



Social Responsibility and Sustainability: The Changing Mission of Higher Education

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Abstract

The article examines the basic principles of higher education and the involvement of universities in achieving sustainable development goals on a global scale.

A complete overview is given of the fundamental principles of higher education - academic freedom and academic responsibility, which form the value basis of classical education in its historical period of development. In modern conditions, these principles are increasingly reflected in the activities of universities related to their key role in solving economic, social and environmental problems. Universities are increasingly declaring social responsibility and proving this through their decisions in the face of a social crisis.

Keywords: higher education, university, sustainability, development, academic integrity

Introduction

At the beginning of 2020 the higher education system truly became the beginning of grandiose changes: In a few days 95% of students on all planets have switched to remote or hybrid training format¹. The new coronavirus infection undermined the classical foundations of higher education, having created barriers to implementation developed for centuries of learning models, and with a high degree of probability could lead to complete suspension training. So were V period military actions, natural disasters, and epidemics: universities closed or moved to other safe areas. In spring 2020 the threat of closing universities for quarantine was quite realistic and, if this it happened 30-40 years ago, a similar outcome would have been inevitable.

But universities all over the world, including Russian ones, despite difficulties, continued implementation of educational processes to remote format to help students continue their education, and graduates to complete it. In this decision, also those actions, which were directed at supporting communities pre-applicants, and students undoubtedly show the social responsibility of universities and their contribution to the sustainable development of society.

Considering the role highest schools in the current decade, it can be argued that universities all over the world have a moral obligation to make a more significant contribution to achieving the Goals of sustainable development UN – through conducting scientific research at the regional level, national and global levels, increasing quality of education, creation of fair and inclusive educational environment, development internationalization and networking, digital transformation higher education, conservation values socially responsible no behavior. Events in 2020 related to COVID-19, demonstrate the necessity from- draw lessons from the experience gained in reacting efforts to make universities more capable of quickly adapting to new challenges of an unstable ness external environment.

Review of literature and research. Last thing the decade was marked by a large number of initiatives aimed at solving global problems of sustainable development. All more often the implementation of the proposed initiatives is associated with the participation we eat the higher school, which takes upon itself the answer responsibility for participation in decisions regarding economic, social, and environmental problems.

In modern conditions, accompanied by deep technological transformations, escalating environmental problems, non-transient attack coronavirus infections new requirements for market labor to level, and the quality of development of competencies graduates, a deep rethinking is taking place in the mission of higher education [2]. Universities received sufficient academic freedom in the formation of a range of educational programs grams and their content, must realize that freedom always comes with responsibility [12]. We admit that academic freedom and academic responsibility always were accompanying categories, But nowadays, the degree of their conjugation becomes very significant – she predetermines the size contribution of the educational organization to the solution problems of civil society [3].

According to the concept of academic freedom, a teacher has the right to create and disseminate knowledge, communicate ideas and present facts without external coercion or restriction, without corresponding repression or persecution. Possible restrictions are in the internal environment of the university and manifest themselves through the evaluative opinion of colleagues regarding the originality, significance and rigor of academic knowledge, scientific ideas and results. At the same time, the

emphasis on academic freedom does not deny the responsibility for modernity and timeliness of knowledge acquisition, high their quality, sufficiency for personal development and professional development, demand by students and the employer community [4]. These requirements have always been imposed on knowledge, but in the conditions of the knowledge economy they certainly increase many times over [5].

Issues of academic responsibility addressed through universities' "third mission" are also central to the activities of the UK Citizens' Universities Network, an international consortium on Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy. The idea of enhancing the significance of events Universities' research to address society's challenges is at the heart of the Global Research Council's 2019 Statement of Principles, Meeting Social and Economic Impact Expectations [7]. It should be emphasized that "research influence" in no way refers to those accepted in academic environment, indicators of a scientist's success, such as citation indices, number of publications in international scientometric databases (Scopus, Web of Science), impact factor of journals, etc. Society is interested in the real contribution of universities to improving the quality of life, as well as determining the role of ongoing research in finding adequate and prompt responses to social challenges. Universities' responsiveness to the needs and demands of society is both a moral imperative and a strategy that deserves our full support.

