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THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL TRAINING OF FUTURE ART TEACHERS IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

Abstract: The paper deals with the conditions of higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was realized in the digital environment due to the measures. The online training of future art teachers has brought many negative as well as positive changes. The paper contains an analysis and interpretation of students' opinions of the Department of Creative Arts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra in connection with the process of online education in the academic year 2020/2021.

Keywords: *teaching and learning in digital environment, future art teachers, online education.*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally affected the educational process at all levels of schools, the educated and educators had to adapt the educational process to the changed conditions practically from day to day. Although the use of ICT in education, as well as distance learning issues, has become a standard and discussed part of the educational process and professional reflections in recent years (Holmberg, 2005, Tait, 2000, Cleveland-Innes, Garrison, 2010, Burns, 2011), but the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the immediate application of these technologies and forms of education also in the educational environment, where until then they were only a complementary alternative to standard education. The workplace of the author of this paper also had to react flexibly to the changed conditions in the academic year 2020/2021, which took place in winter and spring semester in the form of distance learning, students as well as teachers gained new experience. We decided to conduct a survey among students – future art teachers attending

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theoretical and practical courses at the Department of Creative Arts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, to find out information about their experiences and attitudes in connection with online education in the past academic year.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of our research was to find out how students evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of distance education, which became the exclusive form of education due to the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the academic year 2020/2021. The author of this paper teaches theoretical disciplines, but we were interested in how students perceive the conditions of distance education also in relation to practical disciplines, which are normally taught in specialized classrooms.

HYPOTHESES OF RESEARCH

We assumed that:

1. Among the respondents, there will be more who identify the negatives of distance education within the theoretical disciplines than those who name the benefits.
2. Among the respondents, there will be less who identify the disadvantages of distance education within the practical disciplines than those who name the advantages.

RESEARCH PLAN AND RESEARCH FILE

The research was carried out after the end of the spring semester of the academic year 2020/2021. in May and June. The research sample was represented by 127 students enrolled in the current year in the study program Teaching of Fine Arts in combination, or in the one-subject study program Art Education in the bachelor's and master's degree studies, 97 respondents of the addressed students participated in the survey.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method of data collection was an anonymous questionnaire using online tool Google Forms, containing 10 items, 5 with closed and 5 with partially opened

questions. The introductory 3 items of the questionnaire were devoted to the basic selection characteristics, used to determine the affiliation of a respondent to the relevant year of study, gender and the region of permanent residence. The other items focused on following issues:

1. Experience with distance (online) learning before starting university studies.
2. Technical conditions/support during the distance education period in academic year 2020/2021.
3. Advantages of distance learning in the context of teaching theoretical courses.
4. Disadvantages of distance learning in the context of teaching theoretical courses.
5. Advantages of distance learning in the context of teaching practical courses.
6. Disadvantages of distance learning in the context of teaching practical courses.

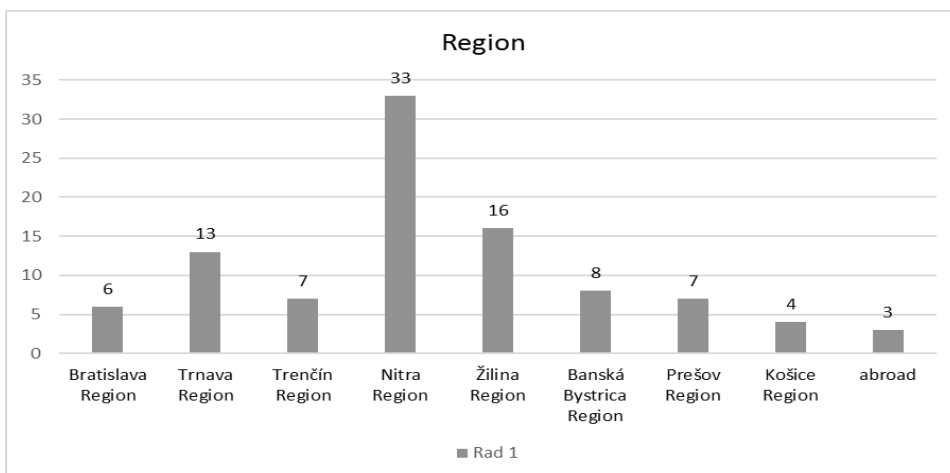
The method of data processing was a quantitative and qualitative analysis of answers from given questionnaires projected into graphs and verbal interpretation of answers, as well as verification or rather evaluation of hypotheses.

