

# Development of Russian Online Learning System

## Educational and Socio-Cultural Aspects of Problem

Tatiana Sokhranyaeva

Department of Philosophy of Education  
Lomonosov Moscow State University  
Moscow, Russia  
E-mail: sokhran@gmail.com

**Abstract**—The article considers the problem of forming and functioning of the Russian system of online learning in educational and socio-cultural aspects. The tasks of developing the online learning system in conjunction with the interests of the main subjects of the social demand for the development of digital learning environment are analyzed. Socio-cultural dimension of the problem is revealed through the analysis of online learning as an element of the mechanisms of socialization, social and cultural integration. The importance of the practices of online education for developing the horizontal social ties and forming the educational programs participants' attitudes to cooperation is considered.

**Keywords**—Online learning; social demand; social integration

### I. INTRODUCTION

The development of online learning system is considered in the modern Russian society as an important task of educational and social policy. This task is actual, first and foremost, due to the innovative potential of online learning as a component of the formal education system, changing the educational process in both organizational and paradigmatic - the subject-subject interaction - aspects. But the online learning system involves the interaction of institutionalized elements of formal education and diverse practices of informal educational activities, which together offers opportunities to use technologies of online learning for solving many tasks of social development, in the processes of socialization and re-socialization of large numbers of people, in transgenerational interaction, etc.

The purpose of the article is to examine the problems of development of Russian online learning system in educational and socio-cultural aspects. The article analyzes the social demand for the system of online learning as an element of formal education, shows the social relevance of e-learning. It will also consider the potential of online learning system in the development of processes of social and cultural integration, emphasize the importance of principles of the online learning environment for developing students' social skills of cooperation and collaboration.

### II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE LEARNING SYSTEM AS A GOAL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The development of online learning as an element of the Russian educational environment can be productively considered as a response to certain social needs, as a social demand, the subjects of which are the state and various institutions, organizations, communities, and private individuals interested in the development of e-education system. Public interest in the development of the system of e-learning is due to understanding of the potential capabilities of this system both in realizing the objectives of educational policies and in resolving a wide range of social problems. In the educational aspect the effective online learning system can be a factor in improving the quality and relevance of Russian education, a condition of integrating the domestic practices of online learning in the international educational space, providing the availability of Russian education in the country and abroad. The new vistas of the use of online learning are opened up when analyzing the potential of the system in relation to the problems of preservation and development of the human potential of the country - training the personnel reserve of enterprises and organizations, fostering an entrepreneurial culture and developing an economic literacy of the population, retraining the people in a situation of unemployment or of changes in the structure of employment. It is no coincidence that the creation of conditions for systematic increasing the quality and expanding the opportunities of continuing education for all categories of citizens is identified as an objective in the priority project "Modern digital educational environment in the Russian Federation", defining the tasks of e-learning development [1].

The phased development of the system stipulates: further formation of digital educational content - online courses, interactive game resources and simulators, online resources of tournaments and competitions; involvement of leading specialists in development of training programs for all levels of education; establishment of a system for assessing the quality of online courses; development of normative legal acts regulating the classification of the results of e-learning within the framework of basic educational programs. The solution of the mentioned problems must result in minimizing the risks of online learning, ensuring the

effectiveness of the mixed forms of education, increasing the number of participants of e-learning among all categories of the population.

The implementation of the priority project involves the active functioning of national online learning platforms. But besides it is assumed to promote the cooperation with the global platforms of open education, "transfer of the global best developments and practices in the field of online learning" and "inclusion of online courses implemented on the global platforms of open education in the created mechanisms of classification of learning results outcomes"[1. P.14]. This approach reflects the modern situation in education when the development of national educational systems occurs in connection with the formation of world educational space and involves the use of experience of the most significant transformations of foreign educational systems. In the modern studies this phenomenon - "the implantation of elements of foreign educational systems in the national education system" – is signified by the concept of "educational hybridization" [2. P.12]. The state plays a crucial role in determining the direction of educational hybridization, and the goal of hybridization (as a creation of a balanced hybrid of domestic and foreign experience) is to increase the stability of the system under the conditions of more complex functioning.

It is important to note the increasing trend of choosing different forms of e-learning by Russian youth. This trend should be considered not only as a demand, but also as a challenge to the traditional education system, as it indicates a change in the educational needs of the most mass category of education subjects. In most cases, this choice is "voluntary", because the high skills of using electronic tools make formats of e-learning not only comfortable, but also attractive to young people [3]. Many motivated students have interest in e-learning which is also associated with the pursuance of developing the individual educational trajectory, with the possibilities of virtual academic mobility and concurrent learning in different educational programs, commitment to getting the educational product of high quality.

