Organizational and Methodical Support of the Academic Process for Extra-Mural Department Students on the Basis of Distant Education Technologies

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The authors describe the experience in realizing organizational and methodical support of the academic process for extra-mural department students on the basis of distant education technologies in LMS Moodle.

Keywords: extra-mural education, organizational and methodical support, distant education, Learning Management System Moodle .

At the present stage of social progress people realize the need of distance learning, focused on professional development and mastery of distance teaching technologies, which will ensure lifelong professionalism. In this regard the organization of distance teaching in the system of higher education has become urgent.

Nowadays the concepts of "open", "distance", "correspondence", "lifelong", "prolonged", "elective", and "home" learning as well as "self-learning" and "individual" one are introduced to the structure of higher education. The concept of "distance learning" embraces several known forms: distance education (including mastering basic and advanced programs), study for an external degree, and various mixed forms such as externship combined with distance learning, part-time learning, part-time learning in combination with intense pre-attestation classes, etc.).

We define distance learning as a part of open, lifelong learning, which organizationally and technologically provides education irrespective of a stationary form of education (distance learning combined with the professional employment in case there are no possibilities to attend regular classes at a higher education institution). In this respect distance learning can be regarded as both a form of the academic process organization and an open system of vocational education.

All modes of education have common problems, but at the same time each of them has its own distinctive features. As for distance learning, it lacks the pedagogical guidance during the interim period. Moreover, there is no permanent

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rapid feedback between the participants of the academic process.

There are the following contradictions in the system of distance education in its present organizational form:

- the focus on a high level of specialists' training versus a low level of the trainees' supportive knowledge;
- the necessity to guide the students' leaning-and-cognitive activity versus the difficulties in the implementation of such guidance in the interim period (Kuznetsova, 1999).

These contradictions exist due to the way distance education in its present form is organized, and namely: it doesn't take into account the following important aspects:

- different age groups of students;
- heterogeneity of the audience: different social and production experience, different levels of basic training of entrants for correspondence courses;
- lack of monitoring of the of students' progress (Sergienko, 2001).

We also distinguish the following contradictions:

- the students' low motivation, lack of developed cognitive needs;
- insufficient implementation of modern technologies to distance education;
- lack of methodological and educational guidelines for autonomous learning;
- lack of the teachers' guidance during the interim period;
- lack of the students' autonomous learning skills.

The specificity of distance learning in the system of higher education requires optimal conditions under which students could get good knowledge and high professional qualification without dropping their work.

The contradictions mentioned above suggest the need for some adjustment not only in the organization of an academic process for correspondence students. They prove the need for a new methodological support of an academic process.

At the present stage distance and open learning have been developed parallel to each other, almost without intersection. Recently, due to the development of new information technologies there is a tendency to the interaction of these educational forms. This trend can be viewed as the way of making use of an open education for distance education improvement as it allows of applying the advantage of didactic teaching opportunities peculiar to an open education.

The whole thing determines the possibility of designing a new model of distance learning, which is based on modern computer and telecommunication technologies. The implementation of the principle of a distance education system design on the basis of distant technologies in an academic process is carried out in its combination with the traditional didactic principles of clarity, accessibility, development from simple to complex, individual approach, systemacy, etc.

The practice of constant revision of the existing model of distance learning that implies introduction of innovative features is necessary because it enriches the achievements of the traditional educational systems, providing a new quality.

The transition from traditional learning to modular and distance ones involves various technologies of pedagogical and managerial kinds. The implementation of these technologies requires the teachers' and managers' skills to use certain algorithms and procedures.

Promising researches in didactics, in our view, are connected with the spheres of use of electronic informational-educational environment and educational technologies based on the use of electronic and didactic teaching tools.

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is one of numerous modern e-learning environments. It is a free learning management system (LMS) which is installed as per GNU GPL (GNU Not Unix General Public License).

Considering the specifics of correspondence students' training at a higher education institution, we have developed a model of organization of an academic process for the correspondence students' full-time tuition at the Institute of Education, Psychology and Sociology of Siberian Federal University. This model is based on Moodle e-learning management system.

The purpose of making this model is to improve the organization of an academic process. The process of the model implementation implies the "support" concept termed so to emphasize the idea of following closely and thus making it possible to implement what was planned.

