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Students' Diaries as a Source of Knowledge about Their Everyday Education and Private Lives During the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Pamiętniki studentów jako źródło wiedzy o codzienności edukacyjnej
i prywatnej w sytuacji pandemii COVID-19*

Abstract: On 20 March 2020, the Polish authorities announced the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by SARS-CoV-2. The announcement of the state of pandemic completely changed our lives. Healthy people were locked at home, entry to forests was forbidden, online school and work became mandatory and face masks and hand sanitizers became a necessity. The “battle” for vaccines was started. As for the people infected with the virus, in addition to transforming wards on hospitals to ones dedicated to COVID-19 patients, additional beds were arranged, for example, on stadiums. The number of deaths rose sharply, to around 200,000 in the years 2020–2021. At the moment, COVID-19 progresses from the pandemic stage to endemic one, which means that it will become a part of our lives. The experiences gained during that time are rooted in every person. Thus, it is worth looking at diaries written by the students of pre-school and early school pedagogics (uniform studies leading to a master's degree, at the University of Warmia and Mazury, UWM in Olsztyn), in which they described their entanglement in the difficult pandemic reality, in the years 2020–2021, in the context of their education and private lives. It is worth emphasizing the importance of the source of information, apart from the problems raised. In this study, this is a source created, constructed over several months in a reality different from normal. The diaries uncover/reveal the meanings which the pedagogics students assigned to the pandemic reality.

Keywords: COVID-19 epidemic; diaries; diarist documents; school; pre-school and private everyday life

Abstrakt: W dniu 20 marca 2020 roku ogłoszono w Polsce stan epidemii COVID-19 wywołany wirusem SARS-CoV-2. Jego ogłoszenie spowodowało, że życie ludzi uległo całkowitej zmianie. Ludzie zdrowi zostali zamknięci w domach, zabroniono wstępu do lasów, pojawiła się nauka i praca zdalna, obowiązkowe maseczki i dezynfekcja rąk. Rozpoczęła się „bitwa” o szczepionki. Natomiast dla ludzi chorych, oprócz przekształcania istniejących oddziałów szpitalnych, tworzone dodatkowe oddziały (np. na stadionach). Drastycznie wzrosła liczba zgonów; w latach 2020–2021 było ich około 200 tys. Aktualnie COVID-19 przechodzi z fazy pandemicznej do fazy endemicznej, co oznacza, że stanie się już częścią naszego życia. Doświadczenia z tamtego okresu mocno tkwią w każdym

człowieku, dlatego warto przyjrzeć się pamiętnikom napisanym przez studentki pedagogiki przedszkolnej i wczesnoszkolnej (jednolite studia magisterskie niestacjonarne, Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie), w których opisały swoje uwikłanie na przestrzeni lat 2020–2021 w tę trudną rzeczywistość pandemiczną w kontekście edukacyjnym i prywatnym. Należy podkreślić, że nie tylko ta problematyka jest ważna, lecz także jej źródło. W tym wypadku jest to źródło wytworzone, konstruowane przez szereg miesięcy w odmiennej rzeczywistości. Pamiętniki odkrywają czy też ujawniają znaczenia, jakie studentki pedagogiki nadawały codzienności doby pandemicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: pandemia COVID-19; pamiętniki; dokumenty pamiętnikarskie; codzienność szkolno-przed-szkolna i prywatna

DIARIES – TERMINOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

In the Polish language the etymology of the term “memoir” dates back to the concept of memory [*pamięć* – “memory”, *pamiętnik* – “memoir”, “memory book”]. It is associated with other concepts, such as: memory, memorable, commemorative, diarist. According to the researchers, the term “memoir” causes a number of difficulties in defining it, due to the meaning field, as well as the indefinite boundary between the memoir and other (Szymczak, 1979, p. 588, 589) ego-documents. Dunin-Wąsowicz defines this concept as follows: “It is a valuable, although quite specific, historical source, existing since time immemorial, and occurring in the form of chronicles, diaries, notes, or proper memories. It is also an extremely valuable resource for contemporary sociology, allowing us to study the changes taking place in society, and especially in social consciousness” (Dunin-Wąsowicz, 1974, p. 199).

