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VIRTUAL INTERNATIONALISATION: BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF E-LEARNING

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E-learning program is considered to be the third wave of internationalization. An example on implementation of massive open online course that provides access to a variety of educational materials is given. Differences in views on massive open online courses of European and American researchers are stressed. The benefits and drawbacks of e-learning are specified.

Key words: massive open online course, open education, European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, open educational resources.

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У статті зазначено, що використання програм електронного навчання є третьою хвилею інтернаціоналізації. Наведено приклад упровадження масових відкритих онлайн курсів, які надають доступ до різноманітних навчальних матеріалів. Відзначено відмінності у поглядах на відкриті онлайн курси європейських та американських дослідників. Вказано на переваги та недоліки електронної освіти.

Ключові слова: масові відкриті онлайн курси, відкрита освіта, Європейська асоціація університетів дистанційного навчання, відкриті освітні ресурси.

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В статье отмечено, что использование программ электронного обучения является третьей волной интернационализации. Приведен пример внедрения массовых открытых онлайн курсов, которые предоставляют доступ к различным учебным материалам. Отмечено различия во взглядах на открытые онлайн курсы европейских и американских исследователей. Указано на преимущества и недостатки электронного образования.

Ключевые слова: массовые открытые онлайн курсы, открытое образование, Европейская ассоциация университетов дистанционного обучения, открытые образовательные ресурсы.

Introduction. Technology supports cost-effective delivery of both basic and higher education, widens access, improves quality and aids in teacher training

and professional development. It can play a central role in developing skills needed in the 21st century and improving access to lifelong learning opportunities. Growth in open educational resources (OER) and free online courses delivered by universities and institutions of technical and vocational education and training are dramatically changing education. Beyond its scope for improving learning in school settings, information communications technology (ICT) can also enable informal and non-formal learning.

It should be mentioned that three distinct waves of internationalization have been identified in the international education industry. The first involved students travelling to study at a chosen institution – mobility which remains common today. The second involved institutions moving forward into the export channel – usually through an alliance or coalition and establishing a presence in international markets through “twinning” programs.

New approaches have emerged recently. They involve the creation of branch campuses in foreign markets and the development of online delivery courses through information and communications technologies (ICT) [8].

The aim of this paper is to analyze modern trend for internationalization of higher education using advanced e-learning programs regarding the Ukrainian and foreign researches’ point of view.

The term “e-learning” has only been in existence since 1999, when the word was first utilized at a CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) systems seminar. Other words also began to spring up in search of an accurate description such as “online learning” and “virtual learning”. [5].

In recent years the development in ICT has opened new opportunities for international cooperation between participants online. Ukrainian academic staff has an experience in e-learning education and massive open online courses [1; 2]. The virtual internationalization has increased under the conditions of economic crisis, social and cultural integration, and its importance is growing. Studying in an international team helps students to expand their knowledge of other societies, languages, cultures and business methods, and to increase their labour market prospects. Moreover, it declines the costs of education. The emergence of a new generation of software products allows geographically distributed teams use the Internet to have real-time lectures, brainstorming, presentations, etc.

The common software (groupware) creates a common work environment, which leads to the emergence of a new class of experts, namely e-professionals able to work together regardless of their geographical location. These developments set the stage for a comprehensive virtual internationalization of education. First, the emergence of such software enables to bring a new experience to the learning process namely, the international e-mobility, where students from different countries collaborate on their academic projects. Second, international competence increases students’ chances for further successful career in today’s global environment.

At the same time, studies show that virtual cooperation is not widely used by the universities. It can be explained by several reasons: the development and

use of e-collaboration tools requires a lot of personal time and additional resources; it is a problem to find foreign partners; poor experience in using electronic devices.

Virtual internationalization is defined as incorporation of different international aspects in research, teaching and administrative activities of higher education institutions based on the use of modern information technology.

To facilitate the creation of international e-partnerships teachers are proposed to create internet portal, where they can search for partners and create e-partnerships using modern information technology [3].

The latest information technologies opened the opportunity for rapid development of virtual internationalization of education and the prospect to strengthen the university presence in the international market and improve the access to the education. This trend will boost world ranking of Ukrainian universities and development of their web resources.

E-learning has been given much coverage in mass media over the last five years. Ukrainian scientist V. Kukharenko [2] considers that online courses are the background for the growth of knowledge in a distributed, global digital world and are of great importance for the future of civilization. They reduce barriers to learning and increase the autonomy of students who acquire the skills to participate in global interactions. K. Buhaichuk [1] names the advantages of e-learning among the main ones are: the possibility to organize online courses for target audience in any conditions where Internet is available; ability to choose a language; informal atmosphere; the ability to create personal learning environment and learning network; the ability to improve skills in teaching.

It is also underlined that universities are strongly affected by the emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). This will lead to a transformation of pedagogies and to new formats in higher education which better serve students and society at large.

