

ICEST 2021**II International Conference on Economic and Social Trends for Sustainability of Modern Society****THE DISTANCE LEARNING SITUATION AS A PROFESSIONAL
CHALLENGE FOR FUTURE TEACHERS**

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Abstract

The change towards distance learning during the pandemic situation has raised questions about the advantages and limitations of online learning. Despite the great interest in this topic, not much is known about how students perceive the learning situation, what factors influence the involvement and effectiveness of learning. Our research is devoted to the study of self-perception in a learning situation, the relationship with students' self-efficacy and assessment of the situation as a professional challenge. The research of the health state, students' experiencing the situation and self-efficacy in the context of various anti-epidemiological measures on the example of the cities of Krasnoyarsk and Grodno has been carried out with the help of an online survey of students. The results have shown that the characteristics of learning in different life conditions have an influence on well-being, situational anxiety, cognitive assessment of the situation and the type of orientation in a difficult situation. If distance learning is perceived as a challenge, it affects the search for opportunities in the situation, the desire to learn something new, correlates with the prevalence of a more positive mood. As a result of the study, possible directions of institutional changes to support personal agency have been identified.

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Keywords: Self-efficacy, personal agency, students – future teachers, distance learning, professional development



1. Introduction

While studying coping strategies of students of various profiles (Bocharova & Dyachuk, 2021), we have found out that students in pedagogical programs were significantly more likely to use “sedatives” (medicines, alcohol, etc.) to cope with a difficult situation than the students of other profiles, and in general, demonstrated behavioral escaping the problem, which caused a research question about the phenomenon of professionally determined characteristics of coping with difficult situations peculiar for a group of students of pedagogical specialties.

At the same time, there are social expectations of the public and state's attitudes towards the professional group of teachers as an avant-garde group that demonstrates not only self-organization, self-efficacy and productive coping with stress, but also willingness to provide assistance, methodological, digital, psychological and other support to other participants of the educational process (projects “Education volunteers”, “Stand-in teacher”, “Digital volunteers”, “Skype of trust”, etc.). Some studies aimed at defining specific characteristics of students involved in volunteering, consider the value-motivational sphere, compassion, independence, perseverance, etc. (Maryin & Nikiforova, 2021). However, highlighting these qualities allows us to describe the distinctive features of this group of students, but does not answer the question of the reasons that determine the involvement in volunteer work, a change in position from a student to a specialist, especially in the pandemic situation associated with uncertainty, increased anxiety, high psychological stress level (Brooks et al., 2020; Protko & Pateyuk, 2020).

Overcoming a difficult situation is connected with a repertoire of coping strategies, defined by estimating the given situation and available resources (Lasarus & Folkman, 1984). At the same time, the estimation of a situation is reduced only to cognitive estimation, not taking into account the experiences of a situation and experiencing oneself in this situation, which can be described both as phenomena of the emotional sphere, as integrative formations of consciousness (Leontiev et al., 2018), and as an activity aimed at overcoming the “gap” of life, “finding the semantic correspondence of consciousness and being” (Vasilyuk, 1984, p. 27). It is necessary to consider not a situation and a person separately but a person in a situation.

One of the experiences is self-efficacy as believing in the ability to organize one's actions to achieve a goal, to perform actions not only in typical but also difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1997; Berman, 2020). Self-efficacy can determine the degree of efforts a person takes to solve problems, persistence, choice of coping strategies, emotional states in situations of difficulties, complexity of the tasks set by oneself (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Pogorelov, 2012), and is also associated with psychological well-being (Fu et al., 2018), mental health (Yıldırım & Güler, 2020).

In the context of distance learning, students become more independent in setting goals, organizing activity during the learning process, responsibility in learning activities. Self-efficacy can be expressed as a condition for involvement in online learning, academic progress. The study of the peculiarities of adaptation to online learning of young teachers in Germany (König et al., 2020) has shown that self-efficacy plays a key role in differentiated setting of tasks for students and providing feedback. In process of teaching students in self-isolation, self-efficacy and motivation are positively associated with participation in online learning (Zapata-Cuervo et al., 2021), seen as allowing a faster transition to distance learning (Cicha et al.,

2021). Self-efficacy is associated with a person's principles that might not correspond to actual capabilities, therefore, its study is not enough to understand coping strategies in a blended learning situation. It is necessary to highlight how a situation is perceived, how it is understood by a person, and to correlate it with an implemented activity and its effectiveness.