In specialized dictionaries of Polish literature, we find different understandings of the term “memoir” depending on the period in which they were created. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the inspiration for defining personal documents by the term “memoir” was the influence of various types of *mémoires* and *memories*, occupying an important place in French and English literature. In the Old Polish language, an opus to commemorate something or someone was called a “souvenir”. The word “memoir” also meant a person who remembered, a witness of events. These records prove that old Polish memoirs are mainly about events, portraits of people or objects (Michałowska et al., 1990, p. 611). “It seems that from this last meaning led the way to today’s genre sense of the word »memoir«, the traces of which can be found already in the 18th century (e.g. in the formulas »write memoir of someone’s life«, »write memoirs about something«)” (Kostkiewiczowa, Cieński, 1996, p. 387). “The works that we are now inclined to call memoirs, the authors usually referred to differently, e.g. »annals«, »chronicle«, »diary«, etc. The label »memoirs« appears in the titles of these works later, most often nineteenth-century editions” (Bachórz et al., 2016, p. 191).

An important, albeit completely different, dispute arose when the memoir narrative was brought closer to the historical source or the story from the past.

Since the 19th century, there has been a strong need to express one's subjectivity in both documentary and fictional literature. Earlier, it was attributed the meaning of "a book in which is written what is worth remembering" (*ibid.*).

Memoir literature varies widely, both in form and content. According to different authors, the memoirs themselves differ from each other. Trzynadlowski distinguishes the following memoirs: monographic, history, fictionalized, mosaic, album and confessional (Trzynadlowski, 1961, pp. 577–583).

STUDENTS' MEMOIRS AS A DOCUMENT OF PANDEMIC EVERYDAY LIFE – METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Maternicki divides the memoir literature, taking into account the person of a historian or chronicler, into:

- diaries and memories – texts written from the perspective of a historian, the consequence of which is the selection of events, the assessment of specific cases and people;
- notes, diaries, correspondence on current affairs – texts written from the point of view of a chronicler who knows what happened but does not know what resulted from it (Maternicki, 1994, p. 76).

Diaries are always somehow narrated, subjective, reflecting their own views and beliefs about the surrounding reality. They are a reflection of both the diverse aspects of life and the turning points of history. They are established or called sources. The latter were written for a competition or at the encouragement of a researcher. This is the case with these studies, which aimed to learn about the COVID reality "seen through the eyes" of 38 students¹ and reveal the meanings of pandemic everyday life in the course of their memoir construction.

The first stage of the research was to prepare the students to understand what a memoir is, how it is constructed, as well as to present the topics to which they will relate. Students wrote them from the beginning of the pandemic announcement, i.e. from February 2020 to March/May 2021. It is worth emphasizing both the importance of the issue being addressed and its source. The subject of the dia-

¹ Memoir keepers – 38 female students of pre-school and early school pedagogy, part-time uniform MA studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, UWM in Olsztyn: Anna Zalewska, Roksana Bednarczyk, Zuzanna Sendrowska, Jowita Kurkowska, Ewa Sankowska, Julita Bubacz Dominika Nahańska, Natalia Nowak, Joanna Lenkiewicz, Oliwia Kurządkowska, Staniszevska Julia, Oliwia Kowalkowska, Weronika Kosakowska, Anita Klimek, Justyna Szulik, Paulina Kuligowska, Emilia Lipka, Paulina Chodakowska. Marcjanna Błudzień, Natalia Żukian, Marlena Pełszyk, Kinga Gliszczyńska, Marta Mojak, Marta Pomarańska, Katarzyna Wołosiuk, Katarzyna Leśnikowska, Patrycja Bugaj, Zuzanna Szymańska, Marlena Pełszyk, Dominika Górka, Ewa Jurczyk, Izabela Ciesielska, Weronika Szymczak, Sylwia Mederska, Dominika Nowacka, Aneta Płotkowska, Magdalena Perzanowska, Kamila Orkwiszewska.

ries was defined, because it concerned pandemic everyday life (university, school, kindergarten and private). The students described their involvement in the difficult pandemic reality in the context of school, preschool, university, professional and private life. Memoirs discover/reveal the meanings that pedagogy students gave to the everyday scholar life during the pandemic. The diaries that the students constructed are different in terms of both the frequency of writing and the issues they raised. Not all students gave the title to² their diary entries, they only gave the name and date of the entry (sometimes only a month and a year, sometimes a time of year).

