
Remote Education and the Development of Selected Social Competencies in Future Manager

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim was to indicate how distance learning affects the development of social competencies important for managers. We present the results of research, which refer to communication and self-presentation.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The technique of non-standardised written statements was used to analyse the statements of 200 management students.

Findings: Remote learning at faculties that are intrinsically related to working with other people, such as management, seemed to present a big risk for the development of social competencies in students. However, the analyses herein described show that the situation is not so unambiguous. Even if students notice problems with developing certain dimensions of their competencies in this area, they are still capable of detecting some other elements that actually benefit from this form of education. They point out as well that 'in a post-covid era' social competencies required from managers will differ from before, accounting for factors such as remote work.

Practical Implications: The analysis of young people's opinions made it possible to formulate recommendations how institutions and educators can develop social competences during remote learning (so that managers can better perform in their future careers). We are talking here about introductory activities, initiating group processes in a team working online, or constant activation of participants by the leaders. On the institutional side, this, in turn, requires reforming the approach to remote classes, considering their social specificity and special requirements and adapting educational programs to them.

Originality/value: The article presents the original results of qualitative research relating to the possibility of remotely developing social competencies of the future manager

Keywords: Social competencies, manager competencies, communication, self-presentation, remote education, social skills training, telework.

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1. Introduction

Even before the pandemic of COVID-19, which forced us to move to various modalities of remote work at a global level, there were voices claiming that the future of professional life (and education indirectly) was going to evolve towards remote work, which constituted a specific ‘megatrend’ (Bentley, Teo, Mcleod, Tan, Bosua, and Gloet, 2016; Contreras, Baykal, and Abid, 2020; He *et al.*, 2020; Tietze and Musson, 2005; Khan *et al.*, 2020; Grima *et al.*, 2020).

It seems that remote work is going to become a ‘new normality’ and people, teams and organizations are going to be defined quantitatively, to be modelled and shaped in a so far unknown manner (Leonardi, 2021).

Changes in education have reached even deeper – since for the first time whole populations of students were forced to study exclusively online (Zimmenrann, 2020). It also applies to the education of adults, to all forms of continuing or complimentary education etc. Undoubtedly, it is an unprecedented situation.

Nevertheless, we should be aware that the models of ‘emergency education’ currently implemented are at the same time perceived as prototypes for educational systems to be replicated in the future (Williamson, Eynon, and Potter, 2020).

Therefore, in the current, dynamic situation, one has to reflect on how the remote work (or education) influences on the functioning of individuals and the development of their competencies.

Among the most crucial ones, we should consider social competencies, which determine how an individual functions in life (Argyle, 1999; Goleman, 2007). They are often perceived as dispositions that condition one’s success in interpersonal relationships, enabling a person to engage in social behaviours and to create lasting relations with others (Schneider, Ackerman, and Knafer, 1996). Social competences include processes involving various human behaviours.

Among the most frequently mentioned in the literature we can find: assertiveness, cooperation and the ability to cooperate, proper use of openness, rewarding and strengthening, communication skills, non-verbal and verbal communication (the ability to listen, start, conduct and end a conversation, ask questions, express requests, collect information, providing feedback, giving orders, conducting discussions, negotiating and persuading others), ability to deal with conflict situations and conflict resolution, empathy, self-presentation and shaping one's own image, etc., (Bandach, 2013).

This raises a question about – how those crucial (from the point of view of managers’ effectiveness) social competencies get developed and where lie the risks?

2. Literature Review: Remote Work and Selected Social Competencies

Teleworking or remote work are broad terms that cover paid work performed remotely anywhere else, as opposed to work where the physical presence of an employee in the organization is required. Employees therefore achieve organizational goals using information and communication technologies, while managing their own time, with limited supervision by a manager (Wojcak, Bajzikova, Sajgalikova, and Polakova, 2016).

