

THE ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE MODERN CULTURAL AND INFORMATION SPACE

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Abstract. The digital transformation of processes and technologies in the economy, society, and, of course, education is a fact. The new reality is inexorably conquering whole areas of life, turning privacy into a ghost of the past, completely blurring statuses, borders, and distances between people, «compressing» time, and making almost any information available for learning, work, and recreation. «Digital solutions» to help educational establishments' development have their origins in the problem of the introduction of information and communication technology, as well as the even earlier problem of the use of technological tools in educational establishments. In a sense, it is one of the directions of technological progress.

In the aftermath of the education pandemic, some events have not yet been fully studied and understood by us - the real and virtual «flow» of students from schools to the online space, the transformation of teaching methods, ambivalent attitude to gadgets, the collapse of «traditional» learning and memorization of learning material by children, the saturation of educational establishments with electronic tools and resources.

The purpose of the study was to determine the role of distance learning in the modern educational process. A survey was conducted among teachers and students to determine regional readiness for digital learning. According to the results of the survey, it was found that the educational sphere of Kazakhstan is ready to adopt distance learning and use Blended learning in learning.

Key words: digital technology, online learning, educational systems, culture, modern information space.

Introduction

Educational systems are complex, and one indicator of complexity is the difficulty in predicting change. Different interrelated components, such as educational content and assessment systems, teacher training, or instructional resources, adapt and/or resist change at the expense of other system components. A change in one component will necessarily lead to changes in another. Even individual teachers and students are part of a system of connections that covers all aspects of the educational system, different subjects, laboratory resources, curriculum structure, schedules, and the degree of importance of various examinations. Viewed as a «dark forest of interconnections», an educational system can react in unpredictable ways: the response of each component depends on relationships with other parts [1].

Given the complex nature of educational systems, some of their main components (teachers in particular) may resist the changes that are introduced for different reasons. In many cases, teachers may find it difficult to try a new approach because of their established skills and beliefs, or they may lack the moral or material incentives to teach students in new ways because of low pay or low social recognition. Perhaps the greatest resistance is that teachers themselves were once in school and have absorbed the norms, practices, and values that they have experienced. It is logical that they do not want to use new models and patterns of behavior, but rather the familiar ones that have become basic to them.

The educational system is not discrete and homogeneous. Being complex in nature, it is connected to politics and policy, to families, to jobs, to the economy, to social norms (e.g., gender norms), and to social stereotypes derived from a broader cultural context. The influence of such «external» factors can subsequently either close or, conversely, open the door to societal change.

Methodology

By mid-April 2020, 1.58 billion children and young people (from preschool to university students) will be affected by the pandemic (World Bank).

Much can be said about the medium- and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. In the long term, it is the financial well-being of the population. Because of fiscal problems and increased pressure on development aid systems, education funding may be seriously threatened, exacerbating the huge deficit in education funding that existed before the outbreak of COVID-19.

All these cases point to the importance of analysing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education environment that will emerge in 2020, with particular emphasis on issues of distance learning provision and the quality of distance platforms. To find out how Kazakhstan's education system has changed, a detailed survey of all users of distance platforms should be conducted.

The Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) on Education

Modern world practice shows that in recent decades there have been profound changes in education in all countries. These changes are caused by the new needs of economic development in the context of globalization of the world economy, the wide spread of information and communication technologies penetrating all spheres of human activity. One of the characteristic phenomena in the development of educational systems in developed countries is distance learning.

The coronavirus pandemic forced a complete reformatting of the education sector in a short period of time. Countries were not ready for the transition to digital distance learning, used to ensure the continuity of education in the vast majority of countries, and faced great difficulties. The pandemic resulted in school closures in 191 countries, affecting more than 90% of students worldwide, half of whom had no access to a home computer, 43% of whom had no home Internet access.

Inequality is most acute in low-income countries: in sub-Saharan Africa, 89% of students did not have access to a home computer and 82% did not have access to the Internet. The same region accounted for the largest number of places not served by mobile networks. In Kazakhstan, during the transition to distance education of 3 million schoolchildren, about 700 thousand (23%) need computers, although more than 250 thousand computers have been loaned to students since the beginning of the epidemic. Children from low-income families, with special educational needs and junior high school students need technology.

