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Evaluation of distance learning in ukrainian higher media education: Perspectives and impact of stakeholders

Оцінка дистанційного навчання в вищій медійній освіті України: Погляди та вплив зацікавлених сторін

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Abstract

The research focuses on the utilization of computer-oriented educational environments for distance learning, aiming to assess the current landscape, highlighting both the positives and negatives, as well as successful examples and future prospects in higher education. Methodologically, the study involved an analysis of various sources, including statistical and narrative information, and conducted surveys among key stakeholder categories to evaluate their perceptions, effectiveness, and the most productive formats of distance learning. The findings challenge the notion that distance education is only suitable for extreme conditions. Key educational process participants, especially in fields like "Journalism," view well-organized distance education as comparable to traditional

Анотація

Дослідження зосереджене на використанні освітніх середовищ, орієнтованих на комп'ютери, для дистанційного навчання, з метою оцінки поточного стану, висвітлення як позитивних, так і негативних сторін, а також успішних прикладів і перспектив у вищій освіті. З методологічної точки зору дослідження включало аналіз різних джерел, включаючи статистичну та нарративну інформацію, та проведення опитувань серед ключових категорій зацікавлених сторін для оцінки їх сприйняття, ефективності та найпродуктивніших форматів дистанційного навчання. Результати викликають сумніви в думці, що дистанційна освіта підходить лише для екстремальних умов. Основні учасники освітнього процесу, особливо в галузях, таких

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and extramural learning methods. It enhances the computer technology skills of both teachers and students, proves to be the most inclusive educational format, lessens financial burdens, broadens professional development opportunities, aids in the internationalization of education, and serves as a marketing tool for attracting prospective students. However, the study also reveals an inconsistency between student and faculty expectations regarding remote communication formats and the practical ability of specialists to meet these demands.

Keywords: media education, distance learning, educational environment, institution of higher education, information and computer technologies, stakeholder.

Introduction

The global crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and the martial law caused by the invasion of Ukraine by Russian aggressors forced the educational environment to work in extreme conditions, most often in a remote format. The period of work of educational institutions in extreme conditions will end sooner or later, and a logical question will arise: will this mean the end of distance education? The proposed article is devoted to the question of the expediency of using this form of educational activity in a computer-oriented educational environment. An example can be Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, which systematically brought the distance education system into the category of priority, thereby creating a competitive advantage over other educational institutions. In the pre-crisis period, a set of measures, in particular the creation of the Digital Campus, made it possible not only to digitize the university but also to improve the distance learning system, made it possible to significantly increase interest in the institution, improve the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of entrants. Modern requirements for the training of specialists require taking into account the interests and active participation of all interested parties: students, employers and scientific and pedagogical workers. The proposed article is designed to show their attitude to distance learning and to determine the prospects of this form of education. **The purpose of the research** is to analyze the distance learning of students in the conditions of a

як "Журналістика", вважають добре організовану дистанційну освіту порівнянною з традиційними та екстрамуральними методами навчання. Вона підвищує навички викладачів та студентів у використанні комп'ютерних освітніх та комунікаційних технологій, є найбільш інклюзивним форматом освіти, зменшує фінансове навантаження на студентів та освітні установи, розширює можливості для професійного розвитку, сприяє інтернаціоналізації освіти та служить маркетинговим інструментом для залучення майбутніх студентів. Однак дослідження також виявляє невідповідність між очікуваннями студентів та викладачів щодо форматів дистанційного спілкування та практичною здатністю спеціалістів задовольнити ці потреби.

Ключові слова: медіаосвіта, дистанційне навчання, освітнє середовище, вищий навчальний заклад, інформаційні та комп'ютерні технології, зацікавлені сторони.

computer-oriented educational environment using the example of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and to generalize the opinions of stakeholders regarding its effectiveness and prospects.

