Distance Learning in the Organization of the Educational Process in Russian Universities

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the study of an important and relevant field of education in higher education - distance learning. The content of the concept of "distance learning" has been clarified. Presented are the results of an online survey, which was conducted for 1-2 year students of Surgut branch of Tyumen Industrial University. The author also conducted a survey of the teaching staff of the department of natural sciences and humanities of the branch. The survey was a questionnaire that included questions focused on the position of students and teachers on the subject of the prospects of distance learning, its state in the Russian educational system. The survey revealed the advantages and disadvantages of this form of education. Undoubtedly, such a format will make it possible to assign education to a more massive scale, but only with the availability of high-quality virtual reality technologies and telecommunication channels will it be able to become widespread in Russia.

Keywords: distance learning, survey, students, teachers, higher education.

1. Introduction

Today's time dictates new requirements for future bachelors, masters, specialists. First of all, competent specialists are needed who could implement the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities in production, as well as those who are ready to constantly self-study and self-educate. Organizations of the educational process are trying to improve by transferring the learning process to the introduction of the latest technologies, such as distance learning and education.

Distance education has repeatedly become a subject of controversy in scientific circles. Such honored scientists as V.P. Tikhomirova, A.V. Gustyr, M.P. Karpenko, E.S. Polata et al. Defend the need to introduce distance education in Russian higher education. One of the main advantages of distance education, according to these authors, is its availability. Indeed, at the present stage of human development, getting the necessary knowledge, not being limited to a country or a continent, will seem to many students a rather enticing and prestigious idea.
Do not forget that not only students need to get specific necessary knowledge remotely. The circle of such applicants is quite extensive and even includes working people for whom obtaining higher education and the necessary qualifications in a distance form is more important than for full-time students. Such a system is not costly, since the cost of such training is low, and in most cases even low in comparison with traditional forms of higher education. In such conditions, the student does not need to think about the costs of the daily transport to the place of study. And to organizations providing such services, about maintaining a permanent staff of teachers, renting premises and buying expensive equipment. Moreover, the obvious advantage of distance education is its flexibility. Each student is free to choose a convenient learning rhythm and load, based on their own preferences and desires. And thanks to the frequent use of modern electronic platforms and courses, such learning can immediately increase the effectiveness of distance learning, which will undoubtedly have a beneficial effect on student performance.

At the same time, according to critics, the quality of this type of education cannot be compared even with correspondence education. A diploma obtained with minimal effort and expense, limited knowledge, lack of control - these are the very negative “side effects” that the student will receive after a while. Experts note that this technique will not bring the desired results without the availability of high-quality educational environments, electronic resources and elementary self-discipline. Obviously, not all students are ready to admit, but nevertheless, the lack of constant control on the part of teachers sooner or later can lead to a weakening of motivation, discipline, and later to a feeling of additional (but false) freedom in the student. It is also difficult to talk about the education of the student personality due to the lack of personal communication between teacher and student, which is an important element of offline learning. The level of emotional coloring of student life is reduced, and there is no room for amazing ideas. The student’s interest in the educational process inevitably fades away every day.

In our opinion, distance education has tremendous potential to improve the teaching and learning process. For example, at Tyumen Industrial University (hereinafter referred to as TIU), in the context of preventing the spread of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) and to ensure the sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population on the territory of the Russian Federation, the implementation of educational programs, including the passage of students of intermediate certification and state final certification, took place remotely using e-learning and distance learning technologies. All this corresponded to the schedules of the educational process and the individual curricula of the students. When implementing distance learning, social networks, instant messengers, the EDUCON 2 educational process support system (Figure 1), video services containing educational materials, various educational platforms (Googl Classroom, Zoom, Kahoot online quiz service, TIU Student Innovation Platform, lectures by leading Russian teachers) were used. www.lektorium.tv, etc.).

![Fig. 1 Educational support system at Tyumen Industrial University](image)

2. Methodology

It is clear that discussions of distance education and learning should be conducted from the perspective of education in general. This means that the analysis of the world education system with its prospects can be entrusted to modern foreign and domestic pedagogy, which has a multidimensional layer of scientific research.

Based on the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" No. 273-FZ, educational programs can be implemented through the network form, thereby expanding the opportunities for students to gain knowledge from anywhere in the world. It can be both Russian and foreign universities. This state of affairs allows us to assume new conditions for the implementation of the educational and pedagogical process.
Let's analyze the essence of the concept of "distance learning". There are options such as "distant education", "distant learning". Some foreign researchers, assigning a special role to telecommunications in organizing distance learning, define it as teletraining. Still, the term "distance learning" is most often used (Gozman, Shestopal, 1999).