The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning and Teaching

Distance education is education that takes place in a situation where the teacher and the student are separated by distance or time or both. Today, a variety of technologies are used to implement distance education: video recordings, broadcast television, interactive videos, audio recordings and audio conferences, web courses (online). The development and proliferation of the Internet and computer technology have revolutionized the concepts of education and training. Already today, «virtual high schools,» in which the entire school has access to online courses, are becoming a reality. But despite its popularity, online education is not without its problems. Distance education is not the same as learning in a face-to-face environment. Administering distance education programs requires different experiences, and for students, learning in a face-to-face environment is very different from learning online. Because of the growing demand for distance education and the unique experiences it creates, especially in a pandemic environment, it is important for secondary schools to know the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges of such online learning [2].

In a traditional learning format, the teacher develops lessons and communicates their content to students who are learning in a face-to-face environment.

Because over a period, students are often offered lessons that require them to be active rather than passively listening or observing [3]; this instructional approach fosters productive interaction among all class members. However, the face-to-face approach has several drawbacks, namely:

- 1) it requires students and teacher to be in the same classroom;
- 2) information can be inconsistent;
- 3) lack of flexibility; and, of course, the main problem is the varying levels of student learning in the classroom.

Since each student comes to the classroom with different goals, expectations, experiences, and abilities within a particular topic, the usual one-size-fits-all course does not produce effective results in this situation. It is the shortcomings of this approach that have opened the door to alternative ways of learning in the form of web-based courses or online education [3, 4, 5].

Distance education is a set of distance technologies used in the recognized forms of education (full-time, part-time, distance learning). The purpose of distance education is to reduce the educational load on the teacher, to improve the quality of education. Distance learning system has become an extremely popular form of education due to its convenience and flexibility. It eliminates the main obstacle - it eliminates the need to attend classes according to a set schedule, preventing contacts of people in difficult epidemiological situations [6, 7].

Transnational education refers to the provision of education services across national borders. With the advent of digital technologies, transnational education has become easier and more accessible. Quality digital transnational education refers to the provision of high-quality education services that make use of digital technologies to overcome geographical barriers and deliver education to students in different parts of the world.

Several factors are essential for ensuring the quality of digital transnational education. These factors are discussed below:

1. Infrastructure: The availability of the necessary technological infrastructure is crucial for quality digital transnational education. This includes high-speed internet connectivity, computers or mobile devices, and learning management systems. The infrastructure should be reliable and able to handle the load of multiple users.

2. Pedagogy: Digital transnational education should be based on sound pedagogical principles. This includes the use of active and collaborative learning techniques that engage students and promote their learning. Pedagogical strategies should also take into account the cultural diversity of students.

3. Quality Assurance: Quality assurance mechanisms should be in place to ensure that the education provided meets high standards. This includes regular monitoring and evaluation of the education services, accreditation, and certification.

4. Faculty: The quality of faculty is crucial for quality digital transnational education. Faculty should be qualified and experienced in their respective fields,

have expertise in the use of digital technologies for education, and be able to communicate effectively with students from diverse backgrounds.

5. Support Services: Adequate support services should be available to students, including technical support, counseling, and academic advising. These services should be accessible to students regardless of their location.

6. Content: The quality of educational content is also critical for digital transnational education. The content should be relevant, up-to-date, and culturally sensitive. It should also be delivered in a format that is easily accessible to students.

7. Assessment: Digital transnational education should include reliable and valid methods of assessment. This includes both formative and summative assessments that evaluate students' knowledge and skills.

Results of a Survey Conducted Among Teachers and Students

Thus, quality digital transnational education requires attention to several factors, including infrastructure, pedagogy, quality assurance, faculty, support services, content, and assessment. By ensuring that these factors are in place, institutions can provide high-quality education services to students regardless of their location.

Even if schools and other educational institutions have returned to the traditional method of education, distance learning still has an important role to play in society. In October 2022, Kazakh British technical university partnered with the University of Reading to conduct a survey of students and faculty to identify the challenges and difficulties of distance learning, and to improve the use of distance learning in the future. More than 5,000 students and 400 faculty participated in the survey. The results of the surveys were as follows:

Table 1. Prior experience of completing/teaching online class and in the future, I would like to improve my technology skills prior to teaching online classes.

