UDC 378 (519.5)

Denys Lifintsev
PhD in Economics, Associate Professor of the Department of Management
Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman

HYBRID LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SEARCHING FOR A BALANCE

Higher education has always been affected by numerous external factors and nowadays they include such global megatrends as globalization and digitalization. The role of digital technologies in education grew dramatically during COVID-19 pandemic. With a full-scale russian aggression against Ukraine digital technologies` role in higher education has become even more crucial for thousands of Ukrainian students who had to leave their campuses due to security reasons.

While under some circumstances caused by a horrific war or pandemic students have to study online using digital technologies it should be also noted that during online classes students might gain competences essential for their future career. Digital communication skills are undoubtfully crucial for young professionals starting their business career (López Peláez et al., 2020, Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019). And during online classes they are improving such competences often using just their smartphone that has probably become the most widespread channel of communication in general (Canavilhas et al., 2020).

Thus, there is probably an expediency of keeping some percent of classes in an online format even under normal external conditions. University students might appreciate the idea not only due to the opportunity of gaining additional digital competences, but also because of the additional time outside the campus when they could join the lectures from their home, café, park or sometimes from their office.

The results of a survey of 516 university students from Colombia, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine proved this hypothesis when 56,5% of the respondents supported the idea of keeping some part of the classes in an online form while only 22,3% disagreed. The same study illustrates that the majority of students wouldn't like to have all classes online, but up to 50% only (Lifintsev, Fleseriu & Wellbrock, 2022).

Online classes require digital competences from both categories: professors and students. The rise of Zoom and popularity of other platforms such as MS Teams in academic circles are obvious responses to the external changes. Educational platforms such as Moodle offer complex solutions to the hybrid format where students can easily transfer from offline to online studies once it is needed.

In our research we also focus on social media usage by university professors. Asking 108 Ukrainian students: "What is your general attitude to the YouTube usage in educational process?", we found out that 60,2% have highly positive attitude, 35,2% - very positive and 4,6% - neutral.

At the same time 89,8% would have positive or very positive reaction if their professor had his or her own YouTube channel for educational reasons, while 10,2% would be neutral about it.

It is clear that new generations of students are the most digitally savvy ever and still they need to improve their competences to meet the challenges of a digitally globalized business environment. While numerous studies illustrate quite different efficiency of online classes compared to offline ones and it is very difficult to see clear advantage of either approach (Kemp, 2020) we believe universities should use opportunities provided by modern technologies.

Though, it is still rather difficult to find optimal balance between online and face-to-face classes since the opinions vary. But in a modern world going digital furthermore it looks clear that universities should definitely consider the benefits for the students from the online classes even when external environment is normal.

REFERENCES

1. Canavilhas, J., Pellanda, E., Piñeiro-Naval, V., & Nunes, A. C. B. (2020). Mobile phones in young people everyday life: case study with Portuguese and Brazilian students. Revista Famecos, 27, e35850-e35850.
2. Kemp, N. (2020). University students' perceived effort and learning in face-to-face and online classes. Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching, 3(1), 69-77.
3. Lifintsev, D., Fleseriu, C., & Wellbrock, W. (2022). Digital communication skills: a five-country study of the attitude to online classes in universities. Estudos em Comunicação, (35).
4. Lifintsev, D., & Wellbrock, W. (2019). Cross-cultural communication in the digital age. Estudos em Comunicação, 1(28), 93-104.
5. López Peláez, A., Erro-Garcés, A., & Gómez-Ciriano, E. J. (2020). Young people, social workers and social work education: the role of digital skills. Social Work Education, 39(6), 825-842.