The next stage of the research was the development of memoir data consisting in organizing and grouping data, content analysis, inference and description. Below I will present two examples of memoirs (excerpts): the first containing general, laconic entries, made once a month, referring to various aspects of everyday life in the era of the pandemic, the second – characterized by extensive entries, conducted systematically with an indication of a specific date, detailing the issues of this everyday life.

Memoir I: (K.O.)

March 2020

It's here! And it took everything that made me happy and that I worked for so long. A pandemic that surprised me. The coronavirus locked me in my home and took away my social and professional life. People went nuts. There is no toilet paper anywhere. I don't go to work and my kids can't go to school. Remote teaching is something terrible, my daughter is nervous and I am too. We don't know what the next day will bring. Disease statistics are constantly growing and I am losing my mind. I don't even have anyone to talk to about it. I had a fight with a friend.

April, 2020

Remote learning is getting better and better, and I'm back at work. However, these are just shifts in an empty kindergarten. Frustration and injustice are on the rise. You can leave the house with a dog, but not without a dog. I don't have a dog so I can go to work, go shopping if it's not an hour for seniors, or I can go to church. I am increasingly annoyed by the pandemic.

May 2020

I keep going to work and there are more and more signs that the kids will be back soon. It's getting warm, the restrictions are slowly being lifted.

² Memoir titles: *Memoir; A few days in kindergarten from my memoir; Memoir of a pandemic student; Card from a Memoir. Pandemic time; A few memoir pages – from the coronavirus pandemic; My impressions as a kindergarten worker/student. How does the pandemic affect our work/life?; Memoir, from the life of a mother, student and education worker; Memoir of a student during COVID-19; My reflections as a first-year student during the coronavirus pandemic; Memoir of life during the COVID-19 epidemic; Memoir of a student during the pandemic; Dear Memoir!*

June 2020

After all, the children are back to normal in kindergarten and I am starting to live. Remote teaching for my daughter is already a "piece of cake" and my son has returned to kindergarten. The end of the year is getting closer.

July–August 2020

The holidays everyone was looking forward to. Most of the restrictions were lifted and I found my peace. Kretowiny (a Polish city). The hotel where I work during the holidays works just like last year. I made up with a friend. Plans to start studying have just become reality. I applied.

September, 2020

At the beginning of the school year, the kids went back to school and I went to work. The kindergarten is functioning and we have adapted to the standards imposed by the Ministry of Education.

October, 2020

I'm a student, my courses are online. Stress, uncertainty, problems with the Teams platform. With the help of a friend, I managed. In the second half of October, my daughter returned to e-learning and I made up a competition to see which of us would have more As at the end of the year. My daughter immediately entered the competition. The number of cases began to increase drastically again.

November 2020

We still live in the shadow of the coronavirus. I got into the rhythm of remote study.

December 2020

We're making dumplings, going wholesale. We made two hundred pieces in three different flavors. The kindergarten continues to function, of course, in compliance with the sanitary regime and COVID procedures. My daughter and I are still studying remotely.

January 2021

The beginning of the year brought nothing new or better, but it brought exams. I spend every spare moment learning, it is not easy, and I was constantly stressed by the thought that during the exam I may have technical problems.

February 2021

The first semester completed. The next one promises to be in the same form, although I was very hoping that we will finally return to the university and I will have the opportunity to meet and see my female colleagues from the year that I have only seen on cameras so far.

Memoir II: (A.Z.)

25 February 2020

The word "pandemic" is being used more and more often. In fact, it dominates almost all conversations at work and at home, taking over our lives with greater force. This virus, which has come from nowhere, is already ravaging European cities. The situation in Italy is becoming dramatic, and we are at an international trade fair in Poznań as if nothing had happened, with only a disinfectant as an antiviral weapon, which appeared virtually by

accident. However, we have another tool of protection, something that each of us has taken with us – common sense.

Although the virus was a distant problem until recently, somewhere in a distant country, it is now in Europe. I think that the appearance of COVID-19 in “our backyard” is only a matter of time. After all, the world is really just a village, albeit a global one.