Literature Review

The concept of "distance education" has a very broad meaning and many interpretations. The term "distance education" is considered synonymous with the terms "distance learning", "e-learning," and "online learning" and is defined as "a form of learning in which the main elements include the physical separation of teachers and students during learning and the use of various technologies for facilitation of student-teacher and student-student communication" (Berg, & Simonson, (s/f)). In Ukrainian legislation, distance learning is defined as "an individualized process of acquiring knowledge, abilities, skills and ways of cognitive activity of a person, which takes place mainly through the mediated interaction of remote participants in the educational process in a specialized environment that functions on the basis of modern psychological, pedagogical and information-communication technologies" (Order No. 466, 2013). Distance education is seen as plural, encompassing a wide set of technological applications and learning processes, including online learning, computer-based learning, web learning, e-learning, distributed learning, internet learning, cyber learning, virtual learning or

networked learning (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). Distance learning is studied in contrast to the traditional offline format, in particular, the differences between online and personal (face-to-face) interaction of students are determined (Shu & Gu, 2018), (Stradiotová, Némethová & Štefančík, 2022), the transition from a traditional environment to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Salta et al., 2022), the conditions for the introduction of blended learning are studied (Shu & Gu, 2018).

The results of the study by Huszti et al., (2022) on distance learning testified to how unexpected and difficult the transition from the classroom to distance education was. Experts were concerned that the rapid transition from face-to-face to online learning could lead to less satisfactory learning outcomes, not only because of the rapid change in the learning environment, but also because online technologies were not mastered by either teachers or students, meaning that these online technologies were used improperly (Ali et al., 2022). Scientists who compared online and offline learning (Aranyi, Tóth, & Veisz, 2022; Salta et al., 2022; Shu, & Gu, 2018), in online learning, they saw a negative trend of decreasing the quality of education: "the education system has been affected by the pandemic" "the study habits of students have changed", "the quality of the educational process fell, despite all the teachers' efforts" (Stradiotová, Némethová, & Štefančík, 2022). Online learning "carries a stigma of lower quality than face-to-face learning" (Hodges et al., 2020), despite research to the contrary. The perception of online learning as a weak option is explained by the fact that it is used only in urgent circumstances and not really planned to take full advantage of its benefits and opportunities. The new model of education envisions only a combination of traditional and distance learning.

Surveys conducted in Ukraine showed that the mass transition to distance learning has become a challenge for most Ukrainian universities: limited access to technological resources, unstable Internet, and inconsistent access to software and technical tools. Nevertheless, the results of the survey confirmed that both teachers and students are satisfied with the rapid transition to distance learning due to COVID-19 (Grynyuk, 2022). Ukrainian scientists Nenko, Kybalna & Snisarenko (2020), having studied the rapid transition to distance learning in higher education institutions, foresee "the development of the concept of distance education and the corporate network of universities" (Nenko, Kybalna & Snisarenko, 2020, p. 17). Knowledge of distance

education and emergency distance learning will be of great importance and will be used in future contingencies such as natural disasters or conflicts. And the experience of Ukraine in the organization of distance education in crisis conditions, gained during quarantine and martial law, can be interesting for the world.

Methodology

The basis of the research methodology was such scientific methods as surveys, expert assessments, and statistical analysis in combination with general scientific approaches such as analysis, synthesis and generalization. The basis of the theoretical understanding of the introduction of ICT-based distance learning was an empirical study of the training of journalists at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University. The survey was conducted in 2022 in the form of questionnaires; separate blocks of questions were developed for each category of stakeholder respondents. 26 representatives of the professional publishing environment who practice professional collaborations with students took part in the survey.

Results and Discussion

The practice of distance learning organization at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University

The innovativeness of the use of distance education at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University consists in the simultaneous application of several models of such training as well as in the establishment of a permanent connection in the chain of student - university - production. According to the authors, the use of distance education in the educational process should be reasoned, may apply only to certain disciplines, or may be inadmissible, for example, during the training of doctors or engineers.

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University has a developed infrastructure, in particular, more than 80 SMART classrooms; an educational cyber training ground; Wi-Fi zones; a TV studio and press center; practical centers, laboratories and workshops; and a resource center for supporting students with disabilities. In 2017, Grinchenko University introduced the New Educational Strategy. Students study in practical centers, the concept of which was developed by the university team in order to improve the quality of graduate training. The basis of the new strategy is education based on research and practical activities. A practical orientation to education is both a hallmark of the university and a logical

response to today's challenges. High-quality digitalization is the effective mechanism that allows you to maintain the involvement of students in practical professional training, maintaining harmony between theoretical, research and practical components.

