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PEDAGOGICAL CAPABILITIES OF A TEACHER'S PERSONAL PAGE IN SOCIAL NETWORK

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the pedagogical capabilities of social networks in solving modern educational problems. The advantages of a social network as a tool for distance learning, a platform for student collaboration and organization of pedagogical interaction are singled out. The article reveals the pedagogical potential of the social network as a whole, as well as a teacher's personal page in it, in regards to the individualization of the educational process, selection of the education content, organization of pedagogical communication, involvement in activities. Educational capabilities of services and applications of the social network "VKontakte" are analyzed. The paper dwells on the results of a diagnostic study of students' attitudes to the communication activities of teachers on their personal pages in networks. The author describes and analyzes the experience of interacting with students on the social network platform, which confirms the positive impact on the students' attitude to the subject and educational motivation of the possibility to communicate and connect with the teacher through the social network. The article also identifies restrictions (increased requirements for the content and design of the personal page) and possible negative consequences of interaction with students through social networks (non-compliance with the framework and blurring of the boundaries of communication, the interpenetration of professional and personal spheres of life).

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Keywords: Educational process, pedagogical interaction, pedagogical potential of social networks, page in a social network, social networks, teacher's personality.



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1. Introduction

It is difficult to imagine the world nowadays without the Internet, and the young generation of this world - without social networks. According to statistical research, social network penetration over the past 10 years has increased from 0.97 to 2.82 billion participants. The most active users of social networks are youth under the age of 30 (Chaffey, 2019).

Social networks act as an aggregator of information and entertainment content, allow storing photos, videos and other materials, create operational group discussions of projects, form creative, professional and other types of communities. A personal page becomes a kind of business card that can say a lot about various aspects of a user's life.

In a situation of active use of social networks by young people, it seems important to consider their potential for education. Of interest for this study is also to determine the capabilities of a teacher's personal page in a social network as a tool for organizing pedagogical interaction.

2. Problem Statement

Today, there are many research works on the study of the pedagogical and educational potential of social networks. The authors note such important characteristics as accessibility, flexibility and comprehensibility of social networks for young people, which make educational content more attractive and pedagogical communication more psychologically comfortable. Summarizing the results of research on the potential of social networks, the following groups of their capabilities and advantages in the educational process can be distinguished:

- organization of distance learning, addition to classroom studies (Arnold & Paulus, 2010);
- formation of a flexible unified information and educational space (Jalal & Zaidieh, 2012; Klamma et al., 2007; Pavlicheva, 2012; Zimenkova & Nikonov, 2014);
- organization of collaborative learning, group work of students and exchange of materials (Alsolamy, 2017; Curran & McCarroll, 2013; Mazman & Usluel, 2010);
- optimization of educational communication and information transfer (Kanimozhi & Vasimalairaja, 2018);
- individualization of the educational process: various types of tasks, completing tasks at a convenient time, etc. (Al-Mukhaini, Al-Qayoudhi, & Al-Badi, 2014; Feschenko, 2011; Klochkova & Levin, 2015);
- opportunities for developing soft-skills, including critical and reflective thinking skills, writing and communication skills, creativity, teamwork, etc. (Curran & McCarroll, 2013; Kanimozhi & Vasimalairaja, 2018);
- increasing educational motivation and student initiative, creating a psychologically comfortable environment for pedagogical communication (Al-Mukhaini et al., 2014; Klochkova & Levin, 2015; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007).

At the same time, researchers see the difficulties and problems of using social networks in the educational process, noting a lack of understanding in communication, a decrease in concentration, and

cyberbullying. Still, from the point of view of scientists, “Educators must adopt this technology in an effort to connect with the new and engaging learning styles of young students” (Curran & McCarroll, 2013, p.6; Jalal & Zaidieh, 2012).

In this work, the research is focused on studying not only social networks in general, but also the pedagogical potential of the teacher’s personal profile as an instrument of pedagogical interaction. An analysis of the scientific literature shows that this issue has not yet received the due attention of researchers.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What features of social networks can be used in the organization of pedagogical interaction with students?