2. Problem Statement

The majority of studies focus on assessing distance learning, how it is perceived by the participants of educational process, what difficulties they face, what the advantages and limitations of the distance learning format are, how the identified difficulties lead to various states, communication process, etc. Studying positive experience of online learning leads to the identification of organizational, information and communication, personal, and other factors that make it possible to be effective in the learning process. The analysis of professionally difficult situations presented by N.E. Vodopyanova, E.S. Starchenkova has made it possible to identify the situations of professional challenge in which “compensation” is less than personal contribution in terms of emotional, intellectual, physical and other costs, and cognitively complex coping efforts are required to overcome these stressful situations” (as cited in Vodopyanova, 2018, p. 77). The research of the representatives of socioeconomic professions carried out by these scientists showed that proactive coping, control over a situation, involvement in meaningful activities, people’s attitudes to the profession help to reduce the expression of various negative states, mediate self-organization and can be considered as personal resources of coping (Starchenkova et al., 2018; Vodopyanova et al., 2020). This allows us to assume that a sharp increase in the volume of educational work has become a stress factor for students, in which only an active creative attitude to the situation allowed several students to cope with the emotional consequences of stress. Discussing these factors must be correlated with the characteristics of a student's perception of the situation as a whole, a student's experience of their activity and opportunities for solving various problems that affect the assessment of distance education, focus either on the shortcomings or on the possibilities of this learning format, academic performance. The students’ experience of their own effectiveness in educational activity is the subject-matter of our research.

3. Research Questions

In this regard, our study was aimed at describing the characteristics of perceiving the learning situation during the pandemic by students of pedagogical profiles in Krasnoyarsk and Grodno, correlating the experience of the situation with self-efficacy and characteristics of educational activity as a manifestation of personal agency and considering it to be the area for professional development.

The research task was the definition of self-efficacy as a factor that determines the perception of a difficult situation as a source of positive activity, identification of statistically significant connections between the level of self-efficacy and certain aspects of students' perception of a learning situation during the pandemic.

4. Purpose of the Study

We intend to research the peculiarities of the situation perception presented by students in the context of various anti-epidemiological measures, depending on the experience of students' self-efficacy, to propose the ways of institutional changes for personal agency development and support.

5. Research Methods

The study involved the students of pedagogical universities ($n = 1037$) of two cities - Grodno ($n_1 = 625$) and Krasnoyarsk ($n_2 = 412$). The educational process in these two cities was carried out in different conditions: in Krasnoyarsk, studying in the first 2.5 months of the pandemic was in conditions of forced isolation caused by an emergency transition to distance learning, and from October to December 2020, studying took place mainly in a distance format. In Grodno, studying was carried out in the traditional format, using information and communication technologies as needed. The survey was conducted from January 20 to February 27, 2021 with the help of Google e-form.

The selection included 1st–4th year students aged from 17 to 26 years ($SD = 21.7$), the majority of them was girls (89.3%). 24.5% of the study participants noted that they had had COVID-19, in 37.7% close relatives had had a new coronavirus infection.

The description of perception and experience of the learning situation in new forms of implementation as a situation of a professional challenge has been carried out through several parameters: self-efficacy, students' perception of a learning situation during the pandemic, significance and effectiveness of educational activities, students' general health condition.

We shall consider the highlighted parameters and tools for their measurements in more detail.

We consider self-efficacy as the experience (belief) of a person that he/she is capable of providing the result by their own efforts through an assessment of abilities to accomplish what has been planned (Bandura, 1997). Its measurement was carried out using the "Questionnaire of general self-efficacy" (Shvartser et al., 1996)

The perception of a situation was considered through the perception of time and coping with difficult situations. The evaluation using the Time Perception Scales allows us to reveal whether a person connects the events of the past, present and future into a single space of their existence (continuity – discreteness), how emotionally attractive certain temporal modalities are, the experience of tension, saturation, organization of time. The types of orientation in a difficult situation have been determined on the basis of the model of E.V. Bityutskaya, who singled out two types of orientation towards difficulties (getting closer to difficulties and avoiding them), which correspond to 8 types of orientation (Bityutskaya & Korneev, 2020). In order to clarify the changes, the question about new things happened to the students during the pandemic situation was asked.

