

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****E-LEARNING IN MODERN MEDIA EDUCATION**

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Abstract

Experiment outcomes conducted by teachers of the Department of Theory and History of Journalism at Astrakhan State University on the implementation of digital technologies into traditional learning process, are considered in the article. Particular attention is paid to the identified advantages of digital learning and its role in improving the quality of the educational process. Its features are interactivity, accessibility, individualization of the learning process, equality in access, practice orientation, and various forms of content provision. Digital technologies application enhances the interest of students, since the novelty of the educational process model is one of the motivating factors in learning. Students manage the learning process on their own, namely, they search for information, process, and then publish it. They actively interact with the teacher and other students both in online environment and offline discussions. In the context of the epidemiological situation associated with the spread of the coronavirus COVID 19 in 2020, it was the experience of digital learning implemented by teachers of the Department of Theory and History of Journalism that allowed restructuring the form of the educational process operatively and effectively. Interaction with isolated students took place at their residence: in the Astrakhan region, in the republics of Kalmykia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, as well as in other regions: in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, etc. Further development of these practices will not only improve the education quality but also allow expanding interaction with special groups of the population (disabled people, the elderly, and migrants).

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1. Introduction

Presently, the formation of youth is taking place in a fast-changing information and communication space, which is characterized by the rapid development of global digital telecommunication networks. The active development of new communication technologies has a significant impact on the media environment transformation of modern society. Expanding the capabilities of the Internet, improving and increasing the number of mobile communication means, changing the forms of media production and broadcasting channels of traditional media types (television, radio, mass media) create conditions for the integration of computers, television, radio, smartphones, and various gadgets into multifunctional means of communication. It is obvious that service capabilities allow using new communication technologies to solve an increasing number of tasks of informational, educational, business, communicative, and entertaining nature. Thus, the devices convergence contributes to the emergence of new opportunities for the media environment development. The specificity of new communication technologies provides with maximal individualization of the process of consuming information products.

The UNESCO Paris Agenda (2007), one of the main documents on media education, presents a concept including three fundamental objectives: 1) provide access to all media, which are potential tools for understanding society and participating in democratic life; 2) develop skills of critical analysis of received messages, both news and entertainment programs for gaining the ability to be independent and active users; 3) encourage production, creativity and interactivity in various fields of media communication. Thus, media education is applicable to all types of mass communication, regardless of the used technologies.

Today, journalism faculties are one of the education types among the variety of opportunities. However, performing organizational, oriented, consulting and supporting functions in the extension of media education, they retain a dominant, elite role in the region. The university can provide qualitative services in media education not only to students, but also to various categories of the population; it possesses the technical capabilities and has professional teachers and tutors, regional social partners.

2. Problem Statement

A contemporary person striving for the successful fulfillment of his daily and professional tasks, regardless of the type of activity, needs the elaboration of skills and abilities to work with new communication technologies. Search, critical analysis of information presented by various symbolic systems (text, figurative, sound), creation and publication of peculiar media content, realizing of responsibility and compliance with the rules of safe behavior in the media environment are among them. The ability to teach a person not only to use information and communication technologies confidently but also to apply them effectively in daily life is one of the major tasks of modern media education. However, it is essential not only to demonstrate methods of working in the online media space but also to enable students to employ knowledge in practice.

Information and communication technologies are actively used in educational activities carried out by the Faculty of Philology and Journalism of Astrakhan State University. At the same time, it worths

taking into consideration specific information requests and needs of both narrow target groups, including special ones (schoolchildren, rural residents, disabled, elderly people, migrants, etc.), and individual users. The Astrakhan region is a border region, therefore the Faculty of Philology and Journalism provides educational support to students from other republics: Chechnya, Kalmykia, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Dagestan, as well as other regions of the Caspian states: Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc. Herewith, students are of different ages, social status, and primarily, of different levels of proficiency in digital technologies. Many of them do not have the opportunity to stay in Astrakhan for a variety of reasons (area remoteness, inability to break away from working production, health problems, financial difficulties, etc.). Thus, there is an urgent need for active personalization, based on offering a variety of choices of use methods allowing students to design their own way of gaining information. The summarization of the experiment outcomes conducted by the Department of Theory and History of Journalism on the implementation and development of digital learning technologies, enables identifying successful forms, thereby contributing to the quality education improvement.

