



Research Article

Remote Learning Environment: Transition to Remote Education

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Abstract

The study identifies the peculiarities of e-learning in the transitional period in secondary vocational and higher education in self-isolation mode, caused by COVID-19.

In this research, the authors aim to determine the capabilities of online learning tools and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) implemented in the academic process for all levels of Higher Education: Bachelors / Masters Degree Programs.

The article focuses on the Professional Training experience within the course that took place in the academic year 2020-2021 at the Theater College of the Crimean University of Culture, Arts and Tourism, and the Sevastopol State University. The study identifies the digital challenges that took place in the academic year 2020-2021 in the degree course. Based on the analysis of literary sources and the conducted empirical study, the authors present and substantiate blended learning peculiarities, online learning tools or e-learning tools, their efficiency and feasibility in developing the modern digital educational environment. The paper highlights the main regulatory framework of implementing e-learning and organizing the educational process using distance learning technologies; analysis was conducted, and propositions for the improvement of the regulatory framework of implementing e-learning and organizing the educational process in the higher education institutions are designed. The method of analysis, generalization and classification was used to process information about current and expired legal documents to design the algorithm for implementing e-learning and remote learning technologies. The study also presents the results of analyzing information about online learning strategies for providing support for pedagogy and pedagogy-driven instructional technology for all teaching staff and teaching assistants.

Keywords: Remote Learning Environment, Remote Education, Self-Isolation Mode, Professional Education, Online Learning Strategies.

Introduction

In materials of the Meeting of the Presidium of the presidential Council for strategic development and priority projects (2016) the new challenges were mentioned: rapid development of information technologies in the era of globalization and the need to use the world's achievements "here and now" have led to raising the issue of digitalization of education. In the reform of the Russian education system, special attention is paid to the digital educational environment, since it will contribute to creating conditions for providing multiple opportunities for quality education of various categories of students, not only at the national level, but also at the international level.

In research studies by Krasnova G. A., Mozhaeva G. V. (2019), Zharko L. N. (2018), Samoylenko N. B. (2018) the issues of organizing e-learning and using distance learning technologies are highlighted as the subject of active discussion in the scientific world.

On May, 12 UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education released Guidelines on Distance Education during COVID-19 (2020). The document encloses practical directions for the use of distance education tools pointing out the key elements of effective design and delivery of a distance learning program: learning resources (content design to support self-learning), pedagogy (sound pedagogical principles of guided-didactic conversation), learner support (psychological and emotional support of learners in academic interaction), and administration (management on the part of an efficient and accountable administration). As an industrialized form of teaching and learning, effective distance learning is characterized by the division of labor, where governments, educational institutions, academic and support staff, students and student bodies, parents as well as quality assurance/accreditation and academic recognition bodies become active

participants contributing to the joint success.

After the outburst of COVID-19 pandemic lack of time and need for concrete actions resulted in the development of road maps by governments, ministries and educational institutions. The adopted solutions were to be implemented by the academic staff who faced the challenges of the disrupted teaching/learning process in their daily interaction with administration and students. The increased workload, working days of unfixed duration, lack of experience in remote teaching have provided the experience to reflect on so that to take more effective solutions in cooperation with administration and students in the future.

Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated (2020) proclaims that on the eve of the forthcoming academic year 2020-21 as universities and colleges are preparing for the continuation of remote instruction either fully or in part, the analysis of the solutions can provide new valuable knowledge.

As universities and colleges are preparing for the remote learning and teaching in the 2020-21 academic year, we focus on some studies concerning remote teaching during COVID-19 (2020) challenges: academic staff prepositions, respect collegial governance processes, and collective agreements.

We agree that academic staff associations should seek to protect the following core principles: academic decisions, including those involving changes to the mode of delivery of courses, should be made through normal collegial processes; academic staff should determine how best a course or program might be delivered remotely and maintain copyright over the course materials they produce; academic staff associations should be vigilant in protecting the work of the bargaining unit from outsourcing; extra time required for the preparation and delivery of remote

courses should be recognized and compensated.

