

# Distance Learning Module “Philosophy and Psychology of Education”: from Teaching Practice

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**Abstract**—A turn of the fourth industrial revolution, characterized by a ubiquitous and mobile internet, artificial intelligence and machine learning, defined a new paideia and a challenge for educationalists, who faced the necessity to approach the issue of an appropriate curriculum development. Enhanced communication and collaboration, learning how to learn and how to find useful resources are becoming the most important goals of education. In the paper the authors share the experience of realization of the online module “Philosophy and Psychology of Education”, which has been carried out under the framework of the international master program “Foreign Language Acquisition and Teaching” and accredited by the international expert board. The results presented in this module highlight the problem areas of online curriculum implementation.

**Keywords**—philosophy and psychology of education, teaching practice, distance learning, competence-based approach, dialogue, media education, online technology

## I. INTRODUCTION

Online module "Pedagogical Philosophy and Psychology of Education" was developed for the students of Northern (Arctic) Federal University in 2012 and has been taught for seven years by now. Conceptually, the module aims at personal emancipation, social improvement and collective well-being. These goals are reached through anthropological perspective, which focuses on a new human identity. In the XXI century personal identity is developed based on self-determination, self-organization, self-regulation and self-control. Autonomous behavior building is placed in the centre of contemporary paideia as it is a pre-condition of abilities and professional qualities development [1].

This means that education puts emphasis on the necessity to foster self-realization and goal-oriented behavior of a learner. Such goal-oriented approach refers to all areas of a student's life: starting from a person's attitude to his/ her own body, relationship with other people and exterior life objects up to a person's relationship with state institutions and political and legal structures. The described

perspective is expected to facilitate the development of a person who is free in his/ her actions and is able to make a grounded choice when it is necessary, at the same time ready to take responsibility and deal with the consequences of this choice. This approach to education is called anthropocentric and is viewed as a part of a value system, thus addressing the question of values and relevant knowledge in today's notion of Paideia [2].

The founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab pointed out communication and creativity as two essential skills for an employee of the XXI century [3]. Collaborations and team work being core forms of work organization in the conditions of the fourth industrial revolution, educationalists need to develop appropriate strategies and patterns to adopt comprehensive collaborative approaches in educational practices, on the one hand, and for the purpose of upbringing communicative skills of the learners, on the other hand. Hence, networked and collaborative models of problem-solving turn out to be the key vectors of academic curricula modernization.

Markedly, in the post-informational society, routine jobs are fading and the need of flexibility and critical thinking is growing. Above all, people have to study lifelong, as their jobs and lives change. Learning how to learn and how to find useful resources are becoming the most important goals of education. So, the focus has transferred to generic skills, e.g., problem-solving and communication in different media, to the skill of detecting necessary information and resources and learning from them and to interpersonal skills that allow successful interaction with people from different backgrounds.

A new perspective includes human-computer interactions, which implies such partners as a computer tutor, a game on the web or other people by means of a computer network. Such communications have numerous advantages connected with flexibility, accessibility and, in case of guided pedagogy, individualization of education through technologies. The disadvantage of such communication is its unsociability. Thus, an imbalance between the market's demand for improved communication and collaboration on one side, and the restrictions of technological environment, on the other side, evolves.

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This incompatibility has been targeted in the process of development of an online module “Philosophy and Psychology of Education”, which has been carried out in the framework of the international master program “Foreign Language Acquisition and Teaching”. The master program highlights learning outcomes according to the Dublin descriptors, European competence framework and the requirements of the professional community. The program underwent international expert assessment and was credited as valid for teaching. The aim of our report is to share the experience of the realization of the module “Philosophy and Psychology of Education” and our perception of technology-mediated environment for teaching future ESL specialists.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In the construction of the module “Philosophy and Psychology of Education” the following approaches were used:

- competence-based approach
- teaching through a dialogue
- media education
- online technologies

Competence-based approach incorporates the necessity to adopt educational technologies, as well as the content of education to the changing labor market demands. Contemporary labor market requirements have been briefly presented above. They include a substantial extent of communicative competence, ICT competence, creativity, ability to work in collaboration and a broad range of skills connected with the abilities to analyze, synthesize and process information in various life areas [4]. The development of these competences was taken as an outcome of the module. All the tasks, assessment procedures and teaching methods used in the module's curriculum were chosen with the relevance to the given competences. The module's success was measured according to the level of formation of the denoted competences as diagnosed among the learners.

Teaching through dialogue can be traced back to Socratic inquiry method. Later dialogic education was conceptualized by L.S. Vygotsky in his socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky argued that learners first formed their ideas in the process of discussion given questions with other participants of educational process [5]. In the course of such a dialogue they suggest their own viewpoints, reason them with the facts and examples coming from personal observations and come to conclusions that are based on collectively gathered evidence. After that learners interiorize new information and develop their own perspectives and theories. Thus, a dialogue comes as a teaching method, which makes it possible to build on students' existing knowledge, share individual opinions and develop well-grounded problem solutions.