3. Research Questions

The development of information and communication technologies has opened up new prospects in the field of education. Digital learning meets the educational needs of students as much as possible. Digital learning (e-Learning) refers to the process of organizing the educational process based on the use of digital technologies: access to educational materials posted on specialized services, communication with the teacher and groupmates (consultations, discussions, experience exchange, etc.), preparation and placement of educational content, and use of multimedia. According to UNESCO (1984) approaches, “media education should be understood as teaching theory and practical skills for mastering current media, considered as part of a specific and autonomous field of knowledge in pedagogical theory and practice” (p. 41). Mobile learning is “learning in different contexts through social and content interactions using personal electronic devices” (Crompton, 2013, p. 10). Thus, the introduction of digital technologies in media education implements the learning paradigm at any time and in any place (Attewell & Savill-Smith, 2005), and in accordance with the style, time, and student location (Shih, 2007), moving from orientation on a learner (chosen by the teacher for student’s needs) to the studying (chosen by students is consistent with their learning goals under the teacher’s guidance).

For more than ten years, specialists of the Department of Theory and History of Journalism at Astrakhan State University have used various forms of digital learning in the framework of formal and non-formal educational courses, including specialized interactive services, social media, messengers, etc. In 2007–2011, an experiment and a project on the blogosphere use in the educational process were successfully implemented at the faculty (Lazutkina, 2018). Since 2015, the ASU university platform “Digital Learning” based on the “Moodle” system, together with ASU Digital Learning Center, has been used in the educational process.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the work is to analyze the experiment conducted on the implementation of digital learning technologies in the traditional teaching system, to identify successful forms of media education that have influenced the improvement of the quality of the academic and educational process.

5. Research Methods

The main method in the work was an experiment on the introduction of digital technologies into the system of traditional education. The following methods were used: observation, conversation, data processing, analysis of scientific and theoretical research, and study of recommendations and international programs of UNESCO on digital learning issues.

6. Findings

The use of digital technologies has opened up new opportunities for working in student classrooms and beyond. Previously, the educational process implied expensive stationary equipment, specially organized lecture rooms, the presence of operators in the classroom who controlled the careful and safe use of equipment. At present, these conditions are desirable (for a more comfortable interaction with the educational material) but not required. Each student has a mobile device connected to the Internet. Free Wi-Fi functions on the territory of the university, completely eliminating the costs of teachers and students. Thus, mobile learning technology has tremendous potential to support academic learning anywhere, anytime, to provide personalized monitoring and consulting (Bernacki et al., 2020).

In 2020, all students enrolled in the specialty “Journalism” (bachelor's and master's degrees), as well as students of particular courses have been registered on the educational service “Digital Learning” of ASU. Students can enter the ASU “Digital Learning” website both through a regular browser and a specialized mobile application. The mobile application provided by Moodle Pty Ltd for free distribution is installed by students from Google Play Market (for owners of Android mobile devices) or the App Store (for iPhone mobile phones and iPad tablets) (Moodle, 2020).

One of the main advantages of using the ASU “Digital Learning” platform based on the “Moodle” system, along with ease of use and various possibilities for publishing materials, is free access (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), which allows students to complete assignments in a convenient place. Taking into account student exchange programs, internships, end-to-end industrial practices, implementation of projects within the framework of social partnership, as well as the absence of students due to forced absences (family circumstances, poor health, etc.), digital learning through a university educational platform increases its effectiveness.

It is especially essential to use digital technologies in extramural form of study. A significant reduction in auditorium time and the refusal of employers to provide full-fledged study vacation sharply reduce the educational process quality, often making it fictitious. The choice of time and place allows each student of the extramural department to publish their work in the virtual interactive environment of

"Digital Learning", actively interact with the teacher, and participate in the discussion that opens up new perspectives for learning.

It should be emphasized that the interaction model of course learners, students and undergraduates with teachers has generally changed as a result of the digital technologies application: gaining educational material, sending completed assignments, presenting project outcomes, organizing discussions, etc. If earlier the teacher could hear a limited number of students in practical and seminar classes, now everyone provides the completed work and has the opportunity to receive the teacher's comment. Published works for a teacher, even within the framework of projects, is an indicator of the teaching quality, the evidence of assimilating theoretical material by students with further implementation into practice.