In March 2020 many countries have decided to close their higher education institutions because of the Coronavirus (Covid-19). Most of these institutions have tried keeping up to the normal schedule. They have switched to online teaching in self-isolation mode. Apart from using the institution's Learning Management System (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, etc.), there are many other tools you can use for teaching from home. The following list does not contain everything that is out there. We have collected just a few ideas, tools, and articles to make it easier to teach in these challenging times.

Purpose and objectives of the research

The article aims the study of the organization of e-learning using distance learning technologies by the implementation of educational programs in the educational institutions of secondary vocational and higher education in the self-isolation mode; the analysis of the organization of e-learning using distance learning technologies by the implementation of educational programs in the self-isolation mode.

The purpose of the work is the analysis of the experience of organizing e-learning with the application of distance education technologies when implementing educational programs during self-isolation mode.

The objectives of the paper included:

- 1) analysis of the national legal and regulatory framework with a view to ensuring effective educational process under the new conditions;
- 2) description of the decisions taken by educational institutions authorities to organize education during self-isolation and their implementation;
- 3) analysis of possible emergency situations when operating systems fail and the teacher / academic has to make solutions on the fly to sustain the teaching/learning process.

The research questions are:

1) What are the features of e-learning in self-isolation mode? Are there any challenges which are only for such a period?

2) What are the legal and regulatory problems of e-learning? The review of existing problems, proposal of new solutions, an assessment of the quality of the regulatory framework in the organization of e-learning.

3) What is the algorithm of the educational process and the description of the set of actions for entering and working in the educational information system of the university.

4) E-learning problems in self-isolation mode, research and comparison with other educational institutions, with various information systems.

5) How to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the remote learning environment and how to make the next transition to remote education?

The paper highlights the main regulatory framework of implementing e-learning and organizing the educational process using distance learning technologies; analysis was conducted and prepositions for improvement of the regulatory framework of implementing e-learning and organizing the educational process in the higher education institutions are designed.

Literature Review

In UNESCO Guidelines on Distance Education during COVID-19 (2020) remote learning is viewed as "an emergency measure, which attempts to replicate the classroom teaching and learning process in an online mode and can also be considered a form of distance learning."

Before conducting the course, we work out how to evaluate. For this we need to know the purpose of evaluation (the key questions); the most appropriate methodology; how to carry out an evaluation.

Analyzing information about online Learning Strategies, we investigate the work of the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI). It provides leadership in

teaching and learning at the University of Toronto and provides support for pedagogy and pedagogy-driven instructional technology for all teaching staff and teaching assistants (primarily through the Teaching Assistant's Training Program) across the university's campuses and divisions (<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/>).

Harrison, L. et al (2016) offered in *Online Learning Strategies* some elements of Online Learning & Teaching.

Online Course Observation Template consists of such sections:

Section 1. General Course Overview and Introduction: Setting the stage for learning and preparing students for successful participation in the course activities.

- Does the instructor provide a thorough description of the course as well as introduce students to the course and the online format?
- Are the learner requirements such as basic technology needs and/ or participation expectations described?
- Are practice use of tools and/or community building activities included to prime the students for learning?

Section 2. Assessment of Student Learning: Alignment of activities and assessments with learning outcomes is evident in the course design.

- Are learning outcomes communicated?
- Is there a variety of activities and assessments?
- Is there alignment of learning activities and assessments with learning outcomes?
- Are formative and summative assessment opportunities part of the design?
- Are assignments clearly described, including grading schemes or rubrics?
- Is student workload appropriate to course level and duration?

Section 3. Instructional Design: A clear path to learning opportunities for students is provided, including interaction with the content, their peers, and their instructor.

- Are there opportunities to interact or seek guidance from the instructor?
- Are there opportunities to participate in community activities or peer-to-peer sharing?
- Is learning scaffolded, guiding students toward increasingly independent learning and/or application of relevant skills?
- Are there opportunities for student reflection on learning and/or feedback to the instructor?

