3. Мур М., Фішер Г., Стівенс К. До інтегрованого біоспостереження Міністерства оборони: оцінка та можливості. *Rand Health Q*. 2014 рік.

4. Ліндлер Л. Створення біосховища Міністерства оборони для майбутнього: потенційні переваги та шляхи розвитку. Військова медицина. 2015.

5. Проривні біологічні технології для національної безпеки. DARPA : веб-сайт. URL: https://www.darpa.mil/news-events/ breakthrough-biological-technologies-for-national-security (дата звернення 20.09.2022)

EUROPEINIZATION OF EDUCATION DIGITALIZATION ON EXAMPLE OF LATVIA AND CENTRAL ASIA COUNTRIES

Mironova J.
Mg.soc., Director of program Business Administration in Tourism
ISMA University of Applied Sciences
Riga, Latvia

Dehtjare J.
Dr.oec., As.prof., Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs
ISMA University of Applied Sciences
Riga, Latvia

Kinderis R.
Doc.dr. As.prof., Director for Strategic Development
Klaipeda University of Applied Sciences
Klaipeda, Lithuania

Introduction

Since the SARS-Cov-2 virus, called Covid-19, caused a massive economic downturn, which used to be seen as the worst global crisis in the past years, World Health Organization was forced to declare a pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Therefore the pandemic led universities worldwide to face many challenges in the education process. According to UNESCO Covid-19 Education Response in 2021 many universities were preparing safety measures for providing safe and effective learning in times of pandemic (UNESCO, 2021). Most European universities have admitted –

the blended learning approach is still vital even after the pandemic has decreased its dissemination impact. The combination of in-class and remote studies has shown itself as a positive force to expand knowledge and skills more globally, improve digitalization and serve as a demanded communication method. Still, the implementation of remote learning during the first wave of the pandemic was rather chaotic, painful, and required emergent investments in infrastructure. Not all the higher education institutions, especially private, especially apart EU, were able to afford necessary innovations without continuous state support in an order to establish a new, powerful and effective continuous model of digitalized approach to studies – such as blended learning.

As it is stated by Mekkonen and Muluye, in developing countries online education is a challenging process, influenced by many factors, such as not proper infrastructure and lack of computers in the households (Mekkonen and Muluye, 2020). Porkhel and Chettri in their research in 2021 raised the same problem – the affordability of online education for a different group of students from varied economic backgrounds created huge disruption in the education system (Porkhel and Chhetri, 20221).

Digitalization of education was an important topic even before the pandemic, but now it is obvious – the pandemic proved a necessity to implement a new innovative approach of introducing a digitalized system into the field of education all over the world.

The aim of this study is to research the European experience of the education digitalization process and its transfer to the countries of Central Asia.

The object of the study is the process of higher education in Latvia and Central Asia.

The subject of the study is the digitalization of higher education taking into account European experience.

Keywords: higher education, digitalization, online studies, blended learning, EU, Latvia, Central Asia.

Digitalization of education in Latvia

The education system in Latvia was affected during the pandemic the same as in other countries of the world. However, a pandemic can be seen not only as a crisis causing the issue but also as an opportunity to continue the digitalization of education, offering a new and sustainable approach to digital education. Nevertheless, the pandemic showed everyone the importance of education digital transformation, as this approach made the education process accessible during the pandemic, while in-class was stopped. As the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education Liga Lejina

mentions, the crisis, caused by Covid-19 served as a catalyst for the digitalization of education, as work on it has been ongoing over the last years before the start of the pandemic (Lejina, 2020). The Information Society Development Guidelines, developed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (VARAM) include Latvia's digital strategy. The aim of the mentioned guidelines is "to provide an opportunity for everyone to use the possibilities offered by ICT, to develop a knowledge-based economy and to improve the overall quality of life by contributing to the national competitiveness and economic growth and job creation"(Information Society Development Guidelines, 2013).

Petrovic and colleagues, in their research done in 2022, state that the digitalization of higher education in Latvia and Lithuania is at a lower level compared to Estonia and Nordic countries (Petrovica et al., 2022).

