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Distance Subject-Subject Pedagogical Interaction in the Age of COVID-19: the Challenge of the Day

The article discusses the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning in the process of the development of subjectness via information and communication technologies in prospective teachers in the course of their professional training. It is proved that information and communication technologies are a multifunctional learning tool that contributes to the efficiency of independent learning, motivates prospective teachers to further development of their “selves” in the course of their professional training and makes this routine process more interesting and efficient. It is theoretically substantiated that the role of teachers in the educational process in the conditions of distance learning has changed significantly. The teacher of a new breed should give up the traditional dominant role in the educational process, and, instead, in the course of distance pedagogical interaction, get a new role as an organizer, coordinator and mentor of students in the process of independent cognitive activity. It is defined, that interaction between teacher and students is the most important difference between traditional education in the classroom and virtual learning. Problems that may arise in the process of distance interaction between the participants have been identified. The teachers should consider them and do their best to overcome.

The key feature of distance subject-subject pedagogical interaction, which is a significant role of a feedback, is revealed. In a socio-psychological context, it means receiving information from others about how they perceive the behavior of a student in the process of distance interaction. Feedback allows the students to understand and adjust their activities to the optimal strategy of activity in an artificial environment. In the future, students will have the opportunity to put their subjective experience directly into their life.

Keywords: organization of distance learning, subject-subject pedagogical interaction, self-motivation, information and communication technologies

Introduction

Today, in the age of COVID-19, there is a rapid computerization at every stage of the learning process around the world, including the system of higher education and higher education institutions. The World Wide Web offers endless opportunities to overcome the situation with COVID-19 via the use of a variety of materials in various fields of human activity. The development of new technologies for the transfer of knowledge and information affects the system of education and causes significant changes in teaching methods in the context of distance learning.

There are more and more opportunities to use new technologies in the education system, since students and teachers have computers with Internet access. It allows both teachers and prospective teachers to use innovative computer technologies to prepare for their professional and pedagogical activities. Such activities as watching authentic films, creating presentations by means of Internet technologies, searching for exercises and tasks on the World Wide Web, make the learning process at university more interesting and rewarding.

The analysis of recent studies and publications

In the context of the spread of COVID-19, there are some research works of foreign scholars essential for our study. J. Schmidt and C. Werner (2007) consider the topics of designing online instruction for success, future oriented motivation and self-regulation, which became the background for the empirical research in lockdown period. M. Scott (2006) introduces the research on innovations in distance learning program development and delivery, which has influenced the rapid introduction of distance learning into the education system.

The purpose of the article is to theoretically identify the advantages and disadvantages of distance subject-subject pedagogical interaction in the age of COVID-19, and to carry out empirical research to confirm the suggested idea.

Discussion

Under the conditions of COVID-19, information and communication technologies are actively used almost in every sphere of public life. For this reason, the problem of professional training of prospective teachers who would be fluent in computer

knowledge and able to apply it in their professional and pedagogical activities deserves special attention. The use of information and communication technologies in the process of the development of subjectness of prospective teachers in the course of their professional training encourages:

- firstly, strong interest and general motivation to learn by means of new forms of work, which are a priority to scientific and technological progress;
- secondly, the introduction of the principle of individualization of learning, since each future teacher has the opportunity to work in their own comfortable way;
- thirdly, the objectivity of control, in particular, the development of self-reflection in future teachers;
- fourthly, the development of skills and abilities for a variety of creative activities;
- fifthly, to master the skills of quick decision-making in a difficult situation;
- sixthly, the access to information banks at any time and any place, i.e. the ability to quickly obtain the necessary information.

In this case, new information technologies become the major means of access to various sources of information from different fields of study. The development of subjectness of prospective teachers in the course of their professional training involves independent search, processing, perception and use of relevant information, which is one of the most important aspects of current educational process in higher education and, in turn, stimulates future teachers to professional development and self-improvement.

Under lockdown conditions, the web environment has become an ideal means to provide future teachers with an appropriate wealth of information on a particular issue. A course structure map that clearly defines the competencies developed in the course, self-assessment that demonstrates prior learning experience and developing assessment, related to target competencies, motivate future teachers to be responsible for their own education.

However, in the situation of complete long-term lockdown and distance learning students are prone to feel frustration caused by lack of necessary technical skills and isolation. Obviously, this happens because they are inexperienced in the online environment, and need additional recommendations for learning in the online space.

User frustration can be minimized by implementing support and feedback features (chats, active calls) and by implementing a time management system.

Advances in information and communication technologies have made distance learning accessible to anyone who wants to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities.