25 February 2020

We had visitors from Italy at the fair today. I can't say I spoke to them freely. Besides, you can see that people look at Asians in a special way here. We strive to maintain the highest professionalism by smiling and shaking hands with all our guests. We're kind.

It's hard to tell how much disinfectant we used today. All I know is that my hands hurt a lot, dry and cracked. Disinfection, hand cream, disinfection, hand cream... Two more days.

2 March 2020...

4 March 2020

And so it happened. We have the first case of COVID-19 infection in Poland. We listened to all the news on the radio today. At every full hour, we would tear ourselves away from the class and just listen to who got infected, where, how. “It's in Silesia, not in our country” – can be heard in the depths of the office. Comforting? Hmmm, that doesn't comfort me at all. It was in Italy yesterday!

10 March 2020...

12 March 2020

We can no longer order a second breakfast from our favorite “Mr. Sandwich.” Dinner must also be brought from home. Preferably on a plate with a set of cutlery in hand, because they also took them from the social room. And couriers are not allowed to deliver packages ordered privately by employees. No more shopping on Allegro with delivery to work.

In the office, we are not talking about anything other than a pandemic, protection measures, ways of infection, disease statistics in Poland and in the world. We're listening. Clients inform us about the worsening situation in their countries. If this goes on, they will stop trading, and that will have consequences for us as well.

19 March 2020...

20 March 2020...

27 April 2020

The company received funding from the so-called anti-crisis shield. The working hours increase to 0.8 and therefore the salary to 80% of the pre-Agreement level.

15 May 2020

The market situation is improving. Customers are ordering again. It's getting better. The black scenarios of March didn't work out. Employment at the level of 0.95 full-time.

28 May 2020...

3 June 2020...

18 June 2020...

28 July 2020...

1 October 2020

This is the time when I can think of myself as a first-year student of Pre-School and Early School Pedagogy. After 10 years of obtaining a master's degree in economics, it is time for a change. Classes will probably be conducted online. Challenge. Fortunately, I have a work laptop with a built-in camera and microphone, in case they are needed, so at least the problem of supplying me with remote learning equipment is gone. In general, I admit that the possibility or necessity, depending on how one looks at it, of conducting recruitment in a way in which there was no obligation to queue in person outside the dean's office with documents in hand was a great convenience. I didn't have to take a day off from work to drive 100 kilometers just to give someone documents. I completed all the information on the online profile, although I had a problem to properly supplement the data from the "old high school diploma" on the template prepared for high school graduates, I attached all scans of the required documents, I made several phone calls in search of information and so I was entered on the list of students.

7 October 2020...

9 October 2020

Since Monday, we have all been working remotely. The situation at the company is serious. More than 150 people are in quarantine.

October, 2020

My first online class. A whole new experience. What is it going to look like? Some kind of Teams? What is it? How to communicate with all those people I see on the screen for a while. I love turning on the camera. I know, however, that it must be extremely difficult for a lecturer to say that to a screen, not knowing if anyone is listening to it at all. So far, we're all rather smiling, at least for the moment when you can see us on the screen. Maybe there's nothing to complain about, nothing to be afraid of? We are all experiencing this completely new way of studying. Here's something that connects us all.

What happened today was a big misunderstanding. How can you ask a group of people who don't know each other to split up into teams of four in a situation where you can't turn around in a bench to your neighbor, or call someone from the other bench to sit down with you, or get up and approach a group to work with? I understand that time is unique and we all try to adjust to it, but you cannot transfer activities conducted in the so-called real to the virtual world on a 1:1 basis. There is a need for an approach as unique as the current situation.

I had been struggling for years before I set up a Facebook account. I lost that fight today. Without communication on Messenger, however, it is impossible to study remotely. I found out today. I also learned that when I go to a scheduled meeting on Teams, I start it. Accustomed to the fact that it is the student who is waiting for the lecturer, not the lecturer for the students, I did not see anything inappropriate in the entrance to the scheduled meeting a few minutes earlier. It was very obvious to me. But it seems to be just for me. Called to order by members of the group, I humbly set up a Facebook account so that I could find myself in this chaos.