3.2. What is the attitude of students to the activity of teachers in social networks?

3.3. Does the content of a teacher’s personal page in the social network affect the attitude of students to the teacher?

3.4. Does the ability to communicate with a teacher in a social network affect the attitude to the subject, educational motivation?

3.5. What are the possibilities of using a teacher’s personal page in a social network when solving educational problems?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to determine the pedagogical potential of social networks, particularly, to consider the capabilities of a teacher’s personal page in a social network as a tool for organizing pedagogical interaction and solving pedagogical problems.

5. Research Methods

5.1. In order to reveal the potential pedagogical possibilities of social networks in the educational process, pedagogical literature was studied on the use of social networks in solving various types of pedagogical problems.

5.2. In order to study the characteristics and capabilities of pedagogical interaction in the “VKontakte” social network, a content analysis of services, interface and content of the social network has been carried out from 2016 to 2019. The included observation was used (interaction with students in a social network) and an analysis was also made of the work of the thematic community “Materials for Students”, created by the author as a tool for the methodological support of training courses.

5.3. Data on the experience of using the social network “VKontakte” in the practice of general education were obtained on the basis of the analysis of scientific publications, as well as conversations with 5 teachers of secondary schools

5.4. Anonymous survey conducted among 192 students from 2016 to 2018 was used to identify students’ perceptions of the educational opportunities of the “VKontakte” social network, representations of the teacher’s personal page as an instrument of pedagogical interaction, and also to study the attitude to the activity of teachers in social networks.

5.5. The methods of analysis and synthesis were used to generalize the obtained empirical data.

6. Findings

6.1. Pedagogical capabilities of social networks

In the framework of this study, the “VKontakte” social network, which occupies a leading position in popularity among users from 12 to 24 years old (Kurnosova, 2019), was chosen as an example. In the first part of the study, we consider the capabilities of social networks presented in the works of researchers and practicing educators.

In support of the use of social networks in education, Klimenko (2012) notes the clarity of the interface (which saves time for students to adapt to the new information environment), as well as the convenience of downloading and viewing multimedia files. Zimenkova and Nikonov (2014) add a wide range of forms of communication to this list, the use of the common way of self-identification in the network; the opportunity to attract experts and consultants to education.

Curran and McCarroll (2013) write that in social networks the process of creating content and exchanging information becomes as user-led and user-oriented as possible, while allowing the use of new interaction mechanisms, including blogging, peer-to-peer mentoring and on-line debate. Social networks allow for effectively interaction with parents of students, with colleagues from other cities and countries.

Exploring the possibilities of social networks, Alsolamy (2017) addresses the topic of overcoming social restrictions. According to the author, “integrating technology to overcome gender segregation in Saudi society has been considered an essential motivation for the majority of participating academics to engage with students and colleagues of both genders” (p. 247).

Feschchenko (2011) describes the pragmatic advantages of social networks in the educational process. The author writes that for most students, social networks are the most understandable and familiar web service. It is fashionable among young people and is free for all participants of the educational process. Social networks make it possible to share educational achievements with a wide range of users, and absent students to keep abreast of events, ensuring the continuity of the educational process.

According to a study conducted by Sultan Qaboos University among 106 students of various courses, more than 80% of respondents see the positive impact of social networks on the learning process. Students’ answers confirm the development of students’ information competence, the availability of wider communication opportunities than in a classroom environment, the emergence of new ideas when discussing online, and the great attractiveness of electronic learning tasks (Al-Mukhaini et al., 2014).

Based on the study of theoretical materials and practical experience of teachers, including their own experience in interacting with students and conducting the thematic group “A.Kukushkina. Materials for students” since 2013, we can note the following social network services that can be used to solve educational and upbringing tasks.

1. Instant messaging. This service is one of the basic for the organization of pedagogical interaction with students. It allows for a quickly response to students’ questions, feedback on assignments, and explanation of the homework. Particularly convenient may be a group conversation between the group members and the teacher, in which operational information may appear, documents for completing homework are attached, links to third-party sites are provided. Currently, the messaging service is

supplemented by a video call function, which opens up opportunities for holding video conferences, seminars, consultations with a screen demonstration.

