

# Tertiary Learning Environment and Extracurricular Activities

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## ABSTRACT

Information-based learning environment presupposes integration of various types of education and upbringing with information support and technological means ensuring an effective management of the educational process. The article highlights the importance of extracurricular activities meant to encourage students' participation and engagement and to ensure students' efficient socialization. Students' involvement in extracurricular activities enhances their professional competence development.

Psychological and pedagogical support based on dialogic interaction is a necessary prerequisite for enhancing students' experience and ensuring their personality development. Teachers' role is not limited to mere participation and initiation of extracurricular activities, teachers function as carriers of cultural values. The article maintains that student volunteering and project-based learning activities have a great educational potential. Student volunteering is aimed at revealing students' personality traits and their inner potential. The innovative educational project “Media Resources for the Bluebird Education Team” initiated by students of Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin has won the first prize in the project competition between young people of the Ryazan Region (media nomination). Many universities are interested in the social and educational project “Children Teach”, which is aimed at improving Ryazan dwellers' computer literacy.

Socially significant projects initiated and supported by Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin are an important prerequisite to preparing novice specialists and ensuring their competitiveness in the labor market. Moreover, these projects enhance the prestige of the university in Ryazan community.

**Keywords:** *extracurricular work, volunteering, information, communication, competition, environment, project activity*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The continuous improvement of education in the modern world presupposes different views on the acquisition and use of information in various spheres of human life. Various educational organizations extensively rely on information communication technology. Higher education institutions use innovative educational technology and rely on innovative and creative information processing approaches [1]. Information and communication environment with its structure components and various aspects plays an essential role in university education.

Information-based learning environment of a higher education institution can be defined as “the integration of program environment, electronic environment, communication environment, and pedagogical environment with educational technologies, information support and documentation. Studying in an information-based learning environment, students are involved into learning activities and are encouraged to actively self-monitor their academic achievements” [2, p. 666].

Electronic information-based learning environment of Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin incorporates the following elements: an official website, an automatized learning system, a learning management system (Moodle), a student testing system, a plagiarism detection system, an electronic library, a corporate network, an email system, a webinar software platform, IC:Univeristy solutions (“Digital Dictation”, “Admission Board”, “Timetable”, etc.), and reference-legal systems (“Consultant Plus” and “Guarantee”).

The Moodle learning management system enables users to register in electronic information-based learning environment, provides online learning environment for distance courses and electronic assessment tools for teaching and training in groups. The Moodle learning management system enhances learner motivation, enables learners to create their e-portfolios, analyzes users' activity. The Moodle learning management system stores information about learners' personal achievements in their profiles, which can be used for student rating and for project activity development.

To ensure effective education and upbringing, it is essential that students should be involved in socially significant projects. That is why it is important to promote youth

organizations and student project activities. Information-based learning environment of the university provides students with all necessary resources for technology-supported communication. It doesn't in the least diminish the role of teachers.

Moral education of university students is mostly executed through well-structured and high-quality extracurricular activities, which prepares students for the challenges presented by the 21st century [3]. It is essential that the learning management system used by a university should be incorporated with an extracurricular management system and students' profiles [4].

When young people have access to higher education, it enhances competition in the labor market. University students clearly understand that diplomas of higher education cannot guarantee their future employment. Therefore, they try to expand their experience and to improve their competence in order to increase their competitiveness. They actively participate in extracurricular activities offered by their universities. Students believe that by acquiring additional competencies and qualifications through active participation in extracurricular activities and student associations they will enhance their competitiveness in the labor market [5, p.21]. Employers expect university graduates to have both well-developed hard skills (standard professional competencies – professional knowledge, practical experience in the chosen sphere, other professional achievements) and soft skills (interpersonal communication, teamwork skills, emotional resilience, etc.). Students who actively participate in extracurricular activities are believed to have better-developed soft skills [5, p.23].

It has long been accepted that active participation in extracurricular activities enables students to improve their professional skills. Nevertheless, the notion of extracurricular activities has not been clearly defined yet. Instead of defining the notion, scholars often give an example of extracurricular activities. Therefore, classifying extracurricular activities is a rather challenging undertaking [6, p. 693].

## 2. METHODS

The research is based on ideas proposed within the framework of axiological approach, activity approach, and culturological approach. It is also based on the traditions of pedagogical culture and education through culture. It takes into account probable transformations of the existing learning management systems and educational technology in the conditions of higher education informatization [7].

To improve students' personal qualities and to enhance their experience, we employ the two-way communication method, which enables teachers to inspire and to guide their students, to share their cultural values [8, p. 1394]. The two-way communication method enables learners to master the art of self-reflection, to learn to critically perceive the outer world.

Self-reflection enables students to assess their strengths and weaknesses, to learn to find solutions in difficult situations,

to avoid problems and mistakes, to face the unknown and to appreciate new knowledge, to improve critical thinking, to use life experience in the learning process [3].

Among diagnostic tools aimed at assessing freshmen adaptation to university life there are student questionnaires, which focus on students' individual traits, social and psychological adaptation assessment tool (K. Rogers and R. Diamond), Health-Activity-Mood method (HAM method), student adaptation assessment by tutors.

Using student profiles to assess freshmen adaptation to university life significantly simplifies the process both for teachers and for students. Using student profiles, we can process and use large volumes of data. It helps achieve qualitatively new results in education and helps prevent freshmen maladaptation [9, p. 186-187].