According to S.N. Vodolad, M.P. Zaikovskaya, T.V. Kovaleva, G.V. Savelyeva, the term "distance learning" means such an organization of the educational process in which the teacher develops a curriculum, mainly based on independent teaching the student. Such a learning environment is characterized by the fact that the student is basically, and often completely separated from the teacher in space or time; at the same time, students and teachers have the opportunity to carry out a dialogue with each other using telecommunications. Distance learning allows residents of regions to study where there are no other opportunities for vocational training or high-quality higher education, there is no university of the required profile or teachers of the required qualification level (Vodolad et al., 2010).

According to E.S. Polat, distance learning is a new form of education and, accordingly, distance education (both a result and a process). But it follows from this that this new form of education cannot be a completely autonomous system. Distance learning is built in accordance with the same goals as full-time education (if it is built according to the relevant educational programs), with the same content. But the form of presentation of the material, the form of interaction between the teacher and students and students will be different. The didactic principles of organizing distance learning at their core (principles of scientific nature, consistency and systematcity, activity, principles of developmental education, visibility, differentiation and individualization of education, etc.) should also be the same, but they are implemented in specific ways, also due to the specifics of the new form of education, the capabilities of the Internet information environment, its services (Polat, 2001).

The characteristic features, according to V.S. Sharov, of distance learning are modularity, a change in the role of the teacher (largely associated with the separation of functions of course developers, tutors, etc.), the separation of subjects of the educational process by distance, virtual cooperative learning, the predominance of self-control over control on the part of the teacher, the use of modern specialized technologies and teaching aids, etc. Distance learning is a new form of education that provides a range of educational services to the general population in the country and abroad using a specialized information and educational environment at any distance from educational institutions (Sharov, 2009).

“Distance learning in general is a purposeful, specially organized process of interaction of students with a teacher and among themselves, using information and communication technologies (ICT). It is uncritical to space, time and a specific educational institution and takes place in a specific pedagogical system, the elements of which are the goal, content, means, methods and forms, the teacher and the students" (Andreev, 2012).

From all of the above, we can conclude that there is no single understanding of the essence of distance learning as such. However, distance learning in Russian universities today is presented in the form of technologies, which is enshrined in the legislative framework. In Art. 32 of the Law on Education states that the competence of an educational institution includes: "the use and improvement of methods of the educational process and educational technologies, including distance educational technologies. Distance learning technologies mean educational technologies implemented mainly with the use of information and telecommunication technologies with indirect (at a distance) or not completely mediated interaction between a student and a pedagogical worker" (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 63” Procedure for the development and use of distance educational technologies” (Electronic resource ).

Distance learning achieved its official status in 1995, when the Concept for the Creation and Development of a Unified Distance Education System in Russia was adopted. At the same time, its target and semantic content was justified, its characteristics and basic principles of functioning were determined. At the same time, and this can be called a success, distance learning has been defined as an innovation that has both social and economic significance.

At the end of the analysis of the basis for studying the phenomenon of distance learning in pedagogy, we present general conclusions.

Of course, distance learning cannot replace full-time or part-time forms of education, except perhaps supplement. And this, in turn, becomes an important element in creating a high-tech educational environment. Thus, the characteristic features of distance learning are:

1. "Flexibility". Students study at a convenient time for themselves, in a convenient place and at a convenient pace. Everyone can study as much as he personally needs to master the course of the discipline and obtain the necessary knowledge in the chosen disciplines.
2. "Modularity". Distance learning programs are based on a modular principle. Each educational course (discipline) studied by a student is adequate in terms of the content of a specific subject area. This makes it possible to form a curriculum from a set of independent training courses that will be aimed at individual and group needs.
3. "Parallelism". Training can be carried out by combining the main professional activity with study, "on the job."
4. "Long-range action". The educational process will not become less effective from the constantly changing location of the student. You can study wherever there is a high-quality communication work.

5. "Asynchrony". It means the non-simultaneity of the schedule, the trainer and the student in the learning process.

6. "Coverage". This feature characterizes an unlimited number of students, "mass character", which is not a critical parameter.

7. "Profitability". The so-called indicator of the economic efficiency of distance learning. In addition to saving money, there are tremendous savings in time.

8. "Teacher". The new roles and functions of the teacher are assumed.

9. "Learner". Absence of traditional requirements for the student.

10. "Sociability". Distance learning to a certain extent relieves social tension, providing an equal opportunity to receive education regardless of place of residence and material conditions.

11. "Internationality". Distance learning provides a convenient opportunity to export and import educational services (Vodolad et al., 2010).

The above features indicate the clear superiority of distance learning over other forms. The state of distance learning at the present stage can be described as follows: the number of teaching technologies is growing, the Internet and other electronic educational environments are widely used, online universities are actively working, mobile distance learning is widely developing through the use of smartphones, tablet devices, etc.; the use of distance learning technologies expands the horizons of distance education, the purpose of obtaining which is not only a diploma of education, but also the implementation of the principle of "learning through life". The correct attitude to such training will open up a variety of opportunities for professional development and will give you personal growth in the future.