But there are reasons of a forced, "involuntary" choice of online learning by the youth, which actualize the problem of its development. So, disparities in economic and territorial development of Russian regions can severely limit opportunities for young people to obtain full-time education in the leading universities of the country. Note also the transformation of students as a social group associated with the forced labor employment of full-time students and making blended and distributed learning attractive. The choice in favor of online learning may be also due to the difficulty of obtaining full-time education by persons with disabilities.

There is every reason to believe that the interest of young people in various forms of e-learning in the formal education system will increase. Moreover, in the near future, the representatives of the people, for whom virtual communication and learning environment have become an integral part of everyday practice, will become independent

subjects of the social demand for education. Now this generation is in their teens, but in the short term, today's students will be autonomous social agents and their preferences regarding the use of electronic online forms and methods of education can be predicted with a high degree of confidence.

Social demand in the development of online educational practices also exists on the part of the educational institutions. The subjects of education of middle rank are the customers in relation to standard online programs for school children and also motivational online courses aimed at early vocational guidance of pupils and the satisfaction of cognitive interests of gifted children. In this sphere the interests of schools, pupils and their parents intersect. Teachers themselves actively participate in various online programs - with the aim of improving the substantive skills and developing the skills of work in the electronic environment, which are essential for interaction with modern schoolchildren who are significantly ahead of teachers in terms of the performance level of the e-learning technology [4].

The institutions of higher education are also interested in the effective functioning of the Russian online learning system [5]. The virtual extension of the educational space is one of the key elements of the institutional strategy of modern universities. It creates additional opportunities to increase the number of students who solve the problems of the academic mobility, to promote international cooperation in the field of higher education, to implement the programs of further education. In addition, the participation in the development of online learning systems is the implementation of the expert function and the "third mission" of universities related to the knowledge transfer.

The constant growth of the number of participants of online learning programs indicates that e-education is regarded by our society as a promising kind of educational activity allowing to achieve the goal of different scale and character. The variety and flexibility of learning formats, the availability of online educational products determine the relevance of this kind of education for society. The timely response to this social demand, which simultaneously is a challenge for the traditional system of education, is one of the priorities of Russian educational policy.

### III. ONLINE LEARNING IN THE PROCESSES OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

As online learning is becoming an increasingly noticeable segment of the education system, it is important to understand what function is performed by this type of educational practices in the processes of socialization. In this aspect the effectiveness of online learning must be determined by the extent to which the most important for the society results of education are achieved by online learning: forming a certain type of subject of social action, providing the social integration, forming the cultural identity. The practices of online learning have greater integrative and socializing potential, despite the fact that they do not provide the traditional "live" forms of socialization. This potential is

due to both the content of educational online products and the characteristics of the organization of online learning practices.

The content of e-learning platforms meets the needs of the subjects of education at different levels, in terms of volume and diversity of information exceeds the possibilities of any form of full-time study and in this sense creates the conditions for socialization and for formation of social competencies through the subject content. In addition, the content of the online programs may be very important in the aspect of social interaction problematics, the study of which is facilitated precisely by distancing program participants from each other. In these cases, online learning can complement other types of education and strengthen the socializing effects of the education system as a whole. Thus, the problem of gender identity is relevant not only for gender fluid individuals or groups but also for the society as a whole, because the social pressure often arises around this problem. The formation of a tolerant perception of the gender choice as a social competence can be done through online learning for a wide range of people of different ages and social statuses, and in the mode of relative privacy, which is often impossible offline.

The integrative function can be performed by online programs, closely related in their contents with the Russian historical and cultural context. Providing not only a direct learning effect – knowledge and skills, but also an indirect – introduction to the cultural environment, they are an element of the mechanisms of cultural integration, a socialization tool of the Russians themselves through the formation of cultural identity, and also as a means of adaptation of representatives of other cultures (in particular, migrant laborers' families) to the Russian cultural environment.

The consideration of the model of online learning practices shows that it is based not on the principle of hierarchy in learning but on the idea of cooperation in a group, which involves the formation of horizontal ties between participants of the educational process and the constant openness of the process. The educational online programs due to used in them various interactive methods can become a new "space" for social interaction for people of the very different ages, uniting them in groups around some kind of a significant purpose involving the receiving of the checked (by professional experts) knowledge in collaboration with members of the virtual community. In the process of such interaction the horizontal social ties arise that can form certain social competencies and generate positive social effects – various forms of cooperation and joint creative activity of individuals.