No. We need to change our mindset. I didn't lose the fight today. Today I took on the new challenge of taming Facebook Messenger. Soon it will have no secrets from me.

7 December 2020

I need some books to write a paper for credit. But how to get them? My city library doesn't have books on topics that interest me. In class, one of the lecturers literally stammered that it was possible to obtain a copy of books by e-mail from the university library. He doesn't know how or what or where, but he knows there's a possibility, so we shouldn't have a problem with that. The teachers' faith in first-year students captivates me deeply. I tried it. I went to the library website. I type in the password, the items pop up on the screen, and then what? O! Got it. Order a copy. Alright. I enter the author, title, number of pages available for order: 50. So I put in 50 and waited. I receive an e-mail with the information that the page numbers should be indicated in accordance with the table of contents. A table of contents is attached to the e-mail. How wonderful. I know how this works.

It is good that I received my ID card during my last stay in Olsztyn. I no longer have trouble accessing the library. At least not one that can't be solved. I discovered another secret of remote learning.

17 December 2020

21 January 2021...

4 March 2021

We begin the second semester of study. It's getting better. I got used to this remote study. I can even see the good things about it: I don't have to rush off to class after work, I can use the time between classes to do something at home, I can listen to a lecture while sitting comfortably on the sofa drinking coffee, I can take notes on my laptop, which gives me a chance to read in a while and it doesn't tire my hand as much. How wonderful. Nothing will surprise me anymore.

6 March 2021

I told you yesterday that nothing would surprise me. Oh, naivety! Lectures in chat? Moodle lectures? What does this tell us? Challenge Think of it as a challenge. Notice the good sides of the situation. I can do this.

16 April 2021

We have received information that they want to organize a vaccination point at my workplace. Great!

19 April 2021...

8 May 2021

Looking comprehensively at the experience caused by the pandemic so far, I can see how much it has taught me. My approach to being financially prepared for "difficult times" allowed me to calmly wait for the development of events. I knew that even if I lost my job, I could survive a year. I was fortunate to work for a company that cares about its employees. Another proof that changing jobs two years ago was a good move.

What about studies? Remote activities are not so stressful anymore. Moodle lectures? Actually, they're not that bad. I can work at my own pace. I can go back to the text prepared by the lecturer at any time. Lectures in chat? Everyone can have their say without getting in each other's way. Sharing recorded lectures? Bullseye! Probably the best form of classes conducted remotely so far.

What about family life? Maybe it got hurt a little. I have less time for her, fewer weekends together, my fatigue after 10 hours spent in front of the computer sometimes takes away my desire to do anything other than sleep, but on the other hand I also see how much support I get from them. They are encouraging me to achieve my goal. And although my husband would prefer me to study full-time because it would be easier for him to bear (he sees me now, but it's as if I'm not there at all), he makes sure I have a hot cup of tea at the computer, sandwiches and snacks between classes and only asks what time he has to make lunch. He is a real blessing!

Fact, I miss interacting with people, both at work (although here I see some co-workers on a weekly basis) and the group girls I sometimes see on my laptop screen. It would be nice to meet you "in real life". I miss this typical atmosphere of studying. Even the physical presence of the lecturer is a little lacking. But what can you do. As a wise man once said, "Don't worry about what you can't control". So I'm not focusing on what the pandemic is taking away from me and what I'm missing. Complaining won't do any good. I look forward to more challenges.

MEANINGS GIVEN TO COVID EVERYDAY LIFE BY THE AUTHORS OF THE MEMOIRS

Diarists, like most of us, have looked in various sources for answers to questions: what is the coronavirus, where did it come from, is it dangerous, can it be effectively treated?

The first cases of coronavirus in Poland. I'm quite skeptical about this – no big deal, why the panic? There was bird flu and many others like it, but no one sowed such panic. (...) We'll get sick, we'll get immunized, that's all.

According to the authors, the initial information was residual, sometimes contradictory, indicating general confusion.

It is a terribly strange time, a time of fear of uncertainty and I often wonder if we will be able to function normally; I spent every break between lessons scrolling on my phone. One of the first things I found was that a Wuhan resident ate a bat and that's where it all started. My first thought – it is impossible that you can get infected from a bat. So I started looking for something specific, I found a video in which everything was described as if it was a biological weapon, I no longer knew what it was about.

