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*Features of Distance Learning Process at H.S. Skovoroda  
Kharkiv National Pedagogical University*

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Cechy organizacji procesu edukacyjnego w warunkach kształcenia na odległość na Charkowskim  
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ABSTRACT

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused global changes that have required adaptation to the new conditions of life. These changes have been in place in all areas of human activities, in particular in education. In 2020, people experienced the state of isolation and the restrictions that had never existed before. There emerged a need not only to provide a quick response to the crisis situations but also to maintain the educational process and not to lose the connection with students, which would be catastrophic for the educational system at the national level. The issues of distance learning have become habitual for educators around the world within a very short period of time. The transition to the new system of learning requires the search for innovative approaches to organizing the educational process and adapting scholars, teachers and students to new challenges and their solutions. The aim of the work is to analyze the condition and features of online and blended format learning under the quarantine conditions, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper analyzes the features of the distance learning process under the quarantine conditions, caused by the spread of COVID-19, at H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. The study outlines a number of problems the teaching staff and students face in their training, and makes suggestions for improving online learning. The analysis determines the most effective means and online resources to be used in the conditions of distance learning. Furthermore, the research characterizes the features of the pre-service teachers' practical training during their online or blended format internship at educational institutions of different levels.

**Keywords:** educational process; training; distance learning; online resources

## INTRODUCTION

The forced distance learning was a challenge for all the participants of the educational process, therefore, management of education quality, students' inspiration and motivation to study in new conditions using digital technologies turned out to be rather difficult.

It should be noted that the total disruption of education systems was avoided owing to the rapid response from educators and teachers and their responsibility, since the level of digital literacy left much to be desired, due to different reasons, including an average age of university teaching staff, the lack of skills when working online, the lack of competences in the field of using digital technologies, etc. The availability of the Moodle platform appeared an important factor of the successful transition to the distance learning at H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University (hereinafter referred to as "University"). For their professional development, according to the public online education policy and online learning quality assurance, nearly all the university teaching staff completed a course at the Informatization Institute of the above-mentioned University or an international professional training course on the online learning as an innovative form of modern education using platforms Google Classroom, Google Meet, held by the Research Institute of Lublin Science and Technology Park and the IESF International Foundation for Scientists and Educators, and have the proper certificates (International Educators and Scholars Foundation, 2021).

According to the definition provided in the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated 25 April 2013, No. 466 "On establishing the provisions of distance learning", distance learning is an individualized process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and the means of cognitive activities, carried out mainly via the telecommunication and interaction of the educational process participants in the specific environment that functions based on the advanced psychopedagogical and information-communication technologies (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2020).

The aim of distance learning is to provide educational services by applying modern educational information-communication technologies at different educational (cycle) levels in compliance with state education standards, following the programs of training home citizens and foreigners to enter educational institutions, as well as to further professionally develop teaching staff.

During the quarantine (lockdown) period, the University teaching staff had to apply distance learning and find out that it was not only a challenge, a step out of the comfort zone, but also the rise of students' awareness of their responsibility for their learning, continuous self-development and self-improvement for students as well as teachers. It turned out to be an opportunity to implement innovative pedagogical, psychological, and methodological techniques.

All the University faculties provided a full scope of training according to the timetable, including online lectures, seminars, practical and laboratory classes using the Google Meet and Zoom platforms. These technological tools enable to use multimedia presentations and video files to illustrate and visualize educational materials, along with virtual online boards to explain, calculate or write formulas when teaching natural and mathematical sciences. To receive fast feedback, chats were used – students could answer teachers' questions and participate in discussions.

Moodle has been the main platform for the university teachers-and-students interaction. It is a tool where individually developed electronic training courses and respective materials have been uploaded. Thus, students can access text and multimedia lectures, seminars and practical sessions, do individual tasks, tests and monitor their performance, receive teacher's feedback, keep in touch with other course participants, etc. The platform also offers certain options for the fast notification on the task submission deadlines, forthcoming events or changes in some courses, which organizes and motivates students to successfully acquire the training material.

