

THE ESSENCE AND STRUCTURE OF STUDENTS' READINESS TO ENGAGE IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Natalya SHEMYHON, Ph.D.,
Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy

Author information:

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6439-1245>; natalishemihon@uipa.edu.ua, Candidate of Pedagogic Sciences, Associate Professor, Doctoral Student, Department of Pedagogy, Methods and Management of Education of the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy, Universytetska Str., 16, Kharkiv, 61003, Ukraine.

Abstract. *The article deals with the issue of higher education students' readiness for distance learning. It has been noted that due to the rapid transition to distance learning in a pandemic, the search for answers to questions related to the quality of distance learning, the teachers' and students' readiness for this form of learning, the lack of unified methodological approaches to the transition from offline to online learning have been actualized. Scientific approaches to the description of the concept of readiness for the activity have been analyzed. Based on the analysis of domestic and foreign scientific sources, the structure of readiness for distance learning has been identified. The student's readiness for distance learning is considered as the ability to carry out educational activities distantly, which includes such structural components as communicative readiness to interact during online education and motivational readiness for distance learning. The impact of students' communicative behavior on the success of educational activities during distance learning has been reviewed. It has been noted that the sphere of direct interpersonal communication relations in distance learning is reduced to a minimum, or non-existent. This affects the formation of personality and the intended purpose of educational space, contact with the teacher in real, not online space is important for the formation of motivation, beliefs and attitudes. The study indicates a lack of motivation and self-control of students during distance learning. The survey of first- and second-year students has found that more than half of students have problems with self-control and the ability to work independently in distance learning. It has been noted that distance education is less effective than traditional classroom education, as fewer students complete the courses, since this type of education provides sufficient motivation, self-control and the ability to work independently with information and training materials.*

Key words: *distance learning; readiness for distance learning; communication component of readiness for distance learning, motivational component of readiness for distance learning.*

Problem statement. Current development of all areas of society is characterized by dependence on the global information space, and quality education cannot but use the opportunities provided by modern, knowledge-intensive technologies, which in turn ensure the rapid dissemination of information anywhere in the world. Such a phenomenon as distance learning has become an integral feature of the modern education system. The development and emergence of distance education is an expected result of changes and

transformations in modern society. In recent years, there has been a process of rapid integration of online education into higher education both in the world and Ukraine. This process has become almost lightning-fast within the conditions of a pandemic and forced isolation.

Articulation of issue. On the one hand, distance learning provides many opportunities for education, unlimited in time and space, but, on the other hand, distance education in isolation has revealed a critical mass of challenges that affect the quality of online education. Traditional forms of vocational education activities are changing: the interaction of those involved in the educational process, forms of teaching material. Where once distance learning in Ukraine mainly served as a supplement to full-time education, now, in terms of the permanent lockdown, the institutional separation and institutionalization of distance education in an independent area has accelerated, which requires searching for optimal ways to include this area in higher education. During the quarantine, all education levels were completely transferred to the distance mode without careful study of the key problems related to the quality of distance learning, readiness of teachers and students for this form of education, lack of unified methodological approaches to the transition from offline to online learning, opportunities to apply the student-centered approach distantly. As a result, despite the fact that distance learning is provided in accredited higher education institutions, credibility of its results and opportunities is viewed with skepticism, as the format is relatively new and students' progress cannot be properly monitored. [14]

Given the above issues of introduction and operation of distance learning, there is an urgent need for their detailed study in order to improve the quality of distance education.

Analysis of recent publications and studies. The issue of the phenomenon of the operation and development of distance education has been actively studied by domestic and foreign scientists. Studies have been carried out in several areas - the works of Veremchuk A. [Error! Reference source not found.], Hlushchenko V.V. [5], Samolyuk N. [11] and other authors are devoted to the study of scientific and pedagogical principles of distance education and prospects for its implementation in Ukraine. Herasymenko I.V. [4], Hlazunova O.G., Morze N.V. [8], Viktorov V.V., Belova I.S., Lysovenko N.N. [6] deal with the issues of software and computer support and provision of distance learning.

