

Equal opportunities for all students

Karmen Javornik, Marija Kavkler, Milena Košak Babuder

Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

The transition to distance education was initially an interesting innovation for primary and secondary school students, but as school closures continued, they experienced increasing hardships that may have long-term consequences. Among the most vulnerable groups are students with special needs, most of whom have severe specific learning difficulties (SpLD). Their suffering was compounded by problems in learning, accessibility and quality of information and communication technology (ICT), and socio-emotional issues. To reduce the impact of distance education on all students, especially those with SpLD, the teacher contributes by considering the student's voice, communicating regularly with students, adapting instruction, removing barriers, teaching cooperatively, paying attention to a culture of belonging and well-being, and working with parents and external institutions to organize comprehensive treatment for all. To ensure equal opportunities, it is necessary to change the way of teaching, which is achieved by training teachers to implement inclusive education.

In this paper, we present the results of a study in which we investigated how distance education affects the learning of Slovenian students with SpLD in primary and secondary school (N = 60) and its impact on the occurrence of emotional and socioeconomic distress. The results showed that secondary school students had statistically significant more difficulties in transitioning to learning, had more problems with organizing learning, and received less additional professional support than primary school students. They had difficulties mainly because they did not know how to solve tasks and spent a lot of time on social networks. In contrast, primary school students were statistically significantly more likely to need parental help and also received it to a greater extent than secondary school students. With the research results, we would like to draw attention to the important role of the teacher in reducing consequences.

Keywords: distance education, specific learning difficulties, inclusive education.