Furthermore, in distance learning, educational platform Moodle provides teachers and lecturers with an opportunity to create a variety of test tasks for different types of students' independent activities as well as for module and final (semester) assessment. The most common tasks for evaluating students' individual performance include tests in both text and other formats (Triventy, Multiple Choice, Matching, Filling in the Gaps, Short Answer, Drag and Drop into Text). It is very convenient that within one test it is possible to combine different types of questions, add comments to the potential wrong answers, likely to be given by students. Thus, the tool is a time-saver since it is not necessary to comment on each person's mistakes.

During online classes, the University teachers have been using modern teaching methods, requiring appropriate tools for their implementation. Accordingly, an essential part of the training is the use of modern interactive learning tools (free applications, online services) for doing interactive activities, creating infographics, and performing tasks with QR codes to make the students more active in class and stimulate their interest in academic disciplines. It is worth highlighting the most useful forms of working with students and the most popular online resources used by the faculty in distance learning.

While preparing and conducting seminars, the teaching staff have used various online learning platforms, namely: For a Lesson, Be Able, an online board Padlet, Learning Apps, Universal Education (Vseosvita), Jigsaw Planet, Quillionz, Kahoot!, Mentimeter, Liveworksheets, Wordwall, etc.

These resources make it possible to identify the level of students' skills and knowledge, both unconventionally and holistically, e.g.: Padlet (an online board

for project and group work, posting individual tasks, a tool for data collection from the whole group); Canvas (an application for creating word clouds and online collages during the lesson); LearningApps (an online service for creating interactive exercises and activities); Classroom and Trello (services for posting educational content and organizing group work); Flipgrid (for creating individual video chats); Mentimeter (a service for conducting polls, providing feedback, and creating word clouds). To provide prompt feedback to students, the University teaching staff use e-mail, mobile messengers (Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger), which give an opportunity to make audio and video calls, set up group chats; send file attachments, documents, images, messages, etc.

The teachers and lecturers of different university departments provided online consultations, created group projects, used a wide range of tools and various educational software programs. Audio recordings from YouTube allowed students to listen to the famous literary works read by Ukrainian actors. In addition, students themselves used online resources to do similar tasks (reciting poems).

Laboratory work within chemical and biological courses was conducted directly in the format of online video broadcasting by teachers who were in the classrooms and used the necessary computer and laboratory equipment (beakers, different types of flasks and test tubes, reagents, biological objects, special devices, etc.). Additionally, for this purpose (to demonstrate experiments), teachers have been using YouTube videos, posting respective links on the Moodle platform. However, during the classes, students could normally see biological objects and chemistry experiments in real time via a webcam connected to a classroom computer or attached to a microscope. To help students master the skills of using specialized computer software, screen sharing has been applied. The use of smartphones and tablets allows the participants to conduct laboratory work online streaming the whole process of working with specialized laboratory equipment.

The Department of Physics, for example, has developed the concept of combining demonstration and laboratory experiments with the elements of modern measuring technologies based on the use of digital technologies of the “Experimenter” automated information system. Thus, it has been possible to carry out online physical experiments using special physics software and hardware packages in real time, measuring parameters and then discussing the results of the experiment. Conducting laboratory classes online allows the Department of Physics to avoid strict time limits for a part of laboratory work; it can provide students with helpful guidelines in case of difficulty, makes it possible to conduct laboratory work in small groups; it allows for collective discussion of the findings, sharing experiences as well as for doing various electronic lab tasks.

The access to the corporate account enables all features and applications of cloud services, namely: Google Drive as an unlimited cloud file storage for keeping and simultaneously accessing files (curricula, syllabuses, guidelines, registers,

etc.); Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms as a means to create and edit files in the cloud storage when collaborating with other users in real-time; Gmail for correspondence; Google Calendar for scheduling; Google Meet for video conferencing; and Google Chat for online communication.

The main purpose of training students of the Faculty of Foreign Philology is to acquire their foreign language professional and communicative competence, which means the ability to use it in all foreign language speech activities, including tackling professional tasks rather than learning a certain amount of knowledge and skills. In distance learning, the effectiveness of developing this competence mainly depends on the combination of the asynchronous and synchronous interaction of the educational process participants. Information and computer technologies are the resources that are useful and make it possible to continue the learning and teaching process. Working remotely allows making the educational process more media-intensive and use additional resources and tools for its organization and monitoring.

