

ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫ БІЛІМ ЖӘНЕ ҒЫЛЫМ МИНИСТРЛІГІ

Л.Н. ГУМИЛЕВ АТЫНДАҒЫ ЕУАЗИЯ ҰЛТТЫҚ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІ
ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ ҚАТЫНАСТАР ФАКУЛЬТЕТІ

ШЕТ ТІЛІ КАФЕДРАСЫ

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ОҚЫТУ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ ЖӘНЕ ИННОВАЦИЯСЫ»
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Жинаққа «Азия елдерінде шет тілдерін оқыту: тәжірибесі мен инновациясы» халықаралық ғылыми-тәжірибелік онлайн конференцияның материалдары енді. Конференцияға Ресей Федерациясы, Франция, Испания, Түркия, Әзірбайжан, Қырғызстан және Қазақстан білім берудегі саласының мамандары қатысты.

Жинақта білім беру ісінің өзекті мәселелері, осы заманғы озық технологияларды меңгеру мен оны оқыту ісінде қолданудың тиімді әдістері, кредиттік оқыту жүйесінің теориясы мен әдістемелік негіздері, педагогикалық қызметтің теориясы мен практикасы, халықаралық білім беру технологияларын тиімді пайдаланудың әдіс-тәсілдері кең көлемде қамтылған.

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DIGITAL TEACHER TRAINING IN KAZAKHSTAN DURING THE PANDEMIC

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The sudden outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has had unprecedented effects on education on the global scale. The overall lockdown led to the closing of schools and universities, which forced the general shift to distant learning with all its challenges and opportunities. The aim of this article therefore is to discuss the difficulties Kazakhstani higher education experienced during the lockdown and describe certain attempts of our universities to handle this situation in terms of training their teaching staff. For this purpose, universities websites were reviewed and publications aimed at assisting the teaching staff to organize the educational process in the conditions of forced distant learning were analysed.

The first attempts to organize distant learning process date back to the 18th century [1], however it did not gain much popularity due to the slow, taking months to connect a teacher and a student, postal services of that time. The global interest in distant learning did not arise until the technologies allowing for rapid exchange of information had been developed. The growth of internet created numerous online platforms for distant learning, such as Coursera, Udacity, FutureLearn and others,

whose MOOCs nowadays attract millions of students worldwide [2]. Kazakhstani universities also contribute to the global trend offering numerous opportunities for distant education including graduate and post-graduate degrees and various MOOCs. The Kazakh National Platform for Open Online Courses has been created [3].

The Covid-19 pandemic changed distant education from a convenient option into an urgent necessity. UNESCO research revealed that more than 91% of learners in all countries were affected by the school closures in 2020 [4]. This situation made it urgent for the educators to develop and maintain the distant learning systems and software, adapt the curricula, organize the teaching and learning process in the most effective way, that is create favourable conditions for the continuous education of the younger generation.

However, the forced shift of face-to-face education into an online one showed that the educators themselves urgently needed to be educated in terms of digital literacy. It is especially true for developing countries like Kazakhstan. We conducted a series of interviews with the colleagues, and discovered that most teachers especially of older age experienced a certain lack of digital skills including use of hardware and modern gadgets, various applications and other software on the moment when the lockdown started. For most of the cases they had to learn to use it by themselves. We wouldn't sin against the truth claiming that never before had the educators been forced to learn new information and adapt themselves to the fast-changing reality.

Kazakhstan experienced the overall lockdown in early March 2020 and the Ministry of Science and Education had to switch all schools and universities to online education. This situation is in progress with little exceptions up to now. Much effort has been done by the education authorities and the results are not so perfect especially in school education but cannot be called disastrous as well, for our schools and universities did not stop their activity for a single day, compared to some other countries.

According to UNESCO [5], digital literacy nowadays has become one of life skills. It can be defined as: “accessing, managing, evaluating, integrating, creating, and communicating information individually or collaboratively in a networked, computer supported, and web-based environment for learning, working, or leisure” [5, p. 4]. According to some researchers, digital literacy includes 5 components: informational literacy, computer literacy, communicative literacy, media literacy, attitude to new technologies [6]. Informational literacy refers to the skills to search, select and critically assess necessary information in the various online resources, computer literacy implies correct usage of technologies and equipment, while communicative literacy deals with using social networks and other communication technologies. Media literacy reflects the skills to create and edit digital content and attitude to innovative technologies refers to the skills to use emerging almost every day new applications and other software [7].

Two main aims of digital pedagogy are: to improve teaching and learning process via ICT and facilitate access to various educational resources [5, p 6].

UNESCO developed ICT Competency Standards for Teachers to measure their digital literacy, as well as provides necessary guidelines and resources. The recommendations for educational policy makers how to enhance digital literacy of the teaching staffs are given in the document [5].

As for our country, in 2020 the Prime Minister's Office reported that digital literacy of the Kazakhstani population reached 82% [8]. The state program of "Digital Kazakhstan" was adopted under which approximately 1.2 million citizens have participated in the digital literacy courses organized by the government. The courses provide basic computer literacy skills, working with electronic government E-GOV, information security, E-trade skills [9].

However, the state-level digital literacy course for educators has not been developed yet. The overall shift for distant learning forced educational institutions to elaborate and introduce their own courses for their teaching and managing staff. It was a hard time for the teachers as they had to mobilise themselves very quickly and learn how cope with the emerged situation without a significant loss in education quality. We did a brief web-research in order to find out about the current state of digital teacher training opportunities in Kazakhstani institutions of higher education.

