

DISTANT HIGHER EDUCATION: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDES

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Since the 1970's (time of the *technological revolution*), the world's life pace has constantly been accelerating, causing the formation of the *network society*. The Wikipedia.org says that *network society* "is the expression related to the social, political, economic and cultural changes caused by the spread of networked, digital information and communications technologies" [1].

Rapidly and massively growing quantities of digital technologies involved in industries produce loads of new demands even from a common worker. The list of skills needed is different according to the field of activity; anyway, the major one is relevant for all – *the ability to work with the information fast and efficiently*. To accomplish that work successfully (that means to orient in various kinds and sources of information), it seems that one has to be constantly aware of what is going on around, from politics to popular hobbies. And the *synthesis of principally new ideas and solutions* (which is also established as a part of modern social interactions) is merely impossible without that awareness. The further the technical progress goes, the better we understand that the classical educational system, still provided by many universities, should be restructured.

One of the great examples of such updated view on higher education lies within a studying facility generally called as *distant education*. The term itself dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, when printed *media* became commonly available, and the huge system of *communications* was built around the world [2]. The desire for better knowledge made people strive for higher professional education; those who hadn't chance to study directly, could choose a distant way of getting a degree. Still, that was a rare case.

Today distant education is often "defined as the process of transferring knowledge to learners (students) who are separated from the instructor (teacher) by time and/or physical distance and are making use of technology components, such as the Internet, video, discussion forums, CD's, tapes and other forms of technology

to accomplish learning” [3]. There are some *terms related to this one* – *e-learning, online learning, distance learning*; a list of their definitions and a number of surveys dealing with the problem of their identification is given in the book “Internet and Higher Education” (see article by Joi L. Moore, Camille Dickson-Deane, Krista Galyen) [2].

As I am currently a student, I’ve decided to reveal the matters from a student’s point of view. It’s complicated to show what lies beneath in such a short research, so I’d focus on the general positive features of the subject.

First of all, it is obvious that distant education is beneficial comparing to the traditional one, as long as someone doesn’t possess an ability to study in another country (due to high life cost, stable work at home place, huge distance etc.).

Secondly, all the necessary materials for studies are at a constant, fast and easy access – as long as you carry a gadget with Internet broadcast-on.

Thirdly, you are practically never dependent on the curriculum, and may choose the most convenient time for studies. But still, there are deadlines left for homework, examinations, and particular time for special collective events, such as online conference.

What is more, you may repeat the track of a lection (lesson), until you get satisfied with your comprehension of the material.

Among disadvantages are: *low social activity level* – a student would be limited from live communication with the peers, which can be harmful, especially if they are teen-aged (up to 30 years) or because of some psychological features; *huge self-control required* – it’s almost impossible to deal with all the studying issues on your own, if you don’t have strong wills; some *stereotypes* of society conducting all specific ways of getting education – that one isn’t prepared enough for practice, and the diploma they finally get while graduating is nothing but an expensive toy.

Still, life shows that advantages of distant education outweigh the disadvantages, and that this is a promising means of getting higher education in many fields demanded by the *global market*. In the course of several next decades, more and more people will be choosing distant education as an alternative to common one.

REFERENCES

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