



Reports



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Report from the 4th National Scientific Conference from the series “Child – a digital native at school”

On 23 March 2019 the 4th National Scientific Conference “Child – a digital native at school” took place. It was organised by the Laboratory of Early School Pedagogy, the Department of Early Education and the Branch of the Polish Pedagogical Society in Olsztyn. The event was held under the honorary patronage of the Rector of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (UWM) and the Polish Pedagogical Society. The main direction of considerations in the series of meetings is the relationship between new media and education, while the issues of this year’s edition focused on the theme of the “Digital environment for education”. The invitation from the organizers was accepted for the fourth time by representatives of various circles, who took part in plenary sessions, specific problem sections and workshops. Among the conference participants were researchers from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Warsaw University, the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, the University in Białystok, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad, the Centre for Social Prevention and a large representation of employees and students of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. Among the guests were also teachers, psychologists, librarians and methodological advisors representing schools, kindergartens, libraries and teachers’ in-service training centres from the Warmia and Mazury Voivodship.

The guests were welcomed by the Chairperson of the Conference Organizing Committee, dr hab. Marzenna Nowicka, Prof. UWM, followed by the Vice-Chancellor for Human Resources, dr hab. Sławomir Przybyliński, Prof. UWM and the Dean of WNS, dr hab. Joanna Ostrouch-Kamimińska, Prof. UWM.

The conference began with the results of the competition “My digital world – episodes from student life” and the presentation of the awarded films, the subject matter of which corresponded with the issues discussed during the conference. The organiser of the competition was the Olsztyn Branch of the Polish Pedagogical Society. The jury, chaired by Dr Wiktor Sawczuk, awarded three works and awarded two distinctions. A detailed account of the competition can be found at <http://wns.uwm.edu.pl/sprawozdanie-z-konkursu-moj-cyfrowy-swiat-epizody-z-uczniowskiego-zycia>.

During the plenary sessions, dr hab. prof. UWM Marzenna Nowicka gave a speech entitled *The development potential of the digital environment*, which was an introduction to the subject

matter of the conference. It was a retrospective look at the three previous conferences held in the same representative hall of "Stara Kotłownia" in 2016-2019. The Chair of the Conference recalled the main topics of those meetings and the directions of deliberations, recalling the key speakers whose speeches were part of the achievements of the Conference and presented publications which were the aftermath of the previous meetings.

The opening lecture entitled *Education in times of idiocracy – new challenges and tasks* – was delivered by prof. dr hab. inż. Janusz Morbitzer. Its aim was to show the essence and causes of the phenomenon of idiocracy, also known as an epidemic of stupidity, and ways to prevent it, to present the new role of the teacher in the school of the digital era, as well as to outline the idea of education towards wisdom and spirituality. In the first part of the lecture, Professor Morbitzer drew attention to the context in which contemporary education takes place. It is created by phenomena present in the sphere of technology – the ubiquity of digital media, in the sphere of culture – postmodernism with its multitude of truths and the idea of unlimited freedom, finally, in the sphere of civilisation transformations – the era of anthropocene, the reign of man-destroyer. In the further part of his speech, the Professor described, especially in the area of perception, imagination and thinking, the "digital natives" – the generation "born with a computer mouse in their hand", juxtaposing them with "the generation of the printed book". The speaker devoted a lot of time in his speech to the discussion of the phenomenon of idiocracy, defining concepts such as stupidity, fanaticism, the agony of knowledge, illiteracy or mediocrity in the context of human use of digital media. An interesting part of the speech, especially for the staff of schools and kindergartens present at the lecture, was an indication of the role of the teachers in a world dominated by modern media. The Professor describes their role as preparing pupils to be architects of their own knowledge. In the last part of the lecture, the listeners had the opportunity to learn about the Professor's vision of the new school and the tasks of the teacher, which is to accompany the pupil on the road to self-fulfilment, i.e. to move from the role of a "wise man on the stage" to a "guide in the background". Professor Morbitzer's lecture abounded in accurate quotations from the works of great thinkers, poets and scientists, which perfectly correlated with the presented ideas.