In distance learning, lecturers of philological courses applied a demonstration check of written tasks. For instance, a lecturer could show an essay on the screen, and students would be asked to analyze the work, determine whether the set topic was discussed, or the arguments were logically stated, or they could be tasked to find mistakes. These demo works may be anonymous only. Upon finishing the correction, the work along with the lecturer's remarks is shared on the screen, and the students have an opportunity to join the group analysis of the work and exchange their opinions.

The Faculty of Foreign Philology has been actively implementing the results of the joint project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the British Council in Ukraine "New Generation School Teacher" (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2016). In this regard, the practical training of higher education students plays an important part in the development of linguistic, methodological, professional and communicative competencies and promotes students' active involvement in the ongoing school educational process.

The organization of distance learning for Art majors has its special features, due to the specifics of mastering particular art forms, which involves students' co-working. These subjects include a choir class, an orchestra class, collective forms of music, choreography workshops, qualification workshops and other courses that require group work. Certain conditions are necessary for the successful mastering of these disciplines. Therefore, some practical classes under the curriculum have been conducted with the students in small groups in person.

Online music classes, including the individual ones, use such teaching aids as an acoustic piano (for a lecturer), an electronic piano keyboard simulator (for students), and a synthesizer.

The interactive Multi Board screen has been used in the educational process organization at the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. As this board is life size,

it is convenient for a lecturer to make notes that students see online and simultaneously demonstrate physical phenomena and processes.

The organization of the training process at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports has also required classes for all students to be conducted online via video lectures and consultations. During these classes, lecturers have used videos, manuals with texts and animated materials about football, basketball, volleyball, basketball refereeing, and presentations to visualize educational material describing exercises, as well as photos and videos shot by the University students.

The students explored recreational areas in the Kharkiv region, the environmental impact on human health and socio-economic development. Advanced technologies have been used in distance learning to analyze the performance at different stages of athletes' training. The Kinovea software has been used: it is based on the four main tasks of studying human movements: capture, observation, note-taking, and measurement. After receiving a task, a student performed it individually by means of summarizing certain topics, recording videos, testing, presenting athletics, etc. Feedback was provided through mobile messengers.

Lecturers have also used the reviews of sports games to analyze and correct athletes' mistakes as well as to teach performance techniques in order to meet qualifying standards: there was a review of the games of the Ukrainian Basketball Championship "Super League" with a separate task on each topic (basketball rules, stance and movement, passing the ball: passing the ball above, tasks to study, passing the ball below, servicing, upper direct passing, direct attacking, blocking, tasks to learn blocking, etc.). The Department's own YouTube channels presenting their activities and a Facebook page with up-to-date information on their work have been actively used.

## ADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

The definite advantage of distance learning is, first and foremost, the fact that the recipients are provided with quick access to high-quality educational materials. The organization of the educational process is quite flexible in terms of determining the place and time of classes. It encourages students to implement their individual trajectory. Teachers provide opportunities for flexibility regarding the speed at which tasks can be completed; everyone can progress at their own pace. Students are guaranteed to receive feedback in the form of individual consultations, answers to questions or otherwise. Distance learning enables constant support of learning processes as it contains additional information sources – Internet resources, videos, etc. It enables to determine the level of knowledge and monitor the acquisition of the material by means of using software programs and a variety of tests. There is a possibility for students to accumulate supplementary materials from Internet resources in a wide variety of the fields of studies. Through the

systematic use of online resources, students not only learn to apply them during their own learning activities, but also learn skills to involve their future students in distance learning. The use of the e-learning platform provides an opportunity to organize effective independent work and assessment activities; to form a self-organizing educational space (group work): search for an answer to a question on the Internet, presentation of the answer using slide animation; free access to the resources of game sites to organize an online individual and pair play; an opportunity to participate in distance social promotions and competitions in social networks; in online courses on the platform EdEra.

### DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

It should be noted that there are certain difficulties of distance learning that are worth considering and should be eliminated (if possible): the necessity to adapt assignments to the e-learning specific capacities, the uncertainty of some students in performing assignments, the difficulty of drawing up educational materials according to valid standards; distance learning limits, for technical reasons, face-to-face interaction, live communication with both teaching staff and applicants, destruction of the creative atmosphere, which is present in every student group. Future educators' training is not fully ensured by improving their interpersonal communication skills, which are essential for their future activities. Particular attention is paid to the creation of the communicative space not only in chat rooms, announcements, but also in the synchronous mode of study.