RESEARCH RESULTS

As mentioned above, 97 students participated in our survey and completed the questionnaire.

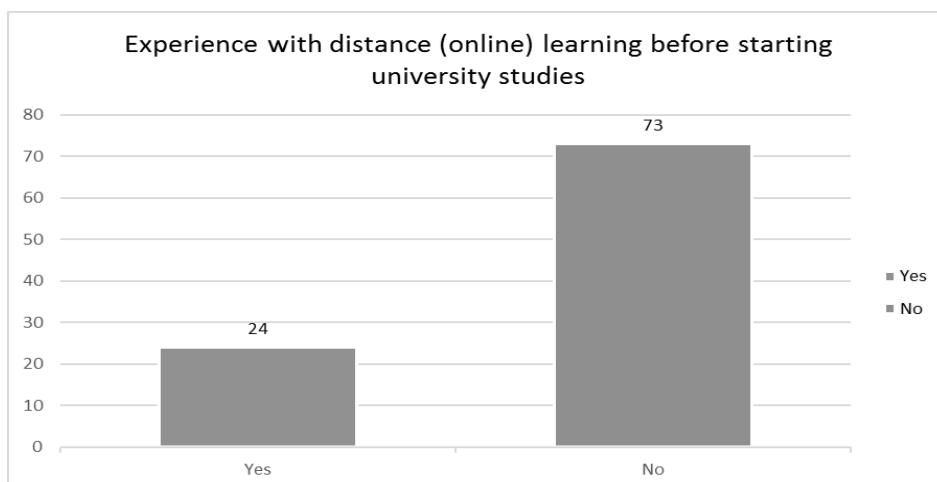
The first item was aimed at affiliating students for the year of study. The majority of students (44%; N = 43) that participated in our survey were studying in the 1st year of Bachelor's degree. 17% (N = 16) students were in their 2nd year of Bachelor's degree, 12% (N = 12) students were in their 3rd year of Bachelor's degree, 17% (N = 16) students were in their 1st year of Master's degree and 10% (N = 10) students were in their 2nd year of Master's degree.

The second item was focused on the issue of gender. 85% (N = 82) of students that participated in our survey identified as female and 15% (N = 15) identified as male.



Graph 1. Item number 3 with question: *In which region in Slovakia do you live in?*
 (Source: Own arrangements, 2021)

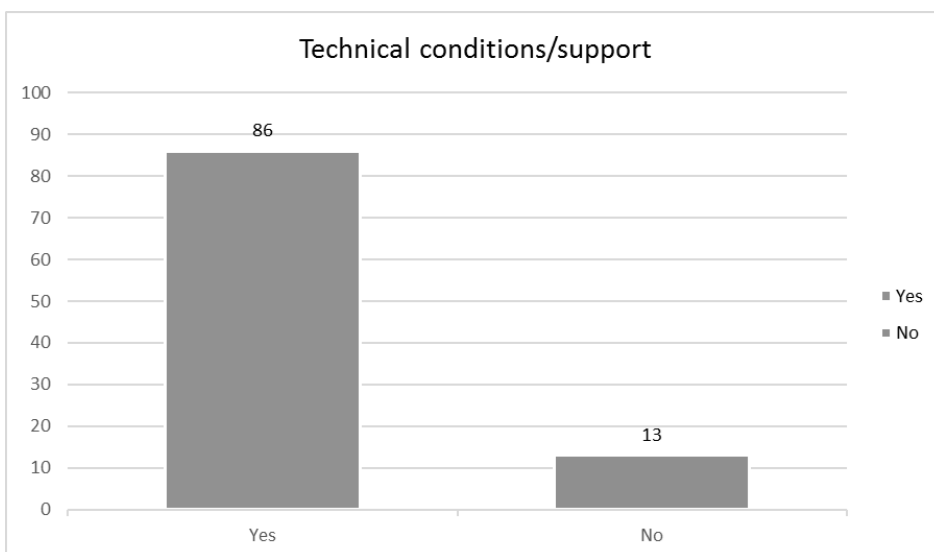
The majority of students (34%; N = 33) that participated in our survey live in Nitra Region, 17% (N = 16) live in Žilina Region, 14% (N = 13) live in Trnava Region, 8% (N = 8) live in Banská Bystrica Region, 7% (N = 7) live in Prešov Region, 7% (N = 7) live in Trenčín Region, 6% (N = 6) live in Bratislava Region, 4% (N = 4) live in Košice Region and the minority of participated students – 3% (N = 3) – live abroad. The fourth item was focused on students' experiences with distance (online) learning before starting university studies.



