

## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS WHEN EDUCATING PUPILS DURING DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

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The contribution is a partial output of grant task VEGA No. 1/0550/22 Current status, trends and problems in technical education at the lower and upper secondary level of the school, in the context of distance learning (2022 - 2024).

**Abstract:** The authors of the paper present research findings focused on the role of parents when supporting their own children during distance education (ERE). It is part of a problematic and one of the research tasks addressed in VEGA project No. 1/0550/22. The aforementioned starting points, as well as the discourse of foreign researches, led the authors of the paper to study the opinions and experiences of parents and their help and support when educating pupils during distance education in the time of the COVID 19 pandemic. The paper presents only one part of a large-scale research study with a package of research and statistical methods (analyses, on-line questionnaires, structured individual interviews, the method of Focus Groups, quasi-experiments, the SPSS program package version 2.0) and more. A total of 407 parents participated in the presented part of the research. The research results show that the parents of lower secondary education (ISCED 2) students [AM 2.1] and the parents of upper secondary education (ISCED 3) students [AM 2.3] were not entirely satisfied with the overall course of distance education (ERE) and its organisation.

**Keywords:** distance education- Emergency Remote Education (ERE), the parents of students, lower secondary education (ISCED 2), upper secondary education (ISCED 3), quality of education, technical education

### 1 Introduction and theoretical background

The problematic of technical education, implemented face-to-face or in a distance form, is very broad. Is addressed by many leading experts at home and abroad Kožuchová, (1993); Pavelka, (1996); Honzíkova (2015); Huľová - Šukolová (2017); Kožuchová - Huľová (2020), Huľová, 2021; Depešová (2008); Hašková - Lukáčová (2022) ; Agaton - Cueto (2021); Davis (2021); Lau - Lee (2021); Sonnenschein, S. - Grossman, E. - Grossman, J. (2021) and others.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a distance education (Emergency Remote Education (ERE) has also become dominant in Slovakia, since March 2020. This organisational form retained its status during the 2020/2021 school year and partly also in the 2021/2022 school year, in which hybrid education (is education that was introduced during the pandemic as a combination of distance education from home (ERE) and face-to-face education at school) dominated. According to Huľová - Kožuchová (2021), several educational problems arose in connection with a change in the organisational form of education, which had to be immediately dealt with. The problems were not only related to insufficient ICT equipment, but also to limited experience in working with communication and attendance software as well as to the methods of education.

Teaching methods and organisational forms of education were adapted to distance education. The endeavour of each teacher was to teach as efficiently as possible, to increase the quality of the educational process, to motivate students, and to ensure the all-round development of their personality; especially during the distance education (ERE), which experienced an unprecedented boom as a result of the pandemic. The sudden and completely unexpected transition from face-to-face teaching to distance education meant not only changes in the approach of educators and the students, but also the parents of these students.

The technical education we have investigated was also implemented through distance education. It includes both theoretical and professional education, as well as an inseparable practical preparation of the individual for a future occupation. According to Huľová (2019) a well-prepared students should be creative, technically minded and able to use certain tools and technical equipment, master technologies and programs, and fully apply creativity, not only in life, but especially in his or her

future profession. Professions with a technical focus are important in many areas of human society, therefore systematic institutional training must be ensured for the pupils, which is part of a school education both here and abroad (Brečka - Valentová, 2018). Distance education, despite many obstacles, can be implemented effectively, provided that all participants approach this form of education responsibly.

In addition to the students and teachers, the parents also became a part of distance education, many times against their will. The role and workload of the parent, during the process of distance education (ERE), corresponded to the age of the child and the grade he or she was attending. Without a doubt, the parents are an important and irreplaceable part of the upbringing and educational process. Their role became even more important during the transition of schools to a distance form education, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Not all parents accepted this fact with enthusiasm, and not all of them identified with their new role. Despite this, parents helped and supported their own children to the best of their ability during this difficult educational period.

### 2 Background of the research study

This difficult pandemic period for everyone involved was a stimulus for scientists, who carried out a lot of research focused on distance education.