50 websites of Kazakhstani higher educational institutions were reviewed and the suggested recommendations to organize distant learning process during the pandemic were analyzed. All the publications referring to distant educational technologies were under scrutiny. 12 out of 50 universities, which accounts for 24%, did not publish any materials concerning their shift to distant learning during the pandemic. The assumption that these universities did not conduct any training for their staff at all would be straightforward and poorly grounded, probably the fact of it was not reflected on their websites. 38 universities (76%) have posted different materials ranging from ready-made guidelines how to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams to recordings made by their own IT departments and centers of distant education. Some of the websites examined include the rubric for distant education in the main menu, while the others launched a separate website and platforms for e-learning where all necessary reference materials for students and teachers are posted. A relatively small number of higher educational institutions (5) organized series of webinars and regular teaching training courses to instruct their teaching staff how to implement digital education technologies, among them Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Gumilyov Eurasian National University, IT International University, Almaty Technological University, Aktobe Regional University, Kazakh National Conservatory and Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University. We can see that most of these universities are represented by well-established higher education institutions of two largest cities of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Almaty and Nur-Sultan.

It is worth mentioning that one of Kazakhstani higher education flagships Al-Farabi Kazakh National University began training its teaching staff to develop their own digital content and MOOCs long before the pandemic – in 2015. Since 2016 the Institute of New Educational Technologies has been operating in KazNU under which the Center for MOOCs has been established. The Institute holds on a regular basis teacher training and refresher courses which are open not only for KazNU staff but for other universities, too. The main aim of the course is to introduce the participants to the industry of MOOCs and teach them to plan, develop and launch their own MOOC [10]. KazNU launched its own MOOC platform based on Open edX and contributed for the creation of the Kazakh National Platform for Open Education. KazNU also developed and posted MOOCs “*Teach by distance!*” in Russian, Kazakh and English languages on this platform. This course consists of an introductory module and 3 main modules which cover such themes as general guidelines to the e-learning process organization (conducting lessons, seminars, lab works and examinations), the use of the Moodle platform, the use of the Univer system, organization and conducting webinars.

During the pandemic KazNU has been organizing regular online workshops called *Digital Workshops for Teachers* aimed at sharing their best teaching practices in using new technologies and digital instruments in the process of education.

International IT university offers a comprehensive certificate-awarding *Online Teaching Training Course* for school, college and university teachers, which consists of three separate parts – Digital Literacy, Digital Competences in Educational Process, Creation of Educational Content for Online Learning. The course program is based on the recommendations of UNESCO (ICT-CFT) and Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Gumilyov Eurasian National University organized its first online teacher training course soon after overall shift to distant learning, in April 2020. It was an open interactive course *Innovative Educational Technologies and Didactic Models* conducted in cooperation with Ruse University (Bulgaria) and HiEdTec project. The HiEdTec project is co-funded by Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and is aimed at modernization of education system in Central Asia and four European countries of Bulgaria, Portugal, Italy and Luxembourg [11]. Three Kazakhstani universities – ENU, Almaty Technological University and Innovative University of Eurasia, participate in the project and also hold regular *IET and DM* courses.

The course was held twice in ENU – in April and December 2020, in the HiEdTec virtual classroom of ENU. It was guided by the National HiEdTec coordinator Prof. Zhanat Nurbekova and the European coordinator Prof. Angel Smrikarov from Ruse University. 5 certified coaches from ENU taught the course and more than 300 teachers from ENU and 13 other universities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan successfully completed it [12].

One of ENU structural subdivisions the Institute of Teacher Training and Further Education provides a number of educational programs for the organization of distant learning process, among them: *Best Practices for E-learning, Development, Creation and Promotion of Massive Open Online Courses, Effective Teaching Methods in Distant Education* [13].

Twice since the start of the pandemic the online course for the teaching staff of ENU *Digital Skills of the Modern Teacher in Distant Learning Conditions* has been held organized by the Center for Distant Technologies. More than 900 teachers participated in the course and received certificates of completion. The course comprised online lectures with practical and laboratory works to consolidate the skills acquired. It included such themes as introduction to informational technologies, the Google online instruments, digital security, the use of Microsoft Teams and Google classroom platforms, the review of Coursera, FutureLearn and Udacity resources, teaching methods used in distant learning (inverted classroom and others), creation of digital content using screen recorders and video editors.

Taking part in this course was a good opportunity not only to gain various digital skills but to share our experience in preparation and delivering lessons. The modern teacher should be well-versed in ICT in order to be equal to the younger generation who were born into this age of gadgets and internet.

Besides the centralized teacher training courses each faculty and each department regularly at least once a month holds online methodological webinars where our colleagues learn from each other how to organize the teaching process in a most interesting and effective way.

Although the shift to distant education was forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a hope that when the situation stabilizes and our universities open again the digital skills acquired in this difficult period will be still in-demand. Distant learning will hardly lose its popularity due to its convenient and time and money-consuming conditions. I would assume that distant learning and teacher training has gained its impetus to develop during the pandemic and Kazakhstani DL programs and MOOCs will soon enter the world market.

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ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT WORK IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING BY USING MODERN INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

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21st century is the age of information, obviously, makes its own adjustments to the traditional teaching of foreign languages. And our goal is to learn how to use