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Reflections of Parents of Elementary School Pupils in the Republic of Croatia About the Use of Tablets in Class

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Abstract: *In the last three years, there have been changes that contributed to the introduction of modern technology, i.e., tablets, into the teaching process. "Refreshment" was needed to continue. The need for effective, interesting, and motivating teaching has become evident. The use of tablets in class can certainly meet these needs. The goal was to determine the thoughts and attitudes of parents of elementary school children about the use of tablets: do they agree that tablets should replace classic textbooks in classes? Research was conducted on a sample of 1,403 parents of children who attended elementary school. The results show that 49.0% of respondents state that their child often uses a tablet in class. Furthermore, 69.6% of parents fully agree with the statement that the use of modern technology in teaching is good to know. 67.3% strongly disagree with the possibility of replacing classic textbooks with tablets in class. Parents: 42.6% of them think that the tablet does not make it easier for the child to learn, and 34.0% of the research participants could not make up their minds about the set items. 80.4% of parents believe that excessive use of tablets by children is addictive.*

Keywords: *parents, pupils, primary school, tablet, teaching.*

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1. Introduction

The Internet and technology have become integral parts of the lives of adults and children today. Today, children are already familiar with the possibilities of the Internet and technology at an early age, and life without them is unimaginable. In the not-so-distant past, we got the necessary information by going to the library, flipping through, and reading encyclopaedias. According to Kadum et al. (2023), today's printed encyclopaedias have been replaced by information on the Internet that is available now and immediately. This is why many children get to know the possibilities of the Internet and technology before entering the first grade of primary school. The Corona pandemic certainly contributed to the greater use of technology in schools that were closed in 2020 and classes that took place online. According to Kadum et al. (2023), online teaching was a complete novelty for the majority. In front of the modern school, the question arose of how to maintain continuity the operation of the school and the progress of pupils, what work methods to apply, and how to train teachers, pupils and their parents for work and learning strategies in the shortest possible time through dynamic learning (Karačić, 2022). Textbooks and didactic materials needed to be quickly adapted to this new situation, i.e., online classes. Ivić and Blagojević (2022) point out that teachers, who previously had negative attitudes about the use of technology in teaching, changed their attitudes under the pressure of the new circumstances in which they found themselves. Today's pupils need teaching that is (Lazić & Žunić, 2016) effective, interesting, and motivating, and the teacher's task is to tirelessly search for new and stimulating ways of teaching. The need is to teach pupils how to find the necessary information themselves and to be active "builders" of new knowledge and content. This is exactly what technology is for—as a supplement to printed textbooks. Mlinarević et al. (2015) say that new approaches to the educational process, i.e., teaching, by using available sources of information, put the pupils in the position of an independent researcher. As children increasingly use the Internet and technology as a source of information, the way in which teaching will be conducted in schools is also changing: Conclusions are reached on how and in what way to replace classic textbooks (Bogdanović, 2018) with something more modern, with newer, more fun, and more child-friendly means.

Parents maintain a balance between children and teachers and have to deal with the demands of both teachers and children. Škutor (2014) states that the participation of parents in teaching children has a significant impact on their future progress, but also has a positive effect on their motivation

and self-confidence. The involvement of parents in school activities affects many aspects of children's lives, as well as parental skills, school success and the child's absence from school. For this reason, guiding parents in the upbringing and education of children is a demanding process, which becomes even more challenging during online classes. (Belec et al., 2021).

2. E-textbook and use of tablets in class

The Act on Textbooks and Other Educational Materials in the Republic of Croatia for Primary and Secondary Schools defines an e-textbook in Article 3 and states that an electronic textbook must contain at least one of the following features: dynamic presentation, simulation (virtual experiment), and interaction (on the relations pupil-content, pupil-teacher, and/or pupil-pupil). (Act on textbooks and other educational materials for primary and secondary schools: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr). The e-textbook has become available on mobile devices as an e-book version and an enhanced digital book. As such, it encourages children's creativity and digital skills, and suppresses the monotony of the lesson (Zubac & Čanić, 2016).