Section 4. Online Organization and Design: Instructor's design and choice of technology effectively deliver course content and supports learning processes.

- Overall, is the navigation and structure of the course easy for students to follow?
- Do the tools and media formats selected to support the course learning outcomes?
- Are guides and protocols for use of the course tools provided?

Considering the course as a whole, provide feedback on the following:

- What aspects of the course do you see as strengths that will contribute to effective student engagement and learning?
- Are there any strategies or resources that you would recommend to enhance the design of this course?
- Final comments or observations?

Pearson collated research on effective online teaching and found nine strategies used by successful faculty:

1. Know the technology
2. Create and maintain a strong presence
3. Set clear expectations for the course
4. Establish a sense of comfort and develop a community of learners
5. Promote reflection and communication through quality asynchronous discussion
6. Have a good balance of active leader and active observer
7. Request regular feedback and be cognizant of misinterpretation
8. Regularly check content resources and applications
9. Expect the unexpected and remain flexible.

(<https://www.pearsoned.com/9-strategies-for-effective-online-teaching/>).

Methodology

The study was conducted at the Theater College of the Crimean University of Culture, Arts and Tourism, and the Sevastopol State University. This research is supported by the grant "Methodology and methods of using information technologies in training and support of teachers-facilitators' professional activities" registration number 48/06-31, 06.04.2020 Sevastopol State University. The method of analysis, generalization and classification was used to process information about current and expired legal documents and to design the algorithm for implementing e-learning and organizing the educational process using distance learning technologies. Oral questioning, conversation, observation was used as the empirical methods.

Firstly, the regulatory framework of implementing e-learning and organizing the educational process using distance learning technologies analysis was conducted.

Our paper presents the results of the experience where we have trained higher education teachers for the online course designing in the process of teaching and learning.

The main goal of the research was to present the organization of e-learning using distance learning technologies by the implementation of educational programs in the educational institutions of secondary

vocational and higher education in the self-isolation period.

Results

The algorithm of implementing e-learning and the algorithm of the educational process itself using distance learning technologies are described.

The final result of its implementation in the educational process will be the creation of the educational environment with the designing of individual educational technologies and the independent curriculum.

Following the Russian Federation Laws (2012), the Order of the Ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation (2014), the first stage of the digital educational environment development, in our opinion, was the possibility of implementing educational programs using e-learning and distance learning technologies.

Moreover, according to Recommendations of the UNESCO policy in the field of mobile learning. UNESCO (2015)E-learning involves the mandatory use of the Global Internet and / or local network of educational institutions and multimedia. Distance learning, in our opinion, is the implementation of the educational process at a distance.

Legal support for the implementation of e-learning is one of the challenges.

We started our research on this issue by analyzing the legal framework (table 1).

Table1: Legal support for the implementation of educational programs using e-learning and distance learning technologies

Level of document approval	Regulatory document	Date of adoption / approval	Articl, part№	Summary of document / article
	Federal law No. 273 "On education in the Russian Federation".	29.12.2012	16	Provides an opportunity to implement educational programs using e-learning and distance learning technologies.
			18	Describes printed and electronic educational and information

