

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIETY

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METHODS OF TEACHING AT UNIVERSITIES DURING THE COVID - 19

***Abstract.** The coronavirus pandemic took the whole world by surprise, and the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 virus forced all industries to adapt to the new realities. The education system has also been forced to opt for distance education without proper training, which has led to a change in teaching methods. In this connection, this article deals with the main teaching methods applied by institutions of higher education during distance learning. The author also discusses the difficulties that universities, teachers and students have had to face. Moreover, distance education has been partly seen as affecting the quality of education.*

***Keywords:** teaching, higher education, pandemic, teaching methods, distance learning.*

Introduction.

In March 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan announced the transition to distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most universities in Kazakhstan were not prepared for the transition to distance education massively. Few of them had fully developed e-learning systems and platforms, such as Moodle, Canvas and Google Classroom, to create a high-quality digital learning environment. At first, the connection was established directly via WhatsApp or Telegram on mobile phones. Admittedly, Kazakh universities have faced many problems and one of the main problems has become the need to apply new teaching methods and technology already in the distance-learning format. The

objective of all higher education establishments was to train teaching staff and adapt students from bachelor to doctoral levels.

Despite the inconvenience caused by these decisive actions and measures to close schools and universities, they have also spurred the education sector to find new educational innovations in online learning. It is difficult to determine the exact impact of COVID-19 on education systems across the country. However, there will definitely be an impact on online and digital learning methods that will lead to further innovation.

In the spring of 2020, mixed learning methods were still being considered, both online and offline. However, al-Farabi Kazakh National University announced already on March 17, 2020 that all lectures would be translated to distance learning by means of informational and educational platforms - «Univer 2.0» and «Moodle». These platforms provide full access to the courses and allow students to attend lectures «online», to give homework and to check students' performance [1]. The International Kazakh-Turkish Hodja Ahmet Yassavi University in Turkestan (IKTU) provides educational programs and lecture materials using PLATONUS and MOODLE for distance learning. All IKTU students and employees are involved in online learning through the KazTEP system, which has been successfully operating at the university for several years [2]. There are many such examples, as virtually all universities already had, in one way or another, a distance-learning base for students who have undergone an academic programme in other countries. Thus, most universities had some online lecture base, staff to provide online learning platforms, and some teachers had previous experience with online platforms. As a result, the transition to online higher education has been much easier than schools. However, as we said earlier, universities needed to rethink teaching methods and technologies to meet the new realities.

The aim of the research is to analyze the main methods of teaching applied by Kazakh universities during the pandemic and to identify the problems encountered by universities during distance learning.

The research method consists of an overview of research articles as well as an analysis of statistical indicators related to the subject of the study. The study is

descriptive and based on the results of earlier published works. The study focuses mainly on teaching methods to students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Authors selected for the analysis were Govindarajan V., Srivastava A., Zimmerman J., Simonson M., Berg G. A., Gabdulina A., Zhuman G.

Results and discussion

Efforts to reduce the incidence of coronavirus have forced everyone to switch to online learning. The move to online learning has caused quite a heated discussion. Some researchers believe that students who choose online learning have a higher level of quality of knowledge than those who prefer to study in a traditional, face-to-face learning environment [3]. However, other researchers have noted that online learning does not yield better results than traditional learning. Although most concluded that, a mixed format might be the best solution for the education system, as there are a number of practical exercises that simply can not be conducted in an online learning format. The teaching community remains skeptical of the success of online learning and the learning model. A study conducted based on complete confidence in online learning based on the technology-acceptance model showed that students and teachers share common concerns about Internet accessibility, Interaction between students and teachers and regular workload [4].

With distance learning, some universities have primarily launched mass open online courses (MOOC). The advent of massive open online courses was a major shift towards distance learning. The MOOC has an extremely large number of students, and tens of thousands of students can use short videotaped lectures. The open online course format was initially used by some universities, but did not become popular before the introduction of MOOC providers such as Coursera, edX, Khan Academy and Udacity. Although the original purpose of MOOC was to provide informal learning opportunities [5].

Online education programmes are designed to transmit the same knowledge and skills as university programmes, so teachers often adapt the same teaching methods to an online learning environment. Teaching methods are most often adapted or supplemented by new elements. However, with online learning, new tools are emerging to improve teaching methodology and technology, and here many

Kazakh higher education institutions have found that most teachers have a poor command of computers and applications for lectures or practical exercises.

The lecture, as in traditional formats, remained the main forms of online learning. As before, professors use lectures to convey information, promote understanding and arouse the interest of students. Learning management systems typically allow teachers to record lectures hold them in real time on online platforms like Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Team, etc. However, it is useful to keep in mind that lectures assign students a passive role, which can negatively affect students' involvement in the online learning environment. It suggested that online lectures are most useful when combined with more active learning strategies.