Graph 2. Item number 4 with question: *Have you experienced distance (online) learning before starting university studies?* (Source: Own arrangements, 2021)

Among all respondents 75% (N = 73) students have had experience with distance (online) learning before starting university studies and 25% (N = 24) students haven't had this experience.

In the fifth item we investigated the technical conditions/support of respondents during the distance education period in academic year 2020/2021.



Graph 3. Item number 5 with question: Did you have the appropriate technical conditions/support during the distance education period in academic year 2020/2021? (Source: Own arrangements, 2021)

Among all respondents 87% (N = 86) students had the appropriate technical conditions/support during the distance education period in academic year 2020/2021 and 13% (N = 13) students didn't have.

Item number 6 contained an open question: If you didn't have the appropriate technical conditions/support during the distance education period in academic year 2020/2021, determine the challenges, missing technical equipment, conditions that prevented you from implementing distance online education. 13 answers were obtained, we present in full:

1. Stronger Internet connection, stronger laptop/computer, 100% disposition of municipal electricity.

2. My laptop doesn't have a camera and it is notable to download some video editing programs, photoshop, or drawing tablets.

3. My laptop broke down, I haven't always had enough space available for online learning, when other members of the family were also at home they disturbed me.

4. Easel.

5. Weak internet connection due to Telekom (our village has a single Telekom provider) which often fails, I had to deal with frequent outages with this operator and sometimes I was late for my classes because of these outages.

6. Weak internet connection and laptop.

7. Weak internet connection, weak technology and camera.

8. The MEET video conferencing system did not work properly. The connection often failed and my device could not start the camera or microphone through this system, so I had to make video calls via my mobile phone which wasn't practical.

9. Internet, insufficient power supply in a PC.

10. In spatial creation disciplines, I could not work with adequate aids due to lack of space / resources.

11. Classrooms – (studio), not enough space for spatial creation and painting at home.

12. Irregular access to the PC, the possibility of only one person sharing the screen during the online lesson, which caused problems during my presentation of work via another device (tablet / mobile phone).

13. Space, material, drawing tablet, powerful computer (my laptop was not able to manage online lectures with over 70–80 people connected at the same time, it did not work at all).

Within items 7–10, respondents had the opportunity to express their views on the advantages and disadvantages of distance education, especially in relation to theoretical and practical disciplines.

Question of item number 7: Which of the following, if any, do you consider as positive aspects and advantages of distance learning (from your point of view) during the academic year 2020/2021 in the context of teaching theoretical subjects at the Department of CreativeArts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (you can mark multiple answers). In the three options we define, the results are as follows:

The option “learning from the comfort of your home” was identified by 69 students, representing 71% of all respondents. The option “saved money on transportation costs” was identified by 68 students, representing 70% of all respondents. The option "gained digital skills, gained skills with digital technologies" was chosen by 27 students, which represents .

28% of all respondents. Under the "other" option, 16 respondents answered and mentioned other benefits of distance education, answers are given in full:

1% (N = 1) I am introverted, it suited me perfectly.

1% (N = 1) I can spend more time with my family, I found a part-time job.

1% (N = 1) I could spend the time during gaps between online classes effectively and participate in them even though I was sick.

1% (N = 1) Saving money on housing costs.

1% (N = 1) Saving time on traveling.

1% (N = 1) Better organization of free time.

1% (N = 1) Saving time on traveling, longer sleep.

1% (N = 1) I didn't have to travel from Bratislava.

1% (N = 1) Saving time on traveling.

1% (N = 1) Saving time on traveling (4–5 hours per day).