Traditionally, journalism is considered a rather sensitive professional activity, as it is one of the first to respond to sociopolitical changes and global challenges. Therefore, the period of quarantine restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic turned out to be quite indicative from the point of view of the representation of professional capacity.

In the period of 2019–2021, the Institute (after reorganization, the Faculty) of Journalism managed to increase the quantitative indicators of applicants' submitted applications and maintain and even increase the interest of young people in studying at this higher education institution. According to the results of the admissions campaigns, the number of submitted applications for the "Journalism" specialty was consistently high: in 2019, more than 3,000, in 2020 – 3,617, in 2021, 3,648 applications. (Kyiv University named after Borys Grinchenko, 2019). In 2022, the Institute of Journalism ranked 2nd in Ukraine in the ranking of higher education institutions by the number of submitted applications for the specialty 061 Journalism. During the period of the admission campaign in

2022, 1,410 applications were received, but this did not affect the admission results (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, 2022). In 2023, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University became the leader in terms of the number of submitted applications for the specialty "Journalism": 1,465 for a bachelor's degree, and second place (260 applications) for a master's degree. In addition, the vast majority of applicants identified the chosen educational programs of the faculty as their highest priority (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, 2023)

Attitude of representatives of stakeholders in the educational process toward the distance form of education

Study of the participants in the educational process: students and teachers

The vast majority of survey participants: students of the I-IV courses of the bachelor's degree and the I-II courses of the master's degree, as well as the teaching staff of the Institute (faculty) of journalism – defined the distance learning format (90.4%) as working online with teachers and colleagues. They identified an e-learning course as a support tool. In total, 77.2% of respondents rated distance learning as an effective format that can be used in parallel with face-to-face learning and as a progressive learning format for the future (Table 1).

Table 1.
Distance learning as an effective format

Answer option	Percentage of respondents (%)
An effective format that can be used in parallel with face-to-face	52,1
Progressive learning format for the future	25,1
A forced step during quarantine restrictions	20,4
It is difficult to say	2,4

52.1% and 25.1% of the participants of this stage of the research generally indicated the importance and positive effect of the possibility of combining the distance learning format with student work. This indicator is directly correlated with the respondents' opinion that distance learning provides an opportunity to save time for professional development (71.3%). 71.3% of survey participants also prefer the synchronous mode of distance learning. The remote format of students' practice received an ambiguous assessment: 35.9% could not decide, 25.1%

spoke positively, 10.8% negatively, and 26.3% defined it as an interesting experiment. Although the general trend of the responses indicates an interest in a similar format. If we understand "interesting experiment" as a positive experience that the respondents would repeat in the future, then in total, we have 51.4% of positive responses.

The remote format of holding meetings between students and practicing specialists was also rated positively by all survey participants (Table 2).

Table 2.
Remote format of student meetings with practicing specialists

Answer option	Percentage of respondents (%)
Useful professional experience	56,3
A necessary element of distance learning	14,4
A format that can sometimes be used	29,3
It is difficult to say	0

According to the survey data, only 7.3% of respondents felt detached from the educational process. According to 47.3% of respondents, the effectiveness of the knowledge acquired through distance education is increasing, while 30.5% indicated a decrease in effectiveness. 54.5% of research participants would prefer a distance education program based on the "distance learning using multimedia programs" model. The fact that distance learning allows you to save time for

professional development was indicated by 71.3% of respondents.

If we look at the list of professional competencies that, according to the respondents, were most developed during distance learning, we will see that distance learning is perceived as capable of developing a wide range of professional competencies necessary for a future journalist (table 3).

Table 3.
List of professional competences that are most developed during distance learning

Answer option	Percentage of respondents (%)
Social	13,2
Communicative	13,2
Social and informational	18,6
Cognitive	29,9
Special	22,2
It is difficult to say	2,9

Research of employers-practitioners involved in the educational process.

26 representatives of the professional publishing environment who practice professional collaborations with students took part in the survey. Among them is the top management of publishing houses (directors, deputy directors, editors, and heads of professional public organizations). The age indicator ranges from 20 to 68 years old. 73.1% are women. 57.7% of survey participants under the distance learning format understand the teacher's work with students online. The electronic learning system (ELC) available at the university is considered only an auxiliary tool. The remote format of holding meetings between students and

specialists-practitioners as something that can sometimes be used. 61.5% of respondents expressed the opinion that the effectiveness of the knowledge acquired through distance learning is decreasing. The same number of interviewed practitioners indicated the presence of certain topics in the training of journalists, in particular in the educational program "Publishing and Editing", which, in their opinion, cannot be learned remotely.