The use of modern information and communication technologies is a socially significant aspect in the professional training of future teachers, since such technologies provide future teachers with the following opportunities:

- free access to world systems of knowledge, culture of foreign countries, current experience in various fields of science;
- development of learning autonomy skills;
- expanding the limits of the learning environment;
- mutual exchange of professional and pedagogical experience of prominent scientists and researchers with each user of a single information space;
- unlimited creative freedom, which is the key to high professional qualification of teachers;
- individualization of the educational process and the spread of distance learning forms;
- overcoming psychological difficulties (Balits'ka, 2003, p. 96).

Consequently, information and communication technologies are a multifunctional learning tool that contributes to the efficiency of individual study, motivates future teachers in the course of their professional training to further development of their “selves” and makes this routine process more interesting and efficient.

In the context of distance learning, the role of teachers in the educational process has changed significantly. The teacher of a new breed should give up the traditional dominant role in the educational process, and, instead, in the course of distance pedagogical interaction, get a new role as an organizer, coordinator and mentor of students in the process of independent cognitive activity. On the one hand, the teacher tries to abstract from the educational process and give more freedom to students and, on the other, gets involved in the educational process and regulates the activities of students. Obviously, the key function of the teacher is to create and organize pedagogical situations that will encourage the development of such personal qualities of students as independent cognitive activity, initiative, self-reflection, self-regulation and others.

The process of subject-subject interaction between the university teacher and the student involves, for example, maximum assistance to the students in solving certain pedagogical tasks and situations, gradual increase of students' self-activity, complete self-regulation in the learning process. Such form of interactive collaboration between teacher and student leads to student's self-development as well as to strengthening their personal subjectness to professional and pedagogical activities (Shekhavtsova, 2018, p. 44).

The ideas above require us to focus on a brief description of pedagogical situations vital in the process of development of students' subjectness to professional and pedagogical activities at the university.

The process of pedagogical interaction is mutual. The university teacher purposefully creates certain conditions and uses the existing objects and phenomena of the educational process, as well as consciously involves the student in interaction with a certain educational environment and plans the educational outcome. Students in their turn choose, use and organize various elements of the environment according to their own motives, needs, values and personal qualities in order to cope with the pedagogical situation (Linnik, 2014, p. 213). Keeping to this statement, we stipulate that the students resolve certain pedagogical situations, draw on their own experience and subjectness, which make professional and pedagogical activities unique and more individual. It is obvious that in most cases the actual result of pedagogical situation solved by the student does not coincide with the result expected by the teacher. Mobility as key characteristic of the pedagogical situation allows the student, on the one hand, to gain their own unique experience and subjectness, and, on the other, allows the teacher to monitor, control and regulate this process.

The most important difference between traditional education in the classroom and virtual learning is interaction between teacher and students. Interaction is perhaps the most discussed factor when it comes to the e-learning process. There are six main types of interaction in the e-learning process:

1. student's interaction with the content, which involves acquainting students with the content of the course in a form planned in advance, through user-friendly, effective digital materials under the guidance of the teacher;
2. student-teacher interaction can be synchronous or asynchronous depending on the use of technological tools (e-mail, virtual classroom, chat, audio or video conferencing, forums);
3. student-student interaction is a motivating and exciting process for students, where they interact through joint projects, discussions in forums, e-mails or social media tools;
4. content-content interaction differs from other types of interaction since specific computer programs, called educational agents, use students' data to update, correct, and improve the learning process, that is, to determine the students' learning style and adapt learning materials and learning activities to their style;

5. teacher-content interaction means preparation, planning, development and implementation of the course content by the teacher;
6. teacher-teacher interaction is a process of exchanging information and experience (Shekhavtsova, 2019, p. 242).

The development of the Internet and communication technologies has changed the importance of distance education. If previously distance learning was organized through correspondence, radio and television, today educational activities in distance education are mostly performed via the Internet.

The most significant problem of distance learning, specifically the lack of student-student and student-teacher interaction, has also been overcome due to the use of the Internet. Today, virtual classroom tools have made a significant contribution to improving distance education.

Learning tools and tools used in traditional classrooms have now moved to the web environment with the help of virtual classroom tools. Virtual classroom learning tools allow students and teachers in different locations to gather on the Internet and communicate audio-visually. Virtual learning tools include a teacher's screen, a student's screen, a real-time chat, and a whiteboard where the teacher demonstrates a presentation. In addition, there are several additional tools, such as quizzes, answers to standard questions, download or upload files and exchange email addresses.

