

# SPECIFICATIONS OF «MANAGING» THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN THE CONDITIONS OF DISTANCE LEARNING (EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE)

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**Abstract.** *This publication focuses on the practice of implementing non-standard approaches to standardized educational processes. The involvement of students in the practical study of the possibilities of using a virtual classroom not only as a basic model for the transfer and testing of knowledge, but also to improve the emotional response and involvement in the educational process. This is due to the inclusion of art therapy technologies, its elements, and individual practice-oriented exercises in the structure of classes, which are inherently training.*

*That is why in this publication we turned to the demonstration of the results of the survey, interviews with the participants of our classes. In particular, not only those with whom we have been working consistently and systematically for more than one year, but also those who study under other programs without the inclusion of the technologies and exercises we offer. In addition, to demonstrate the effectiveness of this method of managing the educational process, we propose to review the work with the use of the proposed inclusions when working with a «new» audience in the process of participation and presentation of the results of interaction with participants of all-Ukrainian conferences.*

**Keywords:** *art therapy technologies, distance learning, experience of Ukraine, practical study.*

## Introduction

Starting our presentation of the experience of «managing» the educational process, in particular teaching in modern conditions, we want to refer to the Ukrainian interpretation of «The Art of War» and the thesis, which today can be decisive for the formation of a new era in the educational management of network and distance forms of knowledge acquisition: *«To be innovative, you need to look for (not avoid) and solve anomalies, which are always boundaries in perception. Creativity is most productive when it is limited»* (Sun-Dzy, 2015, p.93).

Modern school, modern education... this is what we hear, talk about, strive for when organizing the educational process and scientific and pedagogical activities. Since 2019, a turning point has come for Ukrainian society (although perhaps the

same as for the whole world), when the need for change was accelerated not only by the need for time but also by the relevant circumstances.

Thus, in the process of quarantine restrictions, the Ukrainian educational space has faced problems that have long been «brewing», but somehow «postponed» due to the established norms and rules of the classroom system. To a certain extent, even the innovations and projects of NUSH (NUSH, 2016), Intellect (MON, 2016), inclusive classes (Hladkykh, 2020) did not have sufficiently prescribed and regulated parameters for organizing a distance learning format. And the individual form of education (Pro osvitu, 2017) still provided for direct contact with the school's teaching staff in situations of knowledge assessment and confirmation of skills regulated by educational programs.

Since such contacts were prohibited during quarantine restrictions, this led to the search for solutions to some of the problems in an extreme mode.

The same was true for the training of specialists in higher education institutions, as even the developments that involved students in distance education systems were duplicated and/or tested by various forms of control (tests, quizzes, exams) with the personal presence of the student in the educational institution.

In addition, as quite common in educational circles, online courses completely excluded interaction with a «live audience». This created the prerequisites for finding non-standard solutions in our work.

### **Literature review**

Considering distance education as an innovation in the Ukrainian educational space, we faced the discrepancy between our timeframes for the introduction of this type of education in the information field and in foreign scientific and pedagogical works and practice. That is why for a more convenient and qualitative analysis of the prerequisites for the formation of a «managing» to ensure quality distance education, we turned to the scientific research of foreign representatives.

According to the needs and possibilities of organizing such training, there are synchronous and asynchronous formats (Georgescu, 2006; Grabusts & Teilans, 2021). The first of them allows you to work in real time using several types of interaction and data exchange. While asynchronous is gaining more popularity than synchronous, because learners can «study at a convenient time for them, without disrupting their daily routine. In this type of learning, audio and video sessions can be recorded during the lecture and made available to those who cannot attend the live event» (Grabusts & Teilans, 2021).

At the same time, while making the relevant recordings publicly available through YouTube channels, we concluded (based on statistics on views) that in the

case of asynchronous learning, students often view the proposed content either before the semester control or during additional meetings with the teacher. The reasons for this unevenness may be discussed in the following publications.

But, what is important for us right now? This is the definition of the main options for the educational process where the virtual classroom is considered as «an educational and methodological environment designed in software by teachers in such a way as to support collaborative learning between students, despite the fact that they can attend this class at a convenient time and place of their choice» (Bojović, Bojović, Vujošević, & Šuh, 2020; Hiltz, 1995). And this is an advantage of the virtual classroom, but at the same time, the lack of a sense of «real» presence in the classroom creates a number of feedback problems.

