DIGITAL WELLBEING

Natalia Walter

I. DEFINITION ASPECTS

In this part of the study, we will take a close look at the digital wellbeing of students and our own – how to take care of it and how to deal with situations in which it is disturbed.

Digital wellbeing should be primarily associated with:

a. addiction to technology,

b. undesirable habits in the use of technology,

c. optimal (balanced) use of technology.

The correct answer is **c**. Optimal (healthy, balanced) use of technology is the correct meaning of digital wellbeing. Quite often, we inaccurately compare this term with unwanted habits related to the use of the phone or other digital media (it's like associating the use of the phone with unhealthy eating habits; See also Sutton 2017) or with ailments that represent digital malaise, such as technology addiction (Lee, Lee, Park 2019). To put it bluntly – for many people, the synonym of digital wellbeing is the infrequent (or time-limited) use of digital media, i.e. a "digital diet" or "digital detox". This is somewhat surprising, because the concept of general wellbeing is not (and should not be) understood as the absence of adverse phenomena, but rather as a state of "optimal psychological experience and functioning" (Deci, Ryan 2008, p. 1).

What have the last 20 years, especially the pandemic period, given us in terms of new technologies? Certainly the fact that we are surrounded by digital media or even immersed in their world. They are present in our lives every day – from communication, through planning the day, using maps, creating, working, educating, performing everyday activities (such as shopping) to leisure activities. We are always connected, online all the time (Vorderer, Krömer, Schneider 2016). Research from a few years ago shows that we touch smartphones all the

time – the daily number of clicks of one person can exceed 2600 (Winnick, Zolna 2016). People spend almost 3 hours a day with screen media (Deng et al. 2019), and in the case of heavy users, this time even exceeds 5 hours (Deng et al. 2019; Sewall et al. 2020). The pandemic has ramped values up even higher, also in the context of children and young people who spent their days with the media.

Although the use of mobile devices brings many benefits, it can also be associated with various problems. For example, the use of smartphones can (but does not have to and does not for everyone!):

- distract from work and study (Duke, Montag 2017; Rosen, Carrier, Cheever 2013),

- lead to procrastination, i.e. postponement of tasks (Schnauber-Stockmann, Meier, Reinecke 2018),

- cause sleep and health problems (Gustafsson et al. 2017; Lanaj, Johnson, Barnes 2014),

- evoke negative emotions such as anxiety, and also lead to emotional exhaustion (Büchi, Festic and Latzer 2019).

As far back as a few years ago, research showed that both adolescents and adults notice that they spend a lot of time on digital media. Many people have also expressed a desire to reduce screen time, but such attempts have often failed (Jiang 2018; *Global Mobile Consumer Survey* [...] 2017).

All this may suggest that digital wellbeing is difficult to achieve. There is a kind of paradox there – on the one hand, digital media give us incredible autonomy, support us in many activities, and some of them only they make possible at all. On the other hand, this autonomy can be compromised as mobile technologies take control of our thoughts and behaviors. Although the use of the screen is pleasant in itself, we can also feel it as excessive, inappropriate and sometimes even problematic, for example when it hinders contacts with children (Vanden Abeele, Abels, Hendrickson 2020), reduces productivity (Duke, Montag 2017), evokes negative feelings (Aalbers et al. 2019), leads to dangerous behavior, such as texting while driving (Bayer, Campbell 2012) or we consider them simply a waste of time (Vanden Abeele 2021).

Using the definition of Vandeen Abeele (2021), we can describe digital wellbeing as a subjective, individual experience of balance between the possibilities offered by mobile connectivity and its drawbacks. Digital wellbeing is achieved when we experience perfectly controlled pleasure and benefit from the functional support with minimal loss of control. As an example, we can think of going to the mountains. A smartphone in our pocket or backpack would give us a sense of confidence that if necessary, we will find the right route, and in a hazardous situation we can quickly call for help. It helps us orient ourselves in the area, recognize plant and animal species or check the weather. We can also take a picture of beautiful views. When does having a phone with you become problematic? Probably when, instead of looking around, we hide behind the screen and do not experience all the things that can only be taken in through direct experience. Or when we walk the entire trail with a phone to our ear, ignoring the people who accompany us on the journey.

This brings us to the heart of the problem: how to exploit the advantages of technology and at the same time avoid having a sense of loss of control? This problem seems to us to be particularly urgent in the context of the pupils with whom we work every day. Where is the line between reasonable, justified use of technology in lessons and excessive, problematic use of devices? And is getting rid of them completely by hiding them in cabinets/boxes or a repressive regulatory ban the only solution?

To completely free ourselves from thinking about digital wellbeing in negative terms only, we will avail ourselves of the PISA study (*What contributes* [...] 2015) concerning the general well-being of pupils, which will help us identify the most important aspects of digital wellbeing.

Source: Own work.

Digital wellbeing encompasses psychological, physical, social and cognitive aspects.

The psychological (emotional) component is related to life satisfaction, a sense of purpose and self-awareness. In a digital context, it concerns functioning in social networks, self-fulfillment, self-promotion in the media and a sense of fulfillment through posting things online.

Sometimes it also refers to improving wellbeing by telling stories about oneself and keeping an autotherapeutic diary in the form of a blog or a social media profile.

The physical component in the digital context seems to be the most paradoxical, although it does not have to be that way. On the one hand, we have access to online knowledge resources about a healthy lifestyle, diets, recipes, exercise, as well as applications and devices mobilizing to physical activity. On the other hand, digital media consume time that could be spent on activity. They can therefore contribute to obesity, back problems, worsen eyesight, cause difficulty falling asleep. By the way, many solutions are now used to mitigate these negative effects. For example, users are encouraged to turn on filters that eliminate the blue color of screen light, which has a stimulating and detrimental effect on sight. Increasingly, the users are also reminded of principles of ergonomics of using on-screen media, e.g. keeping an appropriate distance from the screen, performing eye exercises, blinking, etc. Digital technologies can therefore distract us from activity and cause physical problems, but they can also encourage and accompany exercise.

In the social component, interpersonal contacts are the most important. Technology often facilitates or even enables them, although disturbing or hindering relationships may also be involved. Digital tools can become an irreplaceable aid in social contacts, including educational ones. It's worth pointing out that during the pandemic, technology was the only way to sustain peer interaction. We will mention this again when discussing the basic myths related to this topic.

Finally: the cognitive component, which consists of access to information, as well as help in solving cognitive problems, learning and remembering content.

In addition, it is worth adding that, according to UNESCO (*The Multi-Disciplinary Forum* [...] 2022), the digital environment (like any other) can contribute to improving wellbeing if it:

- encourages acceptance and empathy among users;
- strengthens their sense of competence;
- develops the ability and motivation to act independently according to the "internal compass";
- develops the ability and willingness to consciously search and act in areas that people using technology are interested in.

For more information on digital wellbeing, see *https://digitalwellbeing.org/*.

If the issues described in the text are of particular interest to you, or you yourself face a similar problem in your school, we encourage you to read the following materials.

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DIGITAL WELLBEING

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II. EPIDEMIOLOGY

Is the following statement true or false?

Most teenagers nowadays struggle with impaired digital wellbeing, and their use of the internet should be described as problematic.