Distance learning creates new challenges to the norms and rules of academic integrity. For students, there is a possibility to cheat, for the teachers there is a problem of proper grading. Low network bandwidth during studies or exam telconferences may be an issue. Outdated technical equipment, blackouts, and Internet service interruptions may become a problem as well. The teachers' increased effort to keep audience's attention and time to prepare for classes is important. Theoretical courses have a better implementation in distance form than practical ones, since the latter require constant synchronous communication. In addition, there are social and psychological problems – a certain degree of students' isolation in a virtual environment, the lack of group communication, “live” interaction of students, the emotional environment, which, in teachers' opinion, affects the perception of educational material. It should also be noted that the study load does not take into account some aspects of distance education, the organization of which requires much more time than initially foreseen in the standard curriculum. This causes health-related problems (the deterioration of eye-sight, motor and nervous system, etc.).

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Distance learning has become a new educational experience, but it has already managed to gain ground in the educational environment. Distance learning provides higher education applicants with the access to unconventional sources of information, increases the efficiency of self-study, gives completely new opportunities for creative self-expression, finding and fixing different professional skills, and teachers, in turn, can implement completely new forms and methods of teaching using conceptual and mathematical modeling of phenomena and processes.

In general, given a rational combination of different means of study and appropriate use of the advantages of different online platforms, it may be stated that distance learning is an effective form of organizing the educational process and does not interfere with the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and abilities. The forms of work that can be applied online diversify the learning process, after all, the modern generation is focused on the active use of digital technology. The ability to work remotely is an important skill in the future professional activity of the student, because in today's world it is impossible to fully carry out professional and interpersonal activities without information and communication technologies. IT creates a new global landscape, where future teaching staff are not only to communicate, but also to build new professional and personal relationships, present their own interests, and represent themselves. Distance learning has its advantages and disadvantages, which should be considered in order to improve the educational process and prepare a high-quality specialist for the new challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## ABSTRAKT

Rozprzestrzenianie się pandemii COVID-19 spowodowało globalne zmiany, które wymagały adaptacji do nowych warunków życia. Zmiany te zaszły we wszystkich obszarach ludzkiej działalności, w szczególności w edukacji. W 2020 r. ludzie doświadczyli stanu izolacji i ograniczeń, które nigdy wcześniej nie istniały. Pojawiła się potrzeba nie tylko szybkiego reagowania na sytuacje kryzysowe, lecz także utrzymania procesu edukacyjnego i niezrywania więzi ze studentami, byłoby



to bowiem katastrofalne dla systemu edukacji na poziomie krajowym. Zdalne nauczanie stało się codziennością nauczycieli na całym świecie w bardzo krótkim czasie. Przejście do nowego systemu nauczania wymaga poszukiwania innowacyjnych podejść do organizacji procesu edukacyjnego oraz dostosowania naukowców, nauczycieli i uczniów do nowych wyzwań i ich rozwiązań. Celem opracowania jest analiza stanu i cech uczenia się online oraz w formacie mieszanym w warunkach kwarantanny spowodowanej pandemią COVID-19. W pracy przeanalizowano cechy procesu zdalnego nauczania w warunkach kwarantanny spowodowanej rozprzestrzenianiem się koronawirusa SARS-CoV-2 w Narodowym Uniwersytecie Pedagogicznym im. H.S. Skovorody w Charkowie. Wskazano szereg problemów, z jakimi borykali się nauczyciele i studenci podczas szkolenia, a także sformułowano sugestie dotyczące poprawy uczenia online. Analiza pozwoliła na określenie najskuteczniejszych środków i zasobów internetowych do wykorzystania w warunkach kształcenia na odległość. Ponadto w badaniu scharakteryzowano cechy praktycznego przygotowania nauczycieli przed stażem oraz podczas stażu online lub w formacie mieszanym w instytucjach edukacyjnych na różnych poziomach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** proces edukacyjny; szkolenie; kształcenie na odległość; zasoby internetowe