It should be noted that terms describing various work modes (remote work, teleworking, working from home), by principle, are not synonymous. However, for the sake of this review and considering the variety of terms used in the literature, we assume that their meanings are closely related; differences in definitions of the respective work modes are not subject of our discussion. Even over the years that preceded the pandemic, there were several meta-analyses carried out related to potential benefits and shortcomings of elastic work modes.

Ravi Gajendran and David Harrison (2007) analysed research conducted among the total of almost 13 000 employees and came to a conclusion that teleworking was correlated with higher level of work satisfaction, increased effectiveness and sense of autonomy and that it represented an opportunity to diminish work-family conflict. An increase of efficiency related to teleworking was also demonstrated in meta-analyses carried out by Martin Harker and Rhiannon MacDonnell (2012).

On the other hand, working ‘from home’ creates a specific culture of being ‘always connected’, which can be a burden for employees that are constantly forced to ponder (or physically resolve) work-related problems online. Negative impact of teleworking is visible in empirical research (Mahler, 2012; Sardeshmukh, Sharma, and Golden, 2012; Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012).

Arguments that are brought up include social isolation and the resulting anxiety experienced by the employees (Golden, Veiga, and Dino, 2008; Lund Dean, 2023, Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020), dissatisfaction and resistance towards this work mode, especially if the proportion of teleworking exceeds two or three days a week (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

Moreover, work performed at home, especially in exceptional circumstances imposed by the pandemic, triggered additional stress due to an increased work-family life overload, which affected particularly women (Razmerita, Peroznejad, and Pantelli, 2021; Villamor, Hill, Kossek, and Foley, 2023).

The situation is similar when it comes to education. Research suggests that remote teaching can be as effective as traditional ‘in class’ education (Cavanaugh, 2001; Cavanaugh, Gillan, Kromrey, Hess, and Blomeyer, 2004; Johnson, Aragon, and Shaik, 2000). On the other hand, analyses of current situation demonstrate that the

effectiveness of learning remotely depends on many factors, such as access to materials and technological resources, well-prepared programmes and teaching strategies, as well as the social capital of the student (Domina, Renzulli, Murray, Garz, and Perez, 2021).

There is empirical evidence that one of the important determinants of effective learning in a remote situation is the ability of self-regulation on the student's side and the provision of appropriate feedback on the other side (Ritz, Rietsche, and Leimeister, 2023; Zheng, Luo, and Liu, 2023). Other researches highlight the key role of socio-emotional support (Shin and Hickey, 2021).

Therefore, international initiatives are emerging to implement innovative solutions in online education and work both now and in the future (Coalition for Global Education, announced by UNESCO, in partnership with Google, Microsoft, Facebook and Zoom, OECD and the World Bank, which are now consistent with the shared mission of expanding online education around the world). These international policy-makers now enable, for example, private educational platform providers to extend their reach to previously unattainable territories and spaces (Williamson *et al.*, 2020).

In this context, the question is – how about the social competencies that represent around 70% of the competencies necessary to carry out above-average work (i.e. persons occupying higher positions, managers, directors, company's representatives)? The proportion being mainly due to the need of networking, that is the skill of acquiring and maintaining business and professional contacts, building trust and credibility (personal and as a representative of the organization) or team work (Stump, Ratliff, Wu, and Hawley, 2009; Zsolnai, 2015).

Due to the fact that a typical manager spends an average of 80% of his working time communicating with colleagues, clients and contractors, an appropriate level of social skills is necessary to achieve basic business goals (Adler, Rosenfeld, and Proctor, 2018; Smolka, 2008). Social competencies, which fundamentally consist in making and maintaining interactions with a satisfactory result (for an individual) (Argyle, 1998; Boyatzis, 1982; Riggio, 1986), can be trained and reinforced also during on-line contacts, however this presents a challenge.

Analysis of recent empirical studies conducted among different circles of pupils and students allows to distinguish both positive and negative aspects of remote education, as indicated by the participants, which relate to the development of their social competencies and work effectiveness.

