in distance form. "Our goal is to create coherent and uniform digital didactic aids for the needs of distance, partly also attendance form of education of the subject "Civics" in secondary schools. Once created, we expect to improve the education quality of this subject in case of the need to return to the distance education form. At the same time, these digital didactic aids can also be helpful in the classical attendance form of education.

One of the main tasks of teaching the subject "Civics" within secondary education is educating students about patriotism, democracy, and tolerance. The Spanish author Nicanor Ramón Fuentes Laíño adds that civil education's primary objective in a liberal democracy and a pluralistic society is to offer access to public education issues. He, therefore, asks himself how liberal democracy can build a common civic identity between group diversity and which values could be shared by democratic citizens who are members of diverse religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups. In conclusion, he adds that the role of the subject 'Civics' is to educate students on ordinary civic virtues, especially in the context of society. (Ramón Fuentes Laíño, 2018; Lincényi, Mindár 2021; Ead et al. 2021) Within the education system of the Slovak Republic, in the subject "Civics", in addition to the basic aspects of liberal democracy, it is necessary to include the education of Slovak students to a healthy national awareness and pride that we are Slovaks who together with national minorities are a solid part of the independent and democratic Slovak Republic, which on January 1, 2023, celebrated the 30th anniversary of its founding. A particular example may be the teaching of "Civic Doctrine" in the United States of America. Of course, it is essential to take only positive models because its concept today faces two fundamentally conflicting problems. This includes, in particular, the traditional concept, designed primarily for younger students, which is often limited to nationalist patriotism and obedience. (Payne, Keys Adair et al. 2020) Based on the above facts, teaching the subject "Civics" in secondary education is essential to focus on creating democratically acceptable civic and political attitudes for students. According to Dutch authors Jacqueline Witschge, Jesper Rozer, and Herman G. van de Werfhorst, the positive relationship between a standardized and universal trust for democracy and civic and political engagement applies only if there is a threshold of faith in institutions and a level of democracy.

(Witschge, Rozer, van de Werfhorst, 2019) The development of civic literacy is also essential within the thematic whole of the subject 'Civics.' The Dutch author Jos van Helvoort considers promoting students' interest in civic and political issues a fundamental educational objective of civic literacy. He sees the term "civic literacy" as the ability and willingness of specific people to listen to the opinions of others. He believes civic literate people can perceive the right moral, economic, political, and scientific judgments. (van Helvoort, 2019) When teaching "Civics," it is essential to shape students' political literacy. Like all abstract concepts, political literacy cannot be measured directly. Still, we assume that if people (students) are politically literate, they understand party differences and know basic political concepts and facts. Political literacy is at the heart of empirical theories of democracy. (Cassel, Lo, 1997) When teaching the subject 'Civics,' it is also essential to consider issues relating to the global multicultural society. This fact brought the need for the development of the goals of civic education and the integration of modern knowledge, skills, and values of each personality. (Marsone, 2016)

With the development of political literacy within the subject "Civics" in secondary education, students should also be mindful of shaping financial literacy. Financial literacy is generally a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of citizens (students) necessary to financially secure themselves and their families in today's society. Money and financial products are an integral part of today's world. Therefore, 'Civics' students in secondary education must understand the market mechanisms that price all available commodities and services. (Tomášková, Mohelská, Němcová, 2011) According to Australian economist Andrew C. Worthington, interest in financial literacy issues has increased significantly globally over the past two decades. (Worthington 2013) In addition, financial literacy is also linked to the economic costs of households. Based on the research cited by the Turkish authors Kamer Karakurum-Ozdemir, Melike Kokkizil, and Gokce Uysal, we can learn that families with lower financial literacy, for example, have a higher mortgage and other economic costs. (Karakurum-Ozdemir, Kokkizil, Uysal, 2019)

### 3. Research objective and methodology

The authors of the research have chosen a qualitative research strategy. In the case of further planning and design of research, the authors preferred the concept of research questions rather than the establishment of research hypotheses. Two research questions (RQ) have been identified:

**RQ1:** What experience with online teaching of civics in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic did teachers have at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021)?

