Distance learning from students' view: sociological analysis

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Abstract

The effectiveness of the use of digital technologies, which began to be introduced into the universities educational process since the late 90s, is currently beyond doubt. Both the students and the teaching staff of educational institutions appreciated the opportunity to increase the degree of visibility of individual courses, to diversify the forms and methods of teaching and control. The changes also affected the forms of distance education: e-learning is successfully gaining the position of the traditional one. In order to determine the attitude of students to DL and to the possibility of using it in the educational process of the university, we conducted a questionnaire survey of students of identical training directions, forms of study and course of 4 universities in Moscow and Novorossiysk. The questionnaire included questions about attitudes towards DL, existing DL experience, its "pros" and "cons", degree of satisfaction with the process and learning outcomes. The article presents some of the research results.An important result of the study is the fact that a number of negative aspects of DL, noted in scientific research, are not taken into account or adequately assessed by students, for example, information security associated with the use of personal data, the effect of electric fields during long-term work with computer; in some cases, respondents note the poor quality of the study of teaching materials, the complexity of the language, which indicates the need for serious preparation of teaching materials, on the one hand, and the improvement of teaching methods, on the other.

Keywords: distance education, students, sociological analysis

1 Introduction

The effectiveness of the use of digital technologies, which began to be introduced into the educational process of the university since the late 90s, is currently beyond doubt. Both the students and the teaching staff of educational institutions appreciated the opportunity to increase the degree of visibility of individual courses, to diversify the forms and methods of teaching and control. The changes also affected the forms of distance education: e-learning is successfully gaining the position of the traditional one [2].

The requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) include the formation of an electronic information and educational environment by the university, and the arising question concerns motivation, the level of preparation of potential students for innovative forms of acquiring knowledge, the appropriate ratio of tradition and innovative forms in the educational process.

2 Theoretical aspects of development of distance education in Russian Federation

Distance learning has received an impetus to development since 1997 (order No 1050 of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation), and after two decades we have the opportunity to assess the pros and cons of putting this system into practice. When assessing the "pros" and "cons" of modern DL, the following are more often singled out as the "advantages": the opportunity to study in remote educational institutions, the availability of additional education for

various social groups of the population, the independence of training, the flexibility of the work schedule, savings in education costs, but as "disadvantageses": lack or insufficient quality of technical equipment and software products, lack of conditions for "live" communication in interpersonal communication, inadapted educational materials (teaching materials, etc.) to distance education courses [1].

The coronavirus infection, which hit all countries of the world, including Russia, and the subsequent quarantine measures, have highlighted a number of urgent problems in the use of electronic devices, especially in the field of distance learning. Distance learning in force majeure conditions of self-isolation required the use of exclusively digital technologies with the absolutely impossible use of the classical classroom form [2].

Many higher educational institutions used online learning before, but total education in this mode was used only by institutions or companies providing additional education.

3 Research of students' attitudes towards distance learning technologies

In order to determine the attitude of students to DL and to the possibility of using it in the educational process of the university, we conducted a questionnaire survey of students of identical training directions, forms of study and course of 4 universities in Moscow and Novorossiysk. The questionnaire included questions about attitudes towards DL, existing DL experience, its "pros" and "cons", degree of satisfaction with the process and learning outcomes. The article presents some of the research results.

The study has showed that the transition to distance learning for students was not difficult: only 3,1% of them did not have access to the Internet. Moreover, the absolute majority was well equipped with various technical means: 72,9% used gadgets, 64,6% - laptops, 18,3% - stationary computers. The traditional "freeze" in social networks during the pre-quarantine period dropped sharply (0,4% of all respondents), while they were most interested in information (84%), cultural and educational (76,9%) and educational and educational (46, 3%) resources. During the breaks, they preferred entertainment (78.2%) and sports information (18,8%). Nevertheless, despite the fairly quick adaptation to distance learning, almost half of the respondents (48,9%) indicated a decrease in the level of motivation for learning, and an increase in motivation was noted only by 14.4%.

Among the difficulties that students faced on the "remote", 76,9% identified an increase in the number of tasks for independent work and 36,1% noted the "rejection" of virtual communication with the teacher. Almost a third of the respondents (29,7%) saw distance education as an opportunity to study in a virtual classroom non-stop at a convenient time and place; 20,5% noted a great opportunity to establish a direct connection with teachers in an online format; 28,8% considered online contests of lectures and practical classes convenient. However, a significant part (36,7%) noted that this form of education is not acceptable for them: only 7% would like to study exclusively online (remotely), 62% preferred the traditional form (classroom lessons); and 44,5% considered it necessary to combine both of these forms. 42,35% were ready to take the exam session online by videoconference, and 41,5%, as usual - in the audience, answering questions about tickets; 37,6% expressed a desire to be tested in the classroom.

More than half of the students (62,8%) noted that distance learning solves problems only in force majeure circumstances, a fifth (20,5%) did not see any advantages in it, and 45,4% expressed concern that it would worsen the quality education. At the same time, studying at a "remote location" taught some of the students to use their working time more rationally (27,9%) and opened up new opportunities for self-development (16,6%), but in general 66,8% of first-year students were unanimous in their opinion that the distance form greatly increases the load on students, but for 18,3% it did not change anything in this regard, and they worked in their usual

study mode; 5,2% considered that their workload had decreased, and 10,9% could not determine whether their workload had increased or, conversely, decreased.

The most popular educational tools for students in a pandemic were: e-mail – 76,9%; ZOOM – 74,7%; special university platforms – 43,6%; WhatsApp – 40,6%; YouTube – 16,2%.

To the question: "Would you like to continue studying at a university in a distance form in the future?", most of the respondents (62,3%) answered negatively, 21,8%. did not decide on the answer and only for 18,3% it turned out to be attractive.

Conclusion

Summarizing what has been said, we note that with a generally prevailing positive attitude towards distance learning, about 4/5 of students cannot rely on their own experience, as a result of which their ideas about distance learning and its forms, as well as assessments of various aspects of DL, differ from the point of view of students with experience of distance learning. As a result of acquaintance with DL, students begin to assess positively the effectiveness of the organization of the educational process, while the assessment remains negative in relation to the quality of technical support, the internal state of the student and the conditions for the development of the personality of the subject of education. Evaluation of distance learning by students with experience of remote educational practice shows that a number of negative aspects of DL, noted in scientific research, are not taken into account or not adequately assessed by them, for example, information security associated with the use of personal data, the impact of electrical fields during prolonged work with a computer; in some cases, the respondents note the poor quality of the study of teaching materials, the complexity of the language, which indicates the need for serious preparation of teaching materials, on the one hand, and the improvement of teaching methods, on the other. Some of the students are not ready for distance learning nowadays and prefer traditional ones [3].

Today the world is changing, people are changing, education must also change. The future belongs to a modern IT infrastructure and a high-quality university online educational resource that allows you to study both in conjunction with a teacher and independently. The combination of digital technologies and the classical form of education, compulsory communication with the teaching staff will adequately meet all today's and future challenges.

It is assumed that it is not timely to talk about a massive transition to distance learning. An effective form of learning could be technology that combines traditional education with separate forms of distance learning (at the student's choice), i.e. mixed, part-time, training.

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