Benefits mentioned by the subjects included among others: the development of new systems of learning online 'face to face' – rapid development of technologies for remote work/education, new opportunities for specialists and students with different psychophysical deficiencies, who, thanks to remote education and remote work

modes, get the chance not to be excluded from the job market. It was also noticed that limiting physical contacts allows people to understand and re-evaluate the importance of interpersonal relationships, strengthen and select valuable relationships.

When it comes to disadvantages and risks, it was pointed out that opportunities to meet other people were limited and therefore: social competencies could not be trained, there was no opportunity to ‘learn from each other’ by way of direct interaction and discussion/observation (in the office, firm or classroom), people lost contact with each other and experienced negative emotions – like rage and fear – related to being ‘confined’ as well as a sense of distrust towards others, people with deficits in technological competencies or in a process of getting assimilated were at risk of exclusion etc.

Among the respondents, there were also growing concerns about time management competences and their own work (there were growing concerns whether it would be possible to meet deadlines, get positive evaluations, obtain the necessary information on time). Therefore, students indicate the need for direct contact with other students and lecturers, noting that as a result of education (mostly remote), it is difficult for them to be systematic in their learning.

It has also been noticed that in the case of remote work, digital skills deficits in interaction partners block the possibility of cooperation, learning and maintaining relationships (Branquinho, Kelly, Arevalo, Santos, and Gaspar de Matos, 2020; Das, Tang, Ringland, and Piper, 2021; de Jonge, Kloppenburg, and Hendriks, 2020; Dubey and Tripathi, 2020; Fraillon, 2020; Franczyk and Rajchel, 2021; Karasmanaki and Tsantopoulos, 2021; Primdahl, Borsch, Verelst, Jervelund, Derluyn, and Skovdal, 2021; Revilla-Cuesta, Skaf, Varona, and Ortega-Lopez, 2021; Razmerita *et al.*, 2021; Williamson *et al.*, 2020).

Future specialists have also noticed that the new times require learning the so-called e-leadership (Contreras *et al.*, 2020) or distributed leadership (Harris and Jones, 2020) - understood as competences necessary in the current crisis and probably in the future in order to effectively operate and manage the network virtual employees.

3. The Aim, Research Questions and Methodology

Conducted research aimed at determining in what way remote education affects the development of social competencies that are important in managers’ work. The present review describes research results focused on only two such competencies, which are closely interrelated: communication and self-presentation. Taking into account the objective that we set, our study group comprised subjects who studied management and experienced remote learning.

Research question was as follows: What is the influence of remote teaching on the development of earlier described competencies, according to future managers?

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions:

Which social competencies (e.g., effective verbal and nonverbal communication, good self-presentation) that are important for future managers are better developed thanks to remote education than in a traditional setting?

- (1) Which social competencies that are important for future managers (as above) are not developed or are developed to a lesser extent in remote education than in a traditional setting?

We conducted the research with the use of non-standardized written expression technique – based on indirect communication and analysis of thus obtained material (Beatty, 1995; Lutynski, 1994). By principle, analysis of content gathered this way allows to recognize author's (subject's) features and characteristics – in this specific case, respondents' opinions on social competencies that are considered important for managers and the development of such competencies during remote education.

In order to dissipate any uncertainty related to how the respondents might have interpreted the term 'social competencies' used in the questions, we decided to provide some examples. In order to do so, we referred to Michael Argyle's classification, which is one of the best known models describing the structure of social competences (2002).

Argyle presents social competence as a set of diverse skills designed to enhance social interactions. His classification of social competences includes (Argyle, 2002: 136-139): rewarding (using an extensive range of rewards in order to make interpersonal relations more attractive), empathy (the ability to perceive someone's point of view and share and take into account someone else's feelings), social intelligence and problem solving (meaning knowledge about the rules of social life and improving interpersonal contacts), assertiveness (ability to exert the desired influence without aggression and harm to a given social interaction), verbal and non-verbal communication and self-presentation (behavior aimed at making a specific impression).