Media education points out the use of mass media (newspapers, magazines, journals, radio programs, films, etc.) in the process of teaching and learning. The main idea of this approach is to develop learners' ability to perceive media information in such a way that all explicit and implicit meanings transferred in media discourse become clear and understandable. Awareness of multiple contexts, mediated narratives and biased implications is especially meaningful for future teachers as understanding complex interrelationships within the fields of pedagogical philosophy and psychology is an important professional skill, which makes the formation of a qualified pedagogue possible.

Online technologies are a part of a modern day society and one of the key teaching methods. “Philosophy and Psychology of Education” module has been taught as an e-learning course at the university LMS platform "Sakai". It is necessary to note that the use of online learning technology has had its advantages and drawbacks. Speaking of the benefits, e-learning environment made education process flexible, allowed vast opportunity to participate in discussion forums, write blogs and use ample web resources. A continuous feedback from teachers has been provided for tasks assessment, forum discussions and technical issues. At the same time, ICT-mediated environment gave way to communication errors, teaching and learning input-output discord and at times demanded longer working hours on both teachers' and students' behalf. The template is used to format your paper and style the text. All margins, column widths, line spaces, and text fonts are prescribed; please do not alter them. You may note peculiarities. For example, the head margin in this template measures proportionately more than is customary. This measurement and others are deliberate, using specifications that anticipate your paper as one part of the entire proceedings, and not as an independent document. Please do not revise any of the current designations.

## III. RESULTS

The module has been taught during three years and the results have been collected and analyzed. We assessed the outcomes according to three major indicators:

1. professional competences development;
2. information and communication technology literacy;
3. students' and teachers' satisfaction.

Speaking about professional competences development, the expected module's learning outcomes included students' abilities to:

- demonstrate deep understanding of philosophical and psychological dimensions of teaching (LO 1);
- apply knowledge of philosophical and psychological theories, concepts, principles and

methodologies in the course of language teaching (LO 2);

- to provide resolutions for specific problems that arise in varying educational contexts (LO 3);
- apply a variety of psychological techniques to evaluate and reflect on individual learners' styles and differences (LO 4);
- develop generic skills important for effective teaching practices, including critical thinking, creative intelligence, computer literacy (LO 5);
- develop willingness for professional improvement in the field of education.

The outcomes were measured with the use of assessment formative and summative assessment procedures in the module. Formative assessment was built into the learning and teaching process through feedback on completion of individual and group assignments which included essays, creative papers, discussions, inquiry sessions, reflections tasks. Summative assessment (credit test) took place on completing each unit of the module. Besides traditional assessment procedures, regular feedback in discussion format was provided by both students and teachers. The questions analyzed during such discussions related to students' self-assessment of the module's outcomes and their own vision of the professional benefits they acquired studying in the module.

The assessment data in the module were categorized and processed. The data showed that all students reached the denoted outcomes to a high extent. We analyzed the data according to the percentage of the correct answers and the amount of points for the answers received by the students at each assessed tasks. The results are shown in the diagram (Fig. 1).

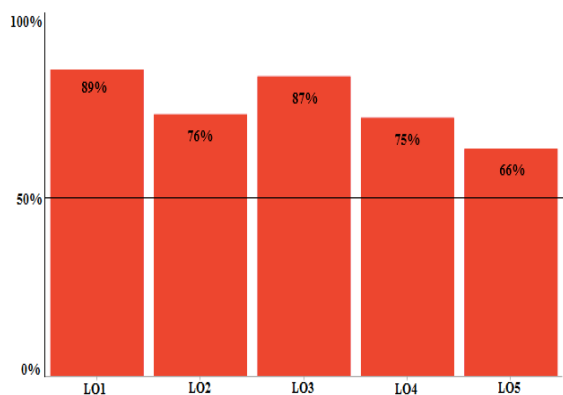


Fig. 1. Learning outcomes for professional competences reached by the students

Technology-assisted communication in the module has also been assessed at several criteria:

1. computer use and skills in learning contexts (C1);

2. professional benefits of computer use (C2);

3. receptivity to inducements to communicate in virtual environment (C3).

Technology-related educational component of the module, being a part of professional competency was assessed through assessment procedures the same way as the development of professional competences. We should admit that there were situations when students asked questions which would not emerge in traditional setting and only appeared because of the restraints of ICT technologies. For example, explanation of several assignments in the module required more details and longer instructions, whereas in face-to-face education such clarification is normally unnecessary. There were also occasional breakdowns related to technical issues. However, in general we could observe a remarkable level of ICT competency in terms of students' computer use and skills. Generation of computer natives is notably more capable of technology use compared to their teachers. They also demonstrated a significant ability to apply the knowledge of ICT to their professional assignments. Speaking about students' readiness to communicate in virtual environment, the results are twofold. On the one hand, students showed their willingness and openness to technology-assisted communication for socializing. On the other hand, reflection, critical thinking, creative and group tasks caused visible difficulty. The results of technology-assisted communication analysis are presented in the diagram (Fig. 2).