At present there are different forms and levels of support. Researches in the field of human personality-oriented educational paradigm (L.N. Berezhnova, L.M. Shipitsina, M.R. Bitianova, O.S. Gazman, E.I. Kazakova, L.B. Lapteva, M.S. Polianskii, I.V. Serebriakova, I.A. Lipskii, I.E. Kulikovskaia, L.G. Subbotina, T.V. Glazkova, A.K. Kolechenko, N.N. Mikhailova, S.M. Iusfin, G. Bardier, I. Romazan, T. Cherednikokva, A.A. Derkach, E.A. Kozyreva, et al.) show that the term "support" is determined by the need to emphasize the value of individual activity style and a human's personal experience, including children and teachers, and its independence in decision-making (Kazakova, 1998; Berezhnova et al., 2002; Belotelova, Novitskaia, 2009).

The word "support" sometimes terms various activities (E.I. Kazakova):

- support can be interpreted as assistance in the transformation of a human's

orientation field of development, which a human him/herself is responsible for;
- support is understood to be the method ensuring creation of the conditions for a human to make optimal decisions in different situations of his / her course of life;
- support can be viewed as the interaction between a guiding person and a guided one, aimed at resolving the problems of life and professional development (Kazakova, 1998).

In our case support embraces such main areas of methodological work organization as analytical, organizational, pedagogical, educational-and-methodical support.

The aim of analytical support is to prepare the teaching staff for effective work. It includes:

- study of the teachers' needs in professional development (mastering and adoption of Moodle, module-rating system for evaluation of the students' knowledge, new forms of presenting the material, etc.)
- analysis of the effectiveness of students' autonomous work;
- analysis of the results of diagnostic and monitoring studies of an academic process;
- analysis of the effectiveness of the teachers' professional development.

Organizational and pedagogical support is focused on providing the continuity of the correspondence students' vocational education. It consists of the following components:

- planning and organization of the students' preparation for the examination and interim periods;
- maintenance of the interaction with teachers;

- provision of electronic teaching materials, access to the university informational and educational network;
- development of a bank of teaching materials;
- organization of discourse, practical and laboratory classes, consultations for part-time and full-time groups and individual students, review sessions;
- organization of students' autonomous work;
- transformation of the teachers' functions to the organizational advisory duty;
- development of individual student learning programs;
- organization and providing guidance for introductory and field internships;
- preparation and holding of theoretical and practical conferences, professional competitions, exhibitions, etc.

The third (educational-and-methodological) area implies the teachers' methodological guidance for creation of the conditions for effective teaching activities, and namely:

- planning of the teachers' activities;
- theoretical and methodological work (writing articles, guidelines and study guides, etc.);
- development of curricula, subject and course syllabi;
- methodological support of innovation work;
- monitoring of activities.

The formation of the theory and practice of complex support is based on the systemic approach. According to this approach support is viewed as a system of specific logical, interconnected elements: phases, principles, methods and ways of an academic process organization.

The following guidelines for the correspondence students' autonomous work can be suggested for an academic process intensification:

- semester autonomous work schedules, semester curricula and syllabi must be developed at the departments beforehand; their implementation should be regularly monitored by the teachers. They must be available on the institute website and accessed easily;
- at the beginning of a semester a teacher should inform the students about the aims of a course, the scope of the material, deadlines, forms of knowledge check and self-check of autonomous work, which should be also available on the site;
- a theoretical course, a complex of a student's knowledge gained is the base of autonomous work. That's why the classes should be organized for all the students to master the technological minimum of their autonomous work. Advanced tasks should be provided for the students, whose knowledge is better due to the tasks of various levels of complexity;
- a teacher's private communication with a student during individual tutorials (in person, via skype, e-mail, etc.) is of a fundamental importance;
- regular monitoring of autonomous work results in a distant mode is necessary.

Thus, the developed Module-based technology keeps students involved in an academic process, facilitates their interaction with the teachers, provides them with teaching aids and access to the university informational and educational network.

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Организационно-методическое сопровождение учебного процесса студентов-заочников на основе дистанционных образовательных технологий

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Авторами описан опыт реализации организационно-методического сопровождения учебного процесса студентов-заочников на основе дистанционных образовательных технологий в LMS Moodle.

Ключевые слова: заочное обучение, организационно-методическое сопровождение, дистанционные образовательные технологии, система управления обучением Moodle.