The research analyzes and compares education technology, investigates teaching experience, uses such methods as observation, discussion, analysis of students' works, and analysis of teachers' papers.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Moral education provided by Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin focuses on the development of volunteering aimed at value-oriented education and at exploring students' individual potential. Volunteering can be defined as acting on an unpaid basis, consciously, willingly, and selflessly for another person's benefit. Volunteering is aimed at achieving pedagogical goals, at impressing on young people the importance of mutual help, social justice and compassion.

Our university views volunteering as a means of enhancing students' socialization and adaptation to university life, as a means of improving student communication skills, of enabling students to acquire knowledge, to gain professional competencies, to prepare for independent post-university life [9]. Volunteering groups of the university focus on socially-significant projects. Students learn to work in teams, to make long-term plans, to assess their own achievements, etc.

Nowadays, social networks which require real-name registration are an important asset for providing moral education and communication possibilities [10].

The Russian social media network VKontakte is most popular among students of Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin. According to statistical data published by the Romir holding, 85% of VKontakte users are young people between the ages of 18 and 24. There are a number of advantages of using a social network, such as immediacy of communication, a relatively relaxed, informal and confiding communication among users, motivation, possibility of sharing information with a large group of people, possibility of uploading documents, videos, audios, photos.

By uploading quality information of social, cultural, psychological or pedagogical nature, educators can use the social network to enhance students' moral education. The social network VKontakte is actively used for social clustering. It enables communication between distant users,

informs users of possibilities of participating in various events. Our educators use social networks to create groups (a university group, a faculty group, a group of volunteers, a community group, a project group), to post information in the news feed, to start conversations, to create questionnaires, to hold contests.

VKontakte promotes the development of key competencies in students and meets the requirements of the Federal State Next Generation Learning Standards.

Another digital learning tool is YouTube. The innovative educational project “Media Resources for the Bluebird Education Team”, which has its own YouTube channel, is an example of a successful project created by students of Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin.

The aim of the project is to develop a system providing methodological support to participants of pedagogical teams via creating an innovative media resource. The project is used to popularize the teaching profession among students and to enhance preparation of scout masters by creating a YouTube community, by using information and communication technology to appeal to a large group of people.

The YouTube channel hosts short videos created expressly for the channel. The videos (the average video length is 5 minutes) are devoted to various games for children of different ages. Each video explains the rules of a game, shows how to play the game, explains some peculiarities of communicating with children while playing, and explains how to avoid potential mistakes. The channel also hosts some master classes and scout masters’ performances.

Since the channel enables one to save time and to clearly visualize the object of discussion, it has become widely popular among scout masters and parents all over Russia. Some videos have been viewed 40, 000 times. The project won the first prize in the project competition between young people of the Ryazan Region (media nomination).

The channel is an actively developing resource in the information and communication environment of the university. The project is aimed at YouTube and VKontakte integration. YouTube video links are shared with the VKontakte community called “Methodological Thrift-box of the Bluebird Team”. In the community, students can also find some theoretical materials, some comments on various education-related situations, advice provided by educators and supervisors, links to interesting posts shared by partner communities.

Using social networks for profession-oriented purposes enhances scout masters training, increases scout masters’ prestige, enables students to realize their creative and professional potential, promotes experience exchange between the participants of the Bluebird team and young people’s community.

Many universities are interested in the social and educational project “Children Teach”, which is aimed at improving computer literacy of people living in the city of Ryazan and in the Ryazan Region. The project is also aimed at expanding the number of people who use the Gosuslugi public services portal and other electronic services. Teachers and students worked together to create a website which can be accessed through <http://детиучат.рф>. The

website incorporates 5 modules, electronic simulators, and information leaflets containing information about such services as Gosuslugi, MyEDiary, eRegistry, Sberbank Online, Safe Online Shopping.

The project is aimed at involving schoolchildren (namely seventh graders and eighth graders) in teaching senior citizens to use digital services and to master information and communication technology. Every schoolchild gets a login and a password to access the website and endeavors to teach senior citizens to work in the information environment.

Schoolchildren learn to participate in volunteering and project activities. When a schoolchild’s protégé successfully completes their electronic simulation, both the child and the school they attend are given some points. Participants of the Bluebird team helped to present the project to people, they also helped to organize a competition between compulsory schools of Ryazan and the Ryazan Region. Students of Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin communicated with schools, consulted teachers and schoolchildren, explained how the site works.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

By introducing innovations in extracurricular activities, one can efficiently integrate extracurricular activities into the educational process in order to promote competence formation (including digital competence and project management competence) in university students.

Information-based learning environment is an essential prerequisite for enhancing novice specialists’ professional training and increasing their competitiveness in the labor market. Information-based learning environment is a factor that greatly predetermines students’ competence, information literacy, media literacy, digital culture and cybersecurity.

Academic grading enables one to assess the knowledge and skills students have acquired through education. To assess students’ professional success, one should assess students’ moral, spiritual and aesthetic qualities.

Ryazan State University named for S. A. Yesenin pays special attention to volunteering and project activities, which greatly predetermine the role our university plays in social life of the Ryazan Region.

Volunteering has become an important component of the sociocultural environment of the university. Volunteers perform many important functions. By participating in volunteering, students acquire teamwork skills, orderliness and punctuality, sociability, initiative, stress resilience, project management skills. These are universal skills all students should acquire according to the Federal State New Generation Learning Standards.

Project activities enhance the development of digital resources which can be used for educational purposes, in order to improve people’s digital competence and to enhance socialization of people of different ages.

The main focus of moral education in our university is to ensure that all students are provided with psychological and pedagogical support.

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