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EVOLUTION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

The authors made an attempt to reflect the genesis of origin and further development of an innovative education form – distance education in Russia. They consider evolutionary platform for development of distance education model in Russia that includes four stages: from using phones and emails to mass use of personal computers and the Internet for implementation of distance education through online and offline courses. In the presented article, special attention is paid to the formation of distance education in home state over the past decade. The main push in distance education development begins with adoption of the Federal Law No. 273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” in December 29, 2012. The essential role of this study is devoted to the transition of national educational institutions’ units to distance education according to the requirements specified in the order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia dated March 14, 2020, No. 397 “On the organization of educational activities in organizations implementing educational programs of higher education and relevant additional professional programs, in prevention of novel coronavirus outbreak in the territory of the Russian Federation” educational institutions with electronic educational information portals for effective work make free access to new, previously unrealized courses.

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Keywords: Distance learning, distance education, digitalization of education, electronic resource, remote training.



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1. Introduction

The education system in Russia allows improving population socialization by developing digitalization of education using distance learning. Distance learning is becoming more popular in Russia and all over the world.

Distance learning has been in demand in the world for several centuries.

The history of distance education dates back to 1728, when Caleb Philipson advertised in a Boston newspaper about recruiting students to study shorthand anywhere in the country by exchanging letters (Petkova, 2015). This was the beginning of distance education.

A huge contribution to distance education development was made by Isaac Pitman. In 1840, he sent letters with his lessons to everyone interested (Petkova, 2015). In 1856, the institute of correspondence education in Berlin was founded. In 1873, the first correspondence schools in the United States were created (Ershova, 2019). In all these newly established institutes part-time students studied at a distance using mail sending.

The first distance program was created in Chicago in 1892. Since 1899, distance learning appears in Canada. Distance learning appears in Baltimore in 1906 but in relation to primary education (Petkova, 2015).

During the twentieth century, with the development of new technologies, distance education is developing more actively and conquering new countries. Distance education is offered in various educational formats with an increase of students' circle. Distance learning is developing at all levels of education from secondary to higher education. In almost all countries there is an opportunity to get an education in a foreign language in another country (Aspin & Chapman, 2012).

2. Problem Statement

In Russia, distance learning is developing slowly, at the same time, the citizens' need for such kind of education is increasing. Only after the revolution in 1917, distance learning in our country began to develop. The first educational program developed in the USSR was organized as part-time course and called: "education without visual contact".

The significant role of this study is devoted to the transition of national educational institutions' units to distance education according to the requirements specified in the order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia No. 397 dated March 14, 2020: "On the organization of educational activities in organizations implementing educational programs of higher education and relevant additional professional programs, in prevention of novel coronavirus outbreak in the territory of the Russian Federation" educational institutions with electronic educational information portals make free access to new, previously unrealized courses.

3. Research Questions

One of the main questions is considering evolution of distance education development in Russia, which includes four stages: from using phones and emails to mass use of personal computers and the Internet to implement distance education through online and offline courses.

An equally important question of the presented study is distance education implementation in the educational process.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to consider the evolutionary platform for development of distance education model in Russia to introduce distance education using online and offline courses.

5. Research Methods

To reflect the genesis of origin, further development and universal application of an innovative education form – distance education in Russia, the authors used an analytical method that allows them to consider all the stages of distance education development in Russia.

From its very inception in Russia, distance learning has had two development directions:

- Private correspondent schools. They used mail for the materials exchange, and in subsequent years, in connection with new technologies development, began to use electronic technologies;
- Distance education departments at universities that used telecommunications, audio and video materials in their educational programs. At the beginning of their development, distance learning courses were supplemented by classroom activities.

For a long period, distance learning was at the same level, despite the fact that the number of people wishing to get an education increased every year.

Distance education in Russia passed several stages while developing, each of these stages has brought its own results that are still used in modern distance learning (Safronov, 2009).

1. While using phones, mail and email, the teacher could simultaneously contact one or more students for having classes. These classes were significantly limited in time. As a result of this interaction, the use of an integrated method of studying the course was excluded.

2. Possibility to record training programs on video cassettes and audio cassettes significantly systematized the process of distance learning. The use of video lectures was limited because of the very beginning of computer technology development.

3. As a result of the Internet invention, distance education has stepped forward. There was an opportunity to expand the ways of presenting information and controlling acquired knowledge. Active development of feedback was provided by both, personal computers and specially organized places with public computers, for example, in libraries. There was a possibility of contact communication between students and teacher through video communication.