From research, which was carried out in many countries around the world, we have obtained relevant information about the course of distance education, about technical, physical or psychological problems on the part of the students and teachers, but also the parents of the students who, even if they did not want to be, were an important part of distance education. Bokayev (2021), implemented research focused on the satisfaction of the parents of students with regards to the course of distance education. The results of the study showed that the age and income of the parents were positively correlated to their satisfaction with distance education. Davis (2021) examined the link between distance learning and the mental health of the parents, who were inadvertently forced into taking on the role of the teacher due to the pandemic situation. The results of the study showed that parents with students who struggled with distance education, experienced increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. Güvercin - Ayse - Sait (2021) investigated the views of parents on distance education. From the results of the research, it emerged that distance education is understood rather as a means of support, to face-to-face education at school. Drawbacks mentioned by the respondents included administrative problems, insufficient infrastructure, and the fact that distance education does not provide equal opportunities for the education of all students. Abuhammad (2020) investigated barriers to distance education, from the perspective of the parents, and through social networks and keywords, has purposefully identified local groups whose discussion was content-oriented on distance education and the parents. The aim of the study was to describe and clarify how parents perceive obstacles and barriers to distance learning for their children during the corona virus outbreak. An analysis of 248 posts showed that parents encountered several obstacles, from personal to technical, logistical and financial. Parents most often mentioned personal problems, especially a lack of professional training and support, and a lack of communication and qualifications in the area of distance educational. Technical barriers were also identified. Distance education (ERE) was hampered by insufficient investment, maintenance and connectivity. Problems also arose from the point of view of logistics when introducing distance learning. Parents also cited financial problems, because the purchase of the necessary technology, and the costs associated with online education, led to financial problems for many families. Apriyanti (2020) investigated the role of parents in supervising their students

distance education. An unstable internet connection turned out to be one of the problems. Several schools sent the students online assignments. As the author describes, the parents gave the task to the students, they solved it, and the parents sent the results to the teacher. The WhatsApp platform was used as a communication channel due to its ease of use, low operating costs, availability and immediacy. So parents had to wait for assignments from teachers every morning. The author states that it was a monotonous activity, and the students were bored with the everyday method of such teaching; they did not have an exciting learning experience. Some students did their schoolwork without parental supervision. It was mainly with families, in which there were several siblings, and the parents could not devote all the time individually to just one child. The research results presented many shortcomings and obstacles, which appeared during distance education. The students did not want to learn, they could not concentrate on learning within the home environment. The reason was also due to disturbances in the home, as well as poor support, supervision and checking by some of the parents.

Sonnenschein, S. - Grossman, E. - Grossman, J. (2021) notes, that COVID-19 has caused increased stress amongst adults as well. Many parents were worried about whether they would be able to help their children with distance education due to school closures. In the presented study, which was carried out, the types of activities parents carried out with their children during distance education were investigated, whether these activities differed according to the age of the students, and whether there was a connection between engaging in various activities and being stressed. The results of the study show that most parents have engaged with their children in education monitoring activities or in supporting learning through technology. Although these activities varied according to the students' age, parents who reported participation in distance education activities also reported increased stress. According to Agaton - Cueto (2021), parents faced various challenges in the area of online education. They struggled with the insufficient availability of the necessary technology, financial difficulties, unsatisfactory educational results, and personal problems related to health and stress. Huřová (2021) also reported that families did not have adapted and modified conditions for learning in the home environment, and thus students experienced rapid fatigue, nausea or stress.

According to Milushkina - Popov - Skoblina - Markelova - Sokolova (2020), the transition to distance education in the spring of 2020, led to the excessive use of information and communication technologies by participants in the educational process. Based on the results of the survey, the authors state that after the transition to distance education, the number of electronic devices used by each interviewed student increased by 96.6%, as well as the average time spent in front of the computer screen. About 80% of the parents reported that their children had more health problems related to working with a computer, and 60% of them reported symptoms typical of computer vision syndrome. Kolak - Markic - Horvat - Klemencic - Stojanac (2021) reports interesting findings where 10 545 respondents took part in the research, of which 88% were mothers and 12% were fathers. The author states, that the involvement of mothers in distance education is significantly higher than that of fathers. The findings showed that more parents revealed that most of them consider their children to be independent, even regarding the ability to control the computer during distance education. On the contrary, according to Lase - Zega - Daeli - Zaluchu (2021), the parents did not perceive distance education (Emergency Remote Education) negatively, even though it was an increased economic, psychological and social burden for them. Insufficient parental involvement and support during distance education, is generally due to a lack of time and the parents' inability to become teachers of their children. A surprising finding of this study was a decrease in the children's motivation towards learning. Parents hoped that distance education would not be extended.

Results of the research carried out around the world, which we have analysed in the paper, led us to investigate the opinions of

parents on distance education (Emergency Remote Education), in the 2021/2022 school year.