According to Dumančić & Valenta (2019), e-textbooks differ from classic textbooks in that they are electronic teaching materials that fully or partially follow the teaching curricula. They can be used by teachers as a basic tool or as additional content, should provide pupils with feedback at any time, and therefore should be enriched with different interactive content. The first textbooks were not interactively enriched, but today's e-textbooks are richly filled with interaction. The textbook must be designed to intensify active learning, develop critical thinking, guarantee the application of multiple learning strategies and continuous learning.. Ricoy et al. (2018) state that tablets should be used systematically, considering them a daily tool for classroom work. In this way, the productive and relevant use of tablets would be enabled. It could be an alternative to the entrenched use of textbooks, accompanied by traditional didactic methods. At the same time, greater cooperation between teachers and families is needed in order to integrate tablets into primary school education. We did not see any evidence of cooperation between these two groups or any effective actions that would help solve this problem.

In the research conducted by Kadum, Ružić-Baf & Čabraja (2022) on the sample of parents of primary school children who used tablets in class, they are very satisfied with the modern approach to teaching and would like their children to continue learning using modern technology. Namely, pupils remember better the content presented to them through the

use of tablets and multimedia than in the classic formal form of teaching, which has become tiring for children. And while Dumančić & Valenta (2019) say that the application of modern technology leads to changes in the learning and teaching process. Ivanković & Ivić (2021) state that parents of elementary school children take on the role of teachers and/or supervisors in this process. Without the support of parents, elementary school pupils would not be able to access digital tools independently. At the same time, direct participation in classes gives parents the "right to vote" for creating beliefs and attitudes about the online school.

3. Method

3.1. Aim, tasks, respondents' samples, and procedure

The goal of the research was to determine the attitudes and thoughts of parents of elementary school children about the use of tablets: do they agree that tablets should replace classic textbooks in classes?

For the purposes of this research, a measuring instrument was constructed: a questionnaire on Google Forms that was distributed to Facebook groups of parents of elementary schools throughout the Republic of Croatia. Before its actual publication on the Facebook group, it was awaiting review and approval by the administrator. The questionnaire consisted of two independent variables (gender and age of the parents) and nine dependent variables, one of which is a multiple-choice question, and the other eight items are based on a Likert-type rating scale, where the research participants had to choose one of the offered answers for the one that best suits their attitude and thinking.

During the implementation of the research itself, the code of ethics was fully respected. The research participants were given written instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire. It was pointed out that the survey is anonymous, that it is not necessary to sign it, that participation in the survey is voluntary, and that they can at any time, without consequences, refuse to give further answers. It was emphasised that the obtained data would be used exclusively for scientific purposes.

The research was conducted with a sample of 1,403 parents of pupils who go to primary school. The characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1. It can be seen that 94.2% of the research participants are female, while 5.8% are male. Furthermore, it is observed that the majority of respondents are aged "40 or more, but less than 45 years old", 42.8% of them; almost half as many are those aged "35 or more, but less than 40 years old", 24.2% of them. The smallest number of research participants is aged "30 years or less" or 4.5% of them. Regarding class attendance, it was

determined that 26.1% of children attended the lower grades of primary school, i.e., classroom classes, while 43.7% attended special classes. There were 30.2% of the research participants who, at the time of the research, had children in classrooms and subject classes.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

particularity		frequency (*f*)	percent (%)
gender	M	81	5.8
	Ž	1322	94.2
	Total:	1403	100.0
age	30 years or less	63	4.5
	more than 30 but less than 35 years old	119	8.5
	35 or more but less than 40 years old	339	24.2
	40 or more but less than 45 years old	600	42.8
	45 years or more	282	20.0
	Total:	1403	100.0

In order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the distribution of respondents' answers with regard to the independent variables gender, age, and the class attended by the children, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied (table 2). The significance values for all three mentioned independent variables are $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, which means that there are statistically significant differences in the normality of the distribution of responses among research participants.

Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality of distribution of independent variables

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilkov		
	koeficijent	df	p	koeficijent	df	p
gender	0.540	1403	0.000	0.245	1403	0.000
age	0.240	1403	0.000	0.909	1403	0.000
class	0.220	1403	0.000	0.809	1403	0.000

a. Lilliefors significance correction

4. Research results

Živković et al. (2015) state that today it is impossible to help a pupil in class outside the context of functional and IT literacy. Parents should be computer literate so that they can help their children in learning and doing other teaching tasks. Therefore, we gave the research participants the

following item to declare: I consider myself computer literate. The obtained data and calculated statistical values are presented in Table 3. It is noticeable that the vast majority of research participants (91.5%) state that 56.0% completely agree with the stated items; that is, 28.8% of them agree. The number of respondents who could not estimate the value of the set items is 13.4%; 1.4% of the research participants do not agree with the stated statement, while only 0.4% of respondents declared themselves to be computer illiterate. The arithmetic mean is M = 4.39, with a SD = 0.799.

Table 3. I consider myself computer literate

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)
I completely disagree	6	0.4		
I disagree	19	1.4		
I neither agree nor disagree	188	13.4	4.39	0.799
I agree	404	28.8		
I completely agree	786	56.0		
Ukupno:	1403	100.0	–	–

$\chi^2 = 1507.738$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$

The value of the chi-square is very high and amounts to $\chi^2 = 1507.738$ (df = 4, p = 0.000 < 0.05), which means that the responses of the research participants are distributed statistically significantly differently. As the obtained asymmetry is negative, equal to -1.168, it follows that most of the data is located to the right of the arithmetic mean M = 4.39, i.e., among the higher values.

The next item about which the research participants expressed their attitudes and thoughts was: My child uses a tablet in class. The obtained data are presented in Table 4. It can be seen that 49.0% of respondents declare that their child often uses a tablet in class, and 13.1% always use a tablet. 7.6% of respondents stated that they do not use tablets in class. The arithmetic mean is 2.68, with a standard deviation of 0.795.

Table 4. *The use of tablet in class*

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)	chi-square (χ^2) degrees of freedom (*df*) reliability (*p*)
never	106	7.6	2.68	0.795	588.552 3 0.000
rarely	426	30.3			
often	687	49.0			
always	184	13.1			
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–	–

Since the chi-square value obtained is very large (χ^2 = 588.552, df = 3, p = 0.000 < 0.05), it is concluded that the responses of the research participants are distributed statistically significantly differently. As the asymmetry value is -0.257, it is concluded that, due to the negative sign, most of the data is to the right of the arithmetic mean, among the larger values.

It is good to know how to use modern technology in teaching, which was the next item that the research participants declared about. The obtained data are shown in Table 5. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents, 69.6% of them, completely agree with the stated items, while 19.6% of the respondents agree with the items. The high arithmetic mean M = 4.55, along with the standard deviation SD = 0.790, tells us about this. It is observed that the value of the chi-square is very large: χ^2 =2319.128 (df = 4, p = 0.000 < 0.05).

Table 5. It is good to know how to use modern technology in classroom

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)	chi-square (χ^2) degrees of freedom (*df*) reliability (*p*)
I completely disagree	15	1.1	4.55	0.790	2319.128 4 0.000
I disagree	19	1.4			
I neither agree nor disagree	117	8.3			
I agree	275	19.6			
I completely agree	977	69.6			
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–	–

The fifth item, which was given to the respondents as a statement, related to the possibility of replacing classic textbooks with a tablet. The obtained results and calculated statistical values are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. It is possible to completely replace classic textbooks with e-textbooks in classes

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)	chi-square (χ^2) degrees of freedom (*df*) reliability (*p*)
I completely disagree	698	49.8	2.05	1.278	866.348 4 0.000
I disagree	245	17.5			
I neither agree nor disagree	265	18.9			
I agree	85	6.1			
I completely agree	110	7.8			
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–	–

From Table 6, it is possible to see that the vast majority of research participants, 49.8% of them, do not agree with the stated items at all, while 17.5% of them do not agree with the items. 13.9% of those who believe that it is possible to replace classic textbooks with a tablet in class Therefore, the arithmetic mean is also of low value: it is M = 2.05, with a SD = 1.278.

