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E–LEARNING AS A WAY OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

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Communication is the main way of knowledge transfer. By and large, classical universities use the traditional form of teaching process: lecturers ↔ students. However, XXI century is not by chance called the century of information technology. According to experts in the middle of this century, the value of the world's leading manufacturers for the most part will consist of the value of information. Therefore it is an extremely important task for the state to train highly qualified workers to work successfully in all spheres of life of rapidly developing society. In order to realize the intended target, it's necessary to develop new concepts and methods of education, implementation of which will allow us to take some advantage of the transfer and assimilation of the material, as well as facilitate the exchange of information between students and teachers from all over the world. The most promising form of learning at this stage of technological development is distance learning. In this paper we have attempted to answer the following questions: what e–learning is what advantages and disadvantages it has, what its significance in the field of intercultural communication is, and if it is necessary to replace full–time forms of training with the remote one?

Distance learning is an interaction between teachers and students at a distance. It can be represented as lecturers–computers–students, where computers and special software are media. Realized through computer technology and the World Wide Web, it reflects all the components of the educational process (goals, contents, methods, organizational forms, training aids). Distance education first appeared in Europe in the late XVIII century. It was called "correspondent training" and was associated with the creation of a regular and affordable postal service, through which students received training materials, corresponded by teachers. In Russia, the official date of the development of distance learning can be considered May 30, 1997, when the order № 1050 Russian Ministry of Education was signed. It allows carrying out an experiment in distance learning education. The Decision № 10 of meeting of the Council on Informatization of the educational system under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus on January 31, 2007 indicated the feasibility of distance learning and secured its further development in our country. Based on the foregoing, we can make a clear conclusion: e–learning is an officially fixed view of the educational process.

The main advantages of distance learning are forms of organization. A personal computer and internet access are the only things you need to get started. So, there are four categories of distance learning classes, which are determined by the level of complexity from the simplest to the most advanced:

1. «Knowledge databases». These databases are the most basic form of e–learning, which offer travel guides, manuals or step by step instructions. Moderately interactive, meaning that a user can either type in a key word or phrase to search the database, or make a selection from an alphabetical list.

2. «Online support» is also a form of e–learning and functions in a similar manner to knowledge databases. Online support comes in the form of forums, chat rooms, online bulletin boards, e–mail or live instant–messaging support.

3. Asynchronous training is an e–learning in the traditional sense of the word. Includes a CD– or Internet–based self–lessons and access to online discussion group, reference materials and e–mail the tutor of the group.

4. Synchronous training is live communication directly with the teacher and the discussion group. Everyone logs in at the right time and communicates with the teacher and the group with the help of Web sites on the Internet, audio– or video–conferencing, Internet telephony, or even two–way live broadcasts to students in the classroom.

Another advantage of e–learning is its cost. Complete e–learning courses are much cheaper than full–time education at a classical university.

Then we would like to mention individuality of e–learning. Everyone can choose their pace of learning, the duration and sequence of lessons, an approach to solving certain problems without "imposing" a teacher of his point of view on this issue.

Using the highest technology is also an advantage because they offer us not only mobility of training and communication with the teacher at any point on the globe. Consequently, the problem can be discussed with the teacher not only in a certain country but also with foreign experts on the required profile involved in teaching. In particular, it is necessary to study foreign languages.

Despite the abovementioned advantages, there are some drawbacks that need to be paid considerable attention to. The first is funding this project. Due to the budget the Republic of Belarus organized distance education at BSU, BSEU, BSUIR, AM at the President of Belarus, PSU, Belarusian–Russian University, and for only a few specialties of a narrow profile.

The downside is the lack of distance learning practical skills. For example, a surgeon or a railway engineer cannot be taught only from books. It follows necessity of introducing practical exercises on the subject, which makes distance learning a hybrid of full–time and part–time.

The lack of common standards for creation of electronic teaching materials, as well as the absence of special scientific base is also a significant disadvantage. This fact is particularly an acute impact on vulnerable populations and persons with disabilities.

Currently active forms of learning (without distant its shape) suggest a very strict control of students. Ownership of student knowledge in one section of discipline does not guarantee knowledge of its other sections. Consequently, the periods of examinations and tests in the disciplines of distance learning cannot give realistic and accurate results.

Based on this information, we can say about a number of significant advantages, which e–learning gives us, both in terms of training and in terms of communication. However, the total transfer of all educational institutions to distance learning, at least at this stage of the project, would be inappropriate and not only because it's unreasonable. We think both classical and e–universities have the right to exist, because this combination is optimal to communicate, transfer information and get education.

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