### 3 Research sample and research methodology

The research was carried out within the grant task VEGA No. 1/0550/22, Current status, trends and problems in technical education at the lower and upper secondary level of the school, in the context of distance education (ERE).

For a comprehensive processing of the given issue, we used the grant task VEGA No. 1/0550/22 package of research methods (conversations, questionnaires, interviews, pre-tests, post-tests, quasi-experiments and the SPSS program package version 2.0). A content analysis was used to map the current domestic and international research findings, scientific studies, new trends and problems, and concepts and content in a technical education implemented by distance education. The selected research methods made it possible to identify, analyse, systematise, and interpret the research findings.

For this partial research and the presentation of the partial results, we used the online questionnaire method.

Therefore, the objective of the paper, as well as our attention and research activity, is focused on examining the opinions of parents, on their experiences, on their support, and their direct involvement in the process of the distance education of their students in selected lower and upper secondary level of school in Slovakia, during the pandemic.

The research questions emerged from the research objective:

Q (1) How do parents perceive the willingness of schools and teachers to communicate and provide information about the organisation and course of distance learning?

Q (2) How do parents perceive their workload and psychological pressure during their children's distance education compared to face-to-face education?

Q (3) How do parents perceive their children's workload and problems during distance learning of their children compared to face-to-face education?

A total of 407 respondents took part in the large-scale research study which we are presenting, including 175 parents students of selected lower secondary school and 232 parents students of selected upper secondary school, to whom an anonymous original online questionnaire of our own construction was made available, in the period from March to April 2022. The online questionnaire contained 27 items with questions for the parents, with simple and multiple-choice answers, and also an assessment scale. The questionnaire also included open-ended items with the possibility to answer freely. Semi-closed items offer parents an open-ended choice in addition to the option to choose an answer. In the questionnaire, each item was evaluated separately. For closed items, we evaluated the frequency of responses for each option, which was then expressed as a relative number (%). The assessment scale was evaluated in the same way. For open and semi-closed items, we categorised the respondents' individual answers and then expressed their representation through percentages.

### 4 Results

The SPSS package of statistical tools - version 2.0 was used for the statistical processing of the results. In this section we present the results of one part of a large-scale research study, namely the part focused on finding out the opinions, experiences in supporting their children's parents during distance education in the time of the pandemic. From the results, we only comment on those which relate to the cooperation of parents with regards to the distance learning of their children.

Tables 1 and 2 present the research sample in terms of age and the highest level of education (first and second item of the questionnaire).

Table 1 Presentation of the research sample according to age.

Age of respondents	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	43.245	44	5.882	.191	-.326	32	58
SS parents	45.047	45	5.071	1.07	3.76	34	73

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

Table 2 Distribution of the research sample according to the highest level of education.

	PS Parents (vj)	SS Parents (vj)
Secondary education	0.44	0.75
University education	0.56	0.25

It follows from the above, that the parents of lower secondary school students [AM 43.2], who participated in the research study, were between 32 and 58 years old. Parents of upper secondary school students [AM 45.0], were aged 34 and 73 years old. The parents of lower secondary school students were more university- educated [vj 0.56], while among the parents of upper secondary school students, a secondary education [vj 0.75] dominated.

In the third item, the respondents indicated which grade of lower secondary school, or upper secondary school, their students attends. The majority of the parents of lower school students [vj 0.23] unanimously stated that their children attend the sixth and seventh grades. The least number [vj 0.15] of parents stated the ninth year of lower secondary school. Within upper secondary vocational schools, most parents [vj 0.32] stated the first year, while the least number of parents [vj 0.16] stated the fourth year of study.

From the presented research findings obtained from the fourth item of the questionnaire, we consider the most significant finding to be that the parents of lower secondary school students [AM 1.5] and the parents of upper secondary school students [AM 1.5] think that they were definitely provided with sufficient information about the organization and the course of distance education in a timely manner by the school (T3).

Table 3 Providing information on the organisation and course of distance learning.

	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	1.509	1	.660	.940	-.235	1	3
SS parents	1.513	1	.757	.687	3.143	1	5

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

Huřová - Tokoš (2022) state that Slovak education was not prepared for a sudden transition from face-to-face education to distance education (ERE). It happened overnight. Several problems arose which needed to be solved immediately. Based on the aforementioned findings, we conclude that the schools tried to solve the situation and provided parents with sufficient information about the organization and course of distance education in a timely manner. On the contrary, Abuhamand (2020) argues, parents experienced difficulties in implementing distance education (ERE) in terms of both communication and logistics. Our claims from the fourth item are also supported on research findings from the fifth item of the questionnaire, in which we asked parents about their communication with the teachers (T 4).