2. File directories. The ability to create directories for various files is provided by the sections “Photos”, “Audio Records”, “Documents”. The teacher can create collections of books and articles, images, video and audio lectures, and podcasts. The ability to comment on each illustration or video allows a teacher to implement the principle of visualization in education, stimulate the process of analyzing visual information, and enhance the participation of students in the research and replenishment of the catalog.

3. The wall. An open publication platform allows a teacher to put notes open to the right circle of people, supplement the text with photographs or recordings, and also makes it possible to comment on the information presented, which helps to organize discussions and express one’s own point of view. In addition to informative publications on the wall, one can leave polls and announcements for students. The most important messages can be fixed in the upper part of the wall, which allows them not to get lost in the data stream. In this service, there is also the possibility of delayed publication of messages, which allows uploading data to a specific time (for example, for organizing Internet quests).

4. Polls. If you need to identify interest in a particular topic, obtain feedback on various organizational and subject matters, you can use open or anonymous polls. In this case, a clear and simple mechanism allows students to quickly indicate their position.

5. Articles. The integrated service “Articles” allows creating large texts on one topic, accompanying them with images, video clips, and links to third-party sources. This format can replace the usual text lectures; it can be used to prepare essays and reports.

6. Communities. A wide range of opportunities appears with the creation of thematic communities (groups). It can be a group created by the students themselves to store training files, exchange materials, etc., or a group created by the teacher to ensure the educational process. In the community you can designate contacts for communication with the teacher (e-mail address, contact phone number). There are all the services listed above, also discussions can be started on forum-type platforms. In discussions, a teacher can organize a discussion on an academic topic, compile a thematic catalog, and answer students’ questions. The “Statistics” service in communities allows tracking the most interesting publications for students, group attendance at different times of the day.

7. Events are a private option for the community. They can be created on behalf of a particular community or individual. Creating a group for a specific event, a teacher or a student can invite friends to it (for whom it will be displayed in the event stream). In the event group, materials for preparation can be presented, discussions organized, and subsequently video and photo reports are posted.

8. Applications. A wide range of functions is provided by applications or widgets of the “VKontakte” social network, which can be embedded in the work of the community. Among the currently existing applications for the educational process, “Questionnaires”, “Tests”, “Quotes”, “Reviews” (for feedback), “SmartBot Designer”, “Quiz and Quiz Designer”, “My Class” and others may be useful. The “Goals” application, a kind of crowdfunding platform on the “VKontakte” network, attracts attention and resources to solving social and civil problems.

As additional services, one can note “Links”, “Maps”, “Bookmarks”, as well as hash-tag system. They are used not so often, however, they allow the teacher and student to individualize and expand the

educational and information space, manage data flows, and quickly search for information sources and locations.

As part of our survey, students noted the positive aspects of using a social network in the educational process, in particular the existence of a study group. Among the responses, the following general points were suggested:

- ease of search and availability of training materials and homework at any time;
- ability to quickly and comfortably communicate with the teacher and students;
- prompt informing about schedule changes and other organizational issues;
- possibility of organizing distance group work.

Regarding thematic study groups organized by the teacher, 40% of respondents said that having a study group and posting materials in a social network more likely increases their desire to learn (57% of respondents believe that it does not affect learning in any way). In this situation, it seems that even for the sake of 40% of students it is worth using a social network as an instrument of the educational process.

During the survey, students also suggested the use of sending messages in the educational process, as well as introducing more teachers to this format of interaction.

At the same time, it is very important to develop the informational competence of teachers, parents and students, to show the possibilities of the information space of a social network, changing the opinion of the participants in the educational process about social networks, as a tool for communication and entertainment.

6.2. Possibilities of the teacher's personal page in the organization of pedagogical interaction (the case of the "VKontakte" network)

Despite the strengthening of the positions of distance and self-education, the role of the personality of the teacher in the process of education and upbringing remains enormous. Sukhomlinsky's (1981) statement is still relevant: "The force that encourages each pupil to look at oneself, to think about one's own behavior, to control oneself, and this is essentially what real education begins with, is the teacher's personality, ideological convictions, the wealth of spiritual life" (p. 153).