In the document "Evaluation of digitalization of Higher education in Latvia" done by the Ministry of Education of Latvia, the following goals were mentioned: To actively use digital solutions in studies, in research, and for optimization of internal processes; To improve the skills of digital technologies of academic staff and researchers; To transfer new knowledge and technologies to the population (lifelong education) (Evaluation of the digitalization of higher education institutions in Latvia, 2020).

Digitalization of education in Central Asia countries

Countries of Central Asia like all countries in the world experienced challenges during the pandemic. As to Adrian Veale, the role of the European Union in education policy is to accelerate the process of cooperation by developing a team approach based on joint work, exchange of experience, practices, and ideas, which is used in the development of cooperation with countries in Central Asia. Challenges that countries face in Europe and Central Asia are common, such as providing quality and facilitating the transition to digital technologies (Veale, 2020). Digitalization and green recovery will lay as the base of the future dialogue between Europe and Central-Asia countries. As all five countries of Central Asia have populations younger than average globally, there is a huge possibility in the development of the potential for further region modernization (Burian, 2020). Sustainable cooperation between European countries and Central Asia countries has a positive impact on the modernization of education systems of Central Asia, as the challenges that are education industry faces are the same while ensuring qualitative education (Annadurdieva, 2020).

HEIs of the Republic of Uzbekistan has developed their strategic plans for the next 10 years with a focus on improving the online study process. Funding of online studies is an important issue nowadays in Uzbekistan, it is

obvious the number of investments needs to be increased compared with the pre-pandemic period. (Zaratti et al.m, 2022). In Uzbekistan, improvement of ICT infrastructure was done by providing a broadband internet connection, computers, and ICT tools for schools. Distance learning was ensured by three TV channels, as well as the availability of online lessons was expanded by providing access to them on Youtube and Telegram (Saytov, 2020). The conference resolution was adopted during the international educational congress "Global Health", organized by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The resolution implies support of the new approaches in the process of education, such as blended learning, in order to attract a wider amount of students, achieve globalization impact, foster the cooperation between HEIs and the stakeholders and increase the competitiveness of higher education according to the market demands. (Ministry of Health of Kazakhstan, 2022).

Conclusion

As the period of the pandemic has proved – digitalization in the education field is crucial for the development of qualitative and modern education, accessible by every stakeholder in Europe and Central Asia. Higher Education Institutions in Europe and Central Asia are facing the same challenges, and cooperation between these regions is extremely valuable in the terms of experience sharing and gaining new, most successful practices through the Europeanization of the digitalization approach. Countries of Central Asia and its population have wide opportunities in regard to supporting the education digitalization process of education. Adoption and support of the digitalization approach in the mentioned countries are possible due to their relatively younger population and their quantitative predominance in the population sample, able to gain new experiences in the fast term. Nevertheless, the implementation of the education digitalization process taking into account the European experience became an integral part of the educational process recovery after the pandemic.

References:
1. Annadurdieva, G. (2020). Ministry of Education Turkmenistan
2. Burian, P. (2020). EU Special Representative for Central Asia.
3. International Congress (2022). Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
4. Lejina, L. (2020). Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia.
5. Ministry of Education (2020). Evaluation of the digitalisation of higher education institutions in Latvia.

6. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. (2013). Information Society Development Guidelines.

7. Mekkonen, S.T., Muluye, W. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Education System in Developing Countries: A review. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 159-170.

8. UNESCO Covid-19 Education Response (2021) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378174 (accessed 01.09.2022).

9. World Health Organization (2020). WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), World Health Organization, Available online: https://covid19.who.int (accessed on 20th September 2022).

10. Petrovica, S., Anohina-Naumeca, A., Avanesova, J. (2022). The Impact of Digitalisation of HIgher Education: The Case of Latvia and Nordic – Baltic Region. *Applied Computer Sciences*, 27(1), 19-29.

11. Pokhrel, S. Chhetri, R. (2021). A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning. *Higher Education for the Future,* 8(1), 133-141.

12. Saytov, K. (2020). DIgitalisation of general education in Uzbekistan. Education and Production Integration Division, Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan.

13. Zaratti, Z., Ermetova, J., Azadovna, S.R. (2022). Covid-19 and Higher Education in Uzbekistan: lessons from two universities. *Higher education Policy and Leadership Studies,* 3(2), 144-164.