Recently, the phenomenon of distance learning has been studied in socio-philosophical terms in the context of its impact on socio-cultural processes occurring in society; O.O. Abakumova [1], Shabayeva A.M. [13] and others are involved in the issue. Approaches to the implementation of distance learning, challenges and prospects for its implementation have long been actively studied abroad by Kebritchi M. [14], Hung M., Chou C. [15], Yue C., Bjork E. and others [16]. However, despite the existing studies, it should be noted that most scientific papers relate to the organization and methods of teaching, the students' and teachers' readiness for distance education remains scarcely studied.

The purpose of the study is to study the structure of students' readiness for distance learning.

Statement of basic material. The scientific community notes that the development of distance education offers more opportunities and prospects for the dissemination of knowledge, access to learning throughout life [6], [15]. Distance learning has a number of advantages: first, the concepts of unrestricted access to education for a large number of people are implemented; secondly - information technologies have allowed for transcending space and time. In traditional education, the key to obtaining knowledge is the necessity of attending classes in a certain place at the appointed time, but today the key and essential condition for distance learning is the availability of an Internet access point. In this regard, distance learning, certainly, contributes to the realization of equal rights and opportunities in access to various types of education.

The specifics of the activity that used to be within the educational building have changed, which provided a certain type of interaction - now this activity is of different nature of learning, is carried out from home, the boundaries between personal and educational space are blurred. At the same time, there are certain issues associated with the readiness of those involved in education for distance learning.

According to researchers from the University of Phoenix M. Kebritchi, E. Lipschuetz, L. Santiago - issues related to challenges that arise for students during online learning can be reduced to students' expectations, readiness for distance learning, and the level of involvement in online education [14].

Studying the issue of students' readiness for online learning is one of the important factors for the successful implementation of distance learning. The issue of readiness for any type of activity arises in the case of innovation or rapid changes in the latter. There is no unified definition of the concept "readiness" in the scientific and pedagogical literature. There are three generally accepted approaches to defining the essence of the concept of "readiness for activity": thus, according to the functional approach, readiness is considered a mental state of the individual, which determines the potential activation of mental functions during certain activities.

Personal-activity approach to defining readiness is reflected in its understanding as a person's readiness and is considered in relation to the formation, development and improvement of mental processes, states, and properties necessary for successful performance [7, p.166].

The psychological approach to defining the essence of readiness focuses on the ability to perform certain professional functions. In this context, psychological readiness for activity is seen as a personal complex, the core of which are positive attitudes, reasons for learning a particular profession, as well as professionally important traits and abilities, a set of knowledge, skills and experience of their application, which provide the ability to determine optimal ways of the activity [11]. In general, the study of this concept in each of the approaches is close to the definition of readiness, which was proposed at the time by S. Rubinstein, who considered readiness as a psychological state of activity that characterizes the person's propensity to take certain kind of action and associated with the availability of the respective person abilities. [10].

The essence of readiness for activity is expressed through a set of certain components. Analyzing the views on the structure of readiness for activity [2], [7], [14] it may be concluded that the structural components of readiness for distance learning are motivational and communicative components. Thus, the student's readiness for distance learning is considered as the ability to carry out educational activities distantly, which includes the following structural components: communicative willingness to interact during online education and motivational readiness for distance learning.

To determine how communicative interaction affects the readiness for distance learning, it is necessary to outline the basic principles of communication of face-to-face and online education. Both forms of education, certainly, act as a form of socialization, the realization of the vital capacities of the individual, which is implemented through communication. On the one hand, educational interaction in distance education also has a purposeful, organized, planned nature. In it, as in traditional education, there is a common subject-subject and subject-object interaction. On the other hand, in terms of distance, direct communication interaction is replaced by indirect, i.e. with the absence of real personal contact. Features of cooperation between teacher and student are based on remoteness and lack of collective action, as a result, an individual is now developing in a fundamentally new environment. In distance learning, the socializing functions of education are in some way

limited. The whole essence of learning is reduced mainly to the transfer of knowledge, and not particularly effective control over their learning [14], [16].