In this study, first of all, the last two categories of competences indicated by Argyle were taken into account. The fact that the situation of work/distance learning affects the communication process is unquestionable (Viererbl, Denner, and Koch, 2022; Wang, Liu, Qian, and Parker, 2021) and it can be assumed that the participants of the research already had both: experiences and thoughts developed on their basis in this area. When it comes to self-presentation, it seems that work or remote learning is a real challenge here (Danielewicz-Betz, 2021; Taber, Dominguez, and Whittaker, 2021) and require special effort to adapt their activities to new conditions.

We were aware that applying this solution might result in subjects restricting their statements exclusively to the provided categories. Despite that, inaccurate interpretation of this term appeared as a greater limitation for the research.

Analysis of statements submitted by the respondents proved that the fear that the examples might narrow respondents' perspective and exclude other possible answers was unnecessary (the respondents used those categories more frequently indeed, but many other sub-categories of the 'communication' skill were also provided out of their own initiative).

We carried out the study on a platform for remote teaching (Moodle, in April 2021). The respondents had 3 weeks to fill in the questionnaire, so everyone could provide answers in the most suitable time and after having duly reflected on the subject. We instructed the respondents that participation in the study is voluntary. The data was stored, coded and further analysed in compliance with the rules. We performed analysis of collected data with the use NVivo Pro ver.11.

The process of coding and analysing statements provided by the respondents consisted of several stages. Initially, we used the names of competencies as provided by the respondents, without creating group categories. Later, they were organized into groups and aggregated into categories coherent in meaning.

3.1 Participants

We analysed written statements provided by 200 respondents (130 women and 70 men) – second semester students of licence studies in the field of management. The pool comprised both full-time (166 subjects, 83%) and part-time (34 subjects, 17%) students.

It is worthwhile noting that the majority of respondents who answered the questions related to professional experience (68,6%) already had such experience. In the group of part-time students, only one person declared not having any professional experience. In the whole pool of subjects, 66% of women and 72,9% of men declared having professional experience.

4. Results

Searching for an answer to the research question posed, a general analysis of two indicated competences was made. First one – 'self-presentation' was rather a uniform construct in the statements of the respondents. Second one – 'Communication' wasn't so homogeneous. In this case, in order to be able to reliably assess the importance of this form of learning for the respondents, the focus was on the distinguished subcategories. Operating only on a general level would be insufficient - for example, competences from the Communication group were indicated as often as developed and undeveloped.

The analysis of the subcategories revealed some trends in this case. However, it should be emphasized that the respondents are not always in agreement with each other. While the majority said that a specific competence was not developing, some were of the opposite opinion. In order to understand this apparent dissonance, it is necessary to know the justifications they present. For this purpose, selected statements of respondents concerning the most frequently indicated subcategories of competences will be presented.

Tables 1 and 2 present numbers related to the described competencies, including several sub-categories of the ‘communication’ competency, which our respondents pointed out as better developed thanks to remote learning or not possible to be developed properly in the context of remote teaching.

Table 1. *Communication and self-presentation as social competencies developed during remote learning*

Category of competency	Sub-category	Number of responses	Total number of responses within given category
Communication	Verbal communication	75	136
	Nonverbal communication	25	
	Remote communication	12	
	Public communication	7	
	Other forms of communicating	17	
Self-presentation	-	51	51

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 2. *Communication and self-presentation as social competencies under-developed during remote learning*

Category of competency	Sub-category	Number of responses	Total number of responses within given category
Communication	Verbal communication	72	151
	Nonverbal communication	35	
	Communication in direct contact	13	
	Public communication	9	
	Communication in group	4	
	Other forms of communicating	18	
Self-presentation	-	58	58

Source: Authors' calculations.