The meaning and results of educational activities were described using the methodology for diagnosing experiences in activities based on the model of optimal experience by M. Csikszentmihalyi, which allows us to highlight the compliance of activities with certain criteria: performance (experience of effort), pleasantness (pleasure), inclusion in broader contexts (meaning). The absence of these three components manifests itself in the experience of emptiness (Osin & Leontiev, 2017). To assess the

effectiveness of educational activities, we also asked the students about academic grades they got for the last two sessions, which took place during the period of the pandemic, and also asked them to estimate their success in educational activities (whether they began to study worse or better).

The study of the state of health has been carried out using the methodology "Scale of states" in the adaptation of Leonova (1984) and the scale of situational anxiety of Ch. Spielberger, L. Khanin (as cited in Spielberger et al., 1990).

The results according to these methods have been compared for students from different cities using the nonparametric comparison methods of Mann-Whitney and Pearson χ^2 . Correlation and multiple regression analysis have been used to identify the relationship between the indicators.

At the first stage a comparative analysis of the parameters selected for describing the situation among students of pedagogical training program in two cities has been carried out. According to the scale of situational anxiety, significant differences have been noticed (48.5% of Krasnoyarsk students have shown high level of situational anxiety, while among Grodno students this ratio is 36.6%, $p < 0.05$), experiences of pleasure and meaning of educational activity (the values of Grodno students are higher, $p < 0.001$) but at the same time higher marks according to the results of the session were demonstrated by students of Krasnoyarsk ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, differences in the prevalence of orientations in a difficult situation have also been revealed: Grodno students highlight opportunities in a difficult situation ($p < 0.001$), identify obstacles and barriers, estimate their abilities and resources to overcome them ($p < 0.05$). Krasnoyarsk students have more emphasis on resource conservation ($p < 0.05$) and postponing their resolution ($p < 0.05$). However, 43.9% of Krasnoyarsk students versus 35.2% from Grodno noted that they had revised their values ($p < 0.001$). Krasnoyarsk students have noted that sense of security was what they lacked during the pandemic situation most of all ($p < 0.001$), as well as communication with teachers, an opportunity to discuss the material they found too complicated ($p < 0.01$). The students of both cities had a predominance of feeling unwell or poor (71.7% among Grodno and 76.9% among Krasnoyarsk students); the perception of time as saturated, compressed - tense - and unpleasantly limited. About 4% of students in two cities joined a volunteer movement, a third part of them mastered new skills, slightly more than half noted the change in their attitude towards health, and about 40% started planning things.

Thus, experiencing the situation by Krasnoyarsk students is associated with an increase in situational anxiety, a decrease in the feeling of security, predominance of poor and low health, predominance of types of orientations in a difficult situation towards avoiding difficulties by conserving resources (inaction) or ignoring difficulties (carelessness). The perception of the situation by Grodno students correlates with feeling unwell or poor, a tendency towards an average level of situational anxiety, more expressed experiences of pleasure and meaning in learning activities, predominance of orientation in a difficult situation towards getting closer to difficulties through seeking opportunities or overcoming obstacles and barriers.

The obtained differences allow us to emphasize that the situation of distance learning during the pandemic in conditions of forced lockdown and restrictions has caused an increase in anxiety, concentration on learning, orientation towards avoiding difficulties, influenced the state of health, mood, cognitive assessment of the situation, led to changing the attitude to one's health, determined the need to develop the skills of self-organization, planning. However, no differences in self-efficacy, which can act as a starting

indicator for studying the students' personal agency have been found. The division of students with different levels of self-efficacy according to two selections does not differ ($\chi^2=0.65$, $p=0.72$).

Experiencing one's own effectiveness, believing that one's own actions and available resources will lead to the achievement of the desired results do not depend upon external conditions, gender, age, overcoming coronavirus infection by students themselves or their inner circle.

In this regard, we shall consider further analysis of self-efficacy on a selection of students of pedagogical profile without division by cities, as one group.

