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## Use of Open Electronic Courses in Educational Activity

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**Abstract:**

*The use of open electronic courses is a relatively new tendency in education and it is not yet fully discovered by researchers. With its introduction a change in the structure of the educational system happens. Therefore, the article studies the specifics of the introduction of online courses, including requirements to them, as well as factors that slow down their active development. Due to it, the following methods of investigation were used as: analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction.*

*As an example, Kozma Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University - Minin University was used. Based on the study of the "Regulations on the use of open courses in the educational activities of Minin University", it was noted, in addition to the functions of the coordination group on open education, that for the trainee at the end of the course, in the case of unsatisfactory result, the possibility of the recalculation is established. This paragraph is used not by every university.*

*In the article we make a conclusion that open courses are a new qualitative step in the development of world education, but online courses would be much more effective as narrow-minded, adult-oriented, and deeply motivated for learning. Taken as the basis of research, Minin University showed that the university is ready for the implementation of online courses. It is one of the few universities that actively use open courses in Russia.*

**Keywords:** *Open Electronic Courses, Recalculation, System of Estimation, Educational Activities, Coordination Group on Open Education.*

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## **1. Introduction**

The spread of open online courses makes the education system to change and these changes are rather serious. These courses have a positive impact on society, because they widely extend the education throughout the world. In the period of globalization of education, these courses provide an open access to the educational content of the leading world universities.

This kind of education is good because now it's not necessary to leave your own country. Distance education simplifies the problem of communication with a university located abroad as much as possible. However, the use of such courses involves the loss of a large number of students who preferred foreign universities instead of their local universities. There is a virtual "outflow" of students.

The technologies used today for the organization of mixed and electronic education began to be used more than ten years ago. They serve as the basis of modern online courses.

Namely this principle of the availability of education with the ability to automatic assessment of the results has led such courses to a big popularity.

Now the student does not depend on the particular teacher's choice of educational content, he can learn what is necessary just for him, the student gets full freedom in choosing a place of study. It is precisely this fact of freedom that causes changes in the system of education. Now, the student's set off of the results of training in open courses does not depend from specific teachers, but just from the administration of educational organizations. Open courses change the structure of the educational system that is why this question is so relevant for consideration.

The theoretical basis of the article consists of: The Federal Law "On Education in Russian Federation", the results of the World Educational Congress on Open Educational Resources, the project of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the Publishing of Open Educational Content, the Regulations on the use of open courses in the educational activities of Minin University.

## **2. Methodology of research: analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction**

It is necessary to note that the idea of open educational courses is not new. In 2001, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has opened the project of open educational content. And in 2012, UNESCO hosted the World Congress, the aim of which was exchanging expert opinions and productive practices for the development and use of open educational resources. The result was the Paris Declaration of 2012, where the main idea was the further promotion of open education and open educational resources in different countries.

With the help of online courses new opportunities to achieve positive results of studying outcomes through alternative ways, comparing with traditional ways of learning. And this creates a global competitive environment for teachers (Vaganova et al., 2016b). This forces universities to search for new teaching methods in combination with remote technologies, forming mixed or fully distance learning. It should be noted that practice shows that the best option is the combination of classroom and e-learning, since in this case, students can communicate directly with the teacher.

The European Commission in 2015 hosted a conference about the interaction of higher education with open source (Gruzdeva & Smirnova, 2017). Its purpose was to identify the causes of insufficient dynamics of the development of open education. 178 universities took part in it from five European countries (Germany, France, Poland, Great Britain, Spain).

The results have showed that the training is mainly mixed in the mentioned countries.

Russia favors the same type of training at the moment.

Teachers are looking for new ways to combine traditional and innovative teaching methods; they try to use online courses as part of an educational program (Koldina, 2014).