**RQ2:** What digital didactic aids would teachers of the subject civics in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic welcome for distance learning?

In the data collection framework, the interview method is one of the most used research methods. (Juszczyk 2003) It is mainly carried out by direct contact between the researcher and the studied person. At present, indirect forms, e.g., telephone or online interviews, are also increasingly applied. Because of the pandemic measures, we decided to use a controlled semi-structured interview, which we conducted indirectly, either by phone or online. The interview consisted of fifteen open questions. A comparative method and interpretation analysis were used to evaluate the research results.

### Research sample

As part of our research, in the fourth quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, we conducted 16 managed semi-structured interviews with teachers who pedagogically provided teaching of civic education at secondary schools in the Slovak Republic. In total, the research sample consisted of 16 secondary school teachers. In each self-governing region in the Slovak Republic, we reached out to 2 respondents, one teacher from the gymnasium and one from the business academy, to ensure the representativeness of the research sample in terms of the type of secondary school.



#### 4. Results and discussion

**RQ1: What experience with online teaching of civics in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic did teachers have at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021)?**

**Question No. 1: How are you evaluating the launch of distance learning in spring 2020 at your school?**

Nearly half of the teachers surveyed admitted at the beginning of the interview that distance teaching surprised them and meant a technical shock to them. "Spring 2020 - I rate this period as a "big leap into the unknown" or as "throwing in the water and swimming as you like." At that time, no one knew how long it would take how it would take", teacher Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the Gymnasium of Andrej Vrábel in Levice said in an interview. (Nitra Self-Governing Region) As the teacher, Beáta Pjonteková from the Gymnasium on The School Street in Spišská Nová Ves states, it was mainly a technical shock for teachers because they had never had such an experience before. "So we had to worry a little bit with the Internet and MS Teams. At first, the signal was falling out. But when I evaluate the distance form of education with hindsight today, I can say that we have all run around quite well with all teachers and students alike." According to the teacher from the Business Academy in Rožňava (Košice Self-Governing Region) JUDr. Petr Valný, distance education surprised the vast majority of teachers. "On the one hand, they were not prepared for it at all, and on the other hand, it was not ensured how to manage this form of education in the future. But gradually, each of us learned to expand various forms of teaching, from simply sending text documents, linking to videos, or launching PowerPoint presentations. Later, we started using videoconferencing, which marked a big step forward." Only four schools addressed were ready for distance learning and immediately switched to e-learning teaching, providing online and distance education. Teachers from the remaining schools rated the launch of distance learning either positively or, in hindsight, as a challenge and a good experience.

**Question No. 2: To what extent have you personally been prepared for a distance form of education?**

The vast majority of the teachers interviewed (9) were not personally prepared for the distance form of education because, in their words, they did not have sufficient technical equipment, and some even had to buy a new computer or laptop, as the old one did not take them. Only two teachers were personally prepared for teaching because they had sufficient experience in information and communication technologies, which allowed them to react relatively quickly and flexibly in distance learning. The remaining teachers could adapt to the situation without significant problems and learned to work relatively quickly in the online space and lead interactive teaching.

**Question No. 3: What form did you communicate with students during the pandemic measures? Have you spoken with your students as part of distance teaching exclusively through online learning, offline teaching (e.g., email communication, assignments), or a combination of both?**

Most teachers at the beginning of distance learning used a classic form of offline teaching and switched entirely to online education or benefited from a combination of offline and online instruction. As part of offline teaching, most teachers focused on sending tasks by email and then sending corrections to students, while some teachers also communicated with pupils by phone. Later, email and telephone communication was replaced by the school website Edupage, which was used for electronic communication with pupils and parents. In the case of online teaching, the instructors used several communication platforms, most often MS TEAMS, Google Meet, Zoom, while some also communicated via Facebook, messenger, or WhatsApp social networks.