The main area of interactions and the way of personality development in the course of education is communication interaction, which ensures the interaction of those involved in the educational process. Communication is the basis of knowledge transfer, the essence of education is expressed through communication. Education has been formed and existed within the paradigm that particularly live communication has been the conceptual and methodological basis of any form of education, both in theoretical and practical aspects. However, the network type of communication is not similar to live human communication. Scholars have noted that communication - interaction - of automated and cybernetic systems can be carried out in the process of information exchange without human participation and, fundamentally, is not communication, which is always of a direct interpersonal nature and is realized and carried out in social interactions, human relations [1]. The essence of distance learning gives rise to a revision of theoretical and practical aspects of educational interaction in terms of communication. Its nature changes: it acquires less dialogueness, integration. The very nature of distancing complicates such interaction.

Inclusion in learning, based on the social perspective of learning, justified by psychologists and teachers, according to these concepts, learning involves efforts focusing on conversation, mental, sensory activities. Of course, such efforts arise in both distance and offline education. But in contrast to online education, it is in traditional full-time education that different types of group activities are formed based on direct interpersonal communication: what is called the student community, this activity creates special characteristics of intra-group relations, values, which later acts as one of soft skills development factors.

In distance learning, the area of direct interpersonal communication relations is minimized or absent. This affects the formation of personality and the purpose of educational space. Students may feel isolated and disconnected under conditions of distance learning, which affects their readiness to learn [14], [16]. Belonging to a learning community affects students' sense of personality and learning, this is particularly relevant for freshmen. Especially if we consider learning in the context of educational communication, which due to its elements creates a certain social structure, forms a professional identity in students.

Another feature of communication that affects the level of students' readiness for distance learning is a change in perception of information; in traditional learning information is perceived visually and aurally, contact with the teacher in real rather than online space is essential for the creation of motivation, beliefs. The role of the teacher in the conditions of distance education is changing. In the distance format of communication there are certain communication challenges for teachers. If previously the classes took place, so to speak, "face to face", in today's conditions, teachers are faced with the challenge of how to convey a certain emotion and information online. During face-to-face classroom learning, a certain type of communicative interaction is created, based on verbal and nonverbal communication in the classroom, which acts as signals that are analyzed by teachers, and this way the focus is directed to the audience. In the course of distance education, when teachers do not see faces, it is difficult to feel the feedback, because the signals of nonverbal interaction cannot be felt and analyzed. Furthermore, the teacher is not able to ensure the active participation of all those involved in the process of communication. One of the main challenges of distance learning is the provision of interactivity.

With regard to distance education, the term "online listening" or observation has appeared; as noted by a team of researchers from the University of Phoenix – it is a complex set of mental phenomena and an essential component of student involvement in distance education [14]. Analysis of students' communicative behavior during distance learning shows

that most students act as passive recipients of information instead of being actively involved in acquiring new knowledge, such as: participating in discussions, active interaction with the teacher, presentation of their own projects and proposals. Furthermore, the format of online education contributes to this, because it makes it possible to hide behind a monitor screen. In addition, many students have a sense of uncertainty when answering online when there is no visual contact, moreover, as noted above, a student body is not yet in place, students do not feel part of the academic community, and as a result, a sense of embarrassment to strangers.

Consider the second component of readiness for distance education – a motivational component. The motivational sphere is the driving force of any activity, this component is the basis that determines the effectiveness of other structural components, readiness for distance learning. Motivation refers to "the need to do something with curiosity and pleasure." In foreign studies, motivation is synonymous with self-efficacy [14], [15]. In domestic scientific papers, motivation is considered as a set of external and internal driving forces that motivate a person to act and provides him or her with a focus aimed at achieving a certain goal [2]. As a result, motivation for learning is crucial for successful acquisition of knowledge and future profession. The development of a motivational attitude to learning arises as a result of an interactive process, which takes into account the individuality and subjectivity of its participants. As mentioned above, passivity during communication, lack of active interaction with the teacher and classmates affect the motivation for distance learning. The issue noted by researchers is the lack of motivation and self-control of students during distance learning. Ukrainian scientists N. Lysovenko, I. Belova, V. Viktorov have noted that distance education is less effective than traditional classroom education, as fewer students complete the courses [6], as this type of education involves sufficient motivation, self-control and the ability to work independently with educational information.