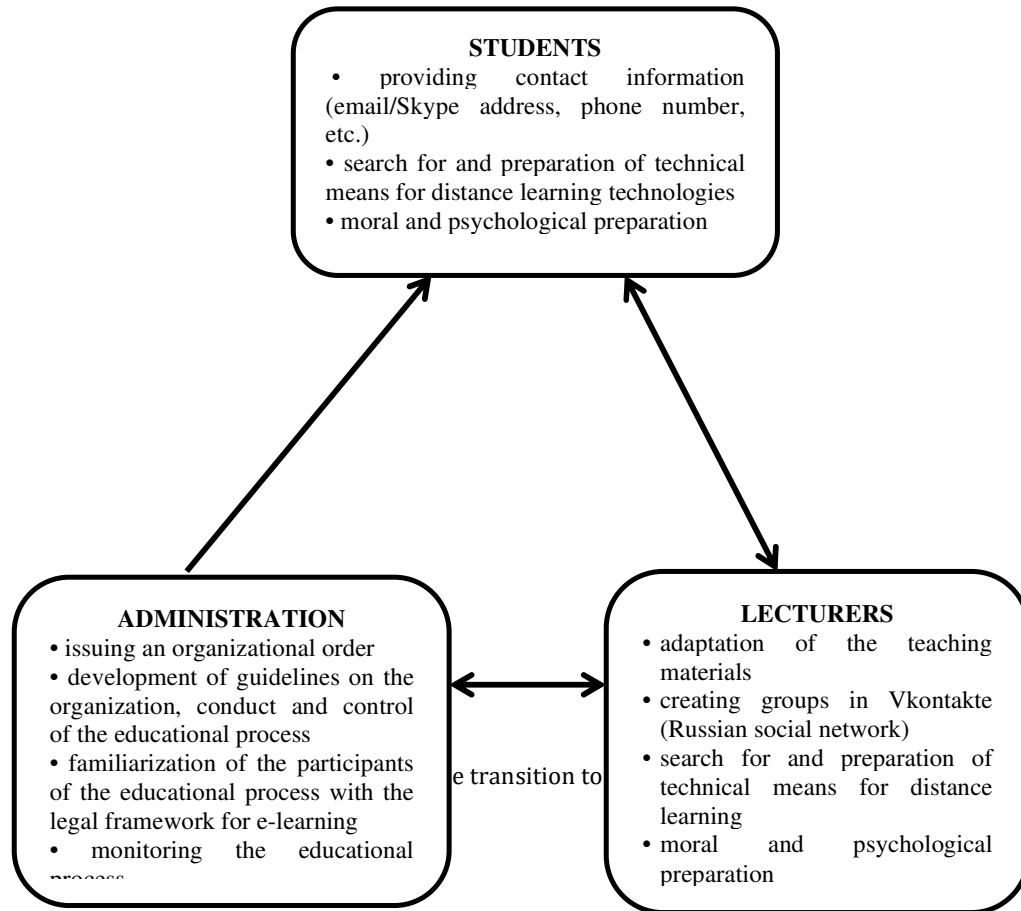
Obviously, the implementation of educational programs based on the use of e-learning and distance learning technologies is the focus of attention at all levels. The analysis of the legal framework promoting the use of e-learning and distance education programs has shown the possibility and approximate procedure for its full/partial use, as well as possible mechanisms for its regulation. Meanwhile, only odd bits of information has been found on the issue of degree programs where the use of e-learning is not possible even partially due to objective reasons and the specifics of the discipline taught. Thus, there is a need for an order at the level of relevant ministries to outline a list of specialties (with codes and names) where the use of e-learning is impossible, as well as guidelines for conducting remote classes in corresponding disciplines in force

majeure conditions, for example, self-isolation.

The transition period to e-learning in self-isolation mode lasted 2 weeks.

The introduction of the general self-isolation regime due to the spread of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) has significantly accelerated the transition of educational institutions to e-learning. In our opinion, this transition did not always proceed in an orderly manner and at a high level, since not all educational institutions were in equal conditions, and there was no preparatory stage, or it was short (1-3 days).

The paper describes the transitional period experience of the Theater College of the Crimean University of Culture, Arts and Tourism (fig.1) and the Sevastopol State University.



The Theatre College Administration issued "An order on the temporary transition to the implementation of educational programs with the use of e-learning and distance learning technologies in special circumstances." By the order, the director was put in charge of the educational activities, and the working hours of the staff were established in accordance with the academic load, as well as the plan of methodological and educational work for the 2019-2020 academic year. The teachers were asked to update the calendar and

thematic plans for the academic disciplines. The teachers and students were informed about the remote communication channels: the Skype and closed groups in the Vkontakte social network were offered as the training platform. A responsible consultant was appointed to assist teachers in the use of e-learning and distance education technologies. A report form, which teachers had to provide on the day of classes, attaching a screenshot of the lesson, was developed to control the conduct of training sessions (table 2).