**Question No. 4: What was the course and organization of distance learning in the lessons you provided?**

In 2021, the course and organization of online lessons were not different from the classes performed by the attendance form. Most teachers were aware of the need to involve pupils more in the teaching process during distance learning. The teachers used screen sharing, involving pupils in solving tasks in the classroom. Teachers who used MS TEAMS in an online class used separate rooms where pupils worked independently on

assignments. Teachers skipped oral exams during online hours as they did not see it as very effective and appropriate in the given teaching. “The use of videoconferencing has become an absolute breakthrough. This allowed me to organize an hour by confirming that it was 90% close to the quality of the attendance form. During the lesson, I could use frontal teaching (my interpretation for students or projected PowerPoint presentations that students could comment on simultaneously) or project short videos that clearly had the greatest resonance among students and reliably ensured students' attention. Videoconferencing also allowed the use of classic forms of teaching such as working with text (textbook or other printed material)“, said the lecturer from the Business Academy in Rožňava JUDr. Petr Valný.

**Question No. 5: If you provided offline learning, was it because, for example, you or your students did not have additional technical security and Internet connection, or did you have other problems?**

After online teaching was launched in secondary schools, teachers approached offline education minimally. Teachers accessed offline teaching due to technical problems such as power outages or the Internet. Instead, students from socially weaker families, who were dealt with individually by schools, had issues. As stated by Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the Gymnasium of Andrej Vrábla in Levice, many students had to share their computers with their siblings or their parents at the home office during online education. Often students were connected via mobile phone at online lessons. Therefore, the school then offered pupils and teachers the opportunity to borrow the technique. According to the teacher Mgr., most pupils were technically well equipped. Marcela Hollá from the Gymnasium of Michal Miloslav Hodža in Liptovský Mikuláš. “If anyone had a problem with the technique, the school immediately responded. The pupil was offered a laptop“. Teacher Mgr. Lenka Krištofiková from Gymnasium of Ladislav Novomeský in Senica occasionally went offline for an hour after students had many online hours and complained that they could not cope because they were sick and their heads hurt.

**Question No. 6: How did secondary school students receive distance learning? What was the involvement of pupils in distance learning in terms of overall participation in teaching?**

At first, according to the teacher PhDr. Miroslava Marčeková from the Business Academy of Milan Hodža in Trenčín, pupils were very pleased that they were “at home,” gradually they were often less communicative, they began to invent excuses such as “connection problems“ etc., but this could be solved very quickly, if the teacher made it clear that fraud on the part of the pupils did not give them a chance. The teacher PaedDr. Emília Černeková from the commercial academy of Dušan Methodius Janota in Čadca thinks that the first wave of pupils was evaluated positive rather than negative. “But then, during the second wave, from October 12, 2020, to May 2021, it was already too much for the pupils themselves. They lacked personal contact and could not concentrate as fully on teaching as necessary. Of course, this includes health reasons because looking at your computer for six hours a day will very quickly manifest itself in your health. So far, the ongoing third wave has only brought about the closure of some classes. Also, on this basis, students gradually realize that the distance form of education is not fully fully-fledged for them. You can't write typing or rehearsing. You never know what that pupil is open about, whether someone personally advises him, etc. To this day, it can't be checked“, Černeková said. Mgr. Erik Chalupský taught at the gymnasium and primary school in Detva. He noted that the pupils in secondary school joined the online teaching in much greater quantities and more regularly than in primary school. Even the performance of duties was at an excellent level compared to pupils at primary school.

