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CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' DECREASED MOTIVATION IN SHIFTING TO DISTANCE LEARNING

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Abstract

Due to the change in the epidemiological situation in the Russian Federation since March 2020, many universities were forced to switch to distance learning. The article examines the influence of distance learning on the change in the quality of education, on the choice of educational technologies used. The article also focuses on the decreased learning motivation in students caused by the long-term use of this form of education. To study distance-learning related problems, an empirical study was carried out in three state universities of Barnaul which switched to this form of education for the period of more than a year due to the difficult epidemiological situation in Altai Krai. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained in the course of the study, the hypothesis was confirmed that the majority of respondents experiencing distance learning changed not only their motivation, but also their views on the role of the teacher in the educational process. A splitting of the integrity of the pedagogical process was also noted. Undoubtedly, it is the goal set by the teacher and the specific features of the studied subject that will determine the choice of means and technologies, ensure the unity of the form and content of the pedagogical process, taking into account the individual development trajectory of a university student. The research carried out gave the authors the opportunity to develop the guidelines on the use of personality-oriented technologies in the study of the humanities in distance learning at a university.

1. Introduction

The development of educational process in the XXI century is closely connected not only with the introduction of new pedagogical technologies, but also with the replacement of all lectures and part of the seminars with online classes. In March 2020 due to the pandemic university students shifted to distance learning. For many teachers and students this form of education turned out to be new or was previously applied to a limited extent. The experience gained during this year requires a rethinking not only of the content of the subjects taught, but also of the teaching technologies used by teachers earlier. The shift to distance learning revealed a gap between network technologies and traditional education. The question arose of combining digital technologies with new pedagogical technologies, as well as the question of preserving the integrity of the pedagogical process.

2. Problem Statement

The separation of learners and teachers by time and space and the transition to the use of network technologies led to various difficulties in the educational process.

2.1. The problems of the educational process

In addition to technical problems (lack of the necessary equipment for students and teachers, power outages, Internet connection problems, freezing due to overload of technical platforms of universities, etc.), time zone differences when agreeing on the time of classes and consultations, university teachers faced the difficulties implementing the same pedagogical technologies that previously proved their efficiency.

Before the summer examinations, students noted difficulties in understanding and memorizing new material and difficulties in skills development explaining it by the lack of distance learning experience. It was also obvious that students do not see the difference between online learning, distance learning, extramural learning. The students showed the problems of search, selection of high-quality information. Junior students experienced difficulties working with the text, it was difficult for them to identify the key problems and find possible solutions.

The first months of distance learning were described by the students as the hardest period due to the lack of non-verbal communication and emotional messages, the distortion of verbal communication, the absence of many previously used technologies, the impossibility of complete self-actualization in a new academic environment. Online learning and online interaction have split the integral educational process, significantly transforming the educational work in the university.

2.2. Students' work-life balance

It was also noted that distance learning often upset the work-life balance and violated the basic principles of a healthy lifestyle, which had previously been promoted in the universities of Barnaul. This led to a decrease in stress resistance, motivation and quality of education in universities.

The relevance of this and other problems led us to the decision to conduct a study among students of three universities to clarify hypotheses about the consequences of the transition to distance learning. We assume that the change in the implemented pedagogical technologies has led to a decrease in students' motivation. Self-actualization and personal development began to be perceived by the students as unattainable in the new academic environment; living in the digital world of network technologies force students to postpone their life missions and priorities for the uncertain future.

3. Research Questions

The study focuses on the following issues:
- the main problems that the students of three non-humanitarian universities faced in the distance learning period;
- the connection between these problems and decreased learning motivation of students studying humanities in non-humanities universities;
- the most effective options for solving the problems that have arisen and ways to reduce the negative impact of distance learning on students of the three universities.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to reveal and analyse the causes and consequences of decreased learning motivation caused by distance learning and to offer the most effective ways to increase learning motivation through the use of personally-oriented technologies in distance learning.

5. Research Methods

- Structural analysis was applied to characterize the main components of the used technologies and to describe the specifics of distance learning.
- Synthesis method was used to identify the common features in the study of humanities in universities during the pandemic period in the Russian Federation.
- Questionnaire method was used to collect empirical information about the problems of distance learning.