When we compare the above figures, there are some differences that come out, such as distinguishing certain subcategories in only one of them and not in the other, i.e. *Remote communication* or *Communication in direct contact*. Despite apparent recurrence of the remaining competencies in both tabulations, if we analyse the reasoning behind including them in the respective sections, we can see that the respondents relate in fact to different points of view. In their answers, they focus on different aspects of the same situation.

In the analysis of communication competencies (highest number of responses throughout the study), two elements come to the foreground as most stressed by the respondents: development of verbal communication and non-development of nonverbal communication. Subjects who claimed that verbal communication had an opportunity to get developed thanks to remote teaching motivated their opinion mainly by the fact the nonverbal communication was considerably limited and, as a result, the verbal one had to become more precise. This is reflected in the below statements:

“Verbal communication is developed because often we have no possibility to see our interlocutor, we cannot see their body language and the only thing that remains is speaking and active listening” (W, 115);

“Limited possibility to transmit nonverbal messages contributed to the fact that we chose words more carefully, so as to better express what we want to communicate”. (W, 134).

In addition, subjects pointed out at a particularly strong development of written communication – stressing that ‘face to face’ contact got replaced with frequent e-mailing, which helped to train the competence of formal correspondence:

“Due to the current situation, we have to write more inquiries to different people” (W, 178); *“E-mails and messaging systems are used significantly more often. This contributes to developing the ability of writing formal letters, according to their specificity and the person to whom they are addressed”* (W, 66).

Verbal communication was also mentioned as one of the under-developed competencies for reason of students being less active, as indicated by the respondents: *“Students speak out and express their opinion much more rarely”* (M, 27), or a very concise style of correspondence and a lack of more extended exchanges: *“What is the most important is the flow of data and the conciseness of information. There is no time for long-winded messages aimed at communicating thorough information”* (M, 49).

Reverse proportion of comments for and against the developing influence of remote education could be observed in the case of nonverbal communication. Huge majority of the respondents consider this situation as unfavourable for its development.

Subjects emphasize that occasions to actively use this means of communication are few:

“Nonverbal communication, that is communication based on facial expression and gestures, is restricted only to giving speech in front of the internet camera, which anyway is rare” (M, 80); “The ability of nonverbal communication is developed to a much lesser extent due to the fact that we do not see the body language of other people, often we do not even see their faces” (M, 41).

Even if it might seem that the development of nonverbal communication in this situation cannot take place, some respondents still pointed out at this competency as actually getting developed. Possibly, it is the difficulties related to expressing nonverbal messages, for example during online presentation, when sitting in front of a computer camera, that force us to put more work and effort into this aspect and thanks to these demanding circumstances we would be improving the skill.

Analysis of discrepancies related to those different kinds of communication that either get or do not get developed leads us the so called *remote communication* and *communication in direct contact*. Respondents emphasized that remote teaching was beneficial for mastering communication through the Internet, skill nowadays required by employers. In this respect, they referred to abilities such as participation in online meetings and content presentation on various platforms:

“For future managers, remote learning may yield a positive effect at work, if they are required to give presentations e.g. through the Internet. Such a presentation would be conducted with a better effect by someone who has already gained some experience in this area” (W, 71).

Among the subjects who appreciated the potential of remote work for the development of communication, there were also views that this very important for a manager face to face communication cannot be trained: *“inability of direct dialogue with another person. There is a significant difference between a discussion held ‘in front of a computer screen’ and a ‘face to face’ conversation (W, 43)”*.

As for ‘*Public communication*’ sub-category, it seems that in the study group, we can find subjects who are convinced that this form of communication gets developed (thanks to the opportunity to practice in more comfortable circumstances, with less stress because there is no public - effect of social facilitation), as well as subjects who have an opposite opinion and emphasize that even if students have the opportunity to present the results of their work, they still would not acquire the skill of presenting in front of a ‘real’ public.