**Question No. 7: What personal experience has distance learning brought you during the coronavirus pandemic? What problems did you have when teaching remotely?**

Several teachers said distance learning had moved them forward. “The distance form of teaching has moved me forward. Two years ago, I could not have imagined that even from a distance, I could carry out a good course of the hour and coolly meet the goal of every hour. I became acquainted with videoconferencing platforms (Zoom, Google meet, Microsoft Teams), and now I successfully use them in the pedagogical process and various

training", said JUDr. Petr Valný from the Business Academy in Rožňava. Furthermore, as stated by the teacher Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the gymnasium of Andrej Vrábel in Levice, distance teaching opened up new possibilities for her because she began to use other teaching methods, especially those that more activate pupils. In addition, she has improved in using information communication technologies in the teaching process; she has also learned to use the zoom, Discord, Edupage programs. On the other hand, some teachers have complained about technical problems such as internet signal failures and difficulties with microphones or cameras. "It has often been the case that pupils have misrepresented certain information or misinterpreted it, and I did not have enough opportunity to notice it on their faces. Social contact and group work were also lacking", added teacher Mgr. Erik Chalupský from the Gymnasium of Detva in the Banská Bystrica Region.

**Question No. 8: What do you think are the needs of schools in the event of the re-closure of schools (including educational requirements)?**

If the answer to this question, the teachers were not uniform. Some of them praise the technical equipment. "As a school, we are ready for online teaching; we even provide pupils with hybrid teaching. Quarantined pupils will join the classroom and be fully involved in the teaching process via a streaming camera. Of course, there is also screen sharing", said teacher Mgr. Darina Chobotová from the Business Academy on Nevädzová Street in Bratislava. The second part of the teachers complained about the lack of technical equipment; according to the teacher Mgr. Monika Pilková from the Piarist Gymnasium of Jozef Branecký in Trenčín, every teacher should have a computer that can handle online teaching at ease. "There are rarely minor technical problems, such as a malfunctioning camera and so on. I also consider the critical availability of various educational programs and applications. I'm not saying they're not today. But you know it's time-consuming to create new and self-contained educational aids constantly. Instead, I would personally welcome uniform aids for all teachers of the civics subject." Teacher Mgr. Martin Huba from the Business Academy in Topoľčany would welcome better and faster internet connection in schools, as well as support for teacher education in the use of digital technologies and, last but not least, the contribution to the internet connection and the necessary technical security for teachers in the case of home-office.

**RQ2: What digital didactic aids would teachers of the subject civics in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic welcome for distance learning?**

**Question No. 9: What didactic aids did you use to teach the subject of civics during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Teachers used presentations, videos, and images to teach online civics. The teacher, Diana Ferencz from the Gymnasium of A. Einstein from Bratislava, taught through MS Teams, using the recommended pages of the Ministry of Education of Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic such as edupage, Zmúdri, as well as methodological letters of the Methodological Pedagogical Centre or the website of the National Bank of Slovakia in teaching economics issues. Mgr. Monika Pilková from the Piarist Gymnasium of Jozef Branecký in Trenčín for students during COVID created various tests that can be filled out online because not every student has textbooks in them. At school, it is common for pairs of students to use one textbook. So if she wanted them to receive the same amount of information in some appropriate form, she had to process her notes and aids herself. She then sent them to students this way, which took up a lot of time to give the students the curriculum. Beáta Pjonteková from the Gymnasium in Špišská Nová Ves used several videos during her online teaching; for example, she let the comments of economists on the impact of inflation on the running of the economy in the state, which she and the students discussed afterward.

Part of the teachers produced their didactic aids. "When we are in classic attendance mode, I use an interactive whiteboard. The truth is, however, that there is not much to the subject of Civic Doctrine in those textbooks. That's why I teach more or less in my own right as before. During distance teaching, I was so based on what I had before. In addition to various presentations, didactic games, and all sorts of activities, I also used videos, and at



the same time, I gave students various practical tasks. In our school, the subject Civics is taught once a week. So you're not going to do any great miracles, but I'm trying to make that class as interesting as possible for the students. Therefore, we do not even write notes. Rather, I focus on the practicalities and personal creativity of students. As part of distance teaching, I mostly assigned them various tasks via email, and during the lessons, they are tasked with fulfilling and discussing them", said PaedDr. Emília Černeková from the Business Academy Dušan Methodius Janota in Čadca.

