

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE ORGANIZATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT JAZAN UNIVERSITY IN COMPARISON WITH THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

Due to the outbreak of COVID 19, universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including Jazan University, have closed their doors and shifted to distance education which has been carried out completely. Accordingly, it was necessary to train the faculty members, especially the new ones, in how to deal with the technology and use the available teaching aids so that the educational process continues to the best of its ability. Jazan University has been tremendously successful in this direction with some obstacles in students' use of educational means but they have also been trained. Also, one of the obstacles is the poor internet in remote areas inhabited by students. Jazan University successfully has used BLACKBOARD as a very interactive and excellent aid for distance learning where teachers can deliver their lectures online and students take different types of exams, submit assignments, take quizzes, participate actively or doing oral presentations. BLACKBOARD has assisted both teachers and students so that the learning process could go ahead successfully. It was really a thrilling experience for the author as a teacher and for his students as well to turn completely to the distance education during the suspension. The author teaches English as a foreign language which indeed needs a lot of practice, so he exerted a lot of efforts to make his students involved in classes, participate and practice their English effectively through BLACKBOARD. Therefore, his students have benefited well while sitting at their homes by interacting and participating in live discussions. BLACKBOARD is really a fruitful program during the suspension.

In recent years, the educational system of Uzbekistan is undergoing dramatic changes aimed at the formation of highly qualified personnel in demand in the labor market. In this regard, the country's leadership is taking active actions and measures to reform the system of education. This article highlights the key changes in the education system of Uzbekistan and the main challenges facing the country in the coming years. The problems and solutions of distance learning during the COVID-19 period in Uzbekistan are analyzed in the article as well. The author of the article makes an attempt to discuss the existing definitions given to distance learning and given his own one. the phenomenon "distant education" is rather new term in our education system. Truly speaking, globally it is not so old-fashioned phrase either. As the word "distant" has actively being used in our everyday life after the "technological

boom”, in particular, since the second half of previous century, not so many people have already been accustomed to managing their needs in distance. Development can completely modify and modernize human life. After the introduction of personnel computers and world web wide our life has gradually been enhanced in every point. Thus, the current condition and as well as the future prospects of newly found way of education have urged the authors on investigating the subject and provide with fruitful findings for the further improvements.

Keywords: education, innovative development, high education, science-technical progress, reformation, university.

BLACKBORAD: One of the e-learning management systems where it manages the educational process in a synchronous and asynchronous way, and allows a safe learning environment for teachers to present their courses and lectures through the multimedia.

Teaching and online learning environment.

Attention to the sphere of education becomes especially relevant worldwide in the age of globalization and information technology, when the level of development of a country is determined not only by socio-economic, cultural indicators, assessment of strength and power, but is largely based on its intellectual potential. After all, it is scientific and technological progress, the foundations of which are laid in the educational environment, that is the central link for sustainable development and prosperity of the country. The World Bank report "Changing Welfare of Nations" notes that it is human capital, i.e. the totality of knowledge, talents, skills and abilities of people that constitute the main wealth of a country. Thus, the welfare of developed countries is provided by human capital at 68%, and in developing countries - only at 41%. [1]. The pandemic has become a unique test of the power of international cooperation, manifested not only in the exchange of experience on epidemiological and organizational issues, but also in mutual financial, economic and food assistance among the population. In this regard, it has become clear in Uzbekistan that it is difficult to fully ensure national security, especially human security, by eradicating the coronavirus only within the country. During the pandemic, international organizations provided the necessary assistance to Uzbekistan, and in 2020, \$ 2.7 billion directed by international and foreign financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, financial institutions will provide health care to fight the pandemic, has allocated \$ 277 million to the storage health sector, sources said. [2].

Corona virus pandemic was a real test of many countries around the globe, among them Saudi Arabia which is really a great country to continue education virtually so that all students in all levels of education had classes successfully and really it was a challenge in particular, for teachers to handle with such a situation. Instructors at Jazan university got an excellent practice of using Blackboard for many usages, so they have become more practiced and professional in online education.