6. Findings

To analyze and confirm the previously stated problems in distance learning, the questionnaire "The influence of distance learning on the motivation of students of non-humanitarian specialties" was developed. The questionnaire surveyed 360 people who had to switch to distance learning during the pandemic period in three universities in Barnaul: 60% of students from Altai State Agrarian University, 29% of students from Altai State Medical University, 11% of students from Altai State Technical University. 78% of the surveyed were the students of the first and the second year of studies, while only 22% of the surveyed were senior students. Specific features of the respondents' age and the curriculum

of 1-2 year of studies determined the results obtained in the research data which in some points turned out to be contradictory.

Transition from school to university is challenging and incoming students may have difficulties adapting to university life. Usually it is the first year at university that gives the students the opportunity to gradually adjust to the new educational environment. In March 2020 the universities went into lockdown and the adaptation process was interrupted and not completed due to social isolation and transition to distance learning that was new to students.

First-year students have just passed the first examinations and started to study new subjects including humanities that are a significant part of the first-year program. The abrupt change in the form of learning, the revision and restructuring of the syllabus and teaching methods before the summer examinations and the first practical training added to the stress of self-isolation that students found hard to cope with. All these factors led to the effect of "alienated education" as well as "deferred life".

Nevertheless, by autumn 2020 students had already gained some experience and adjusted to the new learning environment. As a result, in winter 2020-2021 a significant part of students learnt to combine studies with volunteering and part-time work. Some students stayed at home with their parents and organized their studies according to their own timetable. This was reflected in the following results: 69% of students expressed their attitude to distance learning as positive and only 27% as negative. At the same time, 51% of students noted that the quality of education has decreased, 29% of students said it has increased and 20% found it difficult to answer.

Postponed life syndrome and life in the computer-generated environment put off the prospects for the implementation of knowledge and skills of the future profession. Students' perception of space and time changed, for many of them the real world narrowed down to a room or a house, while the boundaries of access to virtual space were practically erased (Polozhentseva, 2016, p. 24).

Disruption of daily routine and study schedule changed the way students learn, think and act. At the same time, self-isolation allowed students to realize the current pressing issues of modern society, to separate the media-imposed values from the true values of the world. Students understood the importance of genuine feelings, emotions, learned to value person-to-person communication, to differentiate the genuine art and knowledge from pseudo-art, pseudo-spirituality and anti-science.

When asked about changes in motivation during distance learning, 41% of students answered that it decreased, 30% - said that it increased, and 29% of respondents noted that their motivation has not changed. The question "What kept you motivated to perform the tasks efficiently during distance learning?" showed the following results. 53% of students had intrinsic motivation (I do not know how and do not want to study badly - 22%; when I successfully cope with difficulties, I feel happy -14%; I wanted to get high-quality knowledge and realize my potential in the profession / be useful to society, the world - 17%). Only 28% of students had extrinsic positive motivation (desire to get a high score, pass an exam / test, receive an increased scholarship / transfer to free education). Extrinsic negative motivation was not significant, some of the students found it difficult to answer.

In spite of the fact that 69% of respondents had a positive attitude to distance learning, only 40% chose distant learning as the main form of getting education. The main reason for this is decreased learning motivation found in 41% of students who stated that the quality of education has dropped.

Learning motivation of students also depended on goal-setting and learning outcomes confirmed by successful tests (examinations and practical training).

The decline in the quality of teaching-learning process occurred against the background of an increase in the amount of workload and time spent on home assignment (noted by 48% of students). Only 39% of the respondents wrote that home assignments took less time than they did with full-time education. 55% of students faced the requirement to do a lot of homework to tight deadlines. Only 16% of students noticed the absence / minimization of creative tasks, and 14% were alarmed by the general decrease in the number of tasks (the impossibility of obtaining high-quality knowledge on the subject being taught).

21% of students felt uncomfortable because of the absence or a significant reduction of in-person interaction with classmates. Peer interaction was reduced to the exchange of information about the organization of classes and home assignments. During the period of distance learning students lost interest and the ability to collaborate with their peers. This competence is one of the priorities in teaching the humanities. However, students learned to reflect on challenging and complicated questions, ask questions to the teacher, work with visual aids and to complete assigned tasks clearly.