Furthermore, in table 6, it can be seen that the obtained value of chi-square χ^2 is 866.348, with four degrees of freedom (df = 4) and significance p = 0.000 < 0.05. Such a high value of the chi-square leads to the conclusion that the respondents' answers are distributed statistically significantly differently. Since the asymmetry value is .989, it means that most of the results are to the left of the arithmetic mean among the smaller values.

Table 7. Pupils remember better the teaching contents adopted using modern technology

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)
I completely disagree	400	28.4	2.58	1.272
I disagree	228	16.3		
I neither agree nor disagree	465	33.1		
I agree	183	13.0		
I completely agree	127	9.1		
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–

$\chi^2 = 299.876$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$

Table 7 shows the answers of the research participants regarding the part "Pupils remember better the teaching content adopted using modern technology", as well as the calculated statistical values obtained based on the obtained data. It can be seen that 33.1% of the research participants could not make up their minds regarding the defined items. There are 44.7% of those who do not agree or disagree with the article. The chi-square value obtained is $\chi^2 = 299.876$ (df = 4, p = 0.000 < 0.05) and points to the conclusion that the responses of the research participants are distributed statistically significantly differently. At the same time, the asymmetry value is 0.258, which means that most of the data obtained from the research is to the left of the arithmetic mean among the smaller values.

The next item about which the research participants expressed their views and reflections was that children find it more fun to learn with the help of modern technology. The obtained data are shown in Table 8. It is visible that even 30.4% of the respondents could not make up their minds regarding the set items. 48.9% of those who agree or completely agree with the defined items.

The arithmetic mean is 3.39, while the standard deviation is 1.240.

Table 8 also shows the chi-square value, which is $\chi^2 = 246{,}155$, with four degrees of freedom (df = 4) and significance p = 0.000 < 0.05, from which it follows that the responses of the research participants are statistically significantly differently distributed. Since the value of asymmetry is -0.434, it follows that, due to the negative sign, most of the results are distributed to the right of the arithmetic mean, i.e., among higher values.

Table 8. Learning is more fun for pupils with the help of modern technology

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)	chi-square (χ^2) degrees of freedom (*df*) reliability (*p*)
I completely disagree	158	11.3	3.39	1.240	246.155 4 .000
I disagree	132	9.4			
I neither agree nor disagree	427	30.4			
I agree	380	27.1			
I completely agree	306	21.8			
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–	–

The last two items reported by the research participants were subjected to a correlation calculation: the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, which is shown in the lower triangular matrix (Table 9). It can be seen that the mentioned items are in a proportional relationship, i.e., when the values of one items increase, then the values of other items also increase. As Pearson's correlation coefficient is r =.631, it follows that there is a moderate correlation between the observed items, and the connection is pronounced. Thus, the connection is statistically significant at the 1% significance level, i.e., at the 0.01 significance level.

Table 9. Correlation between items (1) and (2)

Items		Items (1)	Items (2)
(1)*Pupils better remember the teaching contents adopted using modern technology*	Pearson coefficient correlation	1	
	Reliability (two-sided)		
	N	1403	
(2)*Learning is more fun for pupils with the help of modern technology*	Pearson coefficient correlation	0.631**	1
	Reliability (two-sided)	0.000	
	N	1403	1403

** significant at the 1% (two-sided).

The tablet makes it easier for the child to learn, which is the next item about which the research participants declared, i.e., expressed their views and reflections. The obtained data and the calculated statistical values are presented in Table 10. It was observed that 34.0% of the research participants could not make up their minds about the set item. 42.6% of respondents have a negative attitude towards the mentioned item. The arithmetic mean of the responses of the research participants per item *tablet that makes it easier for the child to learn* is 2.67, and SD= 1.228.