Autonomy and distance language learning.

The covid-19 pandemic in the social context has significantly affected the population, this due to the great impact that has been generated in all the contexts where the individual develops. Among the problems that can be highlighted due to their level of increase is social inequality, discrimination, exclusion, violence, among others, being those a reason for people to have effects on their well-being and quality of life. In relation to the aforementioned, this research aimed to analyze Covid-19 in the educational context in Uzbekistan universities and in the methodological context in virtual classes during this Pandemic. [3].

The most important strategic goal of Uzbekistan is to join the ranks of developed nations of the world and provide a decent life for its citizens. The country is implementing a clear, clear and deeply thought-out program of action, and the organizational, legal and practical, consistent and systemic measures being taken fully contribute to the implementation of democratic, political and economic reforms and social transformations aimed at creating broad opportunities for the comprehensive realization of the professional, intellectual and spiritual potential of citizens and society as a whole.

Under conditions when an educated, politically and socially active individual with a high level of legal consciousness and culture is assigned the role of the central agent of all transformations, the issues of progressive development of the education system are becoming increasingly important. As President of Uzbekistan ShavkatMirziyoyev rightly noted in this regard: "The success of reforms and our gaining our rightful place among the modern developed nations of the world are connected primarily with the development of science, education and upbringing in our country, and our competitiveness in these areas". [4]. It should be emphasized that the education policy pursued by Uzbekistan is aimed at ensuring consistent and systematic implementation of the principles proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which guarantees the right to free general education. [5].

Over the last 3 years a number of decrees, resolutions of the President have been adopted raising the higher education system to a new, higher level (Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for further development of higher education system" №DP-2909 of 20.04.2017 №18, article 313, №19, article 335, №24, article 490, №37, article 982; Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures for improving the quality of education at higher education institutions and ensuring their active participation in the ongoing large-scale reforms in the country" №DP-3775 of 05.04.2017, №19, article 335; №37, article 982. 982; Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures to improve the quality of education in higher educational institutions and ensure their active participation in the ongoing large-scale reforms in the country" №DP-3775 of 05.06.2018; Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve the system of training qualified personnel in demand and development of scientific potential in the National University of Uzbekistan named after MirzoUlugbek in 2019-2023.

Particular attention is paid to issues of reforming the higher education system with a focus on improving the level of scientific and pedagogical potential, compliance with modern

requirements of educational and methodological and information support of the educational process.

The first author needs to quote the following words for Kristen Ferguson (2020): “Online Education is an ever-challenging field of innovation and development. Just as technology continues to push boundaries and invent new markets, so also online educators adopt technology and create delivery methods to make education more flexible, convenient, and attractive to the modern student”. (p.1)

The online education is needed under any circumstances. The instructor needs to use it besides the traditional teaching so as to assign assignments, make quizzes, announcements or send the students results. Nowadays, teachers who are qualified in dealing with technologies are highly appreciated in all education levels, that is because online education is of utmost importance to both teachers and learners, in particular, during COVID-19 Pandemic in which necessity arouses into the scene.

It is obviously known that COVID-19 Pandemic closed all the educational institutions around the globe, so there was an urgent need to utilize technology more than before. Jazan University is one of those institutions that adopted this technology of online education so that the education process continues. The author is one of the teaching staff in Jazan University, so he was involved in that useful and fruitful project of online learning. The author teaches advanced levels majoring English in the field of Applied Linguistics. Therefore, he had to exert efforts so that his students could benefit well from online learning through Blackboard. In fact, it could not be exactly like physical learning during which students interact in face to face participation, but sessions took place in virtual classes where students had presentations, assignments, quizzes, exams and live discussions. One of the disadvantages of using online education during COVID-19, that a considerable number of students got excellent results at exams because they could find it much easier than physical exams.