In virtual classroom environment, students can also ask questions, teachers give feedback and tips, and students can interact with each other or with the teacher using certain tools. In virtual classroom environment, teachers also have the opportunity to use different types of content to engage students into learning activity. Then students can adapt this material, and thus student-content interaction can be achieved. A significant advantage of virtual classroom environment is that classes can be recorded so that students can listen and review them again, as well as make up for missed classes, or simply to practice and improve the knowledge they have acquired.

Distance learning professionals believe that the Internet technologies are the most rational and widespread. They provide, on the one hand, didactic opportunities, and, on the other, the possibility to carry out subject-subject interaction between teachers and students, and as a result, distance interaction has certain advantages, such as:

- effective transmission of the information of any kind, any amount, and to any distance: audio (audio clip, Podcast), visual (PowerPoint Presentation), text (report on pedagogical practice, exercises, portfolio), graphic etc;

- the possibility to quickly change information via the Internet from one's workplace;
- the possibility of interactive interaction via specially created multimedia information and operative feedback;
- the possibility to access various sources of information, especially Internet websites and numerous conferences, and work with this information;
- the possibility to organize e-conferences, particularly online, computer audio and video conferences, for example, in pedagogical practice;
- the possibility to request information on any issue via e-mail, conference etc.;
- the possibility to save found materials on one's gadget or print them (Balits'ka, 2003, p. 19).

It should be noted that distance subject-subject pedagogical interaction has certain features, in contrast to natural verbal pedagogical interaction. From the standpoint of distance learning, there are variable and invariable components. Invariable components include such characteristics of pedagogical interaction, which are determined by perceptive and universal psychological features of the participants of subject-subject interaction. Variable components characterize certain features of the participants of the interaction. They are developed under the influence of the educational ideology determined by the teacher in accordance with their value orientation and personal characteristics.

We have identified problems that may arise in the process of distance interaction between the participants of the educational process. They obviously need special attention from teachers and some solution. As a result of a special questionnaire of teachers and students, we came to the conclusion that in the process of distance interaction the following problems may arise between the participants of the educational process:

- firstly, the process of distance interaction triggers certain reconsideration of the traditional functions of teacher and student, that is, the teacher tries to provide the best conditions for education and encourages learning. At the same time, the role of the student is increasing, and he or she seeks to take the initiative, which should be adjusted by the teacher;
- secondly, the distance between teacher and students, except for the advantage of easy interaction under any conditions, also has certain problems associated with the lack of direct eye contact, i.e., it becomes impossible to obtain additional nonverbal information for efficient interaction between the participants;

- thirdly, a certain isolation complicates the development of an individual personal picture of a student, as well as building up their portfolio in order to efficiently support the subject-subject pedagogical interaction;
- fourthly, the lack of visual contact deprives the teacher of the opportunity to use one of the common reproductive teaching methods, specifically to repeat what the teacher has demonstrated, in other words, the student is deprived of the opportunity to copy (Shekhavtsova, 2019, p. 239).

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, in the context of distance subject-subject interaction, we believe that the student may have a certain feeling of isolation, or some negative emotions caused by the sense of loneliness in a remote environment.

It is apparent that the problem of loneliness is an important criterion for the implementation of distance subject-subject interaction. To solve this problem, we consider it appropriate for a teacher to create a comfortable online environment. That is, the teacher initiates and supports informal communication, which gives students the opportunity, on the one hand, to get used to the new remote environment, and, on the other, do not feel themselves as an outsider, but as a part of subject-subject interaction, and get a certain idea about group mates and teacher. This stage involves the establishing of trusting relationships between the participants of pedagogical interaction and gives the opportunity to find friends in the process of learning. At this stage, it is advisable to initiate the creation of a virtual “self” to introduce oneself in online space. Thus, this stage of distance interaction will help to overcome the feeling of isolation in students.

Conclusion

Consequently, feedback plays a significant role in the organization of distance subject-subject pedagogical interaction under lockdown conditions. In a socio-psychological context, it means receiving information from others about how they perceive the behavior of a student in the process of distance interaction. Feedback allows the students to understand and adjust their activities to the optimal strategy of activity in an artificial environment. In the future, students will have the opportunity to put their subjective experience directly into their life.

It should be noted that in the distance learning the result of subject-subject interaction between the participants of the educational process depends both on the teacher and the student. In the context of distance learning, the key function of the teacher is to support the emotional and volitional spheres of students for their constant performance in the course of study. There are two ways to create motivational influence: external stimulation and self-motivation. If external stimulation is carried out through constant teacher's control over the tasks and virtual communication of the group, then self-motivation requires from the participants of the training process independent achievement of the expected results beyond the training, in particular, in the process of their pedagogical practice.

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