Table 4 Communication of teachers with the parents regarding problems and help.

	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	1.6	1	.869	1.647	3.014	1	5
SS parents	1.439	1	.701	1.894	4.441	1	5

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

The parents reported that lower secondary school teachers [AM 1.6] and upper secondary school teachers [AM 1.4] were definitely willing to communicate with them and help regarding problems with the distance education of their children.

The research findings also show that the intensity of parental support varied over time and depended upon the specific activity of the pupil and the type of school (T5).

Table 5 Support from the parents of pupils during distance education.

	PS Parents (vj)	SS Parents (vj)
throughout the day, during every online class or activity	0.04	0.00
only when he/she worked on assignments during the lessons	0.03	0.07
only when he/she worked on projects	0.21	0.03
only when he/she worked on homework	0.21	0.05
only when he/she needed help	0.76	0.53
I was not helping, he/she learning and working independently	0.23	0.48

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the support for lower secondary school students from their parents was significantly more intense than that of the parents of upper secondary school students. Up to [vj 0.48] of the parents of upper secondary school students claimed that they did not have time to support their children due to work or household responsibilities. Ibid Apriyanti (2020) states that some students did their school duties without parental supervision. These were primarily families with several siblings, and the parents could not devote themselves to just one child the entire time. Some children needed continuous supervision and inspection by their parents during the lessons. The results of the research showed weak support, supervision, and checking from some parents. Ibid Lase - Zega - Daeli - Zaluchu (2021) argues that the lack of involvement and support by parents in distance education (ERE) is generally due to a lack of time and the parents' inability to become the teachers of their children. We reached similar results in our study as well. In connection with the support by parents of their children, we further investigated whether Slovak parents were more stressed during their child's distance education than during face-to-face education at school (T6).

Table 6 Burden of the parents during the distance education of their students.

	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	2.431	2	1.436	.694	-.824	1	5
SS parents	3.666	4	1.379	-.629	-.911	1	5

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

From the presented research findings, it can be concluded that the parents of lower secondary school students [AM 2.4] and the parents of upper secondary school pupils [AM 3.6] were the most stressed in connection with distance education. The lower workload of the parents of upper secondary school parents is related to greater independence and responsibility.

In the next item, using an interval scale from 1 to 10, the parents expressed the degree of presence of increased psychological pressure when supporting, helping and replacing the work of the teacher, during the distance education of their children (T7).

Table 7 Psychological pressure of parents during the distance education of their children.

	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	4.536	5	2.691	.228	-1.054	1	10
SS parents	3.400	3	2.585	.971	.065	1	10

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

The obtained results show that the parents of upper secondary school students [AM 3.4] feel less psychological pressure when supporting their children during distance education than the parents of lower secondary school students [AM 4.5], whose level of help and support was undeniably more intense than for

students attending upper secondary schools. According to the Institute for Public Issues IPA (2021), the biggest problem on the part of the parents is the burden caused by the need for assistance with learning, with homework and with the solving of technical problems, but also with the coordination of employment or time off from employment.

The psychological pressure of parents is also influenced by the level of support from their employers (T8).

Table 8 Support for parents by employers during the distance education of their children.

	PS Parents (vj)	SS Parents (vj)
they gave me flexible working hours	0.07	0.01
they gave me paid time off	0.01	0.00
they gave me unpaid time off	0.01	0.09
they allowed me to work from home - home office	0.22	0.05
they didn't provide any support, I had to draw on Leave to Care for a Family Member, Pandemic Leave to Care for a Family Member, or other state support	0.09	0.04
they did not provide any support, I had to arrange the supervision by another person (e.g., a grandparent, etc.)	0.11	0.01
I did not have to stay at home	0.49	0.80

Based on the analysis of the obtained results for both groups of parents, we can conclude that employers did not provide any support to the parents of lower secondary school students [vj 0.11] or the parents of upper secondary school students [vj 0.01]. Only a small proportion of parents of lower secondary school students [vj 0.09] benefited from various government supports, while parents of upper secondary school students [vj 0.04] did not sufficiently cover the expenses associated with distance education.