Methods

Introduction. As the distance education is absolutely a new way of teaching, it requires from a subscriber to have a profound knowledge of computer communication. It will be, therefore, entirely sane concept to select the potential number of learners from those who are more or less aware of new gadgets and gizmos, particularly the use internet in education.

Statement of the Problem. In general, from 2017 to 2021 more than 1.7 trillion sums (more than 203 million USD equivalent) were allocated for the implementation of measures to improve the higher education system. The part of these, 1.2 trillion sums (approximately USD 144 million in equivalent) was allocated for the construction, reconstruction and renovation of educational and laboratory buildings, sports halls and student housing, more than 500 billion sums (approximately USD 60 million in equivalent) for the provision of educational and laboratory equipment, furniture and inventory, the creation of shared laboratory complexes, as well as for the development of information and communication technologies.[6].

Aims of the Study. High-tech advancements and modernizations have greatly contributed to a good deal of developments and progresses in our lives. By removing any physical boundaries, they created a unique virtual world that is characterized by speed, quality and efficacy. In turn,

this digital world gave a birth to newfangled improvements and betterments in the way of teaching and learning too – “distance education” - which devastated old concepts of education. To expose the advantages of distance education over classic education through the research and prove my hypothesis that instructing online through a distance is more effective than traditional method in developing language units (grammar and vocabulary). Pursuant to the Decree of the President "On measures for further development of the higher education system" each higher education institution establishes close partnership relations with leading foreign universities and centers. On the basis of established partnerships with foreign universities, it is envisaged to attract to Uzbekistan annually at least 350 foreign highly qualified teachers and scientists to the educational process in higher education institutions. The aims are expected to have the following results:

- Having familiarized with distance learning in terms of lack of experience of it.
- Having pre-intermediate or higher level of English;
- Completing a one or two-year English course with high marks;
- Being able to use computers and the internet without any difficulties for communicating and data-exchanging purposes.

Questions of the Study. At the same time the work on wide implementation of advanced pedagogical technologies, curricula and teaching materials based on the international educational standards is being carried out in the educational process. Taking into account the prospects of comprehensive development of regions and industries, the needs of territorial and sectoral programs, the target parameters of staff training in accordance with higher education are formed, the directions and specialties of training are optimized. According to the statement of purpose, it should be mentioned that specific research questions were outlined in order to make the study effective. They served as key points in solving the issue of teaching English to young learners by using learning and teaching at universities of Tashkent. The questions were the following:

- ✓ How efficient is distance learning and teaching for young learners' language ability, communication ability, and evaluating ability?
- ✓ How can the materials be effective and adequate for student motor skills, intelligence, and physical development?
- ✓ How can teachers select materials to evaluate them, motivate learners, and make adaptation of the learners?
- ✓ How do the teachers learn to teach an online course?
- ✓ Do the academic lyceum learners need to learn second language through distance learning method?

Consistent work is being carried out to solve the problem of creating and introducing new generation textbooks into the higher education system and providing higher education institutions with modern educational and scientific literature. The work on translation of the latest foreign literature into the Uzbek language is underway.

Hypotheses. To demonstrate the overarching effectuality of online learning over tradition classroom in teaching. Throughout investigations there are attempts to prove online learning as the best means to:

- Receive an education reasonably cheaply (without expenditures on commuting, in-campus activities and etc.);
- Upgrade successfully and easily the qualifications and knowledge of students;
- Work with mature students who have home and job responsibilities;
- Make schooling available for dwellers of far rural areas by the means of computer technologies;
- Grant perfect ground to practice what is being taught by conducting discussions, forums and interactive chats.

Steadily improving the level and quality of professional skills of teaching staff requires advanced training courses, internships, PhD and Masters courses abroad for graduates of higher educational institutions.

Significance of the Study. Currently, each higher educational institution of the country is developing a specific program in this area. Work on attracting leading foreign universities to open their branches in Uzbekistan does not stop. If before 2017, it was organized training in the capital branches of seven foreign universities, namely the International Westminster University, the Management Development Institute of Singapore, Turin Polytechnic University, Moscow State University, Plekhanov Russian State University of Economics, Gubkin Russian Institute of Oil and Gas, South Korea INHA University, then in 2018 alone 13 new universities started operating in Uzbekistan, in particular the International Silk Road Tourism University in Samarkand, a branch of the National Research Technological University "MISIS" (Russia) in Almalyk and Puchon University of South Korea in Tashkent.