1% (N = 1) The availability of study materials is really great, thanks to distance learning some notes and books are more available, I don't have to make up for those things I didn't have enough time during physical lectures.

1% (N = 1) Saving time on traveling.

1% (N = 1) Less stress, which in my case was caused by the time management of courses

1% (N = 1) I don't see any advantages of distance learning.

1% (N = 1) Writing notes in my own pace.

1% (N = 1) I perceive distance learning only as a substitute for a presence form of study. The only positive thing is that it was still possible to continue the studies thanks to new ICTs.

Question of item Number 8: Which of the following, if any, do you consider as negative aspects and disadvantages of distance learning (from your point of view) during the academic year 2020/2021 in the context of teaching theoretical subjects at the Department of CreativeArts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (you can mark multiple answers). In the four options we define, the results are as follows:

The option “lack of contact and interaction between teacher and student in real space” was identified by 77 students, representing 79% of all respondents. The option “lack of contact with classmates” was identified by 73 students, representing 75% of all respondents. The option “risk of technical and connection issues on the part of the participants (audio, display image)” was chosen by 68 students, which

represents 70% of all respondents. The option “fears of technical failure at the moment of presentation of own project” was identified by 67 students, representing 69% of all respondents. Under the “other” option, 12 respondents answered and mentioned other negative aspects of distance education, answers are given in full:

1% (N = 1) Procrastination.

1% (N = 1) I am not comfortable with presenting online, I cannot focus as well as when I am physically at school.

1% (N = 1) I miss school in general, social deprivation, even though professors are trying their best, online teaching will never replace normal teaching.

1% (N = 1) Constant looking at the screen/sitting behind the PC, which resulted in migraines, eye pain, exhaustion, rapid loss of attention, lack of focus for the lecture.

1% (N = 1) Issues with long-term sitting behind the computer, constant stress over how long it will stay like this, constant changes in regulations and thus uncertainty about the future of the studies, how it will continue.

1% (N = 1) I have little time, because the things that should have been done during classes, I have to do after the class. It is difficult.

1% (N = 1) Lack of consultation with the professor during the practical part of teaching, painting, textile creation, etc.

1% (N = 1) Higher requirements for completing the course compared to presence teaching (instead of continuous work on the final assignment, the number of secondary, often more demanding tasks) – it did not apply to every course.

1% (N = 1) Bad time management on my part, frequent misunderstanding on the part of the family (disturbance).

1% (N = 1) Back and eye pain, loss of motivation, concentration during lectures, more fatigue, more frequent assignment of essays than in school.

1% (N = 1) Lack of online literature, libraries, lectures.

1% (N = 1) Loss of attention.

Question of item number 9: Which of the following, if any, do you consider as positive aspects and advantages of distance learning (from your point of view) during the academic year 2020/2021. in the context of teaching practical subjects at the Department of CreativeArts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (you can mark multiple answers). In the three options we define, the results are as follows:

The option “learning from the comfort of your home” was identified by 49 students, representing 51% of all respondents. The option “saved money on transportation costs” was identified by 52 students, representing 54% of all

respondents. The option “sufficient time for the creation of art works” was chosen by 59 students, which represents 61% of all respondents. Under the “other” option, 12 respondents answered and mentioned other benefits of distance education within the practical disciplines, answers are given in full:

1% (N = 1) it is true that I have more time for self-development. Since we are still locked up at home and I can't pursue all my hobbies, I am using this time to develop my artistic field. However, the positive side is considerably smaller than the negative side of what the last year has brought me... Hopefully we will return to university as soon as possible:

1% (N = 1) More time for creating.

1% (N = 1) Work.

1% (N = 1) I don't see any advantages.

1% (N = 1) Saving money on housing costs.

1% (N = 1) Saving time on traveling.

1% (N = 1) Instead of the spending time by traveling, I had more space for further self-education and opportunity to work continuously on one piece of work more hours per day.

1% (N = 1) The grading was not as strict as under normal circumstances.

1% (N = 1) Nothing.

1% (N = 1) Less disruptive elements in the creative process (less information about my classmates' work provided me higher degree of authenticity, as I was not consciously/unconsciously influenced/inspired by their creations), increased creativity and creative improvisation, the home environment was for me in terms of artistic activity more stimulating.