This statement is **false**. One of the most frequently highlighted digital media problems today is its excessive use, especially by the youngest users. Attention is paid to the time spent at smartphones or computers (although this aspect is a subject of critical scientific analysis; we also elaborate on this issue in detail in other chapters of this module). Digital wellbeing disorders and their consequences for mental and physical health are widely publicised. This has become particularly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns forcing remote education and work as well as mediated social contacts. But when we look closely at the results of scientific research, it turns out that problematic use of the Internet is not as widespread as many teachers, parents or even representatives of the world of science believe.

Let's start by defining what disrupted digital wellbeing is. It occurs when a person is preoccupied with the use of technology (e.g., the Internet) so much that she or he feels an irresistible urge to use them for longer than intended (Shapira et al. 2003). Being torn away from the screen then results in stress, for example. Such a situation is a criterion for a broader phenomenon that older studies linked to addiction to digital media (typically Internet), defining it as behavioral addiction without the use of narcotic drugs (cf. Young 1996; Griffiths 1996). However, due to the wide variety of issues and various diagnostic difficulties, it was decided that the term „problematic Internet use" would be used. Despite the doubts described above, in our study we use the term „problematic use of digital media". We define such behavior as excessive (or even improper) use of these media, which can cause various types of problems: psychological, social, educational or professional (Laconi et al. 2019; Tomczyk et al. 2020). It is worth adding that, according to many researchers, this phenomenon can be identified to

some extent as FOMO (*fear of missing out*), understood as „an overwhelming fear that other people at a given moment are experiencing very satisfying experiences in which I am not participating" (Przybylski et al. 2013).

The use of information and communication technologies is widespread among children from an early age. According to Eurostat research, in 2019 in the European Union, 94% of people aged 16-29 used the Internet on a daily basis (in the entire population this percentage was 77%). As many as 92% of young people used their mobile phones to access the Internet outside of home or school (52% used a laptop in this way). Young people were much more likely than the entire adult population to be active on social networks (*Being young in Europe today* (...) 2020). Similar data was obtained as part of the ySKILLS project: in 2021, Polish youth declared that they used the Internet most often on smartphones (92%), and less often using computers (48%) or tablets (6%) (Pyżalski et al. 2022).

Young people are the most widely studied group of respondents in the context of problematic digital media use, probably because they have been identified as the main risk group. The research is usually conducted using one of two questionnaires: those prepared by Kimberly Young (1998) or Mark D. Griffiths (1996). These tools name specific symptoms that may indicate that a problem is present. In the Young questionnaire, these include:

- preoccupation with the Internet;
- increasing the amount of time spent in the online world to achieve satisfaction;
- lack of control over spending time on the Internet;
- experiencing feelings of depression, anxiety or irritability when access to the Internet is restricted;
- inability to plan the time spent on the Web;
- social and personal problems due to strong preoccupation with the virtual world;
- lying to the significant others in order to hide one's preoccupation with the Internet;
- treating the Internet as a form of escape from difficulties, problems, unpleasant emotional states.

Griffiths points to:
- dominance (using the Web as a priority for day-to-day functioning);
- mood change (using the Internet to feel better);
- increased tolerance (increased need to use the network);
- withdrawal syndrome (irritability, anxiety, irritability at times of limited Internet access);
- conflict (between the user and their family, friends, or school duties);
- relapses (intense, uncontrolled returning to the problematic use of the virtual world).

The report of the Empowering Children Foundation shows that among Polish teenagers aged 12-17, **problematic Internet use (PIU) occurs in 11.9% of the population**, in which 11.4% are persons with partial PIU symptoms, and only **0.5% – with severe PIU symptoms**. The problem is more common in girls than in boys and in older (15–17 years) than younger (12–14 years) adolescents (Makaruk et al. 2019). Similar results were obtained by EU Kids Online 2018 researchers: the vast majority of respondents (82.4%) did not declare any severe PIU symptoms at the highest level. **Less than one in ten adolescents has 1 PIU symptom at the highest level**. 2 symptoms affect 4.7% of respondents (Tomczyk 2019).

Risk factors for PIU are: severe school stress, experiencing peer violence (in particular in multiple forms), negative attitude towards school, and age.
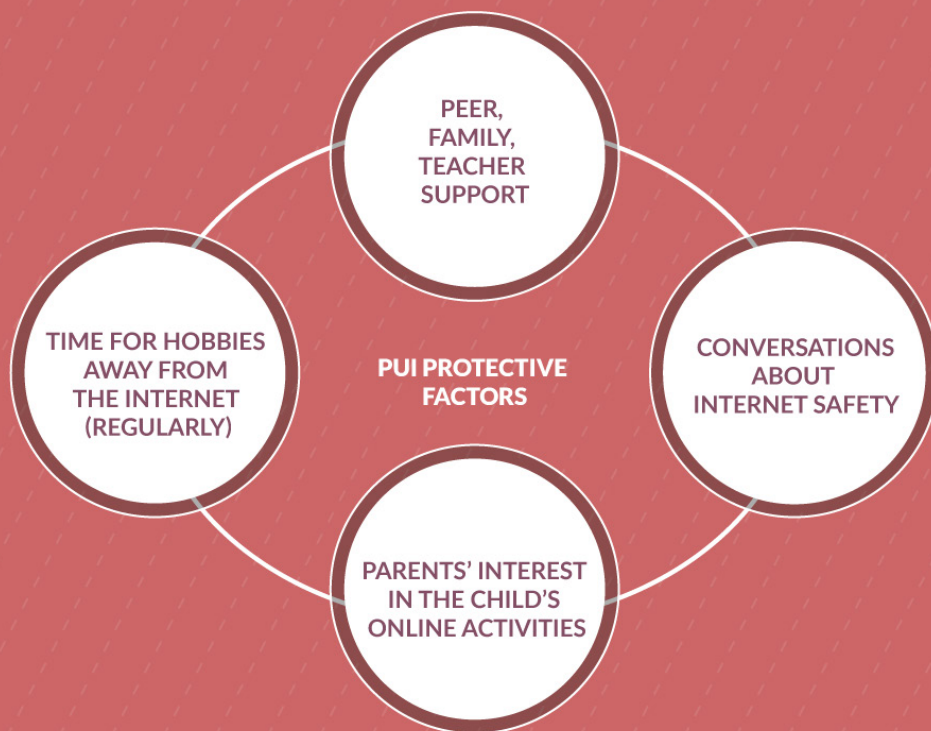

PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE (PIU) RISK FACTORS

EXPERIENCING STRONG SCHOOL STRESS

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TO SCHOOL

PUI RISK FACTORS

EXPERIENCING PEER VIOLENCE

AGE
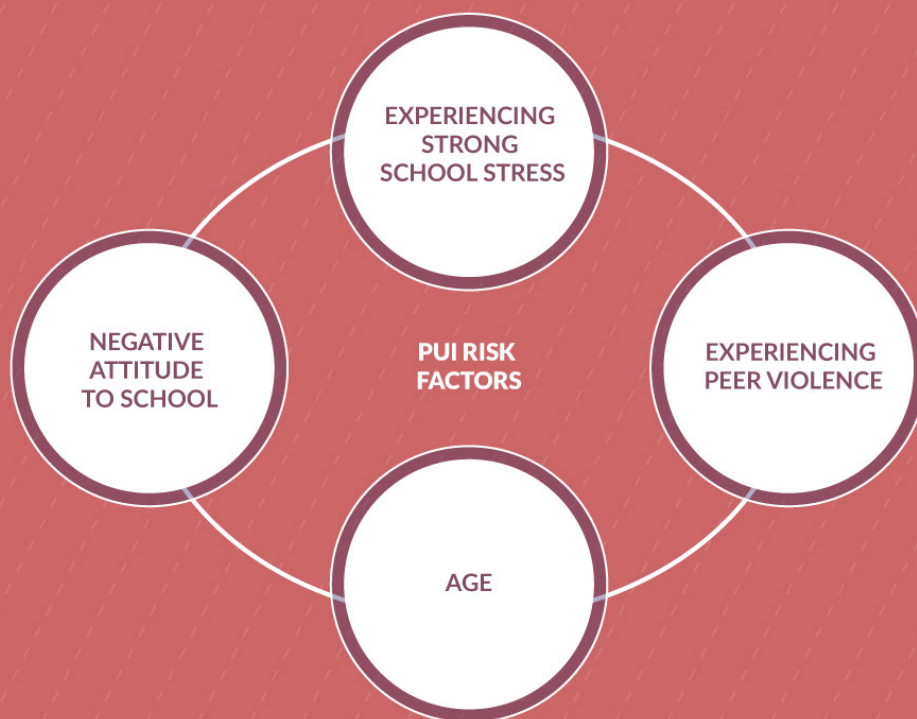
Source: Own work.

Protective factors, on the other hand, include family, peer and teacher support, parents talking to their child about online safety, parents' interest in their child's online activities, and the child's spending time on non-internet hobbies on a regular basis (Makaruk et al. 2019).

PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE (PIU)

PEER, FAMILY, TEACHER SUPPORT

TIME FOR HOBBIES AWAY FROM THE INTERNET (REGULARLY)

PUI PROTECTIVE FACTORS

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY

PARENTS' INTEREST IN THE CHILD'S ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Source: Own work.

Digital wellbeing disturbance may also be associated with dangerous content available online, i.e. materials that may evoke negative emotions or promote dangerous behavior (Polak, Różycka, Marańda 2014). These may include:

- Pornographic content available without any warning, including materials containing child sexual abuse;

- Content that depicts violence, physical injury, and body deformations, such as images of accident victims, animal cruelty;

- Content that calls for self-harm, suicide or harmful behavior, such as the anorexia movement (pro-ana), encouraging the use of dangerous substances;

- Discriminatory content, incitement to hostility and even hatred towards various social groups or individuals.

According to the EU Kids Online research, more than half (54.4%) of young people have been exposed to dangerous content online (Pyżalski et al. 2019). Almost every third person surveyed has seen scenes of cruelty and violence online, and one in four – content about self-harm, pornographic material, content encouraging offending others or of discriminatory nature. Sexting affected 3.8% of young people, and 7% of the sample of older adolescents surveyed received requests for intimate photos in the last year. Another issue is peer cyberbullying (understood as a situation experienced by the victim or initiated by the perpetrator on a regular basis). It is quite a rare phenomenon – as a perpetrator it concerns every twentieth person examined, and as a victim – slightly above 7%. This phenomenon, however, should not be underestimated. One should bear in mind that it affects not only victims and perpetrators, but also witnesses. It is also linked to direct (face-to-face) peer violence. The EU Kids study also noted that almost one in three teenage people has encountered hate speech online in the last year, most often based on physical appearance, nationality or origin.

Problematic digital media use can be associated with various health problems, including mental ones, e.g. depression (Dalbudak et al. 2013). In a cross-sectional study of 11,356 European adolescents (mean age around 15 years), Kaess et al. (2014) found that pathological Internet use is associated with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and may be associated with suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Recent research published in Nature Communications shows that there is a link between young people's use of social media and feelings of satisfaction with life. Longitudinal analyses of more than 17,000 people (10–21 years old) suggest clear "development windows" in social media sensitivity during adolescence – more frequent use in these periods is associated with a decrease in the assessment of life satisfaction a year later. These windows occur in boys aged 14–15 and 19 years, and in girls aged 11–13 and 19 years (Orben, Przybylski, Blakemore 2022).

If the issues described in the text are of particular interest to you, or you are facing a similar problemin your school, we encourage you to read the following materials.

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DIGITAL WELLBEING

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III. A COMMON MYTH

Is the following statement true or false?
Screen time is a single, common value that defines the totality of access to different technologies over a given period of time, such as one day.

The sentence is **false**. This is one of several well-known myths related to digital wellbeing. As noted by Prof. A. Przybylski from the Oxford Internet Institute (2019), we live in a multi-screen world – we are dealing with screens of smartwatches, smartphones, computers, TVs, devices, cinemas, built-in screens and others. We do a lot of different things on them. To aggregate the time spent using all these screens into one common value is pointless. After all, we often operate on several screens at the same time – while watching a movie, we check something on a smartphone or computer, and sometimes at the same time we also use a smartwatch.

Unfortunately, many people, both from the scientific and non-scientific world, perceive screen time through the prism of „digital dualism" – juxtaposing the natural world of live, authentic conversations, relationships and real experiences with the digital world of artificial experiences („virtual world"), which is supposed to degrade the human experience. This is a myth: digital screen time exists in our natural world and is an integral part of it (Przybylski 2019). The online and offline worlds intertwine and it is very difficult nowadays to clearly pinpoint the time when we are really „disconnected". We run with smartwatches, drive cars with navigation running, and on walks we recognize plants or animals using nature applications. Such examples go on and on.

There are many more myths around digital technologies in the common discourse. We will discuss two more that seem particularly important to us.

MYTH 2:
SCREEN TIME CAN BE ACCURATELY MEASURED.

As previously mentioned, screen time is so varied and non-linear that it is difficult to measure it properly. Reports and opinion polls on how many hours we spend in front of different screens are always inaccurate. Currently, we need different data, which is why we investigate not only screen time, but also what we devote it to (Przybylski 2019). Similar conclusions were reached by the American Pediatric Association, which until recently set rigid time constraints for the safe use of screen media by children, whereas now it clearly indicates that it is necessary to determine not only the time, but also the type of activities engaged in. It is one thing to passively watch animated cartoons, and another, for example, remote video call with grandparents who talk to the child, read it books and tell colorful stories.

MYTH 3:
SCREEN TIME CAUSES PROBLEMS AND IMPAIRS DIGITAL WELLBEING.

There is a grain of truth in this myth, although there is little evidence linking digital media to the problems of people using them. This is due to things such as difficulties associated with data collection (which is based mainly on self-reporting by the respondent). In addition, many studies on the effects of using these technologies rely on correlation data that, by definition, cannot identify the origins of a given phenomenon. As Przybylski (2019) suggests, ice cream sales are correlated with an increase in murders, but one does not cause the other – both are associated with warmer weather. After taking into account other variables, it turns out that more than 90% of actions affecting a young person's happiness have nothing to do with how much time they spend on the Internet. However, there are situations in which screen time is all the activity a person does. Things like this happened during lockdowns in the pandemic. Research, including Ptaszek et al. (2021), showed that it made many students and teachers feel bad. Teachers even said they felt like they lived at work. One should bear in mind, however, that this was an exceptional situation that meant that no offline activities were possible. There was no possibility of outdoor movement (or this possibility was very limited) or participation in activities developing interests or taking part in cultural events outside the world. Therefore, there were no factors mitigating the effects of excessive use of technology. There are solid studies that link screen time to a sense of psychological wellbeing, but they involve this additional balancing factor – spending time on activities offline (Twenge et al. 2018; Oberle et al. 2020).