Most teachers actively use the discussion during the lecture. Whether used with lectures or as a separate exercise, the discussion supports learning and actively involves online students in the learning process. Students have the opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas through analytical and cognitive skills. In the synchronized courses, teachers ask questions and discuss course materials using real-time chat rooms and web conference tools. Students in asynchronous classrooms typically interact with their peers and teachers using discussion boards, web forums and social media tools.

Moreover, educational platform functions such as displaying material have been actively applied by teachers. Online courses are as common as traditional courses. Demonstrations are a pillar when it comes to the transmission of certain concepts and processes. They are also among the teaching methods complemented by a virtual learning environment. Teachers often upload videos, regardless of whether they performed them synchronously or asynchronously. Students can view these materials as many times as necessary to learn the lesson.

If you talk about technical specialties and applied disciplines, there have been many simulations for better mastering of material. Simulations conducted in a realistic digital environment allow students to distance test practical skills and knowledge. Universities sometimes use simulations to prepare students for field studies, which are traditionally conducted in a face-to-face setting. This virtual experience is applicable in several fields and disciplines. Online biology students

can use simulations to autopsy. According to Harvard Business Publishing, modelling strengthens key concepts and allows students to explore them in a real context [6]. The preparation of simulations was once a long and tedious process, but the lead platforms can simplify the process by allowing instructors to choose from a multitude of scenarios to complement the course content.

Group work or project work is another method of learning that has been used by teachers even during online learning. Group projects provide students with another opportunity to communicate and learn from each other. It may be useful for teachers to provide students with authoritative online resources to which they can turn for information. Students can use document collaboration programs such as Google Disk to manage their work and share information. Small group chat rooms and forums can also resonate theories and discussions. Even online learning can successfully develop group work skills in students. It is certainly possible to say that there are enough methods and tools to conduct interesting and useful online lessons for students. The options discussed above are some of these methods. In practice, however, all universities in Kazakhstan have encountered a number of problems in switching to distance learning.

The main problems are related to the lack of national IT platforms in Kazakhstan (to ensure the simultaneous inclusion of 1 million students) and the very weak content of digital education and software and the extremely underdeveloped Internet, especially in rural areas. There was also information technology literacy among older teachers. Moreover, psychologists note that distance learning has also led to psychological problems. Low levels of self-discipline and the home environment prevented students from fully engaging in the educational process. Another problem was that many people had been affected by the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, and most students were known to combine the educational process with work, thus covering tuition fees. Here, some of the students also suffered a loss of their jobs, and the problem of paying for their studies also affects the psychological health of the students. Moreover, isolation has also put pressure on the psychological health of students and the lack of live contact with classmates and teachers has also had an impact [7].

The forced transition to distance learning online revealed the country's technical inadequacy in education, and the digital reform, supported by a sizeable financial investment, did not pass the quality test in the new environment. Nevertheless, the present situation can be considered in a positive way as a kind of «trigger» for further development of information and communication technologies in the educational environment with obligatory introduction of IT-based refresher courses Literacy for both teachers and students. Given the above-mentioned challenges, it is critical to provide certain segments of the population with computers and universal connectivity to the global network. The lack of a legislative framework in this area has also prevented a qualitative transition to a distance format. Moreover, the Government had to hasten to develop appropriate guidelines, instructions and regulations.

Conclusion

To sum up the results of the study, the experience gained so far in the field of distance learning is the basis for a modern model and distance learning, and this experience has enabled teachers to develop the skills to develop and adapt existing teaching methods and technologies to the new realities. The use of computers and Internet technologies allows us to move to a new stage in the development of distributed cooperation and integration. The computerization of education on the basis of the world's achievements in the field of IT technologies will become a model of innovative leading development of Kazakh education. In view of this, a coherent system policy on the main directions of computerization of education has been defined as a strategic objective. These trends will address the above-mentioned problems that arose throughout Kazakhstan during the transition to online learning namely: computerization and renewal of the computer park and the development of computer literacy; software; Internet access for educational institutions and leadership in all regions; creation of domestic digital educational resources; automation of the monitoring, analysis and management system of educational institutions; training of teaching and management personnel.

Since most universities had a distance-learning base, the creation and development of new methodological recommendations for the teaching process was

not a major problem. Moreover, leading universities in Kazakhstan provided free online courses for teachers on teaching methods and technologies in an online format. All this has helped teachers to quickly orient and adapt their disciplines and methods to the new realities. However, technical problems encountered by students significantly reduced the quality of education. Lack of internet and computers, as well as low computer literacy, played a role.

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