Distance learning forced the teachers to think of new tools and methods to make the learning process efficient. Students noted that interactive tasks and problem-solving activities were used as well as more traditional teaching methods. Nevertheless, for 74% of students' offline home assignments were difficult to complete due to the following reasons: inability to understand subject issues, lack of the desire to do the task, concentration problems and poor ability to recall badly understood information. That led to the decrease of learning motivation and as a consequence to the decrease in the quality of acquired knowledge.

Some students found it difficult to find the necessary information on the internet or to correctly select the information needed. It indicates that students are not ready to work with digital technologies in educational process because of the lack of critical thinking. The "Google generation" has difficulty in understanding new definitions, categories and concepts.

The question about the common problems of distance learning gave the following results:

- 57% found no problems learning online;
- 29% had psychological problems (inability to study remotely, unwillingness to do anything without the teacher's control);
- 24% had technical problems (absence of the device or access to the Internet).

Students' motivation was beyond any doubt modified by pedagogical assessment of the intellectual and the stimulating sides (their will and the attitude to success) of their personality. This phenomenon influenced the way some certain functions of a teacher were expected to be performed in the situation of distance learning as well as students' physical and psychological health. Answering this question students could choose not more than 5 different options. So, 78% of the students asked mentioned that their health had worsened. 28% of them pointed out that they started feeling tired more often after having shifted to distance learning. They began to experience different kinds of health disorders such as headaches, backaches, pains in their necks, heart problems, etc. more frequently. 23% of the respondents said their eyesight had turned weaker. 29% of the students described their psychological

health as having become poorer. At the same time 49% of the students participated in the survey did not have any health problems. It means that 51% of all the students asked experienced physical and mental health disorders during the period of distance learning. These figures can serve as quite a serious argument against distance learning being used overall, full-time and on a long-term basis. Students' motivation and the quality of education in general were influenced greatly by the health problems mentioned above as well as students' mental state in the situation of the lockdown accompanied by some difficulties to get medical help during the first and the second pandemic waves.

The control over the load and choosing the form and the content were performed by the teachers during the period of distance learning. That was the time when not only them but also the students reconsidered their role, significance and responsibilities in the learning process. It may be illustrated by the following results of the survey: 36% of the respondents supposed that teachers did not have to fulfill any additional functions and the only thing they were to do was to know their subject well, which means to provide the students with good knowledge of the subject taught. Though 34% of the students questioned thought a teacher should become the one who inspires making the situations of success and creating psychologically comfortable atmosphere. 25% of the survey participants stated that university teachers should be qualified enough to offer consulting services and only 20% of the respondents found the question difficult to answer. The results of the survey focus our attention on the reasons of the decrease of students' motivation and stress out the fact that the use of POT is absolutely necessary even when teaching is performed online.

It should be mentioned that distance teaching realia have changed the conditions of the implementing of teaching techniques. Teachers were not able to fully use the methods they used to employ before. Information technologies applied in distance teaching allowed university lectures to take into consideration the difference in students' level of knowledge but at the same time being extremely time consuming together with digital inequality of the participants of the process these technologies are aimed neither at a student's individual development, nor at them gaining necessary skills (Bolotova, 2016, p. 154). It should not be forgotten that academic information turns into real knowledge if it is filled with some personal meaning and correlates with students' values.

The emotional and other components of POT were transformed by the humanities teachers while shifting to distance teaching. The emotional component of teaching process binds external actions and cognitive processes with the inner state of a personality. It is reflected not only in the emotions but also in the feelings of students. This component influences students' motivation and consequently raises the quality of teaching.

After distance learning was introduced in 2020-2021, the teachers noticed that the students lacked positive emotions due to the prevalence of unassisted students' work when they had to gain knowledge and develop their professional skills independently from the teachers. The students noted the significance of emotional and psychological contact with other students and the sense of belonging to their university group. All that was lost at that period which also influenced their motivation greatly.

To make the emotional component a part of distance learning it is necessary to discuss with the students the real-life situations that are important for them. To create positive psychological climate during distant classes the teacher should make sure they get proper feedback from their students which

means not only timely noticing negative emotions of their students but also focusing on the positive side of the studies. Favorable psychological climate can also be created through positive stimulation of the students' learning activities, through friendly attitude to each other expressed by approval, praise, appreciation and encouragement as well as through relevant, useful material used during the class (Loginova et al., 2020).