The implementation of open courses in the Russian system of education has its own specifics. Here under the state control is the content and process of training. And to use online courses in the system of basic educational programs is not so easy. Difficulty arises with the implementation of the principle of openness during entering the educational program. It is so because there are no formal requirements (for example, EGE certificate, and level of education) to the students of open courses. As a consequence, the implementation of open online courses within the framework of Russian legislation can be made only as a program of additional education (Vaganova, Koldina & Trutanova, 2017). Then this will not contradict the Law "On Education in the Russian Federation".

Students will receive a certificate at the end of the course. A local regulatory act of the university establishes the possibility of a recalculation (Salyaeva, 2014). In most cases, universities do not provide such opportunity, however, the Provision of Minin University on the use of open courses in the educational activities of Minin University provides a possibility of recalculation, and its possibility is established by the paragraph 2 of this document and the subparagraph 2.2.

The provision on the use of online courses at Minin University is a response to the new Order on the approval of the procedure for the use of organizations that carry

out educational activities, e-learning, and distance learning technologies for the implementation of educational programs in 2017 (Vaganova et al., 2016a).

The difficulty of the implementation of the recalculation consists in the need for additional examinations with which they conduct a comparative analysis of the results of education and the requirements of the educational program (Prokhorova & Vaganova, 2017). And if there are no recalculation guarantees, student activity is significantly reduced.

Let's turn to the economy of online courses. The cost of educational services for mass learning can be reduced (Starodumova & Homolko, 2017). And it is the potential positive plus of the online courses. However, we would like to note that we have not accidentally called it potential. It all depends on the number of listeners who wished to study for a course. The costs of online learning can be compared with the cost of traditional learning only if a large number of people will use online education. But for most courses this is an unattainable task.

For an open course, it is necessary to set requirements for obtaining qualitative learning by students, such as:

- only educational organizations that have a license for educational activities in specific areas of training have the right to develop such courses;
- the portal of open education indicates the dates on which the course is publicly available;
- labor intensity should not be less than the labor intensity of the corresponding discipline (module) of the university's educational program;
- the content of the course should be really directed towards the formation of competences established by the university's educational program;
- the system of estimation the results should be comparable to the rating system, adopted by the university's for assessing the quality of student training, and the final examination - with the form of intermediate certification, which is provided by the university curriculum (Malakhova, Khokhlova & Starodumova, 2015).

All courses should contain the following components: a set of metadata, that is, there should be an indication of the university-developer, course authors, content and methods of training; introductory videos and enumeration of the knowledge that a student should have at the beginning of classes; list of used literature; a reference to frequently asked questions, which may be called the English term FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions); data about the document to will be received by the student after the finishing training; time framework for training; tests for self-testing, as well as intermediate and final control.

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Current control over the use of the course is carried out by the Open Education Coordination Group (OECG). Such a group was created at Minin University. Its work is approved in the curriculum.

The OECG function includes:

- initial formation of the list of recommended open online courses;
- creation of working groups to assess the quality and prospects of the use of open education courses and management of their work;
- management of recommended open online courses;
- organization of informing the participants of the educational activity of the University about the list of recommended open online courses and the procedure for their use;
- checking on the effectiveness of the use of courses;
- research of references of employees of the university and students regarding the use of courses;
- organization, implementation and control of interaction with the organizations of open online courses and administrations of educational portals (Kostylev & Kostyleva, 2015).

Minin University offers the following scheme of interaction between developers of open courses and educational portals:

- interaction is carried out through the administrator of open courses, endowed with certain powers;
- the administrator complies with the requirements of the Regulations of Minin University on the use of open courses;
- independent interaction of university staff with the university developers is accompanied with notification of the administrator about all actions (Kostyleva, 2017).

The positive aspects of the use of open courses can be the fact that they are open and accessible, since learning can take place at any time and in any convenient place for the student using the Internet; multimedia - the use of various information and telecommunication technologies; provision of bilateral interaction; the possibility of education in leading world universities (Kostylev *et al.*, 2016).

Among the negative aspects, we can highlight the inability of such courses to provide students with a proper level of quality of education. They do not give the same amount of knowledge and skills as traditional or even mixed learning.