Groups	With prior experience	With no prior experience		
Teaching Staff	67.40%	73.20%		
Students	89.40%	90.70%		

In the future, I would like to improve my technology skills prior to teaching online classes	Do you have prior experience in teaching online courses			
	Teaching Staff		Students	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Agree	42.0%	43.9%	46.8%	49.0%
Completely agree	16.3%	22.0%	25.4%	24.0%
Completely disagree	1.9%		1.5%	1.0%
Disagree	1.3%		4.5%	3.1%

Somewhat agree	9.1%	7.3%	17.2%	17.7%
Somewhat disagree	1.1%	4.9%	4.7%	5.2%

According to the results of the introductory question, we see that the majority of teachers (73.2%) and students (90.7) had no experience of distance learning before, but since the difference is not big, we can conclude that the transition to distance learning in the technological issue was not problematic. 42% of teachers and 46.8% of students fully agreed to the question of whether they would like to improve their distance learning skills among those who have experience.

As in many other countries, Kazakhstan’s education system has faced various difficulties. Mostly technical, like data transmission capacity: not all regions have good Internet, families do not have enough funds to pay for higher-speed Internet. The second issue is the provision of gadgets for children and teachers to access the Internet.

Table 2. The internet connectivity is stable and sufficient for teaching online classes.

Teaching Staff		To what level are you satisfied with your teaching performance in the online learning environment?						Total
		Low	Somewhat high	Somewhat low	Very high	Very low		
In my experience, the internet connectivity is stable and sufficient for teaching online classes, communicating with students, and performing teaching tasks		4.9%	11.8%	4.3%		3.6%		4.1%
	Agree	50.9%	35.3%	39.9%	23.8%	28.6%		40.5%
	Completely agree	16.0%	5.9%	8.7%	9.5%	39.3%		13.6%
	Completely disagree	4.9%	17.6%	2.2%	7.9%		33.3%	4.9%
	Disagree	6.7%	11.8%	9.4%	14.3%	3.6%		8.7%
	Somewhat agree	10.4%	11.8%	23.2%	30.2%	17.9%	33.3%	18.4%
	Somewhat disagree	6.1%	5.9%	12.3%	14.3%	7.1%	33.3%	9.7%

Students		To what level are you satisfied with your learning outcomes in the online learning environment?						Total
		Low	Some-what high	Some-what low	Very High	Very low		
In my experience, the internet connectivity is stable and sufficient for attending online classes, communicating with instructors and students, and performing tasks related to the course material?	Agree	52.3%	24.6%	36.0%	22.9%	43.6%	14.5%	39.2%
	Completely Agree	8.7%	2.7%	6.3%	4.5%	31.7%	3.1%	9.5%
	Completely disagree	3.2%	9.4%	4.0%	8.6%	4.0%	30.4%	6.0%
	Disagree	7.0%	19.1%	8.1%	13.6%	4.2%	27.3%	9.7%
	Somewhat agree	19.2%	24.6%	28.6%	25.3%	7.5%	11.5%	21.2%
	Somewhat disagree	9.6%	19.5%	17.0%	25.1%	9.0%	13.2%	14.3%

According to the survey results, the Internet connection is stable and sufficient for conducting online classes, communicating with students, and completing educational tasks (50.9%), and the operation of the Internet and technological support satisfied students.

Table 3. When I engage in online classes, I feel isolated and frustrated compared to face-to-face classes and how do you evaluate your learning achievement in online courses?

Students		How do you evaluate your learning achievement in online courses?					Total
		Mark range 2 (good)	Mark range 3 (satisfactory)	Mark range 4 (poor)	Mark range 5 (fail)		
When I engage in online classes, I feel isolated and frustrated compared to face-to-face classes	Agree	20.0%	20.1%	26.6%	52.9%	27.3%	22.0%
	Completely Agree	8.8%	2.2%	7.6%	23.5%	22.7%	6.6%
	Completely disagree	14.2%	6.1%	6.3%	11.8%	13.6%	9.6%
	Disagree	34.6%	34.4%	17.7%	11.8%	27.3%	31.6%
	Somewhat agree	12.9%	18.3%	25.3%			16.0%
	Somewhat disagree	9.6%	19.0%	16.5%		9.1%	14.3%

	Evaluation Mark				
	Excellent	Good	satisfactory	Poor	fail
When I engage in online classes, I feel isolated and frustrated compared to face-to-face classes					
Completely agree/agree/somewhat agree	43.70%	40.60%	59.50%	76.40%	50.00%

As we can see, in online classes, half of the students did not feel isolated and disappointed compared to face-to-face classes (50%). Thereby, we can conclude that distance learning has positive indicators among respondents.