The issue of the coronavirus became the subject of discussions, both at school and outside it.

The case of patient zero was in Zielona Góra, since then memes about this city have begun. The first conversation between the students began, "What if this? What if that?" At that time, we did not focus on lessons or tests, only on this disease. Teachers did not teach lessons as they did before the pandemic, every conversation boiled down to this one "hot" topic.

The narrative shows that the upcoming restrictions significantly affected people's health, life, science, and work. Workplaces began to organize vaccinations for their employees.

We have received information that they want to organize a vaccination point at my workplace. Great! There is a lot of interest in our team. Some have already signed up for vaccinations in their clinics, but if they can be vaccinated in the workplace, why not? If someone is interested in getting vaccinated, they have to fill out a form and that's it; so when will these vaccinations be? Does this mean that you will not have to wait for a referral according to the queue designated by the metric? What kind of vaccine will they vaccinate us with? Maybe in the next few days we'll know a little more details.

The memoirs noted that over the months, interest in vaccinations has declined.

The government is introducing new privileges for those who have been vaccinated. This is unfair, because everyone should have the right to choose and everyone should function under the same conditions and be treated equally. I feel bad about what's going on in this world right now, and I hope it's over soon.

The meanings that the students gave to the pandemic reality in their memoirs, together with examples of memoirs entries, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The meanings given to the reality of the pandemic in their memoirs by pre-school and early childhood education students

Meanings	Examples of memoirs entries
Pandemic period – another way of functioning of health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Every day, further disease reports, fatal cases are given and restrictions are updated from time to time. – I got a strong fever, convulsions, it's hard to breathe. I'm so scared, I see fear in my husband's eyes. (...) The husband called 999 on his mobile. They won't come, what a time. The E.R. is refusing to help the sick because the symptoms match this nasty virus! I feel really scared. Fever over 40 degrees, convulsions and shortness of breath. We went to the emergency room – teleconsultation. Seriously? Teleconsultation outside the hospital.
Pandemic period contributes to mental health-related illnesses	<p>If it hadn't been for the pandemic, my condition wouldn't have worsened. In hindsight, I'm glad it happened. It was bad enough that I finally went to a psychiatrist and then a psychotherapist and started fighting for myself. However, it was a very tough year, which nearly ended tragically for me.</p>

<p>Pandemic period contributes to children's fears</p>	<p>J., who is 5 years old, was not in kindergarten for a long time. After the break he came back very sad, and on top of that he did not want to take off his mask in the classroom. (...) I must admit that I was surprised by his sudden change in behavior, because this is his second year in kindergarten and he has always been an energetic, vibrant child. The boy said he heard his parents talking about the virus. That a lot of people are dying. Then the boy heard several sentences on the news, which stuck in his memory, among others, about masks or the fact that the number of patients is increasing. The boy was frightened (...) The case of J. is only one case, but I am sure that he was not the only one struggling with such fear.</p>
<p>Pandemic period – making important life decisions</p>	<p>If it wasn't for the pandemic I probably wouldn't have gone to university. It was only at a time when everything seemed so terribly fragile that I realized that I'm stuck with my life, that I needed to grow. And as for that, I wouldn't be in kindergarten and I wouldn't feel like I'm finally in my place, that I feel good here and that's what I want to do.</p>
<p>Pandemic period is a reminder of life's most important values</p>	<p>And indeed – the stress associated with temporary downtime in work was huge, but the moment when you can lose a loved one is the worst time in your life. It is only now that we realize what is really important. And the most important thing is health. The most important thing is the loved ones. The most important thing is also me and my needs. Not money, not fame, not expensive gifts.</p>
<p>Pandemic period – parental stress caused by providing care for children</p>	<p>I can imagine what the parents of the children are going through when they close kindergartens and nurseries. Like every day, I took K. to kindergarten, I went to work, and here what? He learns from customers in the store that nurseries, school and other such institutions are closed! Now what? My son is in the nursery! The nursery must have called, and I have a phone in the locker room! Ugh, fortunately my husband picked up Kacper from the nursery, what a relief! But then what? I'm changing jobs. There is no other way! Nurseries also close every now and then, everything is uncertain, so I'm looking for something to watch my son in shifts with my husband without putting my son in a nursery. Fortunately, I found something, so it won't be so bad!</p>
<p>Pandemic period – time of restrictions</p>	<p>– The pandemic and the restrictions that result from it are giving staff in nurseries and day nurseries a hard time. It was necessary to disinfect tables, toys, chairs and other objects, which was very tiring. To be honest, I didn't have time to play with the kids during this time, because you had to disinfect something all the time, and this is the bathroom, canteen, playroom, changing rooms, etc. And all this in a mask! That was a challenge. My help was to "figure out" the guidelines, although I expected to meet the children and be able to play with them for a while. I think my first day, if it wasn't for the pandemic, would have been completely different.</p>