By analyzing the statements about the second of the competences discussed - self-presentation, it can be noticed that there is five reasons why e-learning can support

its development. Firstly, respondents argued that its development is first of all related to the fact that there might be all sorts of technical problems:

“I learned the so-called practical presentation, that is, I know more or less at what point my presentation (due to technical reasons) will jam or not load something and how to react to it. When to extend a speech to bridge the gap between one slide and the next” (M, 109).

Secondly, that self-presenting online is a particular skill, distinct from the offline one, and as such requires the focus to be placed on different aspects:

“Due to the fact that most of our conversations are held online, we have to master some new rules of verbal and nonverbal communication, such as: adequate dress code, hair or background that we are presenting at. We pay more attention to what we say, to our accent and the tone of voice, elements that we can use in order to win many people over. Presenting ourselves in front of a camera is something new, something that we can explore and “absorb” thanks to remote education” (W, 12);

“When, for example, presenting something in front of the camera - not only do we have to pay attention to how we look, talk or gesticulate (although this part is difficult at the moment), but we also have to pay attention and remember about other important things - we also have to make the surroundings what others see on the camera was friendly to them in the reception (so that, for example, there is no mess). You should also make sure that you can be heard or seen well” (M, 141).

Thirdly, according to some, another circumstance contributing to the development of self-presentation skills would be related to more frequent 1 to 1 conversations with teachers (students need to seek information directly from the teacher to a bigger extent and they derive less from the knowledge of their group members):

“In the era of remote learning, future managers develop their skills of self-presentation much more through multiple one to one conversations with teachers, they have a better chance of becoming more confident and more open to other people” (M, 64).

Fourthly, there seems to be another important argument that remote work is indeed favourable for developing self-presentation skills, i.e. that it is ‘easier’ to present and to speak out online, because there is no “real” public. Thus, a person for whom it would be stressful to give such a presentation is in a better position, can ‘practice’ self-presentation in a less demanding setting:

“I have also learned to present myself more often and with more confidence – during remote classes, we feel more distant from other participants, which gives a sense of bigger freedom when expressing ourselves “ (W, 90).

Fifthly, some respondents see a challenge in online self-presentation, which causes them to try harder, and thus they better master certain skills:

“During remote learning, it is more difficult to make a good impression, thus we are learning to be better at it” (W, 146); “since presenting yourself and communicating remotely is more difficult than stationary, it is kind of a challenge” (W, 3).

Despite certain benefits of remote teaching for the development of self-presentation skills, the respondents indicated that their current presentations were to a big extent devoid of nonverbal communication, which they considered to be an important component of the discussed competence (which corresponds to previous statements, which indicate that, according to the respondents, it is neo-verbal communication that is developed relatively poorly during online classes):

“a verbal level, it also includes your posture, body language, or even clothing. When we sit in front of a computer, it is difficult to learn correctly how to self-present” (W, 115).

“It may be hampered by preventing non-verbal contact. During the self-presentation, the appearance or eye contact with the audience is also very important” (M, 138).

Another impediment pointed out by the respondents related to the impossibility of observing other people’s reactions to one’s speech, presentation, etc:

“In traditional learning, presentation setting enables us to see how we are presenting as a whole person, including gestures that we are using as we speak, whether we keep the focus and what draws recipients’ attention” (M, 65).

The development of this particular competency is also affected by the conditions in which such public presentations take place, which are excessively comfortable (lack of stress):

“When there is public in front of us, we are learning to deal with pressure and stress, whereas at home we do not experience that to the same extent as live” (W, 127); “no possibility to fully present yourself in the small camera window, lack of bigger audience in front of which one could give a speech, lack of focus and sense of gravity of the whole situation, since home is a safe haven, not a challenge” (W, 57); “In addition, she is practiced all the time in the same home conditions, so it does not require greater commitment and learning to adapt to the situation” (K, 115).