Teaching Staff		Gender	
		Female	
I would prefer NOT to teach an online course that includes both male and female students in the future	Agree	2.5%	5.5%
	Completely agree	1.2%	1.2%
	Completely disagree	16.9%	14.1%
	Disagree	36.9%	35.2%
	Somewhat agree	5.6%	3.5%
	Somewhat disagree	2.5%	5.5%

From the data, we can conclude that 10.20% of females would not prefer to teach mix-gender online classes compared to 9.30% of males.

Students		What is your gender?	
		Female	
I would prefer NOT to teach an online course that includes both male and female students in the future	Agree	12.5%	11.8%
	Completely agree	4.2%	2.1%
	Completely disagree	21.2%	18.2%
	Disagree	44.3%	49.9%
	Somewhat agree	9.2%	8.8%
	Somewhat disagree	8.7%	9.3%

Here, 22.70% of females would not prefer to take mix-gender online classes compared to 25.90% of males.

The survey showed that, in general, Kazakhstan is ready to accept distance learning as part of the educational system. However, there are exceptions:

- Lack of efficiency of online learning in some specialties such as medicine and engineering;
- Technology availability issues (internet connectivity in some rural areas and villages);
- Training for teaching staff to use online teaching platforms;
- Lack of interaction and engagement in online learning environments compared to face-to-face learning environments.

It is obvious that distance education will not completely replace the classical full-time education, but, most likely, there will be a large-scale transition to blended learning, where digital formats will find their place in different types. In this connection it will be necessary to elaborate additionally on the legislative level the issues of transition from rigid regulation and standardization of the educational process to various forms of free education, individual educational trajectories, network education. Rethinking of the requirements for teachers, reassessment of their status and the value of their work is already happening, further adaptation of educational programs (disciplines) to modern realities is implemented: full or partial implementation online, expansion of teaching by leading teachers on a remote basis, development of systematic measures to support teachers and students. Experts note that the transition to online because of the pandemic has helped universities, teachers, students, managers to see new opportunities and gain new positive experiences. And it will certainly benefit universities.

The important thing is that the faculty, especially the older generation overcame a certain barrier that they had with regard to digital technology that they couldn't overcome in a different environment.

Uploading lectures to the platform allows faculty members to free themselves from reading them and devote that time to scholarly work, to improving lecture material. For students, this allows them with less effort to master the material that is posted on the platform and given through webinars, which at the same time It also helps to select the best learning materials [8, 9, 10,11].

Blended Learning as a Suggested Solution

To eliminate these problems, the following method is recommended - Blended learning. Blended learning is an educational concept in which a student, in particular, a schoolboy or a student, receives knowledge online, i.e. independently, and face-to-face with a teacher. This approach makes it possible to control the time, place, pace and way of studying the material. At the same time, attention should be paid to the fact that training is recognized as mixed if from 30 to 79% of the training time is spent online. Among its features, the following aspects can be distinguished: individualization of learning, saving time in the classroom, variability of educational trajectories, asynchronous learning, new opportunities for interaction, shortening the chain between the student and the content of education [12].

The components of blended learning are classroom learning, distance learning and online learning. It was the possibilities of information and communication technologies that contributed to the active development of blended learning, which turned out to be more effective than learning that takes place entirely online. This has been proven by scientific research. In particular, Stanford University specialists, who, by order of the US Federal Department of Education, analyzed more than a thousand empirical studies comparing traditional, online and blended learning [13].

The application of the principles of blended learning in pedagogical practice allows the teacher to achieve the following goals:

- to expand the educational opportunities of students by increasing the accessibility and flexibility of education, taking into account their individual educational needs, as well as the pace and rhythm of mastering educational material;

- to stimulate the formation of an active position of the student: increasing his motivation, independence, social activity, including in the development of educational material, reflection and introspection and, as a result, increasing the effectiveness of the educational process as a whole;

- transform the style of the teacher: move from the translation of knowledge to interactive interaction with students, contributing to the construction of students' own knowledge;

- to individualize and personalize the educational process, when the student independently determines his educational goals, ways to achieve them, taking into account his educational needs, interests and abilities, and the teacher acts as an assistant and mentor.

Conclusion

Even though distance education is still controversial for many, over the past few years personalized learning has become the culmination of the use of technology to improve learning and skills development. A new norm of lifestyle has been formed in the information field at the global and local levels.