Due to it there is the impossibility of reaching the established Federal State educational standards of competence for students. Students have no personal contact with the teacher. These mass courses offer a lot of the same material for a large number of people, and this can provoke a banality pattern of thinking that will

restrict the ability of creative thinking. It can limit new ideas that appear mostly in discussions with the presence of so-called "live" communication. The practice shows that only few subscribers of the course pass it up to the end. There may also be a standard problem of lack of motivation for learning, since the responsibility for completing the assignments lies entirely on the learners. Due to this, the effectiveness of the courses is reduced.

Technical problems will also complicate the learning process. We cannot exclude this factor, because it is very often. We also refer to the problems a non-compliance with academic ethics (lack of real, alive communication with the teacher, protection of researches in the audience). All these lead to a weakening of the requirements of incorrect borrowing.

The active development of open courses slows down a number of objective factors. Here we should highlight such as:

- a relatively small number of really good courses;
- insufficient development of mechanisms for ensuring the quality of open educational resources;
- too much proportion of English language courses (however, the situation may start to change for the better with the Orders adopted by the Russian Federation on the use of organizations that carry out educational activities, e-learning, distance learning technologies while implementing educational programs). But now most people cannot use the courses because they do not speak a foreign language. Their ability to use open educational resources is narrowing. In addition, English-language courses have their own special features, which for the Russian population are irrelevant;
- insufficient level of computer literacy among the population (Prokhorova & Semchenko, 2017).

In our opinion, online courses are now more suitable for an adult audience, because, as we have already indicated, self-discipline is one of the most important factors in using such education (Smirnova & Mukhina, 2016). Only adults who are sure of the need for certain knowledge have the maximum degree of it. Therefore, we consider it expedient to propose the following additions to the courses. When compiling an online course, you need to carefully consider the support system for listeners. For example, it will be useful to enter links to additional material sources so that students can explore the topic more deeply (Ugodchikova, Aleshugina & Loshkareva, 2015). In order for the course to perform its functions effectively, it is necessary to monitor its listeners. Interests of the adult audiences have often been formed already; therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to a certain range of questions and to formulate a course so that it will fill the lack of knowledge among students in the necessary area for the expansion of knowledge precisely in this area (Vaganova & Aleshugina, 2017).

The course for greater efficiency should consist of many modules and levels. Courses, in our opinion, will perform their role much more effectively if they will reflect narrow topics for application in a particular field. We believe that online courses should make research a particular subject. That is, the main thing here is not the final positive result, but the process of learning, an experience that includes both successes and failures. Instead of the usual memorization, it is important for the listener to offer such tasks and exercises, the performance of which will give new knowledge and skills that can be applied in practice. This position reflects an up-to-date, competence-based approach. Its essence consists not in obtaining a certain amount of knowledge, skills and abilities, but in the student's ability to apply the acquired knowledge in practice.

### **3. Analysis of research results**

The results of the research have showed that the introduction of open courses in European countries is much easier than in Russia because of the fact that domestic education is controlled by law as much as possible. The number of such training courses` increases, but so far the practice of using them by the universities is not widespread at a necessary level. However, universities noticed that the use of mixed learning gives a positive result. Taken as the basis of research, Minin University showed that the university is ready for the implementation of online courses. It is one of the few universities in Russia that uses open courses actively.

Recognition of education received through training with the use of such courses goes very slow, it is due to the distrust of the population. The advantages and disadvantages of such courses were considered here.

We assumed that online courses would be much more effective than narrow-minded, adult-oriented, deeply motivated learning, for those who need to apply their knowledge in real working conditions.

### **4. Conclusions**

The use of electronic resources and open courses is a new qualitative step in the development of world education. However, despite all these, it is necessary to constantly seek new solutions, methods and forms for maximizing the use of such courses for raising an education to rather high level. Today there are still too many problems, which are connected with the implementation of open courses.

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