

СЕКЦІЯ 1. ПРОБЛЕМИ ОСВІТИ ТА МИСТЕЦТВА В КОНТЕКСТІ СУЧАСНИХ ЦИВІЛІЗАЦІЙНИХ ВИКЛИКІВ

СТАТТІ

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VIRTUAL UNIVERSITIES IN THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL SPACE

The aspects of virtual universities activity in the European educational space have been examined in the article. It has been found that the virtual university ensures the accessibility and openness of the higher education system based on distance learning. Examples of activities of European educational institutions based on the use of digital technologies have been given. It has been concluded that the information society contributes to the transition to virtual education.

Keywords: *virtual university, European educational space.*

The modern stage of civilizational development is characterized by globalization and the evolution of digital technologies, which is associated with changes in existing social structures and the emergence of new social phenomena. Globalization is characterized by universalization, internationalization, modernization, digitalization, which is marked by the penetration of information and communication technologies into all spheres of social life. Social transformational changes require qualitative changes in all areas of human activity, especially in the field of education.

In connection with the spread and use of the virtual educational environment and in the context of the development of the open educational space, the phenomenon of the virtual university is emerging. A virtual university is a resource that allows solving the maximum number of educational development tasks with minimal investment [2].

Scholars of Comparative Education in the field of internationalization of higher education claim that in the near future there will be a positive trend towards an increase in the number of virtual universities and virtual academic mobility of

students. That is why, in order to successfully integrate Ukraine into the European and world educational space, there is a need to more carefully study the possibilities of implementing the virtual university model.

Theoretical and applied aspects of the development of the digitalization problem are highlighted in the works of scientists: V. Bykov, V. Hlushkov, V. Hrytsenko, O. Spivakovskiy, Yu. Teslia, A. Tymchenko, M. Zghurovskiy et al. The problems of the functioning of virtual universities are presented in the works of O. Hniedkova, M. Koziar, L. Lukianova, M. Rizun, H. Sotska, D. Svyrydenko et al. The problem of mass open online courses in the European and global educational space is highlighted in the works of V. Artemenko, K. Buhaichuk, K. Kuzmin, L. Petrova, E. Shavninet et al. However, the problem of the virtual university, in our opinion, requires in-depth study.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the virtual university phenomenon in order to identify positive practices that can be used within the framework of reforming the higher education system of Ukraine in accordance with European and world trends.

In the course of the study, it was established that the spread of digitalization processes in all spheres of society was the impetus for the emergence of new institutional forms of higher education institutions that offer online educational services. Therefore, participation in massive open online courses (from the English MOOC – Massive Open Online Courses) is a fairly common trend among students from all over the world. The term MOOC was introduced as a result of the teaching of the course «Connectivism and Connective knowledge» (also known as CCK08) in 2008 by the University of Manitoba (Canada) led by George Siemens and Stephen Downes and, who pioneered the use of massive open online courses [4].

The best universities in the world participate in the process of creation and implementation of MOOC: Berkeley, Brown, Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, Stanford and many others. Distance education initiatives are supported by large corporations and charitable organizations (Google, Microsoft, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, etc.).

The new model of education, which becomes the embodiment of the idea of forming an open society, needs innovative forms of education, oriented to the peculiarities of the digital society. One of these forms is a virtual university, which has the ability to ensure the accessibility and openness of the new system of higher education.

In the publication «Analysis of Virtual Universities Activity on the Example of Polish E-learning Platforms» [1] the experience of virtual universities in Poland is presented. Virtual universities are considered as a new stage in education. The selection has been made, the evaluation process of virtual universities has been described, and their extended classification has been presented. The website of the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów (<https://ua.uitm.edu.eu/mozliwosci/informatyzacja/>) presents the work of the virtual university and its main components: *the virtual dean's office* (access to information about the course of study: schedule, grades of tests and exams, study plan, information about teachers, etc.), it is possible to choose subjects that are implemented as part of flexible education; *virtual accounting* (access to financial information: payment term, scholarship, etc.); *e-mail* (information about grades, important events in the life of the university and organization of training courses, for communication with teachers and other students of the university); *online consultations* (consultations and access to educational materials, for choosing subjects and a thesis supervisor. The thesis can be sent for verification using anti-plagiarism systems. It is possible to take exams online); *electronic library*; *information kiosks* (after entering the system using electronic authentication, various university databases are available, including data from the dean's office and accounting); *distance learning* (one can find training courses using a web browser. It is possible to learn to solve tasks at home, and set the deadline together with the teacher. It is possible to study at once in different specialties and receive relevant certificates); *smartphone* (it is possible to receive information about the progress of studies and evaluations via SMS and interactive voice response (IVR)); *free software* (thanks to the university's cooperation with IT companies, it is possible to download

and use various programs for free on one's own digital device: computer, smartphone or tablet for preparing for classes and completing projects or exercises).

In the publication «A free virtual university for all interested has appeared in Germany» (Rubrika, 2019) it is stated that a free virtual university for all interested has been opened in Germany, in which one can learn from German professors without leaving one's home. This project is called the «Virtual University of Bavaria» (Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern) and three dozen institutions of higher education are involved in it, in particular the Ludwig-Maximilians University of Munich, the Technical University of Munich, the University of Regensburg and the universities of Augsburg, Ingolstadt, Kempten, Coburg, etc. This project is open to everyone who wants to improve their German language, improve their knowledge in a certain field or choose a new profession. The activities of this Virtual University of Bavaria are intended for different groups of students: 1) virtual courses in the Classic section are free and can be attended by various students, those participating in the project, and receive credit points; 2) the Smar section contains mixed or hybrid training programs, i.e. the student receives knowledge both independently online and with a teacher; 3) the Open section contains massive open online courses where there are no requirements for applicants, and it is not necessary to be a student to attend them. The materials are freely available to anyone. There are no credit points, but you can get a certificate of studying the training course, which is confirmed by online tests. Course topics range from financial management and online marketing to genetics, microbiology, and orthopedics. You can learn how to keep yourself safe on social networks, how to make your own home smart, how to cope with stress and even DJing [3].

Note that a virtual university is an institution of higher education that offers educational programs and courses that are implemented by means of electronic learning using the Internet [5, p. 7]. Due to the popularization and use of various electronic learning tools (video lectures, video conferences, podcasts, blogs, chats, forums, e-portfolios, webinars, etc.) it has become a trend to apply these technologies

not only in online education. Thus, modern universities and colleges use them in the educational process as a guarantee of innovative development and competitiveness.

Note that a number of identical concepts are used today, in particular: «virtual university», «open university», «eUniversity», «eCampus» and others.

The analysis of scientific literature and the experience of European institutions of higher education provides grounds for a conclusion about the educational advantages of a virtual university, in particular: open access to study at leading universities regardless of the place of residence; the possibility of simultaneous study and professional activity, which ensures career growth; the possibility of optional study of disciplines from educational programs of other universities and original author's courses presented in a virtual environment; providing the student with interactive mentoring support; an individual study plan with the possibility of academic breaks in studies; the possibility of constant updating of educational and methodical materials and forms of education; creation of advanced virtual infrastructure, etc.

Conclusions. Considering the above, it can be concluded that virtual universities reveal fundamentally new possibilities of the modern educational space – solving the problem of equal access to quality education, implementing the process of continuous learning throughout life. Currently, virtual universities complement traditional university education, and in the near future, in response to public demand, there will be a convergence between them. After all, virtual universities have significant potential for modernization of the sphere of higher education in today's information society.

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