



THE ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN SHAPING A GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATION CULTURE

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Abstract

This article examines distance education as a global phenomenon within educational and information culture in the context of the emerging information society. It analyzes the role of information and communication technologies in transforming the educational process, expanding access to knowledge, and changing traditional forms of learning. The concepts of “distance education” and “distance learning” are distinguished, along with their significance in contemporary educational practice. It is demonstrated that the development of distance technologies contributes to the formation of new pedagogical approaches focused on students’ independent activity, their creative development, and their ability to process information.

Keywords: Distance education, distance learning, information society, informatization of education, information and communication technologies, educational technologies, globalization, digital environment, computer technologies, self-directed learning.

Introduction

In today’s world, the use of information and communication technologies opens up vast opportunities for humanity, while also presenting challenges whose resolution is crucial to the very survival of society as a whole. The most important social issue is globalization – modern society is becoming a global information society. An information society is an intellectual society based on knowledge and information. The issue of developing distance education and distance learning is of particular significance. It is generally accepted that distance education is the process of transferring knowledge (for which the teacher and the educational institution are responsible), while distance learning is the process of acquiring



knowledge (for which the student is responsible). Currently, the term “distance education” has firmly entered the global educational lexicon. Distance education has become a global phenomenon in educational and information culture. The development of distance education is recognized as one of the key areas of core educational programs. Information and distance technologies serve as a catalyst and a means for major transformations in teaching methods. The process of teaching and learning is changing; adjustments have been made to the duration, location, and pace of learning; and access to education is expanding for a vast number of people.

The informatization of society is an organized socio-economic and scientific-technical process aimed at creating conditions to meet the information needs and ensure the rights of citizens, government agencies, local authorities, organizations, and public associations through the development and utilization of information resources. Consequently, in an information society, information technologies in education must be prioritized. The requirements for a modern education system can be formulated as follows: training specialists capable of approaching problematic situations creatively, ready not only to apply existing models and methods for solving current problems but also to develop new ones; the development of the future specialist’s personal and ethical qualities – responsibility, tolerance, and communication skills, as well as the ability to work in a team; and the development of the ability to independently search for and process raw data, transforming it into information and knowledge.

The emergence of information networks containing databases and knowledge has opened up new opportunities for group learning. The communication that arises in this context serves as a form of self-expression during the process of interacting with computers and peers. This is particularly evident during business games designed to help competing groups of students achieve the best results in solving complex, similar tasks. Computer-based learning technologies enable the instructor to achieve learning objectives by applying either a specific type of educational software or any combination thereof, i.e., to design the learning environment. Information carriers allow the instructor to promptly update the content of automated instructional and assessment programs in line with the emergence of new knowledge and technologies. The teacher’s primary task boils down to supporting and guiding the personal development of learners, creatively seeking and organizing their collaborative work, and selecting, developing, and



choosing the best options for educational programs. Thus, an opportunity arises to move away from the types of teacher activities characteristic of traditional education, replacing them with intellectual forms of work. Of course, teaching methods are related to its goals; however, there is currently a general understanding that the foundation of new educational technologies should be based on information technology: computer, audio, and video equipment.

The primary goal of implementing computer-based educational technologies is to create conditions for students' creative self-expression. The drive toward computerizing education is driven by the specific characteristics of computers as teaching tools, students' increasing expectations of the educational system, and advancements in technology. Computer-based methods are highly effective as a supplement to traditional teaching. They accelerate learning and foster a positive attitude toward the subject matter and the learning process. Information technology can enhance the quality and effectiveness of the learning process through the use and combination of various methods for storing, transmitting, and accessing information resources. Multimedia systems can provide higher-quality images (than, for example, slides in a lecture), as well as audio and video accompaniment. Moreover, they allow students to revisit specific points that are important for understanding multiple times, which is not always possible during a lecture. Educational material can be presented in various forms, taking into account different ways of thinking, preferences for text or graphics, a tendency toward sequential, step-by-step review of covered material, and varying rates of learning.

In distance learning, information can be provided to students using the following technologies: printed materials (educational kits containing literature and assignments); distribution of materials via computer networks (e-mail, online forums, or bulletin boards); online discussions via computer networks (exchange of written messages); electronic materials (computer-based learning environments, databases, knowledge banks, electronic textbooks); audio and video productions; television broadcasts; videoconferences via broadcast with telephone feedback (similar to live television broadcasts where viewers can call a "hotline" to ask questions); two-way videoconferences using computer networks. In this context, the information carriers are: books, floppy disks, laser discs, or hard drives. The teaching aids include: instructional kits (case studies); computers; televisions; telephones; and specialized multimedia equipment. It



should be noted that the highest quality of instruction is ensured when there is sufficiently responsive “student-teacher” feedback. This allows for the use of highly effective interactive teaching methods.

Currently, in addition to traditional information technologies such as mail, fax, and telephone – which have long been used in information exchange – email, the Internet, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, and multimedia tools are becoming increasingly widespread. Email is one of the most convenient, simple, and fast ways to transmit information.

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