3. Results

The experience of using distance learning at the Surgut branch of Tyumen Industrial University made it clear that the communication of students within the educational process is fraught with many peculiarities. Everyone knows that the Internet space is a very non-standard place, it dictates its own rules and laws. Telecommunication etiquette is a must on the Internet. Therefore, it is necessary to organize distance learning on the Internet taking into account the peculiarities of this communication environment. Another difficult situation is the psychological difficulties faced by students and teachers. Some of these are: inability to behave in a network discussion (awkward silence, aggressive behavior, inability to defend one's opinion, speak confidently, etc.), difficulties in communicating with the teacher by e-mail, inability to independently organize and plan work with educational materials, etc.

We conducted a survey of 112 full-time students of 1-2 courses in the direction of "Oil and Gas Business" and the direction "Operation of transport and technological machines and complexes" of the Surgut branch of the Tyumen Industrial University. Here are the results.

So, to the question "Is it convenient for you to study remotely?" 42% chose the answer "yes, but difficult" (apparently, students feel difficulties in completing assignments without the supervision of teachers). To the question "What difficulties did you face in the process of distance learning?" the following answers were given: lack of time; lack of opportunity for conversation, discussion; lack of opportunities for self-realization, creativity; some felt cut off from the university, the team; lack of some components of the educational and methodological complex for a specific discipline in EDUCON 2.

To the question "Are you satisfied with the level of teaching and the qualifications of the teachers?" 84% of the respondents answered "yes, they are satisfied", while pointing out "weaknesses" such as - conservatism, lack of flexibility among teachers; weak level of computer literacy, taking into account the use of distance learning software; inability to organize joint cognitive activities with students; lack of full-fledged methods of objective control of knowledge among teachers.

Students note that in order to achieve the quality of the education they receive, it is necessary first of all to pay attention to the introduction of video lectures into the learning process, to work on the filling of complexes with educational and methodological literature, to revise the content of interactive tests and their compliance with the curriculum for the discipline.

Only 23% of respondents chose the answer "distance learning" to the question "If you choose between distance and full-time education, what form of education would you prefer?" The majority of students - 69% - indicated the possibility of learning in distance and full-time formats together, which indicates the further development of distance learning in higher educational institutions in Russia. Although it is worth noting that the survey data show that the usual way to expand knowledge for 76% is to communicate with people who can share their knowledge and experience.

Additionally, a survey was conducted among teachers of the Department of Natural Sciences and Humanities of the Surgut branch. Qualitative composition of teachers: average age 45 years, 1 doctor of sciences, 10 candidates
of sciences and 1 assistant; the average work experience at the university is 15 years. 68% of the teachers of the department adhere to the position that the traditional form of education deserves more support, which requires constant strengthening, attention and quality control. They do not deny the demand for distance learning technologies, but still see it more as an innovative teaching technology.

4. Conclusions

Based on all of the above, based on the results of our own research, we came to the conclusion that distance learning occupies an important place in Russian education, although for many significant reasons it gives way to full-time education and part-time education, which is traditionally in demand among a larger category of citizens. Russian Federation. In order for distance learning to become a prestigious and demanded form of education, a high-quality, high-tech e-learning environment, guaranteed employment of graduates, the possibility of training as many students as possible, regardless of their country of residence, is required (Krasilnikova, 2006). Distance learning has a unique characteristic that can make it possible to compete with traditional forms of education in Russia - it is its availability. But distance learning should not be perceived only from a geographical point of view, when the teacher is in one place, and the students in another, which is characteristic of this training. Distance and time must be considered. Both students and teachers have access to courses at different periods when the teacher places the appropriate teaching materials, learners at any time access to the course, or during the period designated for the group. This means that each of these participants understands access times differently (Fernandes et al., 2020).

In the course of working on this issue, we have highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning technologies. The positive aspects included: the combination of training and work; savings on transportation costs; accommodation of students in full-time education, the cost of online education is much lower than that of full-time or part-time education; accessibility for residents of remote regions (Kuzmina, 2012); the ability to view lectures, practical exercises as many times as you like, in case of not assimilating the material the first time; the lack of comparison of oneself and one's capabilities with other students is not only useless, but also harmful to the mental health of students. And to the disadvantages: the impossibility of obtaining professional skills and professional experience due to the lack of practice for future specialists; lack of personal communication with other students, teachers (after several years of a seething university life, a new format of communication can lead to psychological difficulties for most students); insidious circumstances such as slow Internet, suddenly turned off lights, noisy younger brothers and sisters in the background inevitably lead the student out of a state of peace and harmony; only students with strong motivation and rigid self-discipline can acquire knowledge on their own; it is much easier to acquire knowledge in a group than alone; there is no factor of influence on the personality of the student, his worldview, professional ethics, and the culture of professional behavior (Sayenko, 2015).

Despite the shortcomings, the popularity of distance education in Russia is growing, and as a result, it becomes necessary to develop innovative distance educational models of higher education, taking into account the opportunities and risks of the globalization expansion of the world educational space, the potential of modern information and communication technologies and the current needs of Russian universities.

References