1% (N = 1) Independent working.

1% (N = 1) I perceive distance learning only as a substitute for a presence form of study. The only positive thing is that it was still possible to continue the studies thanks to new ICTs.

Question of item number 10: Which of the following, if any, do you consider as negative aspects and disadvantages of distance learning (from your point of view) during the academic year 2020/2021. in the context of teaching practical subjects at the Department of CreativeArts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (you can mark multiple answers). In the three options we define, the results are as follows:

The option “lack of contact and interaction between teacher and student in real space” was identified by 78 students, representing 80% of all respondents. The option “lack of contact with classmates” was identified by 57 students, representing

59% of all respondents. The option “missing conditions in the home environment for artistic creation” was chosen by 71 students, which represents 73% of all respondents. Under the “other” option, 12 respondents answered and mentioned other negative aspects of distance education, answers are given in full:

1% (N = 1) I miss everything, especially the positive vibes from our professors. This distance learning will never even come close to the presence one

1% (N = 1) It requires higher financial costs, we have to take care of everything ourselves, communication is sometimes not as effective as “face to face”.

1% (N = 1) The lighting in the photos or in the video is different than in reality, in my opinion some works of art cannot be evaluated the same way through online space as in reality.

1% (N = 1) Insufficient time for the creation of works of art, due to obligations for other courses.

1% (N = 1) Probably no serious disadvantages.

1% (N = 1) Lack of consultation with the professor during the practical part of teaching, painting, textile creation, etc.

1% (N = 1) Practically unused online lessons (we finished assignments outside the schedule).

1% (N = 1) Less availability of materials due to pandemic (closed art shops / unsatisfactory e-shops).

1% (N = 1) Little inspiration for new ideas, little or no progress in drawing, no motivation, little praise for the work submitted, not everything can be understood through online teaching.

1% (N = 1) Not ideal conditions for the realization of artistic creation in the home environment (related mainly to art supplies).

1% (N = 1) Insufficient time for the realization of works of art.

1% (N = 1) Basically we are self-learning as teachers can not show us what and how to do because of the current situation.

Our first hypothesis followed whether students perceive distance education in the context of theoretical disciplines more negatively than positively. Our hypothesis was supported by our research. Students identified more negatives, but what should also be noted is that the difference between advantages and disadvantages in the results was not significant. The students named several benefits, which resulted mainly from participation in classes from the comfortable environment of the home and financial savings.

Our second hypothesis followed whether students perceive distance education in the context of practical disciplines less negatively than positively. Our hypothesis was not supported by our research. Students identified significantly more negatives than benefits in this regard. The disadvantages were mainly caused by unsuitable domestic conditions for creative work, which requires special technical conditions, and also the absence of direct social contact with teachers and classmates played a big role in a student's perspective.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all areas of life, including the educational process. Educational institutions had to react flexibly to restrictions and measures by changing the usual open forms of education to the distance form. In our paper, we dealt with the advantages and disadvantages of distance education from the perspective of students – future teachers of fine arts at the Department of Creative Arts and Art Education, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, whose studies consist of theoretical as well as practical disciplines. Practical disciplines are normally carried out in the conditions of specialized classrooms in direct cooperation with the teacher, which, in the opinion of students, cannot be fully replaced by distance education. This finding also confirms the importance of direct contact with art, or rather with the process of creation, which combines both rational and emotional experience. No virtual environment can replace this experience.

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ТЕОРИЈСКА И ПРАКТИЧНА ОБУКА БУДУЋИХ НАСТАВНИКА УМЕТНОСТИ У ДИГИТАЛНОМ ОКРУЖЕЊУ

Резиме

Рад се бави условима високог образовања за време пандемије КОВИД-19, која је због мера примењена у дигиталном окружењу. Онлајн обука будућих наставника уметности донела је многе негативне и позитивне промене. Рад садржи анализу и тумачење мишљења студената Одељења за ликовну уметност и уметничко образовање Педагошког факултета Универзитета „Константин Филозоф” у Нитри у вези са процесом онлајн образовања у академској 2020/2021.

Кључне речи: *подучавање и учење у дигиталном окружењу, будући наставници уметности, онлајн образовање.*