For example:

- interaction between students, which is sometimes overlooked by teachers, has a significant impact on the overall success of distance learning (Bojović, Bojović, Vujošević, & Šuh, 2020)
- instructors should engage students in a variety of cognitive tasks such as answering questions, asking questions, thinking, reasoning, analyzing information, repeating and retrieving information (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010).
- The role of the teacher is transforming from being a mere information provider to being a guide and facilitator of learning (Marjanovic, 1999) throughout the education system, and even more so in the online environment with all its possibilities of recording, searching and broadcasting content, such as open courses, wikis and video blogs (Bojović, Bojović, Vujošević, & Šuh, 2020).

Facilitation of the educational process became for us the key that allowed us to introduce elements of creativity into clearly structured classes that met the norms of the classroom system and measured lectures. We had the opportunity to include elements of art-therapeutic technologies and practice-oriented exercises in the educational process when teaching the cycle of disciplines «Inclusive Education». After all, given that «Creativity loves restrictions. Creativity is not just unbridled, uncontrolled manifestations of creative energy. Creativity must have a structure, and if you look deeper, you can see that some of the art forms - haiku, sonatas, religious paintings – are full of limitations. They are beautiful because creativity overcomes the rules... creativity thrives best where it is limited» (Sun-Dzy, 2015. p.94).

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this publication is to reveal our findings from observations and practice of using art therapy technologies to improve the emotional response and inclusion in the educational process of students.

To outline and confirm the effect of our proposed technologies we will refer to:

- online surveys. In particular, the questions included in the comprehensive surveys based on the results of seminars, workshops (DPE, 2021).
- video recordings of materials covered within the framework of the annual conference (since video presentations of work and video recordings of meetings with students are available in accordance with the consent of the parties to demonstrate certain content).
- results of interviews and focus groups with participants of the educational process based on the results of the meetings.

Each of the proposed options for getting acquainted with the effectiveness of these technologies allows you to more deeply reveal how emotional stabilization and microclimate in the classroom can contribute to the assimilation of complex topics, and how the elements of art therapy interaction allow you to «keep in touch» your audience.

## **Research results**

*First*, we consider it necessary to note the main positions that prompted us to take elements of art therapy and practice-oriented exercises in conducting classes with students.

In essence, the educational process in any educational institution is clearly regulated, and each class or lesson has its own plan. But, no plan includes in its structure such an element as an environment of diversity. That is, the teaching process usually does not consider the peculiarities of each subsequent group of students, their «group activity» in terms of perception of information, interpersonal interaction, fatigue, workload, level of critical thinking, as well as discussions, arguments of their own point of view.

This element of structuredness during our classes we «diluted» with elements of art therapy. After all, various exercises allowed to improve both the emotional response of students and to «stabilize» and maintain interest during the work during one hour and twenty minutes of the planned lesson. Allowed:

- vary the time and amount of use of pure perception of new material,
- willingness to have a discussion with the teacher,
- maintain psycho-emotional balance and microclimate in the virtual classroom.

In addition, in the process of the virtual classroom we added practice-oriented exercises that were close to training. That is, we adapted some elements of theoretical material for the audience so that students could feel, practice and understand the new material.

*Secondly*, in order to outline the results of the use of elements of art therapy in the educational process, we will use the analysis of the results of an online survey based on the results of the event. For example, we organized and conducted a joint online meeting-seminar on the topic «Points of contact in an inclusive environment and building cooperation on the example of cooperation between Masaryk University and the Teresias Center to help students with special needs», which took place on 17.05.2021 at 10.05 (Google Meet). This event was attended by 24 students from VDPU named after M. Kotsiubynskyi and Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University. And according to the results of the meeting, we offered them a questionnaire with a number of questions, which was passed by 20 students, including 10 bachelor students (Vinnytsia) and 10 master students (Zhytomyr), which also influenced the students' answers.

In particular, there were 11 questions in total, but the most important for us were the following (DPE, 2021):

- The first and the second questions – «Are you a student of a higher education institution» (test format of the answer) and «Are you a practitioner (pedagogical worker)?» (test format of the answer), which allowed us to identify the practical interest of those who, in addition to studying, are involved in working with children with special educational needs and are directly involved in the organization of inclusive education. Thus, among bachelor's students there were no practicing teachers, while among masters there were most of them (6 people).
- The third question «What was the online meeting about (the main topic)?» (open question), gave us the opportunity to understand how much students were involved in the work and «heard» the information offered, since during the event they were allowed to be present but not to go online. It also made it possible to see not only the interest in working together, but also to bring students to discussions and short dialogues on the issues discussed during the seminar and to monitor their reaction to various exercises that were offered during the meeting with elements of art therapy.