This increase in the number of universities, including branches of foreign and local universities, as well as the emergence of non-state universities will increase the coverage and quality of higher education among young people.

It should be noted that in the future it is planned to hold educational forums with such countries as France, Germany, Japan, Turkey, China, South Korea and India.

The purpose of all these systemic and consistent transformations implemented in the education system is to create conditions for the formation of a harmoniously developed personality. This is due to the fact that the ultimate success of reforms in the country largely depends on the education and upbringing of young people, the formation of their worldview on the basis of modern knowledge, spirituality and enlightenment. In particular, in countering such threats as terrorism and extremism, it is no longer effective to deal only with their consequences, the main task is to eradicate the root causes of these threats and educate young people in the spirit of high ideals of humanism. This is the approach Uzbekistan advocates in addressing the most important problems of our time.

At the same time, it is important to understand that in order to solve complex problems in the education system we need not only good teachers and educators, but also good managers,

so-called "education managers" - independent, entrepreneurial, competent and experienced leaders who are able to work with young people, create and implement development programs.

Already now the position of a manager or chief manager is being introduced in the country's higher education institutions. This is a person who deals directly with issues of financial and economic management. The new structure of role distribution will help pay more attention to the educational process, methods, and attracting the best teachers.[7].

Information technology plays a huge role in improving the efficiency of the educational process. Unfortunately, it must be stated that to date there is a low level of use of information technology in the educational sphere, both in terms of increasing access, and in terms of the use of new teaching methods.

Measures taken to solve these problems will promote the widespread use of ICTs, allow greater flexibility and lower costs in selecting courses for study and mastering the content of relevant specializations provided by higher education. The introduction of modern educational programs, pedagogical and smart technologies in the educational process will help to radically improve the quality of education.[8].

Obviously, a positive impact on the quality of training of highly qualified specialists will be made by the organization of distance learning classes and seminars, video conferencing, which will also contribute to the strengthening of interactive interaction and cooperation between educational institutions, including foreign ones.

It is important to form the competitiveness of universities. The main tool for solving this problem is the fundamentally new normative documents in the field of education (educational standards), which are currently being developed taking into account the modern experience of the educational process organization in the leading universities of the world.

Research Methodology.

Specific steps in the experimental process. As the matter of the fact that the research is expected to be conducted in two discrepant settings: classroom and online, there may appear an urge for several essential steps to be taken. Even though the sequence of events is similar to each other, in fact, they will differ in peculiarities, time framing and environment it occurs in. They are:
Phase 1. Evaluating background knowledge of subjects.

In order to set clear goals, forward it is crucial to analyze present situation of learners. Therefore, specifically designed tests will be applied at first step into two settings to know how sound students' grammar and vocabulary is. In addition, a demo-lesson will have been conducted with both groups before the official start in order to get familiarized with each other and with the course requirements. As the anticipated results come out, the research will move into second phase.

The participants of traditional group will be engaged into classroom sessions. Three sessions, each continuing for 2 hours are held a week which is conceived to be as the best approach to the course. During the sessions, all the subjects are introduced the topic and checked for progress and acquisition process. All the materials have been selected with considerable attention according to characteristics of the requirements. The plan, which is specially designed for delivering specific information about the grammar and vocabulary units, is expected to be

utilized. At first, students are checked for background knowledge and awareness of English modal verbs and classified vocabulary. This test includes items for revealing both theoretical comprehension and demonstrating practical output in the form of task completion and retelling the topic. All the 10 subjects will have taken the tests before the main part of teaching initiates. Regarding to the virtual world, the subjects of the experimental group is to have intensive sessions in online format, namely, using Blogspot.com social network, the well-known platform for writing entries. As the members of the online teaching assemble, they initiate to work with weekly updated data. The researcher is the administrator of the group and has following responsibilities for:

- updating weekly lessons;
- controlling the sequence of the processes;
- guiding the subjects through the session;
- checking course-takers' replies and giving feedbacks;
- answering for technical problems the they might face.