What are the consequences of these myths? Firstly, stiff limits on the time of use of screen media, e.g. by children, are commonplace. The decision of the American Pediatric Association (stating that these technologies are safe from the age of two) was devoid of any scientific basis, but it gave parents a sense of caring for the wellbeing of their children. We do not have data on how many hours a day children and young people can devote to screen media and from what age they should have access to it to be safe for them. Such data is impossible to obtain. Nor can one treat all screen time equally, because it is extremely diverse in terms of quality.

Another consequence of the myths presented above is monetization of anxiety. Various solutions (e.g. applications) are created and sold to „take care of digital wellbeing" by controlling the time of use of a given medium. Training, coaching or mentoring services are developed to help achieve digital wellbeing. In some countries, this anxiety translates into decisions and regulations, e.g. restricting access to online computer games (a solution similar to prohibition).

And finally – these myths result in harmful solutions for the school and home. Setting a fixed time or banning the use of screen media in certain situations are just some of them.

If you are particularly interested in the issues described in the text, or if you yourself face a similar problem in your school, we encourage you to read the following materials.

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DIGITAL WELLBEING

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IV. TYPICALLY AT SCHOOL…

What is the best way to take care of the digital wellbeing of teachers and pupils at school?

a. The use of digital media within the school premises should be limited as much as possible (healthy time is time without technology).

b. The use of digital media should be limited to some extent, i.e. the use of technology should be allowed during computer science classes (only on school equipment, e.g. in a computer lab) and breaks.

c. Digital devices, including those brought by pupils, should be used during various lessons.

The correct answer is **c**. We will not develop the students' digital competences by hindering their access to ICT. Let us remind that the EU Digital Competence Framework for Citizens DigComp 2.1 includes aspects such as: searching for information, evaluation of digital data, information and content, active citizenship through digital technologies, digital content creation or problem solving, but also **protection of health and wellbeing** (Carratero, Vuorikari, Punie 2017).

Measures applied by schools related to digital welfare typically include various types of prohibitions and restrictions that are designed to hinder or prevent pupils from using digital media at school. This is due to the previously discussed belief that this wellbeing means no access to technology. In short, a child without digital media is a happy and fulfilled child. Teachers and parents think back with nostalgia about memories of their analogue childhood, in which social contacts were predominantly direct and meetings of children took place in the yard. This contrast between the modern teenager and one born in the 1970s or 1980s is so great that it is difficult for adults to see the advantages in the new ways of communication among young people. In addition, many media reports highlight the detrimental

effects of the use of digital media. Although no research actually confirms it, problematic Internet use is made out to be the everyday life of every family (not only those in which the phenomenon is indeed present).

Schools, whose statutory obligations include not only education, but also upbringing, want to meet the expectations of parents and teachers regarding the digital wellbeing of pupils. Guided by not always appropriate premises, some of which we discussed in the previous paragraph, they try to introduce systemic solutions, mainly of the command-and-prohibition kind. Statutes and regulations of institutions incorporate provisions prohibiting the use of private devices of students (mainly smartphones). Let us look at those for a moment.

Most statutes or regulations contain the following or similar wording: "The pupil is obliged to turn off the mobile phone and other electronic equipment before the lesson", "It is admissible to use a mobile phone and other electronic devices during school trips with the consent of the tour leader" or: "All pupils are strictly forbidden to use mobile phones while at school. In exceptional, justified situations, the pupil may use a mobile phone with the consent of the school employee/staff and in his/her presence.' Therefore, systems of formal social control prevail, often supplemented by sanction mechanisms (if a person is caught using a mobile phone on school premises, then...).

It is a separate issue whether the school has the right to ban pupils from using private mobile phones at all. Well, it has not. Pursuant to Article 99 of the Law on School Education (2017), the school by-laws define the obligations of pupils in the scope including "compliance with the conditions for bringing and using mobile phones and other electronic devices on school grounds". Therefore, the law does not allow for a total ban on bringing smartphones to school. The only European country that has decided to take the most radical step, i.e. a total ban on the use of smartphones in schools, is France.

How do other European countries handle this? What solutions do they implement? Many educationally developed countries, such as Finland, which is at the forefront, not only do not apply such bans, but even encourage people to bring their own devices to school. The BYOD (bring your own device) principle means that learners use their devices (computers, tablets or smartphones) at school and this is an integral element almost all lessons. Of course, technologies are not used all the time, but their use is a natural means for running projects or solving interdisciplinary tasks. Student devices allow searching for information, creation of own work and civic engagement.

The prohibitions contained in school regulations backfired during the pandemic. Teachers who had previously hunted digital smugglers and bathroom gamers like law enforcement officers, suddenly began to require the use of technology during online classes. Moreover, without digital tools, such lessons could not take place at all. What happened to the regula-

tions at that time? What about bans on smartphones in class? We know well from research that the schools which best coped with remote education in the first months of the pandemic were those in which the use of technology had been order of the day previously.

Let us stress once again: digital wellbeing does not mean a lack of access to technology, but a balance benefits and losses. Digital tools at school cannot be banned – our latest pandemic experience shows that. However, too much technology is a bad thing, because then, as in the case of the complete lack of their use, educational effectiveness decreases. If various types of challenges arise (or we anticipate that they may arise) resulting from the risky use of screen media by children and young people, e.g. unethical behavior (hate, ridicule, recording and dissemination of images of others, etc.), preventive and intervention educational measures are necessary. Ideas on how to work with pupils to take care of their wellbeing can be found in the next part of our study, but here we also recommend a few solutions and proposals for educational activities:

1. IMPACT (Interdisciplinary Model for Counteracting Aggression and Technological Cyberbullying), an innovative prophylactic program for schools, which aims to prevent the phenomenon of cyberbullying among young people aged 13-16: *https://impact.fdds.pl/*

2. Materials of the Empowering Children Foundation on the use of digital media by children and young people: *https://edukacja.fdds.pl/course/index.php?categoryid=33*

3. The Digital Education at School in Europe report, which points to two dimensions of digital education in schools – the development of digital competences of learners and teachers, and pedagogical use of IT tools to support and transform teaching and learning: *https://www.frse.org.pl/czytelnia/edukacja-cyfrowa-w-szkolach-w-europie*

4. Scripts of lessons in the field of media education, published by the Nowoczesna Polska Foundation: *https://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/*

5. Scripts of lessons on taking care of the digital wellbeing of children and parents prepared by the School with Class Foundation as part of the "Be Internet Awesome" program: *https://eng.szkolazklasa.org.pl/materials/english/*

If you are particularly interested in the issues described in the text, or if you yourself face a similar problem in your school, we encourage you to read the following materials.

