

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANT LEARNING EDUCATION FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Svitlana Sharkova, postdoctoral researcher of H.S. Kostiuk Institute of Psychology of the NAES of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Some students' feedback regarding distant learning education has been already reflected on both in Ukrainian and foreign publications. In particular, a range of conferences organized by H.S. Kostiuk Institute of Psychology of the NAES of Ukraine has been devoted to the various aspects of online education since the world entered lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic. One of the articles published by Yuliya Krylova-Grek and Mariya Shyshkina [1] inspired us to conduct a survey to compare Ukrainian and American students' responses regarding the most common difficulties and challenges that students came across during the distant learning as a result of the lockdowns.

As an Adjunct Professor who was teaching a course on General Psychology in the spring 2022 semester at Santa Fe College (Florida, USA) I had an opportunity to find out the students' opinion regarding advantages and disadvantages of distant learning education which they have experienced during the previous two years. As it is known, students in American colleges can represent different age groups, ethnicities, and backgrounds. The participants of this survey were 16 – 22 years old. Some of them were combining college and high-school education (referred to as dual enrolled students). There were certain similarities and differences in Ukrainian and American respondents' points of view which will be briefly summarized below.

It has been pointed out by Ukrainian scientists that the biggest challenge for Ukrainian students was the technical issues (lack of reliable, high-speed Internet, difficulties in registering on the educational platform, etc.). At the same time, the main problem for American students was not being able to ask teachers questions directly and to get explanations when experiencing difficulty with the material. In fact, the need for teacher's mentorship was outlined by Ukrainian participants as well while they were discussing educator's role in distant learning. In addition to such teacher's tasks as guidance Santa Fe College students mentioned the need to find the ways to keep students engaged in the class while creating videos and providing sources of additional material. It should be noted that students accepted their professors would definitely need to spend more time not just making lesson plans and grading papers, but also answering the e-mails and helping students with numerous questions. All in all, this can lead to slow learning and poorer quality of education for some students.

Although nearly a quarter of participants in a Ukrainian research study mentioned they had no difficulties in performing assignments remotely, all American students outlined they experienced certain obstacles while completing courses online. Taking into account that there is nobody looking over one's shoulder, distraction and procrastination on tasks became the common problem for young people overseas. At this point few American students highlighted the issues connected either with lack of equipment or poor wifi connection they had, or simply difficulties with figuring out where to start working with new material.

Interestingly enough the majority of respondents from both countries complained about the lack of communication and socialization. To their mind, this feeling of loneliness negatively affects the development of the necessary communication skills.

As far as 61% of Ukrainian students mentioned that working in front of a computer all the day is considered as a problem for them, American youth didn't struggle with it that much. They even highlighted that this online access to the material allows them to create a more flexible schedule, finding a more comfortable environment to study. It was especially appreciated by students who live far away from the college, sometimes even in another country. Foreign participants also liked the idea of the continuous access to lectures, course materials and class discussions (which are usually not published on the platforms that Ukrainian professors use). One more advantage outlined by American students is the ability to stay protected during the pandemic.

In general, face-to-face format remains more preferable for students than online courses. The magic formula for achieving as best results as possible is still being investigated by educators all around the world. Helping students to become independent learners before they make their way into the real world is a long process. The complexity of this issue reminds us that different aspects should be taken into account, like the age of our students, environment where they study, devices they use, etc. There is no doubt that research studies that Ukrainian scientists continue conducting even during this devastating situation of war will help us find better and constructive ways to move on and develop our system of education.

References:

1. Krylova-Grek, Y., & Shyshkina, M. P. (2021) Online Learning at Higher Education Institutions in Ukraine: Achievements, Challenges, and Horizons. *Information Technologies and Learning Tools*, 85(5), 163-174.