To the question of the questionnaire "Should we use the distance learning format after the end of the quarantine", 50% of respondents answered that they would prefer a combination of 25% distance learning and 75% face-to-face learning (table 4).

Table 4.
Appropriateness of using the distance learning format after the end of the crisis period

Answer option	Percentage of respondents (%)
Partially: 25% remote and 75% face-to-face	50
Partially: 50% remote and 50% face-to-face	19,2
Yes	15,4
No	11,5
The face-to-face format is more effective for practical classes, and the remote format is much more convenient for obtaining the necessary information	3,8

34.6% of respondents rated the remote format of students' practice as negative, and a significant number of respondents (26.9%) - could not answer (table 5). It should be noted here that there are certain difficulties regarding the

organization of students' internships. Publishing houses often refuse to conduct internships remotely, although their employees work remotely.

Table 5.
Remote format of student practice

Answer option	Percentage of respondents (%)
Negatively	34,6
Positively	19,2
What an interesting experiment	19,2
It is difficult to say	26,9

An additional survey conducted showed that employers' mistrust of the results of distance learning is caused, firstly, by ignorance of the possibilities of e-learning (constant access to information, systematic and objective testing of theoretical and practical skills, the ability to organize work in mini-editorial offices, etc.). Distance learning requires the learner to be more responsible for the results and develops independent learning skills, which is an important requirement of the modern world – continuous improvement, on-the-job training, etc. Such a specialist, who is able to quickly adapt and learn, is especially valuable for an employer.

It should also be noted that an interesting feature is that among the interviewees, in general, older practitioners have a negative attitude towards distance education, while younger specialists are more favorable to this form of education. More than 70% of the respondents who believe that the effectiveness of the acquired knowledge under the distance form of education decreases and evaluate the distance format of students' practice as negative are over 58 years old. This fact indicates a certain lack of acceptance of information and computer technologies by representatives of this age group. Since publishers of age 58 and older are active in the professional field today, this situation requires an effective program to include this category of publishers in the use of modern digital technologies. In this case, remote formats of communication with students can be very useful. It is the process of mutual convergence between universities and production organizations, where the presentation of the best practices of such interaction is the most effective element of self-improvement.

Conclusions

1. The distance learning format in the conditions of a computer-oriented educational environment and the policy of practical orientation in learning are effective marketing tools of higher education institutions (humanities) in attracting future students. This is evidenced both by the results of the study and the results of the demand of applicants and admission campaigns of the Institute (Faculty) of Journalism of the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University for the quarantine years 2019–2023. Institutions of higher education managed to increase the number of applicants' submitted applications and maintain and even increase the interest of young people in studying at the Faculty of Journalism of the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.
2. Due to the implemented digital campus, a complex of certified ELCs and a system of training pedagogical personnel, the distance learning format is considered by the participants of the educational process as an equal form along with face-to-face and extramural types of gaining knowledge and not only as a forced measure during crisis situations. Leaders of education and politics in Ukraine can choose the most effective models of online education that will work successfully in the era after COVID-19 and after the war. The experience of Ukrainian universities in organizing distance learning in quarantine and martial law conditions can be useful in other countries as well.
3. Distance learning is perceived as capable of developing a wide range of professional competencies necessary for a future journalist and improving the skills of teachers and students in using computer-based educational and communication technologies.

4. Distance education expands opportunities for professional development (organization of practice at enterprises in other regions, online meetings with practicing specialists).
5. The survey confirmed the effectiveness of complex and systematic remote information and computer educational tools, which are built by the University.
6. The distance learning format expands the possibilities of internationalization of education and facilitates the organization of international trainings, lectures, and internships.
7. The study showed that there is a certain discrepancy between the demand of the participancy of the modern educational process (students and representatives of the teaching staff) and the possibility and willingness to satisfy this demand on the part of the practitioners of the media environment.

This may indicate insufficient professional inclusion of the modern media environment in the process of personnel training and insufficient flexibility in responding to the modern challenges of youth.

8. The study showed the wide research potential of the outlined issues.

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