The school teacher and university teacher not only transmit knowledge and form the competencies of students. They demonstrate an example of moral behavior, influence the views and positions of the younger generation. The higher the authority of the teacher is, the greater is the teacher's influence on the students.

Analyzing the experience of interacting with students, Klochkova and Levin (2015) note that communication in the network allows students to see the teacher, "as a real person ... an assistant in the educational movement and professionally-creative self-development of the student", and also contributes to the "transmission of positive ethical and professional qualities" (p. 29).

Using a personal page in a social network can be considered from the perspective of various pedagogical approaches. So, in line with the culture studies approach, the use of a personal page as an information platform gives the teacher the opportunity to acquaint pupils with the achievements of culture and art, to broadcast samples of a communicative culture.

Within the framework of the socializing approach, the profile can be considered as another factor in the social education of students. Based on the dialogical approach, the page in the social network provides the opportunity for formal and informal communication with the teacher, which enriches the experience of students, provides answers to significant questions, and satisfies social needs.

In this regard, students' answers to the question of whether the profile of the teacher in the social network affects the teacher's image and attitude to the teacher present interest. More than 50% of respondents noted that the presence of a teacher's profile on a social network has a positive influence. However, there are both positive and negative points among the answers. According to the respondents, a teacher using a social network "keeps up to date", is "clearer" and "closer to students", ready to communicate, ready to help, answer questions. Studying the teacher's personal page allows students to learn the teacher's interests and understand the values. At the same time, some students noticed that frank photos or unethical statements can affect perception negatively, "spoil the authority".

When asked the question "Do you think there should be some restrictions or requirements on the social pages of teachers?", 30% of respondents said that certain boundaries are necessary. "A teacher, even in social networks, must remain a teacher." Students expect "less ostentatiousness" and "pathos", lack of "negative content", promotion of psychoactive substances, radical views, and a limited amount of personal information from teachers. 20% of respondents found it difficult to answer. Half of the survey participants noted that borders and restrictions are not required, since teachers have the right to privacy, they are "also people". Nevertheless, in our opinion, the teacher who opens the page for communication with students should be responsible for the communication standards and content presented on the personal page.

Based on the results of the conversation with teachers, as well as the observation included in the process of interacting with students of various courses on the "VKontakte" social network, the following aspects of the educational impact of the teacher's personal page in interaction with students can be identified.

1. Democratization and individualization of pedagogical interaction. The presence of the teacher in the social network allows the student to feel connected with the teacher, the possibility (even if it is not used) of appeal on important educational and other issues. Using a social network brings the teacher closer to the student, makes it possible to see a personal side of the teacher with interests, problems, achievements, stops from being afraid of the teacher. In the same way, the teacher can study the profiles of his students, adapting the learning process according to the experience, inclinations and interests of the students.

2. Network communication. The teacher's openness to communication in the network provides students with the opportunity to ask questions for which there is not enough time during class hours, discuss individual tasks, and even ask a personal question. By organizing communication with students, the teacher can broadcast the norms of communication etiquette, friendliness, attention. Network communication helps to strengthen relations with students, makes teachers more socially accessible for students, and helps teachers better remember students.

3. Selection and publication of educational content on the "wall" (open user page). It can be social projects, articles, works of art, motivating illustrations, presentation of information resources, personal thoughts about important public and personal topics, comments on current events, etc. So, laying out a photo report on the visit to the exhibition, one of the teachers notes the emergence of schoolchildren's

interest in this event. Another teacher shares on the page interesting articles on the subject, asking discussion questions. Students write that they decided to read a book or watch a movie on the recommendation on the teacher's page. Attention to publications of any type increases if the teacher adds a personal comment.