In order to identify the factors connected with self-efficacy, a correlation analysis on the basis of Spearman method has been carried out. As a result, positive relationships between self-efficacy and the level of well-being ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), time tension ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), a positive attitude to time ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$), orientation towards opportunities in a difficult situation ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$), orientation towards high labor intensity, thoroughness of study ($r = 0.10$, $p < 0.01$), striving for difficulties ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$), experience of pleasure in learning activity ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$) and meaning ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), as well as effort ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$) and assessment of success (good and excellent marks, improving academic performance) of learning activities ($r = 0.11$, $p < 0.01$) have been obtained.

A higher level of self-efficacy correlates with lower situational anxiety ($r = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$), lower representation of an orientation towards conserving resources, inaction ($r = -0.10$, $p < 0.01$) and response to signals warning about difficulties ($r = -0.12$, $p < 0.001$), lack of orientation towards avoiding difficulties ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.001$) and feeling emptiness ($r = -0.15$, $p < 0.001$).

The comparison of self-efficacy level and answers to the question of what new "happened" to few students during the pandemic has shown that almost a half (48.75%) of the students with a high level of self-efficacy used this situation as an opportunity to learn new things, master new actions, skills.

The generalization of the correlation analysis results allows us to highlight that self-efficiency is related to mood, well-being of students, experiencing the saturation of time and positive attitude towards time which can characterize the expansion of time horizons for the implementation of aspirations. That agrees with the orientation towards rapprochement with a difficult situation and the search for opportunities and anticipation in it, success in solving difficult problems. At the same time, in a difficult situation, orientation is associated with highlighting what is necessary and possible to do, and not taking into account obstacles, anticipating possible difficulties based on the analysis of the situation, i.e. manifestation of an activity to implement ideas, and not overcoming difficulties and getting rid of obstacles. With regard to educational activity, self-efficacy correlates with the experience of its meaningfulness and pleasure, the ratio of which forms a complex experience of joy, which can also be reflected in increased success, higher academic performance, as well as the desire to learn something new, acquire new skills.

Identifying the relationships between many variables has determined the use of linear regression analysis, considering students' self-efficacy as a dependent variable. Assessment of the conditions (well-being), situational anxiety, perception of time and in learning activities, types of orientation in a situation, changes that occurred during the pandemic were introduced as independent variables. Age, course, country, gender have been included in the multivariate analysis, but did not significantly contribute to the dependent variable and were excluded from the equation as insignificant. The final regression equation is presented in the table (See Table 1).

Table 1. Regression Analysis for Self-Efficacy (Dependent Variable)

	B	SE	β	T	p level
R= 0.563 R ² =0.316 Adjusted R ² =0.310 F (9.1027) =52.831 p<0.0000					
State anxiety	-0.142	0.019	-0.226	-7.452	0.000
Experiencing meaning in learning activities	0.385	0.055	0.257	7.003	0.000
Experiencing pleasure in learning activities	0.124	0.056	0.081	2.209	0.027
Striving for difficulties, self- testing	1.341	0.274	0.141	4.897	0.000
Loss orientation (avoiding difficulties)	-0.505	0.237	-0.066	-2.126	0.034
Focus on high labor intensity (thoroughness)	0.512	0.194	0.076	2.642	0.008
Focus on opportunities, search for them to achieve the goal	0.580	0.200	0.086	2.895	0.004
Experiencing the time tension	0.099	0.039	0.070	2.536	0.011
Mastering new skills	0.233	0.157	0.053	2.061	0.039

The results of the regression analysis have shown that the model takes into account a significant proportion of the variance of students' self-efficacy (adjusted R² = 0.310; F (9.1037) = 52.831 p <0.0000). Lower situational anxiety, more prominent feelings of meaningfulness and pleasure in learning activities, experience of tension in time, more prominent desire to test oneself in difficult situations, focus on high labor intensity to achieve goals and search for opportunities with a low level of avoiding difficulties, making use of the situation to learn something new, mastering new skills, predict higher levels of self-efficacy. The model did not reflect the assessment of the state (well-being) and academic performance which might be caused by the fact that these variables are more integrative ones, and rather do not determine self-efficacy, but depend on it.