Research methodology

One of the ways universities are responding to social issues is the rapid response they have taken to the COVID-19 pandemic. First of all, these are restrictive measures to prevent the spread of infection concerning the teaching staff and students - the transfer of the educational process to a remote mode [11]. On the one hand, the regime of limiting contacts of participants in the educational process was indeed extremely important to counter the spread of the new coronavirus infection and preserve health, but with the other is that the degree of readiness of the teaching staff to work remotely may directly indicate the significance of their contribution to solving the social crisis situation. With regret, we can state that attempts by teachers to use face-to-face teaching technologies in distance learning did not lead to planned results, but the skills of mastering distance educational technologies (hereinafter referred to as DET) and methods of their application in the

format of online education

a large proportion of teachers were not proficient. Thus, 70% of US university teachers in the pre-pandemic period did not conduct classes in a distance format and did not have distance learning skills.

In Kazakhstan, 60% of teachers who rated their level of DET proficiency at 3.2 points out of 5 were classified in this category. At the same time, the number of remote mediators educational technologies in Kazakhstani universities are noted at the level of 25% (Fig. 1) - they account for positive expectations from the quality of online learning.

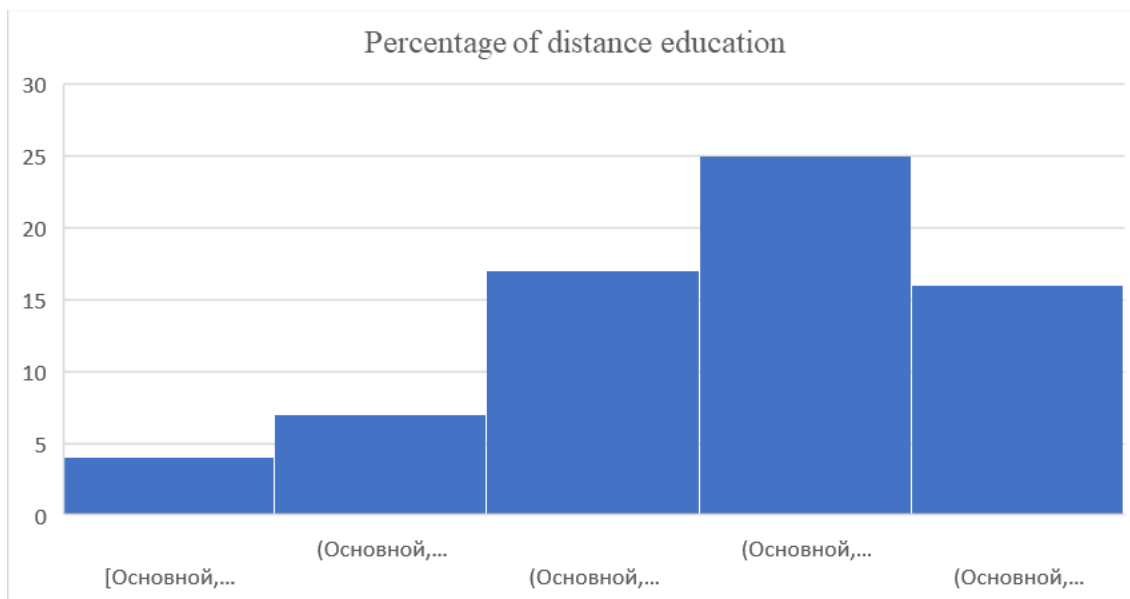
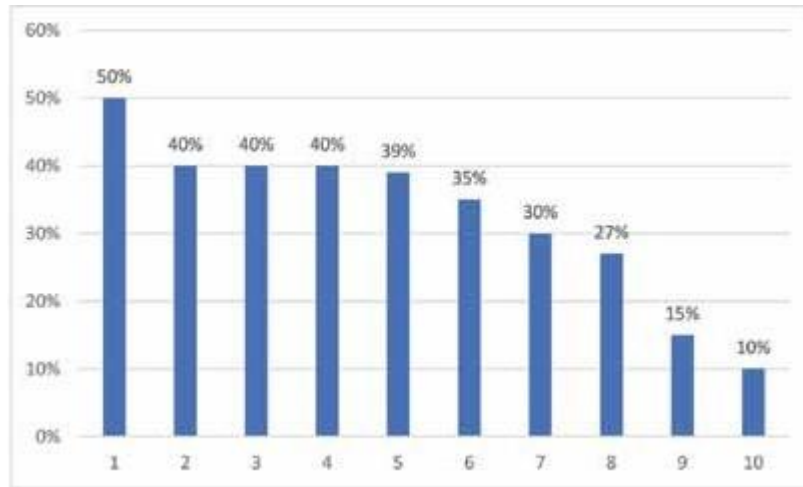