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DIGITAL WELLBEING

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V. HOW CAN ONE INFLUENCE IT?

Which of the following educational activities are most effective in helping to take care of digital wellbeing at school?

a. Introduction of a ban on the use of digital media on school premises (except for computer science lessons).

b. Encouraging pupils to engage in a variety of offline activities and to self-control and self-reflection in their use of digital media.

c. Focusing on lessons (e.g. homeroom hours) on the negative aspects of using digital media, i.e. cyberaggression, hating, sexting, etc.

The correct answer is **b**. The most effective scientifically proven wellbeing measures that teachers can take at school include:

1. encouraging pupils to engage in a variety of activities that do not involve the use of screen media, e.g. outdoor activities, contact with nature, development of unplugged interests, such as sports, artistic, prosocial activities, etc.;

2. initiating online classes which foster students' interests, support their education or encourage them to engage in civic activities or, more broadly, prosocial activities (e.g. e-volunteering);

3. organizing joint online activities involving not only pupils, but also parents/guardians and the teaching staff;

4. engaging in discussions and educational activities about self-control in the use of media and about screen principles that should be implemented in order to feel well (cf. Galpin, Taylor 2018).

One theory to explain why digital media adversely affect our wellbeing is the displacement hypothesis. It proposes that, although it is difficult to clearly determine whether technologies are good or bad, it can certainly be assumed that they replace situations or activities that have a positive impact on our wellbeing (Valkenburg and Peter 2007). Let us explain it using an example. We know that being outdoors in natural light has a positive effect on our wellbeing (health, feeling well, etc.). Using screen media, we often shy away from natural light (sometimes even cover the blinds) and stay in artificial light, often emitted only by the screen. And although artificial light itself is not particularly harmful, the lack of natural light will negatively affect our wellbeing. Same with physical activity – when using technology, we are usually not very active (to put aside situations in which the media encourage physical exercises or accompany them, such as the Google Fit app). The same can be said about contact with nature or face-to-face social interactions – technologies replace face-to-face encounters, which bring us great benefits.

What can we do about it? We should turn this situation around as often as possible and replace the use of digital media with activities that indisputably have a positive impact on our wellbeing. Research shows that initiating offline activities can mitigate the negative effects of excessive contact with technologies.

Another thing which supports digital wellbeing is finding the golden mean. Studies show that the overall wellbeing of teenagers is benefited by adequate access to social media: there can be neither too much nor too little (Przybylski, Weinstein 2017). This is a really important proposition that should radically change our efforts to minimize the time young people use digital media.

If we want young people to use digital media, it is necessary to ensure that time with them is valuable. This will not happen if we do not follow the digital interests of students or initiate joint online activities. It is necessary to integrate technologies into the daily work of the school in such a way as to clearly demonstrate that using them can contribute to the development of passions and interests, to building relationships or cognitive and social development.

How to effectively help teenagers (but also yourself!) control the quality of functioning in the network? Certainly, it is necessary to talk about what situations should be definitely avoided. Digital media should not be demonized, but it will be good practice to refer to sound scientific studies which, for example, clearly show that the use of smartphones and computers just before bedtime will negatively affect sleep quality. Various types of solutions for self-control and self-regulation can also come handy – from analog ones, such as writing down well worked out and discussed screen rules (or using from ready-made studies, e.g.: *https://www.szkolazklasa.org.pl/materialy/asy-internetu-dobrostan-cyfrowy-poradnik-dla-rodzin/* or *https://fdds.pl/co-robimy/kampanie/domowe-zasady-ekranowe.html*), to digital ones, i.e. applications created for this purpose (cf. Curts 2019).

Tracking apps: Sometimes we can have difficulty estimating how much of our day we actually spend using social media, YouTube, email, gaming and the like. There are applications that show us specific statistics and even ones that allow you to set usage limits. These include Digital Wellbeing and Your Hour for Android, ScreenTime for iOS or Space for Android and iOS.

Notifications: Another solution involves tools to manage the notifications you receive. Limiting notifications may be the first step in the fight against FOMO. Every device we use has this option. We will find it in the settings.

Online training: There are solutions available online to learn more about digital wellbeing, reflect on the use of technology in your life and inspire work on a healthy balance, e.g. Google's Introduction to Digital Balance course (*https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/internetowerewolucje/course/digital-wellbeing*) or the Digital Wellbeing course developed by University of York: (*https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/digital-wellbeing*).

If the issues described in the text are of particular interest to you, or if you are facing a similar problem in your school, we encourage you to read the following materials.

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Curts E. (2019). *Digital Wellbeing – Tools to Balance Tech and Life, Tech & Learning*, *https://www.techlearning.com/news/digital-wellbeing-tools-to-balance-tech-and-life* (accessed: 30.03.2022).

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VI. THE IMPACT OF THE TEACHER'S COMPETENCE

Is the following statement true or false?
Today's teachers need to have digital competences that help students take care of their digital wellbeing.

This is **true**, of course. The DigCompEdu competency framework for teachers, commissioned by the European Commission, provides detailed guidance on the digital skills needed for this group (Redecker 2017). The study includes 22 basic competences broken down into 5 areas:

1. professional engagement;

2. use digital resources in everyday work;

3. the use of digital technologies in the teaching-learning process,

4. using digital solutions to improve the methods of monitoring and assessment of the students' work;

5. supporting and empowering students and improving their digital competences.

