SOCIAL FACTORS OF DISTANCE LEARNING: ADOPTED FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DISTANCE LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION IN POLTAVA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND TRADE

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The implementation of distance learning (DL) involves solving a number of problems including social ones. The main social groups are involved in this process such as institutions' and departments' managers; educational, training and IT support staff. It should be mentioned, that in each of these groups there are supporters and opponents of DL and their quantity varies from one university to another. It should also be pointed out, that the number of DL's supporters rises considerably.

Let's consider the group of managers. The fact, that among all Ukrainian universities only seven of them perform an experiment of a partial implementation of distance learning, points out that only a small fraction of Ukrainian universities' administration thinks of implementing this form of learning. We believe that this situation is due to several factors such as: lack of centralized financing of DL's material and technical base in public universities; reluctance to spend funds obtained from contract learning in public and private universities for this purpose; respectable age of most of universities' rectors and their attitudes towards greater effectiveness of established forms of education to its modern forms. However, the main reason of disinterested attitude towards DL among the university managers is that the introduction of DL preserves all kinds of traditional learning forms and methods.

In our opinion, among university managers can be divided into three strata according to their attitudes towards DL: advocates and

initiators of DL's practical implementation (very small percentage); those who understand advantages of DL's implementation and don't prevent its spontaneous formation in subordinate universities (most significant number of universities' leaders); and those who have a critical attitude to the DL, but do not criticize it directly as they think that DL will become less popular in the nearest future, the same way as many other educational reforms and initiatives.

Teaching staff has the same homogeneous attitude towards DL. DL's biggest supporters are young teachers and many of those who are under 40 years old, while the older generation of teachers mostly refers to DL indifferently and hostile. According to our observations, which were made during the pedagogical experiment of distance learning implementation, the ratio between these groups was changing quickly in favor of DL supporters. Thus, during the first year of the experiment the share of DL supporters have increased in the first semester from 43 to 87%, and from 48 to 92% in the second one.

There is similar situation among IT support workers, most of who have quickly adapted to the educational challenges, supporting program of electronic dean, video lectures maintenance and other types of distance lessons.

The experience of Poltava University of Economics and Trade shows, that there is a set of positive social factors which help to implement distance learning. The quantity of these factors is more significant than the quantity of those which constrain it. The growing dynamics of the positive attitudes towards DL, and therefore actions for its implementation is quite significant. All of the factors mentioned above lead to the conclusion that social problems which are tightly connected with the implementation of distance learning in the universities will disappear during the next decade.

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