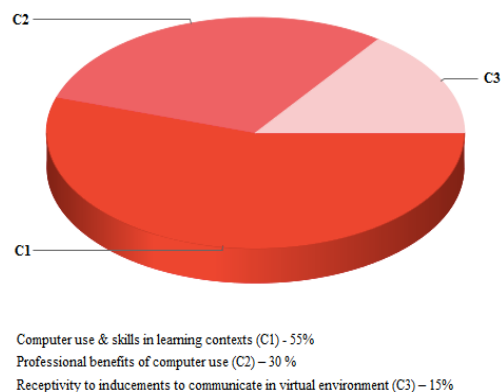


Fig. 2. Levels of information and communication technology literacy reached by the students

As it can be seen in Fig. 2, communication through technology is the skill which needs more development compared to the other components of ICT competency. This becomes even more important if we take into account the direction of studies of the students in the analyzed group. For their professional excellence, future ESL teachers should be able to communicate in various communicative contexts. Mentioned above critical thinking tasks, as well as creative and reflection tasks belong to the highest level of Bloom's taxonomy of learning outcomes. They are

considered to be the most challenging tasks in a traditional learning environment. Generally, electronic forms of communication do not prevent effective communication. At the same time we can conclude that integration of technology needs careful thinking in the part of the module which includes tasks of the higher level, i.e. tasks connected with the development of critical thinking, reflection, creative intelligence and students' collaborative work.

Satisfaction with the learning and teaching process and the outcomes of the module is an essential factor of success of any educational course. First, of all, it impacts motivation for future work connected with the problems covered by the content of the module. Second, if such satisfaction is reached, it reflects the abductive logic as a building principle of the module. Such logic aims at the pragmatic value of educational products for the given socio-historical situation. A determinant feature of satisfaction with any kind of activity is the ability to apply skills acquired through this activity in practice.

Thus, the chain of satisfaction building includes the following benchmarks: feeling of comfort at learning/teaching activities of the module (S1) – motivation to further learning/teaching (S2) – understanding pragmatic values of the module (S3) – application of the skills obtained in the module in professional activities (S4). These points of reference have been used as the areas of analysis for the surveys designed for the measurement of students' and teachers' satisfaction with the module. The results turned out to be quite favourable. They are shown in the diagram below (Fig. 3).

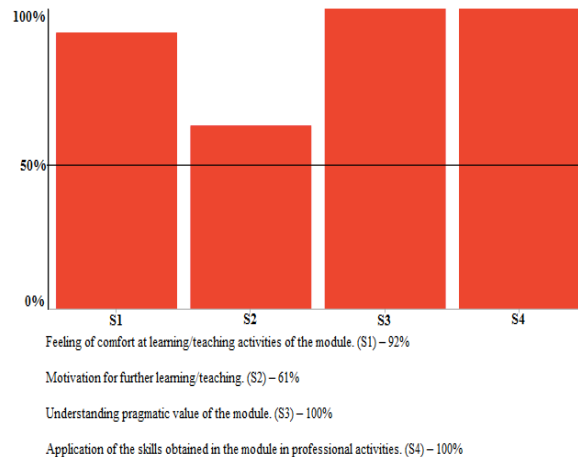


Fig. 3. Students' and teachers' satisfaction levels by the end of the module

To sum up the module has been quite positive. Data presented in the diagrams reflect high levels of reached outcomes in three assessed dimensions - professional

competences development, information and communication technology literacy and students' and teachers' satisfaction. We have also noticed that technology - assisted communication in the module characterized by a serious share of inquiry-based and critical thinking tasks, which are traditionally given in the forms of discussions and oral observations, did not deter module's attendants from effective participation in educational activities. Satisfaction of the participants proves that the module's design was valid and productive.

Surprisingly, the analysis has shown that students do not experience problems relating to the use of technology. It is important to realize that the competences to be developed are connected with the lack of communication among the participants. Evidence proves group forms of studies to present a serious challenge for students as they are required online participation and active collaborative learning. Students' feedback revealed that critical reflection and divergent thinking tasks are also those activities that cause difficulties and discourage learners from studies. These barriers were addressed in the course of teaching the online module "Philosophy and Psychology of Education".

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Surprisingly, the analysis has shown that students do not experience problems relating to the use of technology. It is important to realize that the competences to be developed are connected with the lack of communication among the participants. Evidence proves group forms of studies to present a serious challenge for students as they are required online participation and active collaborative learning. Students' feedback revealed that critical reflection and divergent thinking tasks are also those activities that cause difficulties and discourage learners from studies. These barriers were addressed in the course of teaching the online module "Philosophy and Psychology of Education".

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