The last of these competences concerns, in addition to media education or digital cooperation, also the ability to **use digital media responsibly**. This, in turn, involves taking pedagogical measures to improve the physical, mental and social wellbeing of young people when using technology. This includes enabling learners to manage risks and use digital tools safely and responsibly.
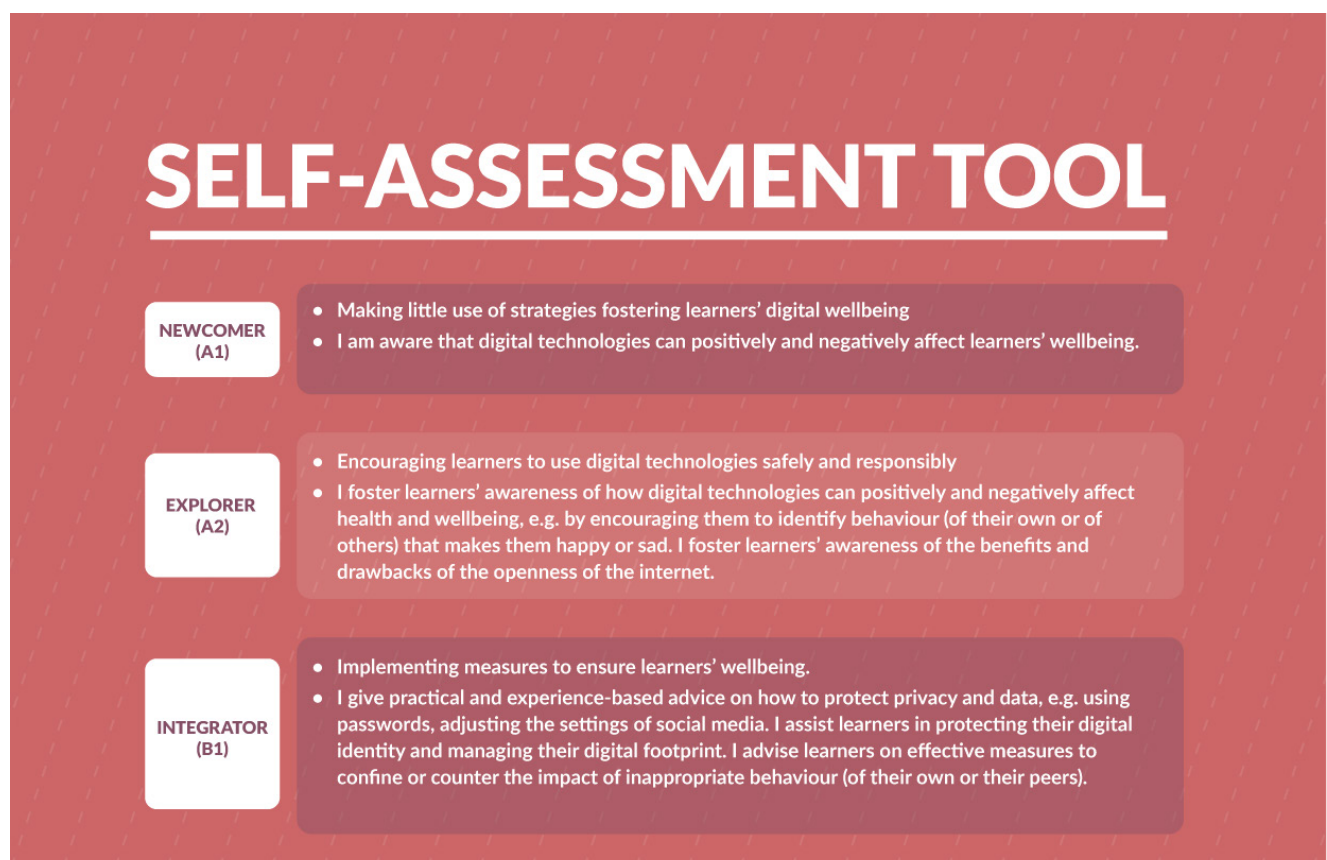
In the context of the use of technology, it is important to realize first of all that students are careful observers of the behaviors and lifestyle of adults. How they use digital media can shape the students' behavior and activity. In addition, it is worth remembering that classes developing this area of digital competences should primarily be based on providing young

people with a positive attitude to technology and encourage its creative and critical use. It is therefore necessary to enable pupils, among other things, to learn how to:
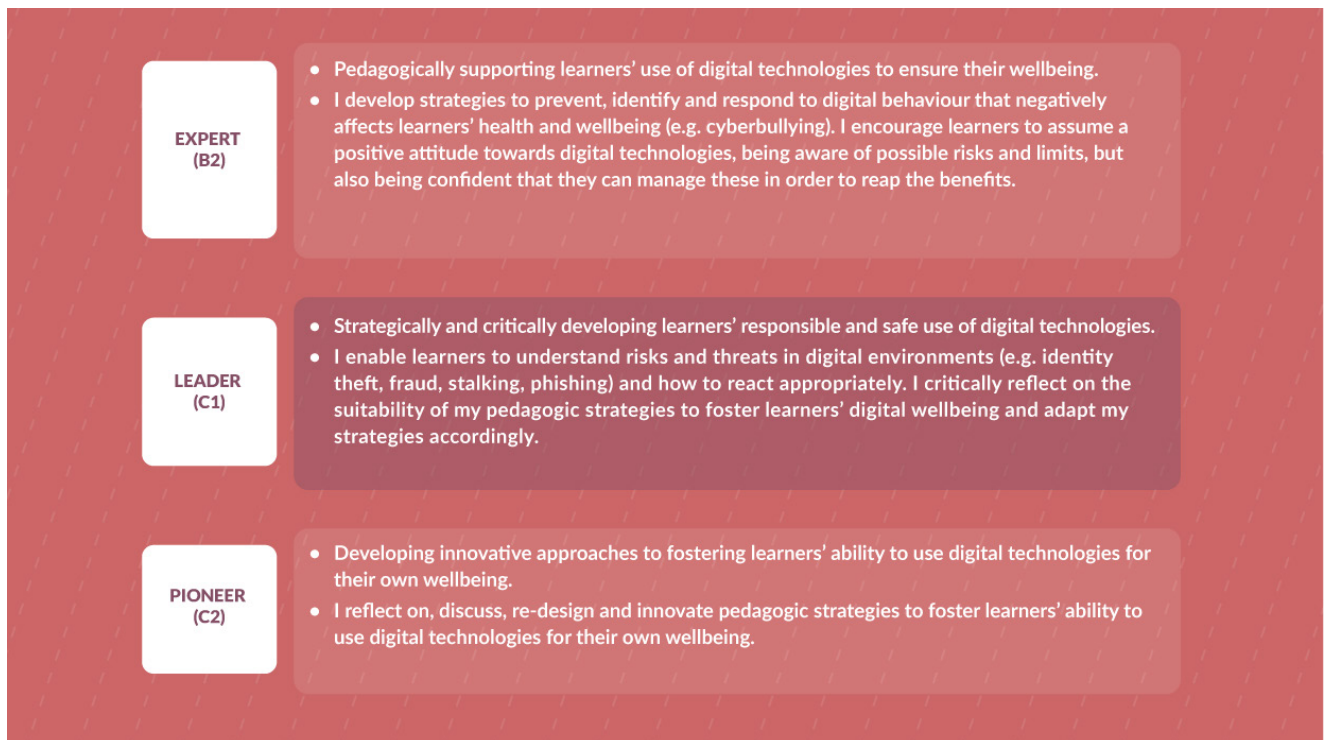
- secure their digital devices and content (such as using anti-virus programs, enabling better security settings, not clicking on suspicious links, etc.); help should also be given to understanding the risks in the digital environment;

- protect personal data and privacy in digital environments (how to use and share personal data online);

- avoid risks to physical and mental health and wellbeing associated with digital media (using solutions such as not using technology before bedtime, taking breaks); it is also important to provide pupils with information on where to report problems arising from the use of digital media and how to respond to them;

- mitigate the negative effects of technology, e.g. by taking up offline activities;

- protect themselves against possible threats in digital environments (e.g. cyberbullying).

In addition, activities should contribute to raising young people's awareness of the role of technology in civic activities and social inclusion.

Based on the DigCompEdu analysis sheet of the level of competences (in the field of responsible use of digital media), we present a tool for self-assessment (Redecker 2017):

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

NEWCOMER (A1)
- Making little use of strategies fostering learners' digital wellbeing
- I am aware that digital technologies can positively and negatively affect learners' wellbeing.

EXPLORER (A2)
- Encouraging learners to use digital technologies safely and responsibly
- I foster learners' awareness of how digital technologies can positively and negatively affect health and wellbeing, e.g. by encouraging them to identify behaviour (of their own or of others) that makes them happy or sad. I foster learners' awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of the openness of the internet.

INTEGRATOR (B1)
- Implementing measures to ensure learners' wellbeing.
- I give practical and experience-based advice on how to protect privacy and data, e.g. using passwords, adjusting the settings of social media. I assist learners in protecting their digital identity and managing their digital footprint. I advise learners on effective measures to confine or counter the impact of inappropriate behaviour (of their own or their peers).