In his study, Lau - Lee (2021) describes similar problems for the parents who demanded more flexible working conditions from employers, better subsidies from the state and better support from schools, which would facilitate distance education for the children. In his study, Abuhammand (2020) states that parents reported financial problems, because the purchase of the necessary technology and the costs associated with online education led to financial problems in many families.

The psychological pressure exerted on parents was also influenced by the considerable burden on students during distance education. (T9).

Table 9 The effect of distance education on the workload of the students.

	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	2.311	2	1.213	.745	-.417	1	10
SS parents	2.771	3	1.345	.133	-1.291	1	10

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

From the presented research findings, we consider the most significant finding that the parents of lower secondary school students [AM 2.3] and the parents of upper secondary school students [AM 2.7] think that distance education places a greater burden on their child than face-to-face teaching at school does. Agaton - Cueto (2021) presented in his study that parents struggled with personal problems related to health and stress, in addition to financial problems, which led to unsatisfactory results in the education of their children. The problems which parents are faced with when supporting their children were diverse and negatively affected the effectiveness, quality and achievement of the desired goals of distance education. In Table 10, we list the problems, which according to the parents, occurred most often during distance education.

Table 10 The most frequently occurring problems of the pupils during distance education.

	PS Parents (vj)	SS Parents (vj)
a lack of social contact with classmates within the school environment	0.61	0.62
a lack of social contact with the teachers	0.40	0.46
changes in the normal routine of the day	0.44	0.41
a lack of the usual morning habits	0.34	0.35
problems with insufficient technical equipment	0.08	0.13
problems with an insufficient internet connection	0.14	0.27
weak motivation to learn through distance learning	0.36	0.38
the problem of studying the curriculum independently	0.35	0.26
insufficient explanation of the curriculum by the teacher	0.29	0.27
problems with fatigue and a lack of concentration	0.17	0.22
manifestations of irritability	0.07	0.12
manifestations of being overworked	0.14	0.09
manifestations of exhaustion	0.17	0.13
too much time spent at the computer	0.70	0.64

Parents of lower secondary school students [vj 0.70] and the parents of upper secondary school students [vj 0.64] cite too much time spent on the computer as their children's biggest problem. Another problem was a weak motivation to learn, difficulty in studying the subject matter independently, as well as manifestations of being overworked and exhausted. The biggest problem was a lack of social contact with classmates and the teachers in the school environment. According to the Institute for Public Issues IPA (2021), up to 78% of parents identified the lack of personal contact of children with classmates, peers or friends as a major problem. Almost two-thirds of parents (69%), also identified a lack of contact with the teachers as a problem. Similar to our findings, according to the IPA, there were also less urgent problems directly related to learning, such as nervousness, a lack of concentration, irritability (46%), problems with misunderstanding the subject matter, inability to solve tasks independently (44%), fatigue and excessive workload as a result of a lot of responsibilities, and a lack of time for rest and fun (40%). Parents also reported a loss of habits and a change in the child's daily routine (68%), such as the daily habit of going to school, getting up regularly in the morning, fulfilling normal daily duties, etc.

In one of the items of the questionnaire, we asked parents to quantify the costs incurred by them in connection with their support in the transition of children to a distance form education (Table 11).

Table 11 Costs of parents in supporting children during the transition to distance education.

	PS parents (vj)	SS parents (vj)
up to 100€	0.21	0.32
from 101€to 150€	0.10	0.11
from 151€to 300€	0.12	0.06
from 301€to 450€	0.09	0.03
from 451€to 600€	0.08	0.04
from 601€to 750€	0.03	0.02
from 751€to 900€	0.06	0.03
from 901€to 1000€	0.03	0.03
more than 1000€	0.01	0.02
no costs	0.27	0.34

Parents also supported their children materially during distance learning. In this context, they declared increased expenses for energy and meals. Other investments went into increasing the volume of transferred data and the speed of the Internet connection. According to the PRservis portal (2020), an increased level of demand for telecommunication technologies was stimulated during distance education. According to a study by Huawei, the volume of data traffic has increased in Europe. As a result of school closures, the average number of active users of online education applications and programs has increased 8-fold.

By analyzing and processing the open-ended responses in the questionnaire items, we found that parents, in order to support their children, also invested in the purchase of desktop computers, printers, color toners, laptops, and peripheral devices needed for online communication such as headphones, microphones, etc. At the time of distance education, some schools lent school laptops to students, which contributed significantly to reducing the psychological pressure, stress and financial expenses of families.

Furthermore, we investigated whether parents think that their children's welfare has worsened as a result of distance education (T12).