Fig. 1. Distribution of teachers of Kazakhstani universities by degree of proficiency in distance education

Results and discussion

It should be noted that the majority of teachers at Kazakhstani universities have a negative attitude towards the transition to an online format training, even as an element of a hybrid training format, and this is due, first of all, to high labor intensity methodological preparation and intensity academic work (this is the opinion of 88% of teachers), the unpreparedness of some universities (15% of the total) for electronic communication between teachers and students, as well as a statement of the low motivation of students (27% of student respondents) to self-organize to master educational programs and the presence of a number of social problems among them 10. The main

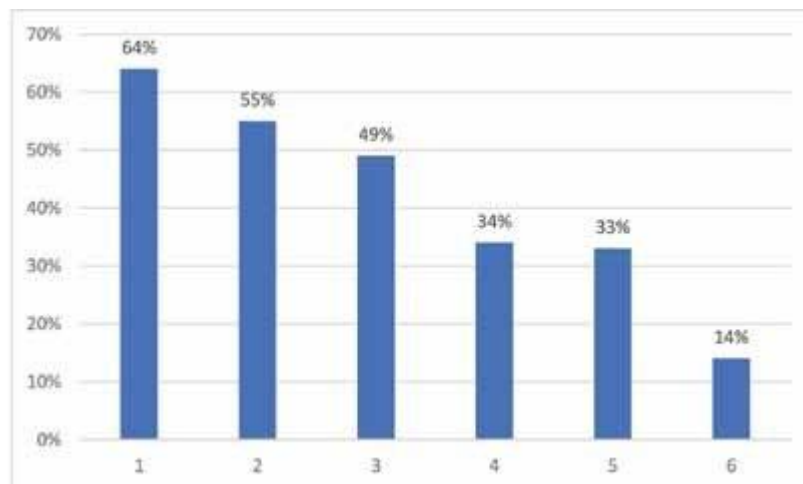
reasons for the negative characteristics of the distance learning format are presented in Fig. 2, positive – in Fig. 3.



1 – more difficult to end the session, 2 – lack of face-to-face communication with teachers and fellow students, 3 – lost their job, 4 – the study load has increased significantly, 5 – it is more difficult to study at home, 6 – it is difficult to ask questions online, 7 – experience discomfort when turning on the webcam in class, 8 – it is more difficult to independently study educational material,

9 – forced to quit school, 10 – did not have appropriate equipment for distance learning

Fig. 2. Negative characteristics of the distance learning format from students



1 – more time to sleep, 2 – less fatigue from studying, 3 – more free time, 4 – remote format is no less effective than face-to-face, 5 – I like the remote format better than the traditional one

6 – complete satisfaction with distance learning

Fig. 3. Positive characteristics of the distance learning format from students

At the beginning of the transfer of the educational process to a distance format, more than 10% of students did not have the equipment necessary for remote learning, and for students from low-income groups this proportion reached 30%. In this regard, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education developed recommendations for social support for such a group of students, with each university providing the most accessible forms of support independently (students were given computers, laptops or financial compensation for their purchase). In addition, 40% of students suspended their work activities, which significantly reduced their livelihoods. Social support for students was the adoption of measures for their employment at their universities - such an experiment was carried out in 5 universities, in which 5 thousand people were hired. In addition, most universities independently made decisions to soften the terms of payment for tuition, for example, in the form of installments or deferred payments, refusal to index tuition fees in the next academic year, and also canceled the fee for living in a dormitory for the period of the introduction of the distance learning form, paid for travel to the parents' place of residence.