Source: Own work.

EXPERT (B2)
- Pedagogically supporting learners' use of digital technologies to ensure their wellbeing.
- I develop strategies to prevent, identify and respond to digital behaviour that negatively affects learners' health and wellbeing (e.g. cyberbullying). I encourage learners to assume a positive attitude towards digital technologies, being aware of possible risks and limits, but also being confident that they can manage these in order to reap the benefits.

LEADER (C1)
- Strategically and critically developing learners' responsible and safe use of digital technologies.
- I enable learners to understand risks and threats in digital environments (e.g. identity theft, fraud, stalking, phishing) and how to react appropriately. I critically reflect on the suitability of my pedagogic strategies to foster learners' digital wellbeing and adapt my strategies accordingly.

PIONEER (C2)
- Developing innovative approaches to fostering learners' ability to use digital technologies for their own wellbeing.
- I reflect on, discuss, re-design and innovate pedagogic strategies to foster learners' ability to use digital technologies for their own wellbeing.

Source: Own work.

Other useful tools for self-evaluation can be found at: *https://emels.eu/pl/* and *https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie*.

If the issues described in the text are of particular interest to you, or if you are facing a similar problem in your school, we encourage you to read the following materials.

References

Redecker C. (2017). *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators*: DigCompEdu, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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SCHEME - PHILOSOPHY

Activities promoting student wellbeing (regardless of the area addressed in our project) should be implemented in a logical and coherent way involving the whole school community. What follows is a clear description of a strategic way of thinking about a specific area, important for young people's wellbeing and mental health. We show how it can be holistically addressed in the school. In order to make the strategy as practical as possible, its different stages are presented in blocks, together with questions that the school management and teaching staff need to answer at each respective stage.

Such an analysis should help the management to see whether the activities in a particular area carried out in the school follow a model that has a good chance of being effective. The analysis can provide basis for a decision about what to improve and how. Teachers can assess how appropriate in terms of the subject matter are the activities conducted in school and consider how to coordinate their individual work with them. Even the best teacher initiatives, in which a lot of time and energy is invested, are often not very effective if they are not coherent with the activities of others in the school and with a shared philosophy. Of course, it is clear that the quality of activities aimed at young people's wellbeing and the awareness of important issues in this area differ from one school to another. However, it is always worth starting where we are, with the potential we have at our disposal. It is useful to know the goal we are aiming for, namely system-wide action at a level of the school as a whole.

For each of the six thematic areas, we have prepared an extensive list of activities that can be carried out within it, with a brief description of each.

STRATEGIES

1. Is this area related to the wellbeing of pupils important in our school?

Baseline – the problem	Baseline – actions	Baseline – support and training
Have there been any major events that have made the given issue important in our school?	What activities in a particular area (effective and well-received by the community) are already being carried out by our school?	What is our knowledge of the issue in question? What training have we attended? What is our competence in the area concerned?
What data do we have from diagnostic studies (e.g. surveys of the problem at school)?	How are the activities in this area carried out by our school so far evaluated by: pupils, parents, teachers?	What knowledge and support do we lack?
Have learners, parents, teachers or anyone else reported that there are any problems/gaps in the area?	Which activities carried out by our school in this area are ineffective or have very little effect?	What support do we as a school use in a particular area? Which experts leaves, professionals and institutions are helping us?
	Which activities carried out by our school have proven to be effective, producing good or very good results?	How do we evaluate the support we already use?
	Are the activities related to this area coordinated in our school?	Are there any establishments, professionals carrying out activities in this area that are worth following or implementing?
	What actions are missing in this area?	What are the costs of the measures we want to implement, and do we have or can we get the funds for them?
		Are there entities or institutions that can provide support to our school at no cost?

2. Are we acting in this area according to a common philosophy and together?

Philosophy of action	Joint actions
Do we all define an area in the school in a similar way? (This includes learners, teachers, parents as well as other school staff).	When planning activities, do we include everyone (learners and teachers, parents, other school employees) in the discussions and decision-making processes, and how?
Do we have a school-wide document that defines the area and describes what the school does within the area?	When implementing solutions in an area, do we listen to and take into account everyone's voices about the actions being implemented (both positive and critical)?
Do we define the area not only negatively (e.g. anti-violence), but also positively (e.g. fostering positive peer relationships)?	Do we constructively resolve conflicts at school when differences of opinion arise about what to do and how to run a particular programme?
What professional literature do we use to define an area?	How do we take into account the special needs of certain students (or groups of students), e.g. those with specific disabilities, in programmes in the area?

3. Are our activities in a specific area logically planned for the long term?

Activity structure – planning phase	Structure of measures – implementation phase	Structure of activities – evaluation phase
When planning activities, do we discuss the results of the diagnosis or carry out additional diagnostic activities?	Are the tasks in the area being implemented according to the agreed plan?	Do we continuously review the effects of the area's activities and the implementation process itself?
Are we using good quality methodological and scientific studies when planning solutions?	Do we document the introduction of activities in the area?	Are we using ongoing lessons learned to modify and improve operations?

3. Are our activities in a specific area logically planned for the long term?

Activity structure – planning phase	Structure of measures – implementation phase	Structure of activities – evaluation phase
Do we review and consult solutions with external experts before implementing them?	Does the team responsible for implementing the activities discuss implementation difficulties on an ongoing basis and seek ways to deal with those?	Is an evaluation conducted after each major (predefined) period of programme implementation?
Is there a clearly defined, leader-led team working on action planning in the area, in which – at least to some extent – all important groups in the school are represented?	Do we have good quality internal and external communication about what the school is doing in the area?	Are the results of the evaluation discussed and the conclusions used in further implementation of the solutions?
Does the team set for themselves tasks to be completed within a certain timeframe and check that they have been completed? na środku nic, a po prawej: Are the results of the evaluation communicated (at least to some extent) internally and externally? How? To whom are they communicated?		

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As we have highlighted in the model presented, digital wellbeing activities should follow a common philosophy and understanding of the problem, which assume:

- an approach geared not only to countering cyber threats, but also to giving young people a positive attitude towards digital technologies and encouraging their creative and critical use;

- emphasising that technologies are a means to implement projects and solve interdisciplinary tasks;

- encouraging pupils to use digital technologies safely and responsibly by building awareness of how these technologies can (positively or negatively) affect health and wellbeing;

- involving all actors, i.e. pupils, parents, teachers and other school staff in the education and prevention activities undertaken; involving external experts, e.g. specialists in the field of problematic use of computer games or the Internet (PUI);

- clear procedures for reacting, reporting and obtaining support in serious cases of cyberbullying and cyberaggression.

The implementation of such a philosophy of action in the area of digital wellbeing includes the following list of solutions that should be introduced as components of the coherent school strategy discussed above:

- Formulate and disseminate a clear institutional policy towards the use of ICT (mainly mobile screen media) on school premises. Focus on educational standards (BYOD type) rather than prohibitions.

- Provide psychological and pedagogical support to students and teachers in situations of disruption of digital wellbeing.

STRATEGIES

- Develop school-wide procedures for responding to cyberbullying against pupils. The procedures should specify step by step how to deal with perpetrators, victims and witnesses of cyberbullying (procedures – a school document).

