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**ORGANIZATION PROJECT ACTIVITIES WITH THE HELP OF  
DISTANCE LEARNING**

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***Abstract***

The research is devoted to the issue of distance learning when teaching Russian as a foreign language. Such a method of teaching students as project activity, its functioning and efficiency is considered. The projects carried out at the Moscow Polytechnic University which clearly illustrate the application of this method and its results are considered. The implementation of project activities in terms of full-time and distance learning is compared. The experience of project-oriented activity has shown good results because the consumer passive assimilation of ready-made knowledge received from the teacher gives way to an active, creative approach. As a rule, projects require in-depth knowledge of the problem and the ability to find practical applications of it. Projects develop the ability to find new information. In addition, a range of personality traits such as critical thinking, problem-solving ability, teamwork, and a full range of communication skills, including listening, speaking and writing, are improved during the realization of a project.

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## 1. Introduction

In modern higher education, namely at the Moscow Polytechnic University, such a method of teaching students as project activities is actively developing.

This type of activity is being effectively implemented at all faculties of the university and brings very successful results, since the technology of project-oriented education provides a high quality of training for engineers, guarantees university graduates advantages in the labor market and grants effective work in enterprises. The project method is understood as a comprehensive teaching method that enables to individualize the educational process, makes it possible for students to show their independence when planning, organizing and controlling their activities, and to creatively approach the implementation of educational tasks (Polat et al., 2008).

This teaching method is very important for the development of cognitive, research and creative activities not only for Russian students (Isaeva et al., 2016), but also for international students at the preparatory faculty.

Despite the fact that international students still have a poor command of Russian at the initial stage of training, nevertheless, the implementation of project activities is possible at this stage of training.

The technique involving projects (under the circumstances of full-time education), in contrast to classical teaching methods, allows the teacher to solve the following tasks in a group of students studying Russian:

- 1) teach students to work independently, both individually and in groups;
- 2) increase the level of students' interest in studying the subject;
- 3) teach students the skills of socialization and adaptation;
- 4) help to find a way out of the problems arising during intercultural communication;
- 5) develop research and cognitive activities;
- 6) stimulate a creative approach when learning Russian as a foreign language

## 2. Problem Statement

Currently, the independent work of students is our first priority, the principles of its organization are being studied, and educational methods are being developed. It was important for us to trace how the educational method of project activity works in the conditions of full-time and distance learning, to identify the shortcomings introduced by distance learning, and to determine the best ways to implement the technique of project activity in teaching Russian as a foreign language.

## 3. Research Questions

- What is project activity as a teaching method?
- How does project activity function under the conditions of distance learning?
- Which learning method, traditional, distance or mixed, can be considered the most effective?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research underlying the article was to study and compare the functioning of project activity as an educational method in the conditions of full-time (off-line) and distance learning.

#### **5. Research Methods**

There have been used comparative, functional and linguistic research methods in the work. The research projects proposed in the article have been tested at the Moscow Polytechnic University.

Based on the foregoing, one cannot but agree with the opinion that "project-oriented education solves a significant number of different pedagogical tasks: it provides the formation of a number of universal and professional competencies, fosters purposefulness and responsibility in students, and contributes to the development of their reflective abilities. The main advantage is that it allows each participant in joint work to independently find "their position" in the project, to perform the task that is truly interesting to him, thereby reveals the creative abilities of the individual that were previously in a latent state" (Sazonova et al., 2015, p. 114).

An important methodological guideline in this study is the works of Russian developers of distance learning V. Samoilenko, T.V. Tretyakova, who write about the modification of modern higher education through distance learning (Samoilenko, 2017; Tretyakova et al., 2020). Ideas about the modernization of higher education are developed in works by Kuzu (2020). An in-depth analysis of the transformation of higher education using digital technologies is found in the works of Seres et al. (2018). Dexeus (2019) writes about the revolutionary process in the higher education system, which is happening today with unprecedented speed. K. Sandkuhl spoke about the consequences of the transformation of the traditional education system (Sandkuhl & Lehmann, 2017). Akhmetova's observations on the use of digital technologies in the sphere of inclusive education are of great interest (Akhmetova et al., 2020). Making various fields of activity in higher education digital is also being actively discussed in modern pedagogy (Lazarenko et al., 2020; Starodubtsev & Ryashentsev, 2020).

Scientists from different countries, such as Collins & Halverson (2009), Thiele et al. (2014), believe that modern students are a new generation or "network generation", which focuses on new forms of education. Digitalization of the educational process of higher education is a natural phenomenon for modern students, they give preference to it, as they consider it more natural, adequate and goal-oriented.