To emotionally stimulate students' active participation in the educational process, a university lecturer should employ verbal and non-verbal evaluations of the way students communicate with them and with each other. For the reason of motivating students, teachers should use 'strokes' such as addressing students by their first names, introducing pronoun "we", staying friendly while correcting students' mistakes and encouraging students' communication activeness. That will develop their skills and abilities, will assist them in their studies and will teach them to act responsibly while working as a part of team.

It is remarkable that not only emotional component is corrupted in the situation of distant learning, but the educational process on the whole is dilapidated. The content-activity component for instance implies understanding of the educational aims and the significance of the gained skills and abilities for further functioning as a professional. Distance learning makes educational goals elusive in the changeable digital world. A teacher has to update the information studied at humanities classes applying personal and professional values, to turn to sociocultural context, to reveal logical ties between the topics studied and to create an integral worldview putting together various information provided by different university courses.

The content-activity component of teaching is based on stimulating students' cognitive activity that implies informative, operational and resultative parts. Distance learning has shifted the focus towards the research and the control of the contents of the educational process.

Undoubtedly distance learning provides good results when students are highly motivated. The same if true for post-graduates. This form of studying is quite efficient concerning academic research performed by students. Together with personality-oriented methods, distance teaching gives more opportunities for information exchange between a teacher and a student. It also encourages the latter to be a creative and an independent researcher.

To eliminate negative consequences which were mentioned by the students in the survey conducted by the university, a lecturer in case of distance teaching should be able to offer various tasks aimed at differentiating the level of knowledge and based on students' peculiarities and their individual needs. That is especially important when a teacher has to work with the groups of students, he/she is not familiar with. Devising individual educational routes, a teacher should remember that it implies not only motivating students but also setting educational goals, choosing relevant literature, helping students with the methodology of research, setting the deadlines, assessing intermediary and final results of students' work. This is often accompanied by systematization of the previously learned material as well as by creating the situations of success for students which can be rather time taking even for experienced teachers.

Communication is a vitally important part of the educational process. It includes the ability to make contacts, be a good interlocutor, as well as to express your thoughts correctly, to provide good

argument for your viewpoint and to be skillful at discussing things (Ataeva, 2016). When working with students online, teachers have to admit that the educational process lacks live communication as students are to get the necessary information and high-quality knowledge from various mostly written sources. The survey mentioned above showed that the students cannot cope with the difficulties and challenges of distance learning. In the conditions of abrupt and unprepared shift to online learning due to the pandemic, the teachers had to use digital ways and technologies of educating the students via various software. At pre-pandemic period the teachers used all these tools moderately always accompanying them with some other methods and health preserving technologies. At the present moment the students who are back to offline studying demonstrate the deterioration of the oral communication skills.

To reduce the number of negative consequences of the total shift to distance teaching a humanities teacher should be skillful enough to set a comprehensible goal significant for everybody. He/she should know how to specificate the tasks given both to the whole group and to each individual; they should also be able to see cause-and-effect relations and to have good analytic and prognostic skills. Personality-oriented technology allows a teacher to act as an inspirer, a co-author and a supervisor. Junior students should be taught to choose relevant information rather than to search for it. They should also be taught to work with the text, to see the ties between the material learnt and their future profession, to set the aim and divide it into intermediary tasks which means being able to design strategy. When students understand complex topics, enjoy the process of facing academic challenges, feel proud developing their own professional skills, they get highly motivated what enhances the quality of the educational process even if it is performed online.

The creativity of students is not connected with self-expression. It is the part of self-realization, self-development and self-representation of a person. Online form of teaching humanities influenced creativity the same way it influenced all other components of the educational process. During the period students were taught online, the educational process underwent some formalization and gamification.

It should be stated that the described POT components which are used by university teachers from Barnaul are neither static nor independent. They interact with each other, which leads to a new higher level of students' development. Making all these components the part of the educational process will undoubtedly encourage students to gain and develop professional skills and will favor their self-actualization.

Modern educators employ different methods of teaching designed to accomplish educational tasks. High quality education is closely connected with the self-development of a person notable for their unique subject experience (Bolotova, 2016).

POT is the way teachers deploy the system of personality-oriented situations. It involves building up such situations that ensure teacher-student interaction and the participants of which communicate with each other thus revealing the value component of education.