- Provide teachers with good quality training in the development of digital competences. Areas to be considered include: professional engagement, use of digital resources in daily work, use of digital technologies in the teaching-learning process, use of digital solutions to improve ways of monitoring and assessing pupils' work, supporting and empowering pupils, taking care of the development of their digital competences.

- Initiate offline and unplugged activities to integrate and activate young people (offsetting the negative effects of excessive screen media use).

- Provide practical and experience-based advice on how to protect privacy and data, how to take care of digital identity and how to manage a digital footprint.

- Develop innovative approaches to support pupils in using digital technologies for their own wellbeing.

- Conduct media education activities during parenting lessons and in other subjects.

- Well-prepared, synthesised educational materials for all staff in the organisation. They should include assumptions for a common understanding of the problem and basic information on the principles of digital wellbeing.

- A workshop for all staff at the centre, young people and their parents on how digital media can be used in education and how to look after digital wellbeing.

- Clear, posted information on the organisation's website about the school's policy on the use of technology (including the BYOD policy) with links to external instructional materials and infographics including procedures for responding to cyberbullying.

STRATEGIES

- Involve pupils in educational activities (peer learning), e.g. by encouraging participation in IT and media competitions, online pro-social activities or internet safety days.

- Ongoing discussion of digital media abuse, as well as intervention and prevention activities and their effectiveness.

- Evaluate actions implemented – encourage learners and teachers to self-evaluate digital wellbeing (use of ready-made tools, e.g.: *https://wellbeing.google/reflect/*) and discuss the results during homeroom hours, meetings and workshops.

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DIGITAL WELLBEING
LESSON AND ACTIVITY SCENARIOS

prof. Jacek Pyżalski

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES BETWEEN US

Objective

Stimulate reflection on the use of technology (mainly smartphones) in order to nurture social relationships.

Duration

Approximately 45 minutes

This activity can be adapted to any age group – only the form of discussion afterwards changes.

Steps

At the beginning, ask pupils how they feel when someone uses a smartphone/mobile phone near them. There may be positive ("it doesn't bother me"), neutral ("I don't pay attention to it") as well as negative answers. Individuals may recall someone using a smartphone when they were playing together, when they expected them to focus on contacting them, or during an important conversation – someone wasn't listening because they were browsing the internet or constantly taking photos. Each of these situations is worth discussing further, with consideration on what emotions arise at such times and why.

After the discussion, pupils and students are given small slips of paper (1 x 1 cm) on which they are to write the letter "Y" if they have used technology in the past month in a way that someone felt uncomfortable, or "N" if they have had no such experience. Collect the cards and count the 'Y' answers. You can write the result on the board as a percentage. Usually the percentage of those who themselves use screen devices in a way that is unpleasant for others is quite high. Discuss the exercise. Emphasise that it is worth looking at how we use smartphones in front of others.

TIME WITHOUT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY – LET'S EXPERIMENT

Objective

Building self-control in the use of digital technologies, promoting reflection on the role of digital technologies in our lives.

Duration

From 10 minutes to a whole day

The activity is suitable for all ages, but mostly from the fourth grade of primary school upwards.

Steps

The exercise involves planning a time with your pupils that you will spend completely without any use of phones/smartphones altogether (the class can put them away in the classroom and deposit them with you during an outing or school trip). This time can be, for example, a long break at school, an outing to the woods, a visit to a museum or a get-together by the fireplace on a trip. It is particularly important to prepare the young people and talk about the purpose of the experiment, how it will be conducted and to discuss the shared experience. It is very important that the adults also give up the use of equipment. The activity can be divided into the following steps:

1. Communicate that you want to conduct an experiment on how we feel without technology (in both a positive and negative sense).

2. Establish the rules – where you will leave the phones, for how long etc. At this stage, ask the young people to observe themselves during the experiment – what they are doing, how they are feeling – so that you can discuss it afterwards.

3. Discussing the experience. At this stage, everyone talks about what they did and how they felt. It is useful to ask what was different from when we spend time with technology. Encourage the class to discuss both positive and negative issues.

4. Summary and conclusions. It is worth discussing whether pupils feel like experimenting again in the future and whether they make or plan to make such breaks in their use of technology outside school.

WORKING TOGETHER ON THE RULES REGARDING THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Objective

To stimulate reflection and support the building of normative beliefs regarding the use of technology in the classroom.

Important: the solutions reached must comply with the provisions of the organisation's by-laws. The activity can be run for any age group.

During this activity, work with the young people to write up rules for the use of technology (smartphones) in the classroom.

At the outset, it is useful to ask what kind of use of smartphones by students and teaching staff (this is important) disrupts how we learn and communicate with each other. Various examples can be given about distraction, cheating, disruption of quiet learning, etc.

Ask for suggestions for rules. These should be worded in a positive way (e.g. "We keep our phones muted/off in our bag/backpack during class unless we are using them deliberately for tasks", "When we are talking to someone, we put our phone away").

The next step is to check whether you have created rules that overlap in their content. If so, trim the redundant ones. Also check whether your rules are in line with the by-laws and, if not, bring them into line with their wording.

Finally, prepare a graphic form of the content of the rules and display it in the room so that it can be recalled and referred to when needed.

Donata Honkowicz-Bukowska

DIGITAL WELLBEING – ACTIVITY PROPOSALS

Suggestions for activities to support work with male and female students, to be used in lessons as well as in other school situations.

1. **Classroom digital rules** – set rules with the young people about the use of electronic devices in the classroom (during lessons and breaks).

2. **The guide**

Pupils design and write a short guide on one of the following topics (of their choice):
   - Safer internet – how to avoid the pitfalls?
   - How to spot a fake piece of information?
   - Effective ways to stay healthy in a heavily digital world
   - Digital Citizen – effective and safe use of the internet in the everyday life of the student
   - Cyberbullying – what is it and how to deal with it effectively?
   - 100 ideas for interesting offline activities

3. **School digital world knowledge tournament**

Pupils plan and organise the knowledge tournament with your help. They compose the questions, determine the scoring, the course of the event, etc.

4. **Visit at a digital technology company**

5. **School theme day** – full-day interdisciplinary activities with a theme related to the virtual world.

6. **Peer education** – pupils prepare information and prevention activities on digital technologies for younger classes.

Friendship has more than one name

In addition to the traditional work with the text on friendship (vocabulary and language exercises), also include a discussion on online friendship: what to look out for when making digital friends, what can be shared online and what is better not to share, when to seek help and where to find it in case of worrying situations while using the internet?

The motif of violence in the literary works we have studied

Weave issues of online peer violence or hate speech into the topic and materials. How to counteract them, how to cope, where to seek help, how to react?

Improve reading comprehension and text analysis skills

Choose texts related to the digital world for assignments and exercises. The activity can be combined with a discussion, a project, a presentation, a homework assignment, an essay, etc. You can choose from a variety of possibilities – your and your class's own creativity is the limit.

Grammatical vertigo

Complete selected grammar topics in the form of a digital escape room. Two versions:

a. You prepare an escape room for the pupils in the chosen application;

b. the class selects suitable applications together with you and prepares an escape room, e.g. for a parallel class.

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