However, it is observed that the MOOC movement is commercially dominated by the United States through both the number of course offerings and leading service providers. But Europe must seize this moment to take the opportunities offered by MOOCs. The open and online learning movement has great potential to educate the many in a flexible way that meets the needs of today's learners for an increasingly complex world. The Porto Declaration on European MOOCs calls upon all to embrace the possibilities the open and online education movement offers the Knowledge Society and stresses the need for stronger collaboration in Europe, based on the principles of transparent cooperation, mutual benefit and collective incremental advantage [9].

The European commission integrated various educational and training initiatives under the Lifelong Learning Program: the project HOME – Higher Education Online: MOOCs the European Way (started in January 2014 to June 2016) is one of them [7].

Massive Open Online Courses have received considerable media coverage since the beginning of 2012. They started in Canada and the USA, and their rise

to prominence was to a large extent driven by service providers such as Udacity, Coursera and Edx. In 2013 MOOC activity began in Europe starting with the pan-European initiative OpenupEd and different (regional) MOOC platforms became available (e.g., FutureLearn, Iversity, FUN, UNEDcoma, Miriada X).

Europe MOOC priorities differ from the United States. The studies show large differences between both continents. A large majority of European higher education institutions disagree with the statement that credentials for MOOC completion will cause confusion about higher education degrees while a majority in the US agrees. Next, more than 80% of European institutions agree with the statement MOOCs are important for institutions to learn about online pedagogy while in the US it has decreased from 44% in 2013 to 28% in 2014. In the US the opinion is mostly neutral or disagrees on the question if MOOCs are a sustainable method for offering courses, but in the EU more than half of the institutions agree.

However, one must also recognize the risks that come with the advent of MOOCs. Current evidence suggests that MOOCs do not reach those that most need access to higher education. The majority of participants who join online courses are already well-educated and live in developed countries. Moreover, they already have the digital and language skills needed to successfully complete these courses. The threats that MOOCs pose to the traditional educational system need further analysis and public debate. One threat, for example, is that only universities with celebrity academics and the financial means can develop MOOCs and offer them for free to a massive audience. Some consider this approach nothing more than a self-serving marketing exercise by a few universities with the effect of promoting the dominance of Western knowledge, a new kind of imperialism [7].

Important benefits for students are outlined below: no boundaries, no restrictions; more interactive; cost effective [5].

With e-learning the professor has the ability to host a guest lecture without having to spend much money. It can be done virtually, with cameras for both the lecturer and the students, and with the use of microphones to facilitate the same level of interaction that would be possible if the lecturer were physically present in the room.

Even given all the benefits of e-learning, one cannot deny there are some drawbacks. Practical skills are somewhat harder to pick up from online resources.

Though e-learning offers ease, flexibility and the ability to remotely access a classroom in the student's own time, learners may feel a sense of isolation. As technology progresses and e-learning benefits from the advancements being made, learners can now engage more actively with professors or other students using tools such as video conferencing, social media, and discussion forums amongst others.

E-learning requires the use of a computer and other such devices; this means that eyestrain, bad posture and other physical problems may affect the learner.

In the context of internationalization, open educational resources, massive open online courses, and expanding international cooperation it is necessary to form international organizations and associations in this area.

One of such organization is the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) founded in January 1987 [6].

EADTU is Europe's leading institutional association for open and distance higher education, and is at the heart of the modernization agenda of European universities. It has a European coverage and is regarded as a key-partner of the European Commission as far as lifelong open and flexible learning in distance higher education is concerned. It is committed to the creation of a European Learning Space in accordance with the Bologna Declaration and the Education and Training 2020 Strategy.

More and more multinational companies are starting to understand the economic return from investing in e-learning, as it offers a very cost-effective approach to training compared to conventional classroom programs. Lower training costs, increased employee retention, and the delivery of better goods and services are just a few of the many benefits that motivate companies to invest in e-learning. In fact, a recent study by Training Magazine estimates that organizations that have deployed e-learning instead of conventional instructor-led training are saving between 50% and 70% [4].

Conclusion. Capacity is needed to harness the potential of technology for a range of learners at all levels and in various contexts. The amount of data, information and knowledge accessible from infinity of sources makes critical thinking a key requirement for education and learning, along with ethical and responsive handling. If these needs are not addressed, attempts to integrate technology can lead to breakdown and failure in education systems. Policymakers need to examine how to better exploit the potential of ICT in education. Sustainable infrastructure, funding, content and quality assurance are key challenges in this area, as are the means of developing and implementing multilevel policies on e-safety and e-ethics.

There is also the expectation that MOOCs could contribute to improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of higher education, and as a means of broadening and innovating learning. Decades of successful practice have proven that online higher education learning is possible and can be of high quality. It has also become clear that it has not replaced face-to-face instruction, but offers an alternative for learners who are not able and prefer not to attend a brick-and-mortar institution, and allows for an overall flexibility in teaching and learning.

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