<p>Period of pandemic – time of job insecurity</p>	<p>– Quarantine’s over. We are back to work! Unfortunately, it turned out that not for long. I went to work and we found out on the spot that the government is closing kindergartens from tomorrow. For me, this information was a huge blow. I had just started work and was financially cut off by the quarantine and lockdown. I was angry. The pandemic and restrictions, the lockdown was very difficult for me. They caused a difficult financial situation.</p> <p>– Additionally, my contract had come to an end and I didn’t really know what to do - the decision on my return had to be approved by a higher authority than the director’s decision itself. For a month I was unemployed, I knew that I would not get a salary, and yet I have to pay school and installments. In addition, I was stressed that if I did not return to kindergarten, I would look for employment for another month – it was difficult to apply for a job during quarantine.</p>
<p>Pandemic period is a period of being on the dole</p>	<p>Well, and I’m on the dole, because after all, what else would I do? I won’t leave my three-year-old alone in the house, his grandparents are away.</p>
<p>Pandemic period is a time of concern for children and the elderly</p>	<p>– I’m scared! For myself and my loved ones, especially my son. He can’t get sick ! I can’t let that happen!</p> <p>– No! Dad’s sick! Coronavirus! What do I do now? He’s almost 60 years old, high blood pressure ! How can he take it? I’m afraid. We bring him groceries, leave them at the door. It’s so sad, my heart breaks when I see him, but I can’t even come near him. He has such a terrible cough, he’s pale, he’s having a hard time breathing. May he recover already! I’m very worried about him.</p> <p>Unfortunately, my family got sick and we were in quarantine for 21 days. Every day I was worried about my mother, who was very ill. It was a time of great stress and tension.</p>
<p>Pandemic period – negative and positive views of pre-school children</p>	<p>– When kindergartens were closed, children had remote classes, lasting 40 minutes in total. The obligation to merge was 6 years old, but after a few days, smaller children also joined. Preschoolers said that they did not like remote classes, that they prefer to come to kindergarten. The answer as to why, was unanimous – because there are children here and we can play. – Children like to wear their colorful masks with motifs from their favorite fairy tales. Hand disinfection disturbs only two girls – they mentioned a rash that popped up on their hands after using the liquid.</p> <p>– The children’s other feelings were that the shops were closed, and that there were no toys in the room that used to be there – teddy bears, prams, dolls. The fact is that there are far fewer toys these days, and although we try to buy them games or toys (which are easy to disinfect), the school does not have an endless supply. Nevertheless, children play with what is left and understand the cause, of course, within the limits of their abilities.</p> <p>– In September, when the new 3-year-olds joined the group there was a slight problem – the children cried, they didn’t want to go in on their own and be undressed by strangers. Over time, they became less resistant. Now it happens that they forget to say “bye” to mom or dad.</p>