The main objective of the educational environment is the formation of motivational and value attitudes to learning and, subsequently, professional activities through active involvement of students in various educational activities: academic, quasi-professional, educational and vocational types. Higher education students often have different motives for entering a higher education institution, different levels of training, and various individual characteristics. During in-person training, these motives, which differ in their aspirations, are formed into purposeful motives of educational activity due to the purposeful action of the educational environment of each higher education institution. For many students, especially freshmen, it is important to visit the campus, which ultimately creates a sense of belonging to the environment of a particular higher education institution, and, consequently, becomes an element of motivation to study. Distance learning, especially for first-year students enrolled in higher education institutions in 2019-2020, does not provide an opportunity to form a sense of belonging to a particular institution. Self-identification as a student, due to belonging to the educational environment plays an important role in shaping readiness for learning. As a result, first-year students become unmotivated in online learning for which they have not been prepared.

In online learning, there are several threats that significantly affect the quality of education of insufficiently motivated students. This is a constant diversion of attention by social networks, YouTube, news websites, i.e. lack of self-control and lack of independent learning skills. Self-control within learning is defined as the degree of control that can be managed by students in their learning activities [15]. Acquiring knowledge within distance learning involves a significant amount of independent search and processing of information. The student must independently prepare not only for practicals and laboratory practicals, but also to perform tasks in the distance learning system.

Thus, the students' readiness for self-control and independent work during distance learning is determined by their sufficient motivation. A survey of first- and second-year

students of the Faculty of Power Engineering, Energy Saving Technologies and Automation of Energetic Processes of the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy was conducted to determine the potential for independent work and self-control skills. It's no coincidence that the subjects of survey are junior students, because it is this category of students has the greatest difficulties during distance learning, this category of students has not had time to adapt to the new learning environment of higher education during the rapid transition to online learning as a result of the pandemic.

The survey involved 94 students, 68 first-year students, and 42 second-year students. The first group of questions is aimed at identifying problems associated with self-processing of learning material provided distantly. It has been identified that a significant percentage of students have certain complications with the processing of educational information in the distance mode: the lack of independent learning skills, lack of the ability to link theoretical material with practical actions. The following responses have been offered to the question "What difficulties do you have in the course of independent work?": do not understand how to perform tasks; lack of time to perform independent tasks; lack of constant feedback from the teacher. The following results have been obtained. The response "do not understand how to perform tasks and the lack of necessary explanations from the teacher" ranks first - 44% of respondents (persons). "The lack of time for independent work" ranks second by the number of chosen responses - 35%. The third position is occupied by the responses involved the lack of constant feedback from the teacher - 15% (persons).

The next group of questions related to the ability of students to monitor their own learning activities online. Students have been asked a list of questions: "How often are you distracted while completing tasks online?" "Do you have difficulty in concentrating on the task and not being distracted by entertaining content?" The analysis of the responses showed the following results: 67% of students have problems with self-control of their online activities and are constantly distracted by social networks, listening to music and other things that affected learning outcomes and had consequences during tests and exams.

The survey has shown that students with a high level of self-control in distance learning are more successful within online environment. This efficiency is associated with complex tasks, such as the ability for self-imposed limitation and solving problems. This, in turn, involves the transfer of consciousness from the external environment of students to their inner self, the origination of the need to solve problems aimed at acquiring knowledge within distance learning, identifying their own subject-practical capabilities, their readiness for learning. There has been no need for distance learning in students. The emphasis in the needs that determine the motives of learning has been shifted to external motives: to pass the session, to avoid active communication during classes.

Conclusions. Thus, the effectiveness of distance learning in higher education institutions depends on the level of students' readiness for this form of learning. Readiness for distance learning is represented by a motivational and communicative structural component. The formation of these components directly affects the ability of students to engage in learning activities during distance learning. It has been identified that the first-year students have some difficulties with the processing of educational information within the distance learning, which is due to the lack of the above components of readiness for activity. Therefore, given the above, within the first education, distance learning should complement full-time education, because a young person should be in close communication with the educational environment, which is a socializing factor.

Prospects for further research are identifying and justification of pedagogical conditions for the development of structural components of readiness for distance learning.

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