Table2: Report on the implementation of educational programs using e-learning and distance learning technologies during the period of self-isolation

Nº	Name of the discipline, Full name of the teacher	Date of the session	The theme of the lesson	The type o the lesson	Self-study work	Year	Number of students present

Lesson report

Teacher's name	Subject/ Discipline	Group	Date	Student	Lesson reporting resources
Samoylenko N.B.	English for academic purposes	Phil/М-19-1	11.06 11.50 - 13.20	10/1 0	Topic: Unit 6. Research Papers. Key Words. Introduction Sections 1)Video: Research Paper Introduction https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSkb7KZ5yw0 Key Words. Developing Keywords for Your Research https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCUjnPS2_1g (present recommendations for writing research paper introduction and key words); 3) Preparing mind maps for theoretical material: 11. Research paper: general structure 12. Research paper: structure of introduction section Platform Big Blue Button https://bbb.is.sevsu.ru/b/fd3-v6q-9ke .

The students were informed that they had to continue their learning in the new model to be admitted to their term or final examinations (but for cases of legitimate excuses).

According to the Order of the Ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation "On approval of the list of professions and specialties of secondary professional education, implementing educational programs which are not allowed using only e-learning, distance educational technologies" (2014) there are educational programs which are not allowed using only e-learning, distance educational technologies. That is why at the

initial stage, there were difficulties with the academic disciplines of a purely practical character, requiring additional equipment ("Solo singing", "Stage movement and fencing", "Dance", "Make-up", "Acting").

Aged teachers, in our opinion, did not overcome the psychological barrier when switching to e-learning, since they did not have enough knowledge of the technical tools of e-learning and it took them longer to adapt. It should be noted that the teachers' working day was no longer standardized.

The Regulation "On the Electronic Information and Educational Environment

(EIEE)" defines the purpose, structure, and procedure for the functioning of the electronic information and educational environment in SevSU.

To ensure the functioning of EIES at SevSU, the following information and telecommunication technologies are used: official e-mail (<https://mail.sevsu.ru>), a file server, webinar tools (Mirapolis Virtual Room, BigBlueButton, Discord, etc.), tools for videoconferencing (Skype, Zoom, etc.), remote communication information system (<https://chat.is.sevsu.ru>).

To inform the participants of the educational process, a community the VKontakte social network (<https://vk.com/sevsu.online>) was launched on. In the group news and teaching materials for organizing the learning process in a digital environment are quickly posted. Methodological

materials, lecture notes and practical lessons, video instructions for teachers and students are posted and periodically updated on the website org.sevsu.ru in the folder "EES and DL Distance Learning SevSU"

(<https://www.sevsu.ru/novosti/item/762-1-gde-najti-informatsiyu-o-dstantsionnom-obu-chenii>).

Operational information about direct communication and feedback ("learning - teacher", "student - administration", "teacher - administration", "student, teacher, administration - technical support service") is located on the SevSU page of the official website in the "Education" section.

The educational process is carried out according to the following algorithm (table 3).

Table 3: Algorithm of the educational process in SevSU

Learner	Tutor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Login / password verification, possibility of entering EOES "SevSU. RU". • Login to http://test_moodle.sevsu.ru/ • Search for the direction of training, course, group of students. • Choice of discipline according to the schedule. • Completing assignments, participating in online classes. • Sending completed assignments to the teacher for review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Login to http://test_moodle.sevsu.ru/ • Search for the direction of training, course, group of students. • Choice in the section "Course" of the name of the taught discipline. • Download PD, lecture notes and / or practical classes, presentations, assignments for independent work, links to online courses, additional resources if necessary. • Description of instructions for different types of work. • Determining the timing of assignments, time for online classes

Thus, the participants successfully pass all stages of training following the considered algorithm of the educational process.