With different approaches, students' decisions may vary depending on the pace of learning, the nature of the training sessions and the topics to be studied. Personalized learning is intertwined with self-education, with autonomous learning that better meets the needs, preferences and goals of a particular student. In the same category system [14], an individual approach is learning in which the pace is controlled by the student. The Grant and Bazey model offer a learning model that corresponds to the interests of the student, the preferred style and pace of his learning. Among the most important figures in the field of education of the XXI century, it is worth remembering Lucy Calkins. Personalized learning is associated with her practice of «conferring» with students, even if they are still learning to write [15, 16]. According to Calkins and many other experts, one of the advantages that

personalization gives is «meta-awareness», when a student chooses, understands and continues to be aware of the purpose of learning.

The modern education system should not only provide a normal, good, basic education, but also prepare creative, creative students who should think about innovations, be more constructive. Models, types and advantages of blended learning should be studied in advance and implemented in all parts of the education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This will allow our country to cope with the challenges of the new digital era, implement the Digital Kazakhstan program and successfully enter the top 30 competitive countries of the world.

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Қазіргі мәдени-ақпараттық кеңістіктегі қашықтықтан оқытудың рөлі

Аңдатпа. Экономикадағы, қоғамдағы және, әрине, білім берудегі процестер мен технологиялардың цифрлық трансформациясы - бұл факт. Жаңа шындық өмірдің барлық салаларын шексіз жаулап алады, құпиялылықты өткеннің елесіне айналдырады, адамдардың мәртебесін, шекаралары мен арақашықтықтарын толығымен бұлдыратады, уақытты «қысқартып», кез-келген ақпаратты оқуға, жұмыс істеуге, демалуға қолжетімді етеді. Білім беру орындарының дамуына көмектесуге арналған «цифрлық шешімдер» ақпараттық-коммуникациялық технологияларды енгізу проблемасынан, сондай-ақ оқу орындарында оқытудың техникалық құралдарын пайдаланудың одан да ертерек проблемасынан бастау алады. Бұл белгілі бір мағынада оқу орындарындағы технологиялық прогресс бағыттарының бірі.

Білім беру пандемиясынан кейін біз әлі толық зерттемеген және түсінбеген оқиғалар орын алады-оқушылардың мектептерден онлайн кеңістікке нақты және виртуалды «ағыны», оқыту әдістерінің өзгеруі, гаджеттерге екіұштылықпен қарау, балалардың оқу материалын «дәстүрлі» оқыту мен жаттауының күйреуі, оқу орындарын электронды құралдармен және ресурстармен қанықтыру.

Зерттеудің мақсаты – қазіргі білім беру процесінде қашықтықтан оқытудың рөлін анықтау. Цифрлық оқытуға аймақтық дайындықты анықтау мақсатында оқытушылар мен студенттер арасында сауалнама жүргізілді. Сауалнама нәтижесінде Қазақстанның білім беру саласы қашықтықтан оқытуды қабылдауға және оқытуда Blended learning қолдануға дайын екендігі анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: цифрлық технологиялар, онлайн оқыту, білім беру жүйелері, мәдениет, ақпараттық кеңістік.

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Роль дистанционного образования в современном культурно-информационном пространстве

Аннотация. Цифровая трансформация процессов и технологий в экономике, обществе и, конечно же, в образовании — это факт. Новая реальность неумолимо завоевывает целые сферы жизни, превращая приватность в призрак прошлого, полностью размывая статусы, границы и расстояния между людьми, «сжимая» время, делая практически любую информацию доступной для обучения, работы, отдыха. «Цифровые решения», призванные помочь развитию учебных заведений, берут свое начало от проблемы внедрения информационно-коммуникационных технологий, а также от еще более ранней проблемы использования технических средств обучения в учебных заведениях. В некотором смысле это одно из направлений технического прогресса.

В последствии пандемии образования происходят события, которые еще не до конца изучены и поняты нами - реальный и виртуальный «переток» учеников из школ в онлайн-пространство, трансформация методов обучения, амбивалентное отношение к гаджетам, крах «традиционного» обучения и заучивания детьми учебного материала, насыщение учебных заведений электронными инструментами и ресурсами.

Цель исследования - определить роль дистанционного обучения в современном образовательном процессе. Был проведен опрос среди преподавателей и студентов с целью определения региональной готовности к цифровому обучению. По результату опроса было выявлено что, образовательная сфера Казахстана готова к принятию дистанционного обучения и использовать Blended Learning в обучении.

Ключевые слова: цифровые технологии, онлайн-обучение, образовательные системы, культура, информационное пространство.