**Question No. 10: Have you used classic didactic aids in online or offline teaching, or have you had the opportunity to use digital didactic aids?**

The teacher Mgr. Dominik Ilaš from the Gymnasium of P. O. Hviezdoslav in Kežmarok used PowerPoint presentations, electronic documents, philosophical texts in electronic form, or worksheets from economics during online teaching. The teacher PaedDr. Emília Černeková from the Business academy of Dušan Methodius Janota in Čadca combined the interpretation from the classic textbook by the author Štefan Bojnák with materials, which she found on her own on the Internet and subsequently processed. The teacher Mgr. Lenka Krištofiková from the Gymnasium of Ladislav Novomeský in Senica also used the same didactic tools in online teaching as in offline teaching. She couldn't use physical interpretation dictionaries or dictionaries of foreign words, which they replaced with shared Youtube videos.

**Question No. 11: Has the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic or any other competent state institution helped you in any way with the provision of online teaching? Or have you searched for digital didactic aids for online learning in a self-help way?**

Several teachers agree that the competent authorities' teaching initially did not help ensure online teaching. They appreciate that the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic later made classic textbooks online. Teacher Mgr. Martin Huba from the Business Academy in Topoľčany sought to use all the resources available on the pages covered by the field of education and also desired to educate himself in the development of digital technologies. The teacher Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the gymnasium of Andrej Vrábel in Levice sought didactic aids on her own, complaining about the problem of accessing online textbooks, which was complex through various logins in the form of passwords and codes. The teacher Mgr. Monika Pilková from the Piarist Gymnasium of Jozef Branecký in Trenčín did all the materials according to herself because she did not find a single source or anything like that would personally help her in teaching the subject Civics in distance form.

**Question No. 12: Would you like to see a more excellent selection of didactic aids in teaching the personal curriculum of the subject of civics in the future?**

All teachers would welcome a more excellent selection of didactic aids. "It would make our lives easier. Over and over again, you have to invent something new and new individually for those students. A possible choice would bring new wind and direction to all this. How often do the students bring some good idea, a good article, or good information, and then we teachers deal with it? But I would certainly accept something like uniform didactic aids for all teachers of the subject Civics", said teacher Beáta Pjonteková from the Gymnasium in Spišská Nová Ves. According to the lecturer JUDr. Petr Valný from the Business Academy in Rožňava, the emphasis should be placed above all on visual aids, which have the most significant impact on students' attention, focus, and interest. As Stated by Mgr. Monika Pilková from the Piarist Gymnasium of Jozef Branecký in Trenčín, teachers, would undoubtedly be significantly helped by a uniform selection of up to three approved textbooks because today they have to search for everything on the Internet for themselves. Worse still, the information available today varies in everything. "In several textbooks for Civics, whether for an eight-year grammar school or the third year, there is a lack of methodology. As textbooks, they are excellently done. They're nice. But sometimes, there's a task or a discussion that I don't know exactly if I'm thinking right. And then I can't tell if they even exist for those textbooks. I am therefore of the opinion that this methodology should come along with those textbooks.", adds the instructor Mgr. Lenka Krištofiková from the Gymnasium of Ladislav Novomeský in Senica.

**Question No. 13: What are adequate digital didactic aids that would be useful to the educator and of interest to the student? (e.g., electronic textbooks, video lectures, etc.)**