<p>Pandemic period – a positive and negative picture of e-learning</p>	<p>– The first e-lessons, you could get up 5 minutes before class, but it was not a good solution, because you were very sleepy. The first lesson is mathematics. Of course, again conversations on a known topic, after 15 minutes we move on to the lesson, but how do you teach all this over the Internet? The teachers from my school quickly switched to the e-learning mode and everything was like in a normal lesson, only through cameras.</p> <p>– March 2020. My older daughter was in the second grade of primary school when lockdown began for the first time, and those four months were not e-learning but “e-assignments” because the teacher sent material. Together with my daughter, we meticulously solved tasks every day, at least at the very beginning. Week after week, it got worse and worse. Grades appeared in the electronic journal, as Lila also solved classwork that had to be sent by email. The teacher called to ask how we were doing, how the studies were going, my daughter always asked when she was going back to school and so on, until June, with assignments to solve, studies and a phone call from the teacher. We worked out the system of the day: fun, learning, fun.</p> <p>– September 2020 third year of primary school and here it is like a rollercoaster going to school, increased sickness and at the end of October the government ordered e-learning, and I have to say it worked quite well, there was less homework more learning with the teacher. In physical education, with the consent of your parents, teacher urged them to go outside. My daughter was out in the garden with the dog and the other children were supposed to exercise individually and what the PE teacher was doing nobody knows, camera off and silence until five minutes before the end of the lesson where she said see you at the next PE. I'd probably be making dinner, hanging laundry, etc. for 40 minutes.</p> <p>– End of the school year for high school graduates. (...) Each class had a separate hour to turn up at school to collect their diplomas. It's my turn - I walk into the school, wearing a mask of course. There was a janitor standing in front of the door disinfecting hands, then I went into the first classroom on the right, there I just got my certificate and could go home. I couldn't even say goodbye to my teacher, the sadness was really great because my class was very close-knit and the teacher gave her heart to us to make things as good as possible.</p>
<p>Pandemic period – a positive and negative picture of the university's remote everyday life</p>	<p>– My first online class. A whole new experience. What is it going to look like? Some kind of Teams? What is it? How to communicate with all those people I see on the screen for a while. I love turning on the camera. (...) Maybe there's nothing to complain about, nothing to be afraid of? We are all experiencing this completely new way of studying. I had been struggling for years before I set up a Facebook account. I lost that fight today. Without communication on Messenger, however, it is impossible to study remotely. I found out today.</p>

	<p>– Moodle class! what? Is there a video option? Lecture in chat, text read and what's next? We sit down to chat and when I manage to write something it turns out that 39 people have already written an answer and there is already another new question and I haven't managed to answer the previous one. Well yes some more writing course would be useful!</p> <p>– Pros and cons of remote – first of all, problems with the Internet, without which we will not join the meetings and the stress associated with it. As you know, the lecturers are different, some people will understand, some will not. Another issue is the virus-computer/telephone, in which looking at it makes your eyesight worse, not to mention the headaches. Online tests or examinations in various forms via the Internet – another stress caused by connection quality – especially during the exam.</p> <p>I got used to this e-learning. I can even see the good things about it: I don't have to rush off to class after work, I can use the time between classes to do something at home, I can listen to a lecture while sitting comfortably on the sofa drinking coffee, I can take notes on my laptop, which gives me a chance to read in a while and it doesn't tire my hand as much. How wonderful.</p> <p>– Winter exams, I was glad it was remotely because I am a very stressful person. Here I was able to breathe a sigh of relief because I didn't have to be in a big classroom and take all those exams “face to face” with lecturers. At home I did very well passing the courses one by one, but the stress was still there, fortunately not as much as if it had all taken place in person.</p> <p>– The big plus of e-learning is that I do not have to commute to the university, because I have over a hundred kilometers to Olsztyn. Studying online gives me the opportunity to save time and money. The time I would spend on commuting, I can spend on studying, reading literature, working at home, walking with my dog or gardening. I also save money on accommodation.</p> <p>– I'm getting tired of it. I feel like I'm starting to choke in my own room. I wonder if the fuss about finding classrooms would be better already.</p>
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Source: Author's own study.

Above, the meanings that pre-school and early-school pedagogy students gave to their educational and private COVID everyday life were presented. One can unequivocally conclude that it was a difficult or even very difficult time for all memoirists. COVID-19 has taken health, often life, but also a sense of family, professional and financial security.

At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that despite these adversities, students writing memoirs found in themselves the strength to continue, i.e. looking for work, “securing” child care, undertaking further education. They were able to cope with remote university everyday life and at the same time enrich their knowledge in various areas and acquire various competences. However, they remained aware that “there was an unfortunate virus” and they wished: “May we avoid it!”.

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