Furthermore, table 10 shows that the chi-square value is χ^2 = 247.082, with four degrees of freedom (df = 4) and a significance of p = 0.000 0.05. This leads to the conclusion that respondents' answers are distributed statistically significantly differently. At the same time, the asymmetry value is positive and amounts to 0.208, which means that most of the obtained research data is to the left of the arithmetic mean, i.e., among smaller values.

Table 10. A tablet makes learning easier for a child

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)
I completely disagree	316	22.5		
I disagree	282	20.1		
I neither agree nor disagree	477	34.0	2.67	1.228
I agree	198	14.1		
I completely agree	130	9.3		
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–

$\chi^2 = 247.082$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$

The penultimate item by which they are respondents indicated their attitudes and thoughts: frequent use of tablets leads to vision problems or some other health problems. The obtained data are shown in table 11.

Table 11. Excessive use of tablets leads to certain health problems

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)
I completely disagree	53	3.8		
I disagree	65	4.6		
I neither agree nor disagree	215	15.3	4.23	1.103
I agree	243	17.3		
I completely agree	827	58.9		
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–

$\chi^2 = 1434.623$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$

In table 11, it can be seen that 58.9% of the research participants completely agree with the stated item, that is, 17.3% of them agree, while 3.8% of respondents do not agree with the item at all and 4.6% disagree. The arithmetic mean is M = 4.23, with a standard deviation of SD = 1.103.

Chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 1434.623$, with four degrees of freedom (df = 4) and significance p = 0.000 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that the responses of the research participants are distributed statistically significantly differently, and since the value of asymmetry is -1,350, most of the results,

due to the negative sign of asymmetry, are located to the right of the arithmetic mean, among higher values.

The last part that was given to the participants in the research to declare was that excessive use of tablets in pupils is addictive. The data obtained from the research are shown in Table 12, where the values of the calculated statistical parameters are also shown.

Table 12. Excessive use of tablets in pupils is addictive

	frequency (*f*)	percent (*p*)	arithmetic mean (*M*)	standard deviation (*SD*)	chi-square (χ^2) degrees of freedom (*df*) reliability (*p*)
I completely disagree	56	4.0	4.35	1.068	1916.918 4 0.000
I disagree	42	3.0			
I neither agree nor disagree	178	12.7			
I agree	203	14.5			
I completely agree	924	65.9			
Total:	1403	100.0	–	–	–

In table 12, a high value of the arithmetic mean M = 4.35 (SD = 1.068) can be observed, which means that the majority of research participants have a positive attitude and reflection regarding the mentioned item. At the same time, 80.4% of respondents agree (14.5%) with the defined item; that is, 65.9% of them completely agree. Furthermore, in table 12, a high chi-square value can be observed (χ^2 = 1916.918, df = 4, p = 0.000 < 0.05), which leads to the conclusion that the responses of the research participants are statistically significantly differently distributed. And since the asymmetry is -1.672, most of the results, due to the negative asymmetry, are to the right of the arithmetic mean, that is, among the higher values.

Table 13. Correlation between items (1) and (2)

Items		Items (1)	Items (2)
(1)*Excessive use of tablets leads to certain health problems*	Pearson coefficient correlation	1	
	Reliability (two-sided)		
	N	1403	
(2)*Excessive use of tablets in children is addictive*	Pearson coefficient correlation	0.682**	1
	Reliability (two-sided)	.000	
	N	1403	1403

** Korelacija je značajna na razini 0.01 (dvostrano).

The last two items were subjected to the calculation of the correlation coefficient (table 13). It is observed that the Pearson correlation coefficient is r = 0.682. Since the correlation coefficient is positive, it follows that the mentioned items are in a proportional relationship, i.e., when the values of one items increase, then the values of the other items also increase. As the Pearson's correlation coefficient is r = 0.682, there is a moderate correlation between the observed items, and they are extremely connected; the correlation is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.01, i.e., at the significance level of 1%.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of the research was to determine the attitudes and thoughts parents of pupils elementary school about the use of tablets: do they agree that tablets should replace classic textbooks in classes?