In this regard, an initiative was adopted that includes 5 key aspects:

- 1) implementation of the concept of sustainable development in all areas of its activities and processes;
- 2) increasing the competence of students, teachers and staff in the field of sustainable development;
- 3) supporting a wider range of scientific research, including interdisciplinary research, in response to global challenges;
- 4) working with global partners to provide innovative solutions and leverage technology;
- 5) support for open science to promote constructive cross-border collaboration to solve specific problems.

Thus, today universities cannot remain on the periphery of problems that concern global humanity; in the modern knowledge economy, they go beyond their borders and find themselves at the epicenter of global events in the struggle for the well-being of society. It becomes obvious that the missions of modern universities around the world are filled with aspects of the development of scientific technologies and the creation of a progressive scientific and educational environment aimed at rational management of the Earth's limited resources, providing the living population and future generations with the knowledge and ideas necessary for the sustainable development of all

humanity.

Conclusion

Universities, as bearers of unique advantages in generating knowledge and producing scientific results, possessing tools for identifying the interests of stakeholders and strengthening partnerships with them in solving pressing problems, must consolidate their key role in building a sustainable future on the principles of academic freedom and academic responsibility, solidarity and cooperation.

At the present stage of modification of the classical form of education, associated with the influence of infection and the emerging opportunities of digital solutions in mastering educational content, the issue of academic responsibility for the quality of mastering educational programs is complemented by issues of social responsibility to stakeholders, primarily internal ones - teachers and students. The experience of implementing educational programs remotely made it possible to formulate the necessary decisions that should be taken into account when switching to a hybrid learning format, which is so actively discussed in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

Firstly, the development of a new model of the educational process, called hybrid or combined, should occur without losing the values accumulated in the classical form of education, which should primarily include the direct interaction of teachers and students during classroom lessons. The traditional classroom format (under appropriate epidemiological conditions) should extend to practical and laboratory classes that develop practice-oriented competencies, scientific work and social activities; Lectures can be conducted remotely. The asynchronous element of learning involves students completing assignments prepared by teachers, which can be supplemented by the use of online simulators and training in online courses hosted on open educational online platforms. Each university must develop an optimal teaching model that corresponds to the available resources, the specifics of educational programs and the situation of restrictive measures, if any are introduced by the regulator.

Secondly, the success of a hybrid form of education should include the readiness of teachers to implement digital technologies and master digital didactics. To do this, a personal diagnosis of teachers should be carried out on their proficiency in digital technologies in order to develop an individual approach to advanced training in the field of digital didactics or to implement digital

mentoring.

Thirdly, the need to improve the digital literacy of teachers is determined not only by the transition to a hybrid teaching model, but also by a number of other reasons, including:

- eliminating the gap between “digital” students and “non-digital” teachers, which will make it possible to move to one “wave” of mastering planned competencies;
- individualization of learning, including the possibility of implementing individual learning paths for certain categories of students (gifted, working, family, with disabilities, etc.);
- optimization of the educational process, allowing to create a set of methods that are the most productive for achieving maximum scientific and educational results with minimal effort and time in given conditions;
- development of new educational programs in order to ensure their relevance to the complex current situation and its development trends, compliance with the needs of a wide range of stakeholders (students, employers, government, etc.), implementation of strategic development plans for universities.

Fourthly, the development of digital infrastructure, the accelerated expansion of digital resources and tools, the creation of a methodological base for digital didactics, generalization and analysis of the best digital educational practices with the possibility of their replication in the educational process and methodological support for teachers, evidence-based research on the effectiveness of digital technologies in mastering educational content are required.

The proposed measures are fully consistent with the student-centric approach and humanitarian values in education, the principles of academic freedom and academic responsibility, which form the basis of the university’s internal social responsibility.

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