Teacher PaedDr. Marianna Kamenská from the Business Academy in Sered' agrees with the electronic library and video lectures, but mainly with interactive didactic aids. "Specify digital textbooks where you can work seamlessly. I at least see that it is exciting for students to use different applications to which they can connect via their mobile phones. I, as a teacher, will give them, for example, various tasks or a test, which they then do on their mobile phone. I know from experience that this is a complete top for them. And as for other digital didactic aids, digital textbooks, videos, video lectures, etc., are also very adequate.", said lecturer Mgr. Monika Pilková from the Piaristic Gymnasium of Jozef Branecký in Trenčín. Teacher Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the Gymnasium Andrej Vrábel in Levice would welcome an interactive electronic textbook, online worksheets, practical tasks on given topics, educational videos, games, quizzes, and other activities produced in various applications (learning apps, word wall...). "I like videos on YouTube. Some, for example, are in English or German. Even though our students learn both foreign languages, not everyone is so adept at them that they understand the videos as they would like. That's why, in my opinion, those videos that are animated or interesting in some other way and are also contained in less formal language are much more interesting. In them, the whole curriculum could be summed up in seven or eight minutes. I think that is what they would be more interested in. Because, for example, when I play a five-minute video on their philosophy, it's animated, but it's in English. I'll honestly tell you they enjoy it. It's handy and fun for them. I would personally be heading in that direction. Those classic lectures are so stereotypical for them. An electronic textbook has also helped so that they do not have to take the classic textbook home, but they can get a better look at it is fine. But I would rather go into something so dynamic and interesting.", said teacher Mgr. Lenka Krištofiková from the Gymnasium of Ladislav Novomeský in Senica. The teacher JUDr. Petr Valný from the Business Academy in Rožňava thinks that not everything will solve digital aids because an electronic textbook, to a limited extent, like a video lecturer, can improve the teaching process but not replace it.

**Question No. 14: Do you think that, for example, a digital didactic textbook and other digital didactic aids could also help in the framework of self-study attendance teaching?**

Teachers differ in their views on whether a digital didactic textbook could help with full-time teaching within self-study—teacher Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the Gymnasium Andrej Vrábel in Levice is convinced that the electronic textbook should be used well, especially in these uncertain times during the pandemic, when the form of education changes from day to day. It is often the case that students keep the textbook at school and then do not have it available during distance learning. If an electronic textbook is available, you don't have to deal with whether you have a textbook at home or school. According to the teacher Mgr. Monika Pilková from the Piarist Gymnasium Jozef Branecký in Trenčín, such a digital didactic textbook could help because they have many students using self-study at the grammar school. Such students are present in the classroom, they will listen to it, but at the same time, they need to supplement themselves with additional information. The opposite view is the teacher Mgr. Lucia Szentesi from the Private Business academy in Prešov would welcome methodological material for the teacher to elaborate on the state educational program – i.e., according to particular standards/themes – before the electronic textbook. "I don't like textbooks; the world is changing, especially Civics is full of change; if we want to be up to date, the textbook would have to be very general, and it would again be up to the teacher to update that information. It would be great if there were a database of such methodologies for each lesson/topic and if it were still adapted to both attendance and distance form (e.g., as two versions of the work – similarly they do in Zmudri)." Teacher Mgr. Erik Chalupský from the Gymnasium in Detva thinks that no child who goes home by bus from school or lies at home on the couch will open a digital textbook. What might open up would be a didactic game or app.

**Question No. 15: Where do you see space for distance form in teaching civic education, and where, on the contrary, do you think online teaching is not suitable?**

