

# Special Integration Aspects of Students Professional Training with the Use of Distance Learning Mode

Nazirkhan Gadzhiev<sup>1</sup>, Ravil Arykbaev<sup>2</sup>, Mikhail Trofimov<sup>3,\*</sup>, Sergey Konovalenko<sup>3</sup>,  
Arthur Gadzhiev<sup>1</sup>, Bashir Abdulaev<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dagestan State University, Russia

<sup>2</sup> Astrakhan state technical University, Russia

<sup>3</sup> Ryazan branch of Moscow University of the MIA of Russia named after V.J. Kikot, Russia

<sup>4</sup> Accounting chamber of the Republic of Dagestan, Russia

\*Email: [trofimov\\_fanat1k@mail.ru](mailto:trofimov_fanat1k@mail.ru)

## ABSTRACT

The research examines the methodological problems of combining distance learning and traditional learning technologies, choosing the most suitable distance learning mode and grounding its organization scheme, taking into account individualization principles while providing electronic distance learning.

Under the conditions of the COVID19 pandemic distance learning modes are the only way to provide an educational process. Thus, the use of distance learning modes becomes a fact of life that may displace classical face-to-face education modes from dominant positions in the near future.

The purpose of the research is to determine special organizational aspects of distance learning mode for students of economical discipline in the national system of higher education in Russia, to examine the experience of its application; to find ways of involving foreign students with the help of virtual technologies, that can give access to educational courses of the universities all over the world.

The basic methods of research used in this work were the following: observation, comparison, induction, deduction, and monographic (descriptive).

The basic results of the research are confined to the fact that the authors point out the unprecedented control and prevention measures for the COVID19 pandemic, that resulted in the new education model and total domination of distance learning modes in the short term. As a result of shifting to distance learning modes, there were developed specific premises to create one digital space and to integrate distant platforms into classical education modes, so far mainly for obtaining new knowledge and expanding students' self-learning and self-training functions.

**Keywords:** *Electronic educational environment, Education, Distance learning, Learning technologies.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Under the conditions of the COVID19 pandemic spreading, distance learning has become the only available mode of education in the country's universities. Legal aspects of this education mode are governed by a number of existing regulatory legal acts, the most significant of which are:

1. Federal Law No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012 (as amended on July 31, 2020) "On Education in the Russian Federation" (as amended and supplemented, entered into force on September 1, 2020) Article 16. Implementation of educational programs with the use of e-learning and distance learning technologies.

2. The Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia No. 816 dated 23.08.2017 there

approved the Procedure for the use of e-learning and distance technologies by educational organizations in the implementation of educational programs.

3. The List of professions, specialties, and training programs, the implementation of educational programs for which it is not allowed using exclusively e-learning, distance learning technologies, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia No. 22 dated 20.01.2014 "On approval of the lists of professions and specialties of secondary vocational education, the implementation of educational programs for which is not allowed using exclusively e-learning, distance educational technologies".

It is necessary to underline that the majority of specialists consider the use of distance learning technologies for humanitarian subjects possible, also for

obtaining new knowledge and skills, but for the system education, professional growth, and development of "legal and economic mindset formation", distance learning is not suitable. The existing distance learning technologies are perfect for advanced training courses, namely for obtaining new knowledge with an already formed professional level of lawyer or economist [1].

The demand for economic specialties diplomas depends on a university's international rating, but alas, in Russia, there is much room for improvement. The implementation of distance learning resources in the higher education system, and also the creation of international platforms, allow improvement of basic learning process components. The modernization of higher education in Russia imposes new requirements not only on students but also on teachers and conditions the necessity of their training and retraining.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

American researchers analyzed the nine most popular open platforms of distance learning system (ATutor, Dokeos, dotLRN, ILIAS, LON-CAPA, Moodle, OpenUSS, Sakai, Spaghetti Learning) by 34 parameters summarized in eight groups: 1) learning program management tools, 2) administration features, 3) technical aspects, 4) customization features, 5) platform usability, 6) user data management, 7) learning objects, and 8) communication tools [2].