4. The current stage of distance education development in Russia has begun with the adoption of the order of the Ministry of Education of Russia No. 1050 on May 30, 1997. Distance learning is based on a set of virtual teaching techniques, as well as using training systems. Distance learning has become a complete substitute for full-time study. Communication systems are widely used in the modern world; they allow you to share information in a wide variety of formats.

With the adoption of the order of the Ministry of Education of Russia No. 1050 “On conducting an experiment in the field of distance education” dated May 30, 1997, distance education appears in the Russian Federation (Petkova, 2015). From that moment, online courses have begun to develop.

The participants of the experiment, in accordance with the order, were:

1. Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics;
2. non-state educational institution “Modern Humanitarian Institute”;
3. non-state educational institution “Moscow Higher Banking School”;
4. non-state educational institution “Moscow International University of Business and Information Technologies”;
5. non-state educational institution “International Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism”;
6. non-state educational institution “International University of Business and New Technologies” (Barankov, 2017).

For the period from 1997 to 1999, the universities participating in the experiment were allowed to create a branch network for organizing educational process using distance education technologies in the specialties (directions) of training programs indicated in their licenses.

According to the results of one year of study, the educational institutions needed to report on executed work. The results of the experiment were summarized, and suggestions and changes were made for the further experiment conduct.

The order of the Ministry of Education of Russia, No. 1050, dated May 30, 1997, lost its force on June 27, 2000.

The article No. 16 of the Federal Law No. 273-FZ, dated December 29, 2012 “On Education in the Russian Federation” clarifies the concepts of “e-learning” and “distance learning technologies”: e-learning is understood as an organization of educational activities using the data (information) contained in the databases, used in implementation of educational programs, and information technology providing this data processing, technical equipment, as well as information and telecommunication networks providing transmission of this information along the communication lines and interaction of students and teachers. Distance educational technologies are understood as educational technologies, implemented mainly with the use of information and telecommunication networks with indirect (distance) interaction between students and teachers (Barankov, 2017).

With the adoption of the federal law, organizations engaged in educational activities have gained the opportunity to develop their educational process with the help of distance educational technologies, which are rapidly being introduced into the educational process (Shapovalova, 2012).

For the implementation of distance education, it was necessary to create conditions for a stably operating electronic information and educational environment (Pulyaeva, 2015).

The Federal Law of December 29, 2012 provides a list of the electronic information and educational environment units: electronic information resources, electronic educational resources, combination of information technologies, telecommunication technologies, appropriate technological means that ensure the successful mastery of educational programs by students regardless of their location (Soldatkin, 2018).

For the effective implementation of distance education, the necessary amount of classroom hours for each subject is determined, while a complete absence of them is also allowed.

The order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 22, dated January 20, 2014, "On approval of the lists of professions and specialties of secondary vocational education, where implementation of exclusively e-learning, distance educational technologies is not allowed" approved the list of professions of secondary vocational education with limited use of e-learning and distance learning technologies (Barankov, 2017).

The procedure of e-learning and distance learning technologies used by organizations engaged in educational activities when implementing educational programs was approved by Order of the Ministry of Education of Russia No. 816, dated August 23, 2017, "On approval of the procedure for the use of e-learning, distance learning technologies by organizations engaged in educational activities when implementing educational programs" (Soldatkin, 2008). This order also approved a new list of professions, specialties and training areas where implementation of educational programs using exclusively distance learning is not allowed.

For the effective implementation of distance education, the necessary amount of classroom hours for each discipline is determined.

6. Findings

The popularization of distance education is currently increasing. The number of people who want to get an education, but who do not have the opportunity to study full-time, is also growing every year.

Development of electronic distance learning courses is especially important for people with disabilities, people who are not able to receive training at a certain time, in a certain place or in a certain country.

Distance learning can be divided into two types: totally distant education and distant studying some part of the courses by intramural, intra-extramural or extramural forms of study.

Totally distant education allows you without encumbrance to get higher education, additional education, take advanced training courses, as well as retraining courses on the job or during your full-time study.

The range of proposed areas for distance education in Russia is expanding every year. Most universities offer several areas of training for both, higher education and additional education, for example in the form of further education courses (Amelina & Stymkovskii, 2013).

An essential condition for distance education popularization is its price. Due to its trifling value, people with low incomes can afford to get higher education (Green et al., 2003).