The ability to organize discussions is one of the primary advantages of digital learning, as it contributes not only to receiving feedback, but also to increasing the level of student responsibility for information materials posted in the virtual space. In this regard, students are more thoughtful about the text preparation, and the choice of appropriate photo, audio and video materials, and the placement of personal data. To our mind, the main thing is the student's awareness that as soon as information is placed in the virtual space, it can be immediately read and replicated. The given communication process is irreversible, even if later the message is edited or deleted. Thus, the student will learn to take responsibility for the actions in the virtual space and the left information there.

Publications on the "Digital Learning" platform of ASU enable students to comprehend the material being studied and see the results in practice. Comments on messages assist discussions, support for fresh ideas, and establish new contacts on a topic of interest. If traditional writing gives a continuous and linear perception of information, then the Internet text has many links and provides multidimensional perception. This contributes to the awareness of interconnections and a more in-depth material study with simultaneous acquiring of skills in the correct formatting of texts and their hosting on the Internet.

Especially valuable opportunity is to use the ASU "Digital Learning" resource as an archive of completed students' works and teaching materials. In case of conflict situations, loss of printed final papers (term papers, reports, etc.), one can restore and demonstrate materials owing to the virtual archive at any time. It is also convenient for students to save access to the training materials of the studied courses.

There is a special section in which students publish project materials. In 2015–2020, students posted the materials of the following projects on the educational platform "Digital Learning" of ASU: "Dialogue of generations" (photo competition with a grading system, publication of analytical articles, video materials); "Battle of Storytellers", "Simply about Difficult" games (analytical materials on topical social issues), "Fall in love with Russian literature" (book trailers); "Art Project" game (SMM promotion of art projects in social media, long reads on the topic), "Cultural hike" (photo gallery), individual projects and many others. Obviously, it is convenient for teachers to have an archive of the results of students' project activities, the access and presentation of which is easy to organize in any convenient place.

The main concerns that arose at the preparatory stage of the experiment contained the problem of overcoming technical difficulties by students. First of all, this applies to young people who received secondary education in regions with a low level of Internet penetration. However, simple instructions,

teachers' consultations and the help of fellow students contributed to the rapid mastering of basic technologies of working with the system.

Digital technologies application enhances the interest of students, since the novelty of the educational process model is one of the motivating factors in learning (Renniger & Hidi, 2016). The use of digital technologies makes it possible to be more creative in the work performance owing to the presented materials visualization. Students manage the learning process on their own, namely, they search for information, process, and then publish it. They actively interact with the teacher and other students both in online environment and offline discussions.

Individual courses containing study materials, completed assignments, student projects are available only to students of a specific group and the teacher. Therefore, the use of different combinations in publishing allows the teacher and students to stay in their media environment and close materials and discussions that provide value or contain internal information that is not intended for a third-party user. The research outcomes have shown that prevention of cyberbullying and copyright infringement are ensured by hiding some of the students' creative works from public viewing.

Publications in a closed virtual space and digital technologies application for organizing information interaction with the platform enable students to comprehend the material being studied and see the results in practice. Comments on messages assist discussions, support for fresh ideas, and establish new contacts on a topic of interest. If traditional writing gives a continuous and linear perception of information, then the Internet text has many links and provides multidimensional perception. This contributes to the awareness of interconnections and a more in-depth material study with simultaneous acquiring of skills in the correct formatting of texts and their hosting on the Internet.

In the context of the epidemiological situation associated with the spread of the coronavirus COVID 19 in 2020, it was the experience of digital learning implemented by teachers of the Department of Theory and History of Journalism that allowed restructuring the form of the educational process operatively and effectively. As a result, all students who are in self-isolation, both in Astrakhan and the Astrakhan region and at their residence place in the cities of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kalmykia, and Dagestan actively interact with teachers, and continue studying. The scientific and practical conference of young researchers "Topical issues of modern journalism and media communications" was held in online format at the faculty. Implementation of projects and creative works of student groups is continuing.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we note that digital technologies application in the educational process at relatively cheap expenses allows students to get an idea of the current information and communication space, theoretical knowledge, and practical skills of effective work on the Internet, explain basic rules of online environment security, thus forming their information culture. Since the availability of new communication technologies is constantly increasing, the development of projects related to digital learning seems to be the most promising. Further implementation of the educational projects will enable both teachers and students to confidently use information and communication technologies, using them in educational activities effectively and responsibly.

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