Statistically, the distribution of distance learning systems in the educational sector in the world is represented by the following figures: 1) Moodle (18.6%); 2) Other (16.6%); 3) Developed In-House (14.8%); 4) Sum Total (14.6%); 5) Saba (12.5%); 6) Blackboard (8.9%); 7) Oracle (7.9%); 8) Plateau (7.5%); 9) Learn.com (6.7%); 10) SkillSoft (6.2) [3].

The survey shows that both in Russia and over the world common platforms for distance learning are used, and the most widespread ones are open and partially free platforms - Moodle and Oracle. The leading universities, that have additional and stable funding, prefer to develop their own individual platforms representing the student's specific educational needs of the particular university. In Russia, there are developments, alternative to foreign distance learning systems: ASDO «Dotsent», «Prometey», «OROKS», «eLearning 3000», REDCENTER, «Novyi Disk», «Phisikon WebSoft» [4].

## 3. RESULTS

The conducted survey of distance learning technologies (hereinafter referred to as "DLT") determined the positive sides of virtual interaction in an educational environment when receiving economic education, that allow the following:

- to monitor quickly current and retained knowledge of students;
  - to use an electronic learning environment (hereinafter referred to as "ELE") as a database and backup copies of methodological materials (to create a kind of an electronic library for economic and accounting disciplines);
  - to organize the realization of self-training and self-study of students;
  - to integrate active and interactive forms of education into the educational process;
  - to form funds of rating tools for economic and accounting disciplines;
  - to administer remotely training sessions for missed seminars and practical assignments;
  - to have access to additional learning and scientific materials;
  - to participate online in conducting collaborating scientific research on a suggested theme;
  - to use effectively and adaptively class time;
  - to organize the process of self-study;
  - to choose independently place and duration of classes;
  - to involve students into research, creative and project activities;
  - to organize individual work with different information sources;
  - to provide "meta-cognitive" students' activity taking into account their interests and potentials during the educational process. Learning skill development is the primary educational objective at the same time [5].
- In the learning process of economic specialties students the problems of DLT (distance learning technologies) are the following:
- more frequent attempts of academic dishonesty compared to traditional learning mode, problems of "cheating", identification of a student who fulfilled the task;
  - the tendency among students to fulfill tests instead of usual tasks that have a higher level of difficulty;
  - the dissatisfaction of some students with the terms of tasks checking in electronic learning system;
  - a significant number of complaints about technical problems that raise difficulties in the process of tasks fulfillment in electronic learning system;
  - significant limitations of *distance learning systems use* (hereinafter *LMS* - learning management system) in teaching disciplines that require the fulfillment of

training tasks related to oral speech, practical tasks implying an imitation of professional communication;

- the necessity to combine tasks in an electronic learning system with the face-to-face communication between a student and a teacher;

- the lack of time in communication between a student and a teacher, the absence of emotional contact;

- the problems of mutual understanding between teachers and students, that arouse from the absence of nonverbal communication typical for face-to-face contact;

- a volume decrease of students work with printed literature sources, the de-evaluation of books significance;

- expenses for equipment and program software, the necessity of significant investments in distance learning technologies from the universities sides;

- specific psychological and pedagogical requirements to students, including their academic honesty, stark self-discipline, self-support;

- specific professional requirements to the level of technological and methodological readiness of teachers to use distance learning technologies;

- the necessity of high-level technological infrastructure, technical malfunctions risk [6].

The current trends show that the number of universities that use various LMS will be constantly increasing, and electronic learning platforms will be continually upgraded to provide new knowledge and possibilities for students [8].