4. Involvement in activity. Through a personal page, the teacher can motivate students to participate in various competitions, volunteer projects, cultural events, especially if the teacher is a participant in the event. For example, the author, being the head of a volunteer group, systematically invites students to participate in volunteer events, festivals, etc. It makes a social network a tool for real change.

Note that these opportunities are successfully realized if the teacher uses the open page and informs students about the presence on the social network, giving permission for communication.

6.3. Problems of using social networks in the process of pedagogical interaction

Despite a wide range of opportunities, the teacher needs to be aware of the difficulties and limitations of social networks. The researchers identified such difficulties as a leak of information (Alsolamy, 2017), cyberbullying (Curran & McCarroll, 2013), and a decrease in the degree of reliability of acquired knowledge (Zimenkova & Nikonov, 2014, p. 132). During the pedagogical work, the most frequently occurring difficulties in using social networks were defined.

One of the important problems, according to the students themselves, is associated with such a feature of social networks as the diversity of services and content, communication opportunities. So, going to ask an educational question or to analyze homework, the student is distracted by reading the news, talking with friends and other features of the social network. More than 30% of students noted that a social network distracts with "advertising", "correspondence with friends, updating news", and an abundance of "excess information". As a result of overloading with unnecessary information, concentration of attention is disturbed, thought processes become fragmented, patience and perseverance decrease, impulsivity increases. Also in the answers of the respondents there were options about the possibility of poor health. Here we can say about the danger of visual impairment and the emergence of Internet addiction or dependence on social networks.

According to the included observation, another controversial issue is the establishment of the personal boundaries of the teacher. In the absence of network etiquette, students can write at night, omit the greeting and explanation of the situation (for example, send a text document of the work without any comments). With a small age difference, students may ask provocative questions to the teacher. In order to avoid this problem, it is necessary to pre-designate the principles of communication on the network, time frames, etiquette rules for communication and possible topics for discussion. If controversial issues arise in communication, it is necessary to identify social role positions and, if necessary, transfer the conversation to a meeting in the classroom.

A separate issue is the increased ethical requirements for the content and communication on the teacher's public page. If the teacher prioritizes personal information space and interpersonal communication, he/she can rely on the constitutional right to freedom of speech on one's own page. However, using a personal profile as an instrument of pedagogical interaction, the teacher, in our opinion, should be careful about the content of the page (including the use of intellectual property). In this case, the

teacher's page should not contain profanity, frank photographs, offensive remarks and other materials that could negatively affect the moral character of students. If necessary, invalid comments from other users may be deleted.

In a conversation with young teachers who use social networks, the experience of maintaining two separate profile pages (personal and work) was noted as a solution to this problem. Teachers shared the practice of consolidating a public statement addressed to colleagues, students and their parents regarding personal boundaries, content and teacher communication in a social network.

In our opinion, when working in social networks, it is important to focus on the subjectivity of each student, the responsibility of all participants in the educational process for publications, images, audio recordings, etc. In most cases, the problems of interaction between students and teachers in a social network can be prevented by the early identification of boundaries and rules of communication, which must be clarified and supplemented as controversial situations arise.

7. Conclusion

Despite the increasing role of computer technologies, the personality of the teacher remains one of the most important tools for teaching and shaping the moral character of students. Due to the increase in the pace of life and the decrease in the volume of real communication with students, teachers need to look for new tools for pedagogical interaction. Such a tool can be a social network where students and teachers can design and enrich the content of the educational process.

Using the social network "VKontakte", the teacher can update the capabilities of its various services (add files, create and maintain discussions, conduct polls, organize group work, etc.). Through a personal profile, a teacher can make communication with students more comfortable and democratic, indirectly form students' educational and information space (selecting interesting articles or topics for discussion), and engage them in volunteer, social or creative activities.

As the study showed, the activity and openness of the teacher's personal page positively affects the attitude to the teacher and to the study of the subject. In this case, the teacher must clearly indicate the personal boundaries and framework of communication in a social network in order to avoid the occurrence of ethical contradictions or other problematic issues.

The results can be used in the organization of current classes and individual educational events, in the working out guidelines for the development of the corporate culture of an educational institution in social networks.

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