- The fourth question «Was there anything that «touched» you during the meeting in the negative sense of the word (emotionally, informationally, physically)» (test format of the answer), allowed us to determine how the training exercise with emotional inclusion influenced the formation of understanding of the peculiarities of the perception of the world by children with special educational needs. Thus, among 20 people, only 1 person had a negative experience of participating in such an exercise, which was expected, since it was a representative of masters and a non-practicing student. While for practicing students and bachelor students who had repeated meetings and master classes in centers of social and psychological rehabilitation and supervisory meetings with practitioners of inclusive education.

- The sixth question «If you participated in the next joint sessions, what would you like to hear?» (open question), allowed us to formulate and develop areas for further cooperation based on answers such as «features of children with educational needs», «examples from practice», «experience of other countries», «more examples from life», «more about innovative approaches to inclusive education», etc.

- The eleventh question «Your short comment if you wish» allowed us to determine that masters studying in other programs and not related to the practice of working in educational institutions and inclusion noted the accessibility of the material, positive impressions of the audience interaction. Master students who noted that they are practitioners also noted the informativeness of the classes, acquaintance with previously unused means of audience interaction and timeliness of the information received. At the same time, it can be noted that bachelor's students who are «used» to such interaction were ready to perceive the material, engage in discussion issues and perform exercises, so the mark in one of the questions «Everything was great, but ...» gives a signal about their need for a more intensive practice-oriented format of work with the study of not only foreign experience, but also new training exercises and technologies of art therapy interaction that they can use in practice.

In addition, the answers given by the participants to the questions regarding further meetings allow us to conclude that:

- attentive listening during the one-and-a-half-hour intensive;
- interest in the topic and its presentation from different sides in comparison;
- desire to understand and delve into the proposed topic of inclusive education;

- a positive attitude to continue participating in the meetings, even if there is no element of interest in the topic of teaching.

*Thirdly*, we had the opportunity to test our theory of interaction, which we put into the purpose of presenting this material. In particular, interaction with the audience during meetings with a new unfamiliar audience in the process of presentations during conferences (VDPU, 2020; VDPU, 2021). And we had the opportunity to observe the appropriate emotional response to the proposed topics even without receiving visual feedback and to track the involvement of participants through discussion questions and reactions to the proposed theses, both voiced by the participants and through chat. In addition, the high level of involvement was confirmed by the implementation of the proposed tasks with elements of art therapy and discussions that took place in the process of direct acquaintance with the theory of the presentation.

### **Conclusions and discussion**

Of course, we are not the first to pay attention to the need to «update» the educational process, to include new elements that will allow the teacher, teacher, pedagogical worker to go beyond the usual transfer of information to «manage» (facilitate) the process of searching and assimilation of knowledge. And we are not the first who draw attention to the need for and importance of the transition to the use of computer training, augmented and virtual reality. For example: «the future and education in the future will be digital... therefore, it is irresponsible to use ICT in education without defining the principles of digital humanistic pedagogy» (American article), the subject of which is the impact of ICT on all subjects of the pedagogical process, the study of educational and cognitive actions taking place both in material and virtual reality and, accordingly, the design of content, forms and methods of teaching (Ukrainian article).

If we take the goal that we pursued when presenting this material, then in our opinion we have revealed the effectiveness of using elements of art therapy in the educational process that takes place online, as a technology for involving all participants in the processes of performing individual tasks, including the «leader» of the process - the teacher.

In addition, it is worth noting that according to the results of the survey and preliminary classes with various groups of preparation for work in an inclusive school, we were able to continue working in this direction in accordance with the requests received from students and teachers:

- to join and implement cooperation with Faculty of Education, Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic) and Vinnitsia State Pedagogical University

(Vinnitsia, Ukraine) within the COIL project within the subject SOp150 «Inclusive education» (COIL, 2021);

- to develop and start implementation of the project module «The Social Integration of Children with Special Needs in an Environment of Diversity and Inclusion: European Approaches» Project: 101085267 - SEEDUE4UA - ERASMUS-JMO-2022-HEI-TCH-RSCH (MDPE, 2022).

Although in continuation and at the end of this article we can summarize that «winning strategies are never repeated, they are adapted to infinitely changing situations» (Sun-Dzy, 2015. p.30), which fully corresponds to the current situation of «management» of the educational process of distance learning.

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