The mainstreaming of distance technologies in the universities of Russia is determined by the following factors:

- geographical distance of our country from the central cities and poles;

- location of scientific-technical and educational clusters in big cities;

- implementation of society demand in educational services accessibility;

- unexpected situations of global or regional nature (pandemic, emergencies).

The implementation of the learning process in the field of distance education creates integrated working space, available for all concerned: teachers, students, university management. The key benefits of distance learning are the following: learning process automation, the availability of courses at different times, the usability of provided materials.

LMS is focused on a series of consecutive periods designed for self-study of theoretical material and its

consolidation through the performance of control and laboratory work, tests, work in the chat/forum. LMS also includes services of video conference meetings and webinars. The problem with such services is the use of quite an expensive service equipment and additional program software. In the situation of financial and economic crises, not all students are able to participate in the distance learning process for financial reasons.

The relative cheapness of this learning mode in comparison to traditional intra and extramural educational forms and distance foreign learning may become an important factor of LMS rapid development in Russia [7].

As per statistical data the average cost of distance learning for economic specialties in Russian universities ranges from 25000 to 80000 roubles per year.

The cost of study in the leading foreign universities for economic specialties also ranges to a great extent, but its total cost is several times higher. Fern University (Germany) is the first and the only state open university. At the present moment more than 79000 students, more than 6000 of them are students outside Germany, graduated from it. The University provides the possibility to get degrees of bachelor, master and PhD. The study cost of the Bachelor's program ranges from 1600 to 2400 euro, the Master's program ranges from 1000 to 1200 euro.

Universidad a Distancia de Madrid (Испания) UDIMA uses in the learning process the following open source tools: Moodle, Gmail, GoogleDocs, GoogleSites, GoogleTalk. It has a YouTube channel, a Facebook official page, and its own virtual space in Second Life. The average study cost is 4380 Euro per year. [9]

In the USA the cost of one semester on economic specialties ranges from 20000 to 35000 \$USA.

The researches evidence that at the present state of currency rates the study cost in the Russian universities is significantly lower than in the foreign universities. However, the relative cheapness of education in Russia is offset by the difficulty of monitoring the quality of education, and the "quotation" of the diploma. The "quotation" of economic specialties diploma depends on the international rate of the university, and alas, in Russia there is much room for improvement.

At the same time, the prevalence of the Russian language in the post-Soviet space and the countries of the former Warsaw Pact (countries of the socialist camp) remains an indisputable reserve for the development of distance learning in Russia. All this makes Russia attractive for citizens of the CIS and Eastern European states.

## 4. DISCUSSION

With all the attractiveness of the LMS, it must be recognized that for its formation and development, clear regulatory norms and significant investments in software and training of the teaching staff of universities are required. And this is a limiting factor of LMS development. The competitive advantages of modern highly developed countries are connected with the possibility to develop human potential, that is significantly determined by the education system status. The basics of the digital economy are created in this particular sphere [10].

It is reasonable to develop LMS in Russia through the merging of traditional and distance learning systems in one. This "hybridization" process of the higher education system is recognized as a priority in the Concept of the Federal Target Program for the Development of Education for 2016-2020.

The process of LMS development was highly accelerated as a result of the world COVID19 pandemic. The possible development of a national integrated hybrid system of distance higher education will be fulfilled directly without introducing appropriate regulatory norms, as they say from the "wheels", with the subsequent necessary changes of existing legislation.

It was the COVID19 pandemic that became preconditions to the development of one digital space in the country and integration of distance learning platforms into classical educational modes, so far only for obtaining new knowledge and extending self-study and self-preparation functions of students.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the distance learning system in Russia in the near term may become dominant in the national education system, as evidenced by both numerous sociological surveys and the level of modern education technical development, while world global trends start playing the lead (the introduction of emergency situations, global pandemics, the development of hybrid wars, and etc.) The conducted research does not take into account all risk factors and only confirms one of the most important trends in the national education system - the continuous growth of distance learning technologies share on the market and the active integration of distance platforms into classical forms of education.

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