Brown (2015) claims that digital teaching methods have been added to traditional face-to-face education, which has led to the fact that the methods are now mixed / hybrid.

Almaraz-Menendez et al. (2016) correctly note that distance education has become more flexible, accessible, thus, all scientists come to the conclusion that modern education needs to be reshaped and adapted to meet the needs and requirements of a new "network" generation.

#### **6. Findings**

At the Moscow Polytechnic University at the preparatory faculty a number of projects have been developed and successfully implemented. They help students not only gain good knowledge, but also socially adapt in a foreign language and foreign cultural environment that is new to them.

Let us cite as an example a research project that is being prepared by foreign students. They participate in the Student Scientific Technical Conference, which is held annually at the Moscow Polytechnic University. The conference, as a rule, takes place in the second part of the academic year (in April), when international students have already mastered the basic skills and are able, under a flexible form of guidance on the part of the teacher, to prepare their first research project, which will be presented in the form of an article. The teacher helps to determine the topic, draws up an approximate structure of the project: defines the problem, tasks, novelty, purposes, hypothesis, etc. Besides, the teacher ought to assist the student in selecting literature, preparing a thorough presentation, composing a report. In the process of preparing this research project, students learn to independently translate foreign language texts, obtain the skills of taking notes in a non-native language, and also get the opportunity to analyze, systematize, differentiate and integrate the received scientific material.

As examples that are offered to students, there may be the following topics: "Borrowings in Russian and Spanish", or "The case system of the Russian and French languages", or "The Arabic language and the origin of Russian phraseological units", or "Common and different in the case and aspect system of verbs in Russian and Arabic". As we can see, most often topics from the field of comparative linguistics are interesting, useful and feasible for students being at their elementary stage of the Russian language studying. The project can be individual, but work in small groups is also possible, it all depends on the level of students' involvement in research activities. Students speak in a workshop and participate in the struggle for prizes on a par with Russian participants.

In this case, we should consider, as the "finished product", or the so-called material object, the knowledge, skills and abilities, acquired by the student in the field of learning the Russian language, and drawn up in the form of a report, scientific article, presentation.

We should also add that doing this type of project activity, students gain invaluable experience, in the process of which they learn the skills of social adaptation, intercultural communication and the basics of public speaking in a non-native language. The project is designed for several months and may well be called long-term. We share the idea, expressed by Demushina, that "the result is not only a material object created by the performers of the project, but also the experience that is acquired both in collective and individual activities" (Demushina et al., 2016, p. 264).

Within the framework of project activities working with international students-economists, it is possible to consider such a direction as linguistic tourism.

This principle of organizing the project is possible and very successfully implemented in history lessons in groups of students studying Economics. Students of the preparatory faculty study history in a rather concise format, since at this stage it is not a deep and professional knowledge of the history of Russia that is important, but only the acquaintance of foreign students with it for cultural and educational purposes.

For this purpose, within the framework of project activities, students are invited to participate in a program of lessons-excursions to the historical places of Moscow. For example, "Lesson-excursion to Poklonnaya Gora" allows visually acquainting with the stages of the Great Patriotic War, "Lesson-excursion to the Borodino field" allows them to fully imagine and understand the role of Russia in the Russian-French war with Napoleon Bonaparte, a visit to the village of Kolomenskoye forms among

students ideas about the era of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, a visit to the village of Tsaritsyn gives an understanding of who Catherine II is, and an awareness of her place and significance in the history of Russia. The result of this project activity can be introduced in the form of a presentation, report, essay, or in the form of any creative project (the way the teacher and students see it). This type of the educational process helps to cover the maximum number of students, which significantly increases the creative potential of students, the level of their motivation.

While visiting historical places, students are invited to work on a text with pre-text and post-text tasks of a lexical and grammatical nature. Such work, which is done by students outside the classroom, helps to more successfully assimilate knowledge, since that emotional, cognitive and perceptual contact, those feelings that the student experiences from personal contact with history, allow them to learn the material deeper and more effectively. At the Moscow Polytechnic University, within the framework of project activities, there is a large-scale annual event - the festival "We are for Peace", at the time of which an attempt is made to unite all international students, studying at all levels of higher education (preparatory faculty, when earning a bachelor's or master's degree, taking a postgraduate course). The festival is preceded by a long and painstaking preparation, the result of which is a grandiose, colorful and interesting show-concert, where students from every country have the opportunity to introduce themselves and introduce the audience to their culture. The event consists of several stages, each of which takes place on a competitive basis.

1. "Essay Competition" is an individual scientific and educational project, thanks to which cognitive and independent activities, critical and creative thinking are activated, and writing skills are developed.