The determination of the ratio of students with high level of self-efficacy has shown 11.8% in Grodno, 10.7% in Krasnoyarsk, the average for all students is 11.3%. Using the Kruskal-Wallis criterion, a comparative analysis of the school's indicators of states, well-being, and academic performance has been carried out. As a result, significant differences at the scale of well-being (H = 39.15, p <0.001), marks for the last two sessions (H = 8.83 p <0.01), the assessment of their success in studies in recent years (H = 12.03, p <0.01) have been singled out. Students with a high level of self-efficacy are also characterized by higher indicators of subjective comfort, higher academic grades and also estimate that they have managed to maintain the same level of performance in educational activities and improve grades. Thus, these variables can be viewed as related to self-efficacy.

The highlighted indicators, such as self-efficacy, well-being, efficiency, success in educational activities can be considered as characteristics of a student's readiness to highlight prospects, opportunities for development in a difficult situation. Self-determination in a new situation, its perception as an opportunity for mastering new competencies, believing in one's own effectiveness, active transformation of oneself and the world around can be correlated with personal agency (Zakharova & Vilkova, 2020).

6. Findings

The situation of the pandemic has had a great impact on the students' well-being: the majority of them feel mostly unwell and poor. The peculiarities of the anti-epidemiological measures taken have influenced situational anxiety, sense of security, cognitive assessment of the situation, experiences in learning activities. The experience of the lockdown and a greater number of restrictions are associated with higher situational anxiety, the predominance of types of orientation in a difficult situation to avoid

difficulties, revising the attitude towards one's health, determined the need to develop the skills of self-organization, planning, and a decrease in the experience of being involved in the educational process. These features of the the learning situation perception can subsequently lead to loss of knowledge, decrease in motivation for learning and in the long term - to reduction in human capital.

We regard self-efficacy as an important indicator that allows us to adapt to new conditions, overcome a stressful situation and use our own resources to cope with the situation. Regardless of the characteristics of training in conditions of the pandemic, the proportion of students with high self-efficacy remains the same.

As a result of the analysis, it has been revealed that self-efficacy is associated with the perception of a situation as saturated, organized, rapidly changing, having different possibilities, a certain challenge. In educational activities, students with high self-efficacy mention experiences of meaning and pleasure, the ratio of which forms a complex experience of joy, which correlates with higher academic performance, the desire to learn something new, acquire new skills, and a focus on high labor intensity to achieve goals. The experience of one's own effectiveness, the ability to achieve goals, cope with a situation correlate with a lower level of situational anxiety, higher indicators of subjective comfort.

In this regard, according to the identified features of experiencing a learning situation in the pandemic conditions, it can be noted that the perception of the situation as a development area is associated with self-efficacy, manifestation of personal agency. The belief that one's own efforts will lead to the desired result also influences the state of health, the prevalence of a more positive mood.

7. Conclusion

The results obtained cast doubt on the comparability of too high expectations from all future teachers as an educational and professional social group to act as the vanguard of support in crisis situations without the introduction of special organizational and pedagogical conditions and mechanisms to stimulate the development of their personal agency. Only every ninth student of the pedagogical training program, according to their individual-typological and personal characteristics, is able to independently and productively cope with difficult situations, use them as a resource for acquiring new experience and developing skills.

This small cohort is characterized by higher levels of subjective comfort, higher academic grades, and also it is noted that they have managed to maintain the same level of performance in educational activities and improve grades.

We have found out that the proportion of students with high self-efficacy does not exceed 11% in countries with different anti-epidemiological conditions and organization of education during the pandemic. However, they are those who represent the vanguard group of future teachers with manifested personal agency: they study meaningfully and with great pleasure, strive to test themselves in difficult situations, are not afraid and even use such situations to achieve goals, they use the time of forced distance and self-isolation to learn something new.

According to the studies of personal agency in higher education (Nosko, 2011; Wulf, 2019), the possibilities for expanding this vanguard group are associated with personification of learning and mastering the meanings of the profession of a teacher; in this case, with the perception of a difficult situation

as a professional challenge to manage one's own learning and helping and supporting others relying on this experience.

The necessary conditions for institutional support of students' personal agency in situations requiring coping with stress will be considered in the next articles.

Acknowledgments

The research was funded by RFBR, Krasnoyarsk Territory and Krasnoyarsk Regional Fund of Science, project number 20-413-242905.

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