Teachers were offered webinars from the educational platforms Yurayt, Lan. The ELS team "Lan" together with the St. Petersburg "Center for Educational Services" conducted an intensive online course "Technology for creating e-learning courses based on LMS Moodle", including a series of webinars (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VM8eINM7-U&feature=youtu.be>).

However, the university administrators foresaw the problems that teachers could face in the distance learning in self-isolation period in the previous algorithm of the educational process at SevSU. The office of educational programs SevSU has developed the course "Basics of Working in Moodle" for methodological support of the distance learning organization (<https://testmoodle.sevsu.ru/mod/page/view.php?id=45750&forceview=1>). The aim of the course is to help teachers develop their e-learning resources based on e-learning

templates. The content of the course is presented with the guidebook.

The course offers to listen to the recording of the webinar "Implementation of electronic educational resources in the Moodle LMS" aimed to train teachers for the academic year by designing electronic course templates.

The structure of the course "Basics of Working in Moodle" includes a number of steps.

Step 0. Introduction

In this section, the system administrators of SevSU made a video instruction which is offering to get acquainted with the structure of the course home page, with a template, to make personal settings for a personal profile, and to study the stages of the structure of the electronic training course.

Step 1. Course setup

This video contains a detailed algorithm for setting up a course, informative sections of a course template, principles of course editing.

Step 2. The Section "General"

This step describes the structure of the section "General", the content of each element of the section "General" (abstract, forums, curriculum-thematic plan, and list of basic and additional literature, attendance), and the principles of its editing are described.

Step 3. Webinars

This section presents the possibilities of simultaneous classroom training in the form of webinars in the system "SevGU. Conference" based on BigBlueButton.

Step 4. Lecture materials

The video shows the organization of the presentation of theoretical material in e-course templates in two formats: in the form of lecture elements and in the form of

file resources (lecture notes or presentation). The placement of theoretical material in the format of a lecture summary and presentation, settings the element "Lectures" and editing it in the author's course template is described in detail.

Step 5. Workshop

The organization of practical tasks in e-learning templates is presented in text format, the possibilities of working with the elements "Assignment", "Forum", "Seminar", "Test" and their editing methods are described.

Step 6. Other Moodle Elements and Resources

The teacher is offered a wide variety of resources and course elements that can be used for creating authoring courses in a distance learning environment. A separate part of the section is devoted to the electronic element of the course – "Chat". The algorithm of "Chat" creation and edition, its features, as well as its capabilities in synchronous written communication of course participants in real-time are considered.

The preceding step of the course consists of the video instructions and text instructions for the guideline in Moodle.

Each step of the course ends with an anonymous survey of teachers, where they are asked to rate the usefulness of the content of the sections, indicate what incomprehensible material was in the sections and what other information they would like to receive on the studied sections.

After the end of the course, teachers learn how to create e-courses, design them in accordance with the requirements, place and organize educational materials in the course elements, and work with the course users.

Over the first weeks after the transition to remote learning, partially due to the lack of LMS experience of work on the part of academics, and for such technical reasons as LMS upsets, popular solutions taken by

the university authorities and the staff included the application of social network VKontakte (Russian social network analog of Facebook) and Skype. Although the platforms are not secure in terms of information and communication protection, they provided the necessary opportunities for conducting lectures and practical sessions online.

The popular decisions in the organization of lectures were basically live broadcasting (with or without the audiovisual recording) or group chats with downloaded texts and tasks to them.

The use of live broadcasting was very similar to the real-life lecture but conducted on the internet platform it got an additional tool in the form of a chat where students could ask questions and discuss the material. However, this kind of interaction was not very effective. Following the conversation and delivering the lecture simultaneously were time-consuming for the lecturer and could be ineffective and distracting for the students if interrupted by strangers.

The potential of group conversation based on learning material from the downloaded text was found more interactive if it was presented in portions with pre-reading, while-reading and after-reading questions discussed in the chat synchronically and followed by summative thematic tests. This feature was also appreciated by the students who for some reason missed the lecture but could read the conversation in self-study format.