Table 12 Parents' opinion on the welfare of their child during distance education.

	AM	MDN	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	MIN	MAX
PS parents	3.296	3	1.298	-.101	-1.079	1	5
SS parents	3.587	4	1.307	-.498	-.960	1	5

Legend: AM - average mean value, MDN - median value, SD - standard deviation, Skewness - skewness coefficient, Kurtosis - slope coefficient, MIN - minimum value, MAX - maximum value

The findings show that the parents of lower secondary school students [AM 3.2] and the parents of upper secondary school students [AM 3.5] think that their child's performance has worsened as a result of distance education. Ostertáková - Rehúš (2021), also stated that up to 84.5% of teachers state that students have mastered less subject matter through distance education than during face-to-face teaching. Up to 75% of teachers estimate a loss compared to regular teaching in the range of three or more months. The reasons are a lack of motivation, insufficient technological equipment, access to the Internet and a lack of support from the parents. Half of the teachers think that the pupils' digital skills have improved thanks to distance education.

From the presented research findings obtained through an online questionnaire, we consider the most significant finding to be that as many as [vj 0.31] of the parents of lower secondary school students and [vj 0.36] of the parents of upper secondary school students have concerns that their child will not get a comprehensive knowledge through distance education, which will then be difficult to catch up in the future. In upper secondary vocational schools, up to [vj 0.49] of the parents are concerned that their child will not acquire the necessary skills through distance education, especially in the area of professional

technical subjects, which may cause them problems when applying for higher education or their future profession.

## 5 Conclusions

Due to the closure of schools and school facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, distance education also dominated as an organisational form of education. It maintained its position during the two school years, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, and hybrid education was already dominating in the 2021/2022 school year. The resulting situation led us to the implementation of a large-scale research study addressed within the framework of the grant task VEGA No. 1/0550/22 focused on the current state, trends and problems in technical education at the lower and upper secondary school, in the context of distance education (ERE). The results which we present are a part of it and are focused on finding out the opinions, experiences and support of parents in the education of students at selected lower and upper secondary vocational schools in Slovakia, during distance education at the time of the pandemic.

The answers to the research questions that emerged from the research objective were answered in the interpretations on an ongoing basis. Finally, we summarize the answers:

Q (1) *How do parents perceive the willingness of schools and teachers to communicate and provide information about the organisation and course of distance learning?*

Parents perceived and evaluated positively the willingness of the school and teachers to communicate and to provide them with sufficient and satisfactory information about the organisation and course of distance education.

Q (2) *How do parents perceive their workload and psychological pressure during their children's distance education compared to face-to-face education?*

Parents perceived their workload and psychological pressure during their children's distance education very negatively, for many of their children from the lack of social contacts even depressing compared to full-time education.

Q (3) *How do parents perceive their children's workload and problems during distance learning of their children compared to face-to-face education?*

Parents perceived their children's workload and problems during distance education as burdensome not only because of spending a lot of time on computers, but also because of many deficiencies associated with the facilities - computers, internet connections, their own learning space, and many others ) compared to face-to-face education.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that from the perspective of the parents, long-term distance education has had an adverse effect on their children. Distance education is challenging, and its success depends on many technical, psychological and psycho-didactic factors (Huřová, 2022). In order to achieve the effectiveness of education, even with such an organisational form, it is desirable that all participating entities approach teaching with maximum responsibility. From our point of view, these are primarily pupils, teachers, parents, and their employers, and many others. Several unfavourable factors can be eliminated with the support of the parents and a responsible approach by everyone involved. But despite this, the research data obtained from the parents of lower and upper secondary school students show that, according to them, it is not possible to fully replace face-to-face education. According to Huřová -Tokoš (2022) there are obstacles which can only be removed with great difficulty, or not at all. These mainly concern upper secondary vocational schools and technical education, in which psychomotor educational objectives dominate. Almost half of the respondents fear that their children will not acquire the necessary skills in the field of technical education through distance education, which can lead to problems when applying to the job market or studying at technical universities. The above shows that for a number of vocational for a number of vocational subjects, including vocational training and apprenticeships, distance education is not appropriate. We also found that parents of lower secondary

school students felt the greatest problems, obligations or burdens.

We believe that one of the reasons for this is the fact that the student is less independent by the age of 15 and therefore the parent feels more responsibility for the student and the need to devote more attention.

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#### Primary Paper Section: A

#### Secondary Paper Section: AM