As stated by Kadum, Koroman & Hmelak (2022), in a large number of schools, classes were held online, which is very demanding for pupils and teachers, and thanks to this, the use of tablets in schools "expanded". In today's world, it is unthinkable not to use modern technology in teaching. Teachers are trying to find guidelines to successfully apply modern technology in the classroom (Pavičić & Portner Pavićević, 2014). That is why, after the pandemic, they started to use technology more in class, which certainly contributed to the quality of the teaching process and better learning outcomes. Today, modern teaching ensures the introduction of pupils to the "connectedness of the world". In order for parents to get involved in their child's school duties and help them learn and master the material, they must be computer literate, because all the necessary knowledge

can be found quickly and efficiently today using modern technology. In our research, when asked whether parents consider themselves computer literate, 56% of them completely agreed with the statement, and 28.8% agreed with the statement.

We are surrounded by modern technology, and the schools enrol children who are surrounded by technology from the youngest days, and it is an integral part of them for life. These are pupils who grew up with technology and its development and do not know of a time when this technology did not exist. Bogdanović (2018). Smiljčić, Livaja & Acalin (2017: 157) state that "it is therefore important that we start formulating pedagogically and methodically teaching materials through which young people will be raised and educated for a future based on information and communication technologies". According to the research conducted by Karačić (2023), the obtained results indicate that working according to new learning strategies was difficult for teachers, pupils, and parents, that a great effort was invested in education for working according to new strategies, that work experiences are very rich, and that they will serve as a guide in working with pupils in some new unforeseen situations. 49% of our respondents declared that their children often use tablets in class.

Research by Neumann et al. (2020) suggests that parents and teachers feel that tablets can be a useful learning tool if used optimally in the classroom and at home.Furthermore, parents believe that if children do not use tablets, they will fall behind in a world where technology "rules", but on the other hand, they are aware of the dangers if used carelessly. The results of our research show the same thing, 89.2% of parents agree or fully agree that it is necessary to know how to apply modern technology in classes, but they are aware of the danger of excessive use of tablets because 80.4% of parents believe that excessive use is addictive.

Certainly, more research is needed that focuses on the use of tablets in the classroom and provides a better understanding of children's activities in a well-designed classroom. It is also necessary to fully understand how parents influence digital technology and what role digital technologies play in children's lives.

The value of the results is that they provide insight into the attitudes and thoughts of parents of elementary school children about the use of tablets in class. After two years of online classes, parents have helped their children and can have an opinion on whether it is desirable to use technology in classes.

The presented research made it possible to gain insight into the attitudes and thoughts of parents of elementary school children about the

use of tablets in class, and represents a contribution to the understanding of the effects of such a way of conducting the teaching process. When interpreting the results, attention should be paid to several observed limitations. The results and attitudes obtained from that sample and interpreted in this research do not have to refer to the attitudes of participants from other countries.

Namely, it was originally planned to conduct the research in direct contact with the parents, i.e. to give the parents survey questionnaires in paper form, but we had to give up due to the distance of the schools and the costs of conducting the research. Thanks to the covid-19 pandemic, technology has only accelerated the entry into schools. It is certain that teachers will not stop using it. Future research should focus on whether students are more motivated to work, learn faster and have better grades using tablets in class. Therefore, the next research step would be the validation of the questionnaire on a larger number of respondents (parents), as well as teachers. It would be interesting to take a special look at the attitudes and thinking of teachers who work in elementary schools and compare the obtained results and connect them with their experience and other relevant factors.

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