Real practical classes and seminars were held in virtual classrooms on university's LMS or in Skype. The platforms offered opportunities both for implementing online resources enriching and diversifying the content of the disciplines, and, supplying teachers and students with interactive tools available across the Internet.

Thus, immediate decisions taken to compensate the lack of real interaction varied, but they all tended to fulfill the requirements of the educational process. Still, the experience proves their

application has serious limitations which include security and copyright issues, technical and financial availability, as well as organizational potential for university, academic staff and students.

Georgiadi A.A. et al (2017) mentioned that the criteria for selecting a web resource from the position of a teacher can be availability, safety, reliability and functional compliance with the tasks of teaching a particular discipline with regard to the needs of the student audience. The main discipline content in the form of interactive abstracts, lecture materials, monographs, textbooks, that are copyright objects, should be stored and used on a secure platform with the limited access (for registered users). It can be a learning management system (LMS) such as Moodle or free cloud services that allow regulating access to the materials. Automation of learning control requires selection and acquisition of a test platform. The use of such a product in its turn requires a web resource with specific technical characteristics. Test platform performance can be ensured by adequate learning management system (LMS) or a web site. The area of creative interaction between teacher and students is associated with transformation of educational activity forms (classroom, extracurricular, independent and individual work). In this context, access to open cloud services is inevitable.

In the book *Distance Teaching Survival Kit* (2020) we studied the materials and documents:

- 1) Collections of tools recommended for online teaching
 - <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures/solutions>
 - <https://techagainstcoronavirus.com/>
- 2) How to move your course online and be successful - article
 - <https://medium.com/@contact.josecc/how-to-move-your-course-online-and-be-successful-6098b4a0823d>

3) Conducting Distance Education Effectively - article

- <https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/teacher-resources/resources-for-distance-education/>

4) Characteristics of Successful Distance Learning Programs -

article [https://www.sutori.com/story/characteristics-of-successful-distance-learning-programs--](https://www.sutori.com/story/characteristics-of-successful-distance-learning-programs--Aw7yxYFMjDqUHGKMeAZ2yPMb)

[Aw7yxYFMjDqUHGKMeAZ2yPMb](https://www.sutori.com/story/characteristics-of-successful-distance-learning-programs--Aw7yxYFMjDqUHGKMeAZ2yPMb)

Many universities implement the flipped classroom, which is characterized as an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom. *We recommend to study such resources:* <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/flipped-learning-0;> [https://flippedlearning.org/.](https://flippedlearning.org/)

Discussion

E-learning is one of the components of the improvement system, both in providing educational services and in receiving them. The end result of its implementation in the educational process will be, in our opinion, the expansion of the boundaries of the educational environment with the ability not only to design individual educational technologies, and trajectory but also designing the curriculum independently; creation of unified information space in a separate educational institution; unification of information spaces within the domestic specialized educational institutions with the possibility of reaching the international level; providing the opportunity to repeatedly study the covered material; use of the latest information in the field of the taught discipline, will make the learning process more visual.

Conclusion

The experience of implementing educational programs using e-learning and distance learning technologies during the period of self-isolation made it possible to analyze the positive aspects, take into account the made mistakes, the regional,

national specifics, "professional" features of educational institutions for further optimization of the educational process, for designing specialized training programs, approving the relevant standards; generating a unified communication format within the educational process. Although the forecast of UNESCO, the World Bank, and other organizations about increasing inequality in access to distance education is quite realistic, since not all students can cope with connecting to video broadcasting independently; not all students have technical means; Internet connection is not available everywhere.

In general, the research results confirm the need for full/partial implementation of e-learning and distance learning technologies for educational programs realization. The experience of using e-learning and distance learning technologies during the period of self-isolation makes it possible to analyze the positive aspects, take into account the made mistakes, regional and national specifics, "professional" peculiarities of educational institutions for further optimization of the educational process.

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