If we consider online learning basing on the concept of "Learning II" by G.Bateson as a learning of the contexts of Learning I, interactivity and continuous peer feedback are the specific context of this type of learning. This context is inseparable from the process of studying the course content; it stimulates the formation of students' specific attitudes towards the behaviour in the learning process – the willingness to cooperate in creating and developing of learning product, the responsibility for the learning process,

the readiness for peer teaching and control. To characterize the pro-social group activities in online learning the concept of "zone of proximal development" (L.Vygotsky) can be applied in the interpretation used in social psychology. The interaction of the individual with other members of the program can result in the occurrence of specific version of the zone of proximal development, with its educational and socializing effect, when a group of students performs for the individual as a supportive and conducive start for learning.

According to J. Rifkin, the development of online learning revolutionize the whole system of education not only in technical but also in paradigmatic aspect, forming the subjects of the coming "Collaborative Age". He notes that «in the Collaborative Age, learning is regarded as a crowdsourcing process and knowledge is treated as a publically shared good, available to all, mirroring the emerging definition of human behavior as deeply social and interactive in nature. The shift from a more authoritarian style of learning to a more lateral learning environment better prepares today's students to work, live, and flourish in tomorrow's collaborative economy» [6. P.92].

As it was mentioned, for so-called "generation Z" (children of 2000-2005 year of birth), from an early age included in the space of the Internet, online learning in a peer group is the basis of its subculture. The sociological portrait of the generation is not described with scientific rigor, but the current teenagers are already spoken about as a generation much more involved in the social activity than the previous one, sharing the ideas of social solidarity and common responsibility for the world events. If we accept of J.Rifkin's idea, we can assume that emerging in this subculture social competences of young people are conditioned not least by the specifics of their interaction in the environment of online learning. Moreover, in the field of online learning the youth are increasingly acting as prosumers – subjects, not only consuming but also producing a product for personal and collective use, since, as it is noted by A.Fulford, "content can be uploaded, shared and downloaded across the virtual word at near zero marginal cost" [7. P.374].

Online learning can be an effective tool in the resocialization of individuals by the way of restoring the socially useful ties of individuals or groups in cases when offline learning is uncomfortable or impossible. So, e-learning can be an instrument of the solution of problems related to the "demographic modernization" – the aging of the population in Russia. In the next 15 years, Russia will continue to increase the number of persons over working age, their specific weight in the structure of the population, the demographic load on the working population [8. P.7]. The involvement of older people in various programs of online learning is a means of maintaining their cognitive potential [9], prolongation of economic and social activity of the elderly persons, especially that the indicators of computer literacy of this cohort of the population in Russia is constantly increasing. The possibilities of online learning in the development of transgenerational interaction should be noted separately – the Russian youth is actively involved in

the development and implementation of e-learning projects for older people as volunteers.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the modern Russian society there is an actual social demand for the development of a national system of online learning. The task of ensuring its effective functioning is one of the priorities of Russian educational policy. The development of digital educational environment will improve the quality of the Russian education, will create additional conditions for its integration into the world educational space, which meets the national interests and expectations of other subjects of education. In the socio-cultural aspect, the value of online learning is due to the potential of this type of education as a factor of minimizing the risks and costs of socialization, development of processes of social and cultural integration, re-socialization of people of older age groups.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Passport of priority project "Modern digital educational environment in the Russian Federation". Approved by the Presidium of the Presidential Council of the Russian Federation for strategic development and priority projects (Minutes of October 25, 2016. No.9). [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://government.ru/media/files/8SiLmMBgjAN89vZbUUtmuF51ZYfTvOAG.pdf> (accessed 15.05.17.)
- [2] Senashenko V.S., Makarova A.A. Educational hybridization as instrument of modernization of the system of higher education. Alma mater (Vestnik vysshei shkoly). 2017. No.1. pp.11-15.
- [3] Burnyashov B.A. E-learning in institution of higher education. M.: RIOR: INFRA-M. 2017.
- [4] Koroleva D. Always Online: Using Mobile Technology and Social Media at Home and at School by Modern Teenagers. Educational Study Moscow. 2016. No.1. pp. 205–224.
- [5] Carnoy M., Kuzminov Y. Online Learning: How It Affects the University Structure and Economics. Panel discussion. Educational Study Moscow. 2015. No.3. pp. 8–43.
- [6] Rifkin J. The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism. N. Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- [7] Fulford A. Higher Education, Collaboration and a New Economics. Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 50, No.3. 2016. pp.371-383.
- [8] The elderly population of Russia: problems and prospects. Social newsletter. Analytical center for the Government of the Russian Federation. 2016. No. 5.
- [9] Sergeeva O.V. From print text to digital text: changing of elderly user's habits. Human Being. 2014. No.3. pp. 42-46.