The main constituents of POT are communication, collaboration, equality in everything, mutual understanding, subject-to-subject relations and personality-oriented pedagogical interaction. "Personality-oriented pedagogical interaction can be defined as a special form of communication which is based on a learner-centered approach and is shaped by subject-to-subject relations, empathy, sympathy, mutual respect and the interaction of the participants of the educational process" (Kremleva, 2010a, 3, p. 111).

One of the most important moments of online teaching is the individual pedagogical support of every person which implies diagnosing the problems of the personality and monitoring the problems of student's development.

> Pedagogical support is aimed at helping students to balance their cognitive, emotional and physical work load, to find the way to react to misfortunes, to interact with other people in a non-toxic mode and to design their own unique style of work. (Kremleva, 2010a, 3, p. 111)

This peculiarity of POT is topical in the situation of online teaching and helps to improve its results. While employing this technology a teacher creates such pedagogical situations that make students to choose, evaluate, express their opinions, assess their own behaviour, make decisions by themselves (Kremleva, 2010b).

Among the essential features of POT there are the objectives to develop student's personality, the focus on the subjective experience of the students, efficiency, effectiveness, an individual style of teaching as well as the aspiration for encouraging students to study the subject, to develop general learning skills and for providing them with all the necessary conditions for their cognitive activity.

Using all the pedagogical conditions mentioned above and adjusting the main features of POT during the pandemic in Altai Krai made it possible to partly solve the problems of high education institutions of shifting to online teaching.

7. Conclusion

Distance learning has its pros and cons. The online form of teaching influenced all other components of the educational process. One of the most significant disadvantages is that distance learning reduces the possibility of implementing educational work, destroys the integrity of the pedagogical process. It is also necessary to emphasize that there are some skills and competencies that cannot be acquired through distance learning. At the same time, online form of teaching fits perfectly into the new concept of education, when "the university is trying to maneuver from the pole of academism (preparing scientists and researchers) to the pole of the market, corporatism and management (teaching the profession)" (Gilmutdinova, 2016, p. 1040).

One of the main problems of distance learning is a decrease in the students' motivation and their psychophysiological health. The emotional component is corrupted in the situation of distant learning and the educational process on the whole is dilapidated which also influenced students' motivation greatly. To reduce the negative consequences of distance learning, we suggest using the following personality-oriented technologies:

- creating a situation of success and positive psychological environment;
- giving problematic, creative tasks related to professional activities and personal experience;
- working in small groups;
- combining training with the educational process;
- using health-saving technologies;
- practicing individualized teaching and pedagogical support.

In our opinion, distance learning is better used in combination with other forms of training. Communication, collaboration, equality in everything, mutual understanding, positive teacher-student relationship and personality-oriented pedagogical interaction made it possible to partly solve the problems of higher education institutions when shifting to online teaching.

It should be remembered that digital technologies are a means, not a goal, of learning. It should be emphasized that the efficient use of the Web space increases the possibility of building an individual trajectory of students who conduct a research or do a project. At the same time, the use of distance learning should not be total and determine the forms, means, and content of educational process. The goal, the means of the pedagogical process chosen by the teacher should be built taking into account the combination of all pedagogical components. Personality-oriented technologies do not exclude working with computers, audio-video recordings, modeling situations, but they should not be the only tools used in remote educational process.

Tasks formulated on the basis of the main POT components form the conditions for consolidating motivation to receive education in any form, including distance one. After analyzing the conditions for implementing the components in distance learning, we came to the conclusion that the use of personality-oriented technologies will increase not only the students' motivation, but also the quality of this form of education. POTs have long-term goals, take into account personal motives, students' values, and have been effectively used in teaching humanities for several years. The pedagogical conditions, written above, ensure the effective use of POTs. The peculiarities of POTs help to improve the results of education.

The knowledge of each student' individuality and the use of differentiation in the educational process help to build a personality-oriented approach to learning. The use of POTs, in our opinion, directs the learning process along an individual trajectory, increases the student' motivation, the level and quality of learning. It also allows us to include a set of educational methods that form students' critical, logical thinking, a holistic system worldview, an adequate response to emerging modern socio-cultural problems, the development of the right strategy for solving personal and professional problems.

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