The system of totally distant education has its pros and cons (Guenther, 2017).

The pros include:

1. Various methods of presenting learning material and monitoring gain knowledge.
2. The students choose themselves deadlines for fulfilling necessary requirements to obtain midterm assessment on the course.

3. The teacher uses individual approach to every student, taking into account their life situations, as well as physical and mental capabilities.
4. Classes online meet most students' requirements and wishes.
5. The student has opportunity to receive education in any educational institution regardless of its location.
6. Anyone, regardless of their health status, material and social status in society, can receive distance education (Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus & Duckworth, 2008).

The cons include:

1. The need to purchase or have access to special equipment, for example, a personal computer or iPad, and, of course, you need to have access to the Internet.
2. The possibility of verbal presentation of thought is limited in time.
3. The lecture materials provided may not always give completeness of knowledge, and there is no opportunity to ask all the necessary questions orally. You can ask questions only offline.
4. There is no possibility of immersion in the student environment, for communication with classmates and other students (Sokhan, 2016).

Unfortunately, a limited number of professions can be mastered at a distance. This is due to the fact that most of the courses in many areas of training require practical application of knowledge in practical and laboratory classes. In order to master these professions, people, who do not have the opportunity to study on the territory of the educational institution regularly, have the possibility to learn part of the courses online (Cherkasov & Lapina, 2018).

Partially distant education is used in all educational institutions and involves training using special educational systems: online courses, offline classes, chat rooms, instant messengers, Internet tests, including a-exam simulators, and performing current tasks, such as writing an essay, abstract or control work.

Partially distant education is limited by time frames for intramural, intra-extramural or extramural forms of study. The transition to such kind of training allows student to complete the current course on time and without serious consequences associated with a long absence from classes.

As with totally distant learning, partially distant learning has its pros and cons which overlap.

In accordance with current legislation, combination of two forms of education (full-time and distance education) is implemented in case of epidemic, adverse weather conditions and other force majeure circumstances.

In case of absence of access to special equipment, it remains possible to complete the task in person.

There is a problem while implementing a distant educational program – it is identification of the person performing the task. In the modern world this problem is solved with the help of contact work during video chats.

In the structure of higher education, the application of studying part of a course at a distance using digital technologies occupies a special place in educational process and is being used more and more often.

Since the workload of the educational process is high and it is possible thanks to distance learning to control the capture of a course part in any free time (Bezvikonnaya, 2017; Soldatkin, 2018).

7. Conclusion

In connection with the epidemiological situation in the country, the Decree of the Chief State Sanitary Doctor of the Russian Federation No. 6 “On additional measures to reduce the risks of coronavirus COVID-2019 spread” was published on March 13, 2020 and came into force on March 17, 2020.

The decree obliges regional authorities to limit the mass events and to ensure compliance with the anti-epidemic regime in educational organizations. In all educational institutions, if possible, it is necessary to organize distance learning until the virus spread risk is reduced.

The decree extends to the entire territory of the country. The exception is Moscow, since all the necessary measures were taken there earlier. Students of universities are actively transferred to distance education.

In connection with the adoption of the order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia No. 397, dated March 14, 2020, “On the organization of educational activities in organizations implementing educational programs of higher education and the corresponding additional professional programs, in conditions of preventing the spread of new coronavirus infection in the Russian Federation”, subordinate universities are prescribed, and other institutions are recommended to organize exclusively distant work of students with teachers, namely, using various educational technologies that will enable the interaction of students and teaching staff at a distance, including e-learning and distance learning technologies.

This applies to higher education programs and additional professional programs. Students have the opportunity to provide individual vacations, as well as individual curriculum training. Contact work between students and teachers should take place only at a distance in the electronic educational information environment.

To implement the requirements specified in the order the educational institutions that have portals for effective work in the electronic educational information environment open access to new, previously unrealized, courses.

Since March 18, 2020, authorized persons have posted on the website of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education “a list of free online courses for students according to the curricula of educational programs”. Free online courses are also introduced by some universities in the country, for example, St. Petersburg State University opened access to its online courses for students from other universities for the time of special measures introduced in the city because of the coronavirus.

Every day an increasing number of higher education institutions switch to distance learning. At the same time, as a result of distance learning students should have needed level of mastering the discipline, in accordance with classroom instruction. Students must comprehensively gain knowledge under curriculum.

The massive transition to distance learning is already having positive results. Students are becoming more interested in carrying out current tasks well and in time.

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