Teachers differ on the future of distance learning in civic education teaching, according to JUDr. Petr Valný of the Business Academy in Rožňava, the distance form in teaching civics can be applied when passing on information, either in the form of enlightening videos or PowerPoint presentations or in the form of assignment of a task and finding a solution on the Internet or in literature. "Their graphic design, musical background, or method of administration play a major role in visual aids. (Let me draw attention to the video series History otherwise on the Youtube channel. They feature a young, beautiful, cultivated, and erudite history and civics teacher, photographically accurate with a pleasant voice and a perfect way of speaking – in short, a delight for everyone who watches this channel). However, the subsequent discussion of the video would require an attendance form in which it is essential not only to hear the opinions of students at the verbal level but also to perceive their emotions, face mimic, gestures, and that distance form, even with the camera on, can never be replaced." Teacher Mgr. Ľuboslava Hrešková from the Gymnasium Andrej Vrábel in Levice thinks that online teaching is suitable for the whole subject of civics. At the same time, she adds that online teaching is a good alternative, but it does not adequately replace the full-time form of teaching. The teacher Mgr. Dominik Ilaš from the Gymnasium of P. O. Hviezdoslav in Kežmarok was suited for distance teaching in thematic units such as psychology, sociology, and law. In the case of thematic units of political science, economics makes more use of the board to conceptual maps and needs immediate interaction with pupils and better feedback. The teacher Mgr. Darina Chobotová from the Business Academy in Bratislava on Nevädzová Street can imagine that a theory could be sent to pupils. Still, it has proved to present practical examples on every topic/phenomenon, with pupils showing their own opinions and attitudes, having to argue and have a discussion—teacher Mgr. Lucia Szentesi from the Private Business academy in Prešov found it challenging to learn civics because she lacked the contact and forum needed in this subject. "I see the great advantage of distance learning or this form is discussions with experts. We are based in the east; it is understandable that only at any time an expert who works in Bratislava comes to us. Through distance education, we succeeded, and we discussed with Mr. Šnidl about hoaxes, with UNICEF about child soldiers, and with Zmudri. I can also imagine applying this to attendance education and inviting guests to an online meeting while the class will be looking at the whiteboard and discussing with the guest remotely." Mgr. Diana Ferenczy from Gymnasium of Albert Einstein in Bratislava believes that distance teaching is unsuitable for group work of pupils when working in pairs and is less effective even if it wants to have dialogues with pupils. In addition to naturally active pupils, during online teaching, other pupils are heard only for direct calls by the teacher; there is no visual contact, and the current control of pupils' work in the classroom, according to Mgr. Erik Chalupský from the Gymnasium in Detva, a distance form of teaching is not suitable for any subject because the pupil does not go to school only to be educated. At school, he gets to know friends, communicates, lives socially, and argues with classmates, which helps shape his personality.

**Conclusion**

Qualitative research mapped the state of teaching civic education in secondary schools in the education system in the Slovak Republic during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, resulting in the following most important results:

- From the interviews conducted with secondary school teachers, it appears that the distance teaching of teachers surprised them. The fact that Slovak education at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic was not sufficiently prepared for online teaching is also evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of teachers at the beginning of distance teaching used the classic form of offline teaching before moving fully to online teaching, or using a combination of both.
- Most of the teachers surveyed complained not only about unsatisfactory technical equipment but also about insufficient digital skills. On the other hand, the rest of the teachers praised the technical equipment, which means that secondary schools are still differently technically equipped.

- Several teachers agree that the competent authorities of the instructors did not initially help with the provision of online teaching. Teachers at the beginning of distance learning used various digital didactic aids in teaching the subject of civic education. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Research of the Slovak Republic made classical textbooks in the online form available to teachers later, resulting in several managerial failures.
- Teachers would welcome a more excellent selection of didactic aids in teaching individual curriculums on the subject of civic education.
- Teachers differ in their views on the future of the distance form of education in teaching civic education without being made clear either whether a digital didactic textbook and other digital didactic aids could also help in the framework of full-time teaching within self-study.

Based on the results presented above and clarified, the authors formulated several recommendations that could be a basis for managing authorities and inspiration for school facility managers in the Slovak Republic:

- Distance education and subsequent online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted regional differences in digitization in Slovak education, implying the need to continue the concept of informatization and digitization of education in the Slovak Republic. Teachers and schools need to be equipped with digital technologies, whether software or hardware.
- It is necessary to streamline the management of regional education so that managing authorities can respond more promptly and effectively in crisis management.
- There is space for complementing teachers' digital skills in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic in the form of further education.
- Based on interviews with teachers, the authors see space for creating digital didactic aids for teaching distance learning in secondary schools in the Slovak Republic.

The authors are aware that this topic is still not researched but are convinced that the study's results have broadened the knowledge to date and will contribute to the improvement of online teaching in distance learning in the future. The main limitation of this study is the geographical area limited to the Slovak Republic, where the research was carried out. The authors, therefore, plan to extend the analysis to the other Member States of the European Union in the future for the possibility of further comparison. The authors believe that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were so severe for education that this issue needs to be addressed more intensively.

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