2. Competition "My Favorite National Dish" – a creative competition, thanks to which students get to know the cultural distinctive features of other countries (the peculiarities of national cuisine). During this contest creativity is activated, and speaking skills are developed (students present their dish in Russian).

3. Postcard competition - informational and educational presentation competition, in which students talk about the economic, political, cultural and historical features of their country. In the process of preparing a presentation, students learn to analyze, systematize the material, learn speaking skills

4. Creative competition (performance of a song or national dance), the result of which is the acquaintance of students with the culture of other countries.

This project allows covering a large number of students (60-80 percent). The project turns into a big holiday-concert, which is attended by many guests. Students demonstrate their skills, presenting the culture of their country, go through different stages of social adaptation.

All the mentioned above practices allow international students to help overcome the adaptive difficulties that arise among different ethnic groups. "Students engage in cognitive activity, in the process of which the stage of individual regulation of the process of sociocultural adaptation is involved, since the teacher has the opportunity to provide individual assistance to the student in the process of joint interaction if any difficulty arises" (Saenko & Panova, 2019, p. 84).

Due to the pandemic, this year the teaching staff in schools and universities had to refuse the traditional form of education and switch to distance (correspondence) form, this was relevant to the Moscow Polytechnic University, which was forced to abandon the usual form of project activities.

Therefore, a number of events were organized remotely, which significantly changed both the approach to organizing methods and the approach to assessment criteria. The reason for this was a whole set of reasons: firstly, having distance learning it is impossible to contact personally, which is why communication within the framework of the behavioral model of teacher-student and student-student is somewhat disturbed, as a result of which an emphasis is placed on the student's independent work. Secondly, the factor of social interaction decreases.

Thirdly, it is difficult to cover a wide audience for participation in project activities, since in the process of online communication, the level of mutual understanding and understanding as such decreases. Fourthly, connections between people are weakened due to the lack of personal contact, which makes it difficult to organize an event, makes it difficult to involve and attract a large number of students.

During the self-isolation regime at Moscow Polytechnic University, several distance learning and creative projects were carried out. We should dwell upon the creative project "Competition of poetry readers of A.S. Pushkin". About 12% of the preparatory department students took part in the project, since distance learning complicated the process of attracting students. But, nevertheless, both students and teachers gained experience in organizing project activities using digital technologies. In the process of preparing for the competition, students get acquainted with the poetry of the great writer, get acquainted with the poetic word. They learn to better understand the Russian word, Russian intonation, Russian thinking. In this case, thanks to the project, students acquire broader knowledge in the field of intercultural communication.

In the view of the aforesaid, one cannot but agree with the opinion, expressed by Sazonova et al. (2015) that project-oriented education forms a sense of purpose and responsibility, contributes to the development of students' reflective abilities, their cooperative activity, reveals their creative abilities and develops the skills of independent work.

At the end of the competition, a survey was conducted among the students. It became clear that project activities, organized remotely, have a number of advantages and disadvantages. As a result of the survey, 98% of the recipients answered that participation in the project, firstly, aroused great interest among the students, and secondly, participation in this event influenced their knowledge of the Russian language.

Students note that they have learned a lot of new words, mastered new things in grammar, as well as in the field of syntax of the Russian language. Many students say that participation in the event helped them learn a lot of new things about Russian literature and culture. The overwhelming majority of recipients (99%) answered that participation in the project remotely helped them to become more self-confident, believe in themselves, helped to devote their free time to an interesting business, contributed to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, practical skills that are important in life and which they are not taught at the lessons of the Russian language, also participation in the project remotely helped to showcase their talent and abilities.

Speaking of disadvantages, 76% of the recipients answered that participation in the competition remotely did not teach them the skills of communicating with other people, did not help them to become more sociable; 91% of respondents answered that participation in the project did not contribute to the acquisition of new friends; 69% answered that it was difficult for them to prepare for the project remotely, as they lacked live contact with the teacher, lacked guidance from the teacher, and it was this fact that prevented them from achieving better results.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, it is important to note that the personality of the teacher and those communicative connections that develop in the learning process and the creative atmosphere that also affects the assimilation of knowledge play a huge role in learning. During distance learning, these components are absent, which worsens the learning process. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the organization of project activities using digital technologies cannot become the leading way in educational process. It can be effective only when combined with full-time education, which takes place under the supervision of a teacher. The project-based teaching method together with the traditional classical teaching models: extractive (passive assimilation of knowledge by students), intraactive (independent assimilation of knowledge by students) gives a high positive result in the assimilation of knowledge by students (Kulikova & Danil'chuk, 2019).

The authors have come to the conclusion that digital education produces only basic skills and abilities, but truly effective the training can be when it is given with the use of integrative approach, which combines traditional (off-line) teaching and distance learning.

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