The next guest of the plenary session was prof. dr hab. Marlena Plebańska, with a lecture *STEAM lessons: how to teach competences of the future*. The speaker discussed the assumptions of STEAM as a model of future education, used to support holistic human development in five thematic blocks, whose English names were used to create the name of the model: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ART and MATHEMATICS, and presented the possibilities of applying this approach to the development of "future competences" among students, necessary to function in a rapidly changing world dominated by new technologies. Photos from STEAM lessons conducted with younger schoolchildren, during which pupils prepared nesting boxes for birds as part of an educational project, served as an illustration for the presented model. Professor Plebańska also presented a model of a room arranged for the needs of classes according to the STEAM model, with space for several types of activities typical for this approach.

Dr hab. Natalia Walter was the last speaker in the plenary session and gave a lecture on *Digital support for children's reading. The role of audiobooks in elementary education*. In the first part of the lecture, the speaker recreated the history of audiobooks, and then presented research on the impact of spoken books on the psychosocial functioning of children with dyslexia. She emphasized several advantages of using audiobooks in working with children (e.g. conveying

content in a clearer and more lively way, promoting a higher level of reading, shaping the passion for reading, increasing the level of understanding of content). In the last part of the lecture, the conference participants were presented with the results of research conducted by the speaker with the participation of two research groups (children from a comprehensive school, age 8-9 years; children from a non-public school, age 7-9 years). During the experiments the pupils listened to the texts read by the teacher and audiobooks, and then answered the questions related to these texts. In the final considerations, the author presented conclusions from her own research, drawing attention to the developmental benefits of using audiobooks for children, which include: development of auditory attention and imagination, development of linguistic awareness, increasing verbal fluency, improving correct pronunciation, understanding and learning of new idioms, etc.

The plenary session was followed by workshops, conducted by experts in the use of modern technologies, on the following topics: *Gamification elements in the school – practical use of the ActionBound mobile application* (run by: Lidia Bielinis, MA), *Immersion in a digital environment. Head on top* (run by Jolanta Okuniewska, MA), *A STEAM lesson – robotic theatre* (run by prof. Marlena Plebańska), *How to teach (programming) thinking from an early age?* (run by Iwona Brzózka-Złotnicka, MA).

In the specific problem sections, with the participation of 28 speakers, three leading themes were discussed:

1. *A child in a digital environment – in search of solutions.*
2. *Supporting the potential of young people in the digital environment.*
3. *Academic digital environment – (un)exploited opportunities.*

The speeches in the first problem section focused on the topic of *A child in a digital environment – in search for solutions*. The speakers characterized the digital competences of children and assigned them important roles in the everyday life and school life of young people. The speeches raised the issue of risks related to the use of digital technologies and the responsibility of adults (parents and teachers) for the safety of children in cyberspace. However, more attention was paid to the educational potential of new technologies, reflected, among other things, in pupils taking responsibility for learning. The participants of the section were also interested in the teacher's themselves and their digital competences, as opposed to a sense of being lost in the world of digital technologies.

The topic of the second section, *Supporting the potential of young people in the digital environment*, was to focus on the problems of young people in the digital environment, with an emphasis on supporting the potential (in the broad sense of the term) of young ICT recipients. However, the age limit turned out to be fluid, as e.g. both children, young people and adults are interested in computer games, which was highlighted in several presentations. Their joint message was to stress the educational potential of games, e.g. because of the rules, which are not far from the real world.

In the last section, entitled *Academic digital environment – (un)exploited opportunities*, papers on three main topics were presented. The first one concerned the digital world of students in/for their academic and non-university education. It showed the Internet resources used by students in the scope of broadly understood educational needs and specialist vocational and educational programs. The second problematic issue were academic proposals for the use of Internet tools in school education. This included examples of cooperation between academics and students in the implementation of projects based on the use of digital instruments. The third

field of considerations mentioned in the papers included a reflection on relations between individuals and digital media in the context of two important characteristics: searching for identity in the digital world and succumbing to manipulation of the digital media.

The wide spectrum of problems raised by the participants of the conference deserves to be emphasized, as well as the good atmosphere of the meeting, encouraging questions and discussions. Although the conference had a rather national dimension, the presence of two researchers from Russia, from the I. Kant Baltic University in Kaliningrad was greatly appreciated. The participation of young academicians students and doctoral students from several academic centers in Poland was also an advantage of work in the sections.

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