The subjects are anticipated to participate actively in all discussions, accomplish the given tasks and home assignments, take an enthusiastic interest to learn more, share and exchange ideas and, of course, be motivated to broaden their grammar and vocabulary range. The overall duration of the all sessions is two weeks in which there should be held 6 e-lessons.

Phase 2. Working on theoretical part

This phase may take a bigger part of the lesson as the field of investigations is too broad and theoretical as well. Complexity of chosen topics for curriculum requires a variety of methods to deliver the content. Consequently, students-oriented virtual environment is bound to come into existence and the approach is taken. For instance, in experimental group subjects are going to be taught grammar by the help of the visual aids such as pictures and posters. This is done in order to form clear comprehension in learners about the English language tenses and modals as they are considered to be troublesome to distinguish from each-other. The more cases will be provided the better understanding they will shape. As for vocabulary part, Mr. Duncan's vocabulary video lessons are integrated into the process and attached to the weekly post. It is followed by written explanations of new words and sample examples that can make the data to be absorbed easily.

Nearly the same pattern is likely to be implemented into traditional classroom environment with major alterations. In this setting, teacher will be the in the center of the lessons and is the main source of the knowledge. Unlike the experimental group, traditional group subject are able to acquire theoretical knowledge of topics with the help of the instructor/researcher. Furthermore, pictures and video lessons are also integrated into the process as authentic materials for learners.

Phase 3. Moving to practical input

As is widely known, the practice makes perfect. Bearing this in mind, there are planned to have a lot of practice sessions in both formats in order to make learners confident about their knowledge and secured about their English. Both group subjects are assigned to do practical activities such as exercise completion and identifying the cases for each grammar rules (for

instance, going to or present continuous for planned actions while future simple is for on-the-spot decisions), multiple choice tasks and picture describing sessions. Finally, the subjects will be asked to produce their own work in the form of either written or oral compositions utilizing learned new words and tenses.

Because of diverse settings (online and classroom), sessions differ in format and techniques of delivery, but not in the overall content and sequence.

The study explored the impact of technological progress on learner engagement when developing new educational standards, the main task is to train modern, highly professional specialists with the latest knowledge, analytical and creative thinking, skills of using advanced information and communication technologies, and capable of effectively applying all this in their daily practical activities. The goal is to make our education meet world standards and introduce advanced foreign methods of evaluating knowledge, which will guarantee the quality and efficiency of the education system.

Delimitation of the Study. There are anticipated to see several variables in the research such as dependent, independent, intervening and etc. Dependent variable, the one which is affected by the other variables, will perhaps be a number of subjects selected for both Traditional and Experimental groups. Also, the growth of the mark on subjects' classroom performance assessed by the researcher-generated rubric may have crucial impact on others. The Independent variable, which is usually manipulated in order to see what effect it has on the dependent variable, will be mode of instruction (classroom vs. online networking). As for intervening one there may be many more obstacles associated with anonymity of the subjects in online setting and spelling correction function of the computers for them. It may change and effect the true score subjects can actually get for their performances.

Recommendations. Thus, the new educational standards should become one of the most important means of improving the level of training of specialists with higher education through the development in the process of learning the basics of professional activity, methods, techniques and skills of individual and collective performance of research work, development of abilities to scientific creativity, research independence and as a result - formation of highly professional specialists capable of generating new knowledge and its effective use in the context of globalization. Research was quite challenging and difficult at the same time because the settings the research has been held were quite diverse. Furthermore, it is important to seek new ways to teach EFL to students in order to motivate them to learn it for pleasure not only because they have to learn it. Thus, teachers need to think about student's personal goals.

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