On top of this, students tend to be unwilling to speak out or even to switch on their camera during class:

“Good self-presentation also doesn’t get developed during remote learning, sometimes students are more often to blame for that than the teachers. Many

students are unwilling to switch on their camera during class and thus they deprive themselves of the possibility to practice self-presentation. Same when nobody from a given group volunteers to discuss work progress or give the final presentation. I also think that there is less projects to be presented during class and that occasions to practice giving speech in front of the group are few” (W, 93).

5. Discussion

Remote learning at faculties that are intrinsically related to working with other people, such as management, seemed to present a big risk for the development of social competencies in students. However, the analyses herein described show that the situation is not so unambiguous.

Even if students notice problems with developing certain dimensions of their competencies in this area, they are still capable of detecting some other elements that actually benefit from this form of education. They point out as well that ‘in a post-covid era’ social competencies required from managers will differ from before, accounting for factors such as remote work; this is in line with the studies discussed earlier (Contreras et al., 2020; Harris and Jones, 2020).

Nonverbal communication and traditional self-presentation (in direct contact with other people) were estimated to have suffered the most from this form of education. There is however a meaningful element to that – most common reasons why these competencies do not get developed. It seems that the fundamental problem is related to the way such classes are organized.

On the basis of the conducted research, it can be argued that the method of conducting classes does not support the social presence of learners, and thus hinders the acquisition of social competences, such as interpersonal communication or self-presentation. Social presence is related, among others, with self-projection into a group and is associated with the possibility of two-way communication, but also psychological involvement (Kehrwald, 2010a).

This type of presence is indicated as ‘an essential element of online learning’ (Kehrwald 2010a: 39). So it is obvious that in the case of developing strictly social competences during distance learning, it is even more necessary.

The basic problem in this area is the failure to ensure that social bonds are established in the groups, that the students know and like each other. Although the respondents did not explicitly raise the problem of the introductory activities (as a result of which members of the group get to know each other), it can be assumed that they are not given much attention (respondents do not know their colleagues from the group, often do not even know what they look like). Kehrwald (2010b) indicates that these types of activities are the first step to building social presence.

In turn, directly on the basis of the analysis of the respondents' statements, it is possible to point out specific erroneous actions related to building the social presence of students. The impediments would include, among other things, the unwillingness to use cameras, few group projects, relying on individual assignments, 'acceptance' that students are not active during online classes or non-respect of proper standards of speaking during remote communication. As we see, these are not problems that cannot be solved.

It also needs to be emphasized that the peculiarity of current situation in education is actually appreciated by many students, who see it as an opportunity for the development of social competencies. They especially point out the sense of security generated by the distance from others, as well as the possibility to strengthen one's weak points in less demanding circumstances.

It should be emphasized once again that irrespective of the COVID-19 crisis, studies predict that the dynamic nature and uncertainty of the crisis will only deepen. In this respect, one should take into account irreversible changes in the labour markets, regarding remote work, which is considered from the point of view of economic and sustainable development (Heidt, Gauger, and Pfnur, 2022).

As a result of our findings, certain directions of activities supporting the development of social competencies during distance learning can be indicated, which may be expected from the institutional side and the educators conducting classes. We are talking here about introductory activities, initiating group processes in a team working online, or constant activation of participants by the leaders.

On the institutional side, this, in turn, requires reforming the approach to remote classes, considering their social specificity and special requirements, adapting educational programs to them, etc. Therefore, remote courses in the education of future managers should be treated not so much as a forced replacement but as a valuable (albeit demanding) alternative to traditional courses.

The possibilities of remote training of remote competencies of future managers require further, broader research, also using other research techniques that will allow for a better understanding of the conditions of this process. It would also be valuable to look at this problem from the perspective of the people conducting the classes

6. Limitations

The research took place during the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore the authors of the research did not have the opportunity to meet respondents in person and conduct a more detailed interview, which can certainly be considered a significant limitation of this study. More in-depth research would be needed to shed light on the individual determinants of students' attitudes and opinions.

7. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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