

CHALLENGES AND RISKS IN THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF A HIGHER SCHOOL TEACHER OF HUMANITARIAN CYCLE IN THE CONDITIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

DESAFIOS E RISCOS NA ATIVIDADE PROFISSIONAL DE UM PROFESSOR DE ENSINO SUPERIOR DO CICLO HUMANITÁRIO NAS CONDIÇÕES DE EDUCAÇÃO À DISTÂNCIA

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Abstract: The authors focus on the fact that the reform of the education system leads to various risks in the professional activities of the higher education teacher of the humanitarian cycle in the context of distance education. Reforms in the higher education system introduce a varying degree of uncertainty into the lives of participants in the educational process. The authors highlight organizational and managerial risks, information risks, competence risks, economic risks, labor risks. Of particular relevance are information risks in the context of distance learning. According to the authors of the work, any risk besides uncertainty is an opportunity for teachers of the humanities to adapt to new conditions.

Keywords: higher education; innovations; modernization of the education system; online education; distance education.

Resumo: Os autores enfocam o fato de que a reforma do sistema educacional acarreta vários riscos nas atividades profissionais do professor de ensino superior do ciclo humanitário no contexto da educação à distância. As reformas no sistema de ensino superior introduzem um grau variável de incerteza na vida dos participantes no processo educacional. Os autores destacam riscos organizacionais e gerenciais, riscos de informações, riscos de competência, riscos econômicos, riscos trabalhistas. Os riscos à informação são de particular relevância no contexto do ensino a distância. Segundo os autores do trabalho, qualquer risco além da incerteza é uma oportunidade para os professores de humanidades se adaptarem a novas condições.

Palavras-chave: ensino superior; inovações; modernização do sistema educacional; educação on-line; educação à distância.

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Introduction

The state's position on the world stage and its internal social stability depends on a large number of factors, among which such a factor plays an important role as the state of the education system in the country. A high-quality state education system helps maintain a high level of labor resources in the country, which, in turn, acts as a driver of the socio-economic development of the state.

In recent decades, in connection with Russia's socio-economic situation, the higher education system is in a state of active transformation. The state seeks to contribute to education (Sokolovskaya et al., 2020; Grigorieva et al., 2019), since this is an investment in human capital, which is one of the most effective investments and leads to an increase in the incomes of the population, which means it contributes to the development of the country's economy. State support for education (National Education Project, 2019) is one of the main directions of our country's development until 2024, which are indicated in the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 204 of May 8, 2018 (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation "On National development goals and strategic goals, 2018).

One of the national project of the Russian Federation "Education" is the modernization of vocational education, including through the introduction of flexible educational programs.

At present, the paradigm of "education for life" is being replaced by a new paradigm of "education throughout life." The modern stage of the development of education is characterized by active computerization and informatization (State Program of the Russian Federation "Information Society", 2011), which in turn entails changes in educational programs of higher education: approval of new federal state educational standards in all areas of study at the undergraduate and graduate levels, postgraduate studies, taking into account world educational standards, changing curricula with the inclusion of online courses in the educational process for the main educational programs, introducing an individual learning path for students, which will expand the domestic and international academic mobility of students, the introduction of distance learning, leading to optimization of staffing higher education, which in turn requires specific changes in the work of university employees.

Since higher education has now become one of the segments of a market economy, the market for the production of a specific type of service - educational, there are transformations in social functions both within the framework of the higher education system and in the activities of participants in the education system. Particularly relevant are issues related to the development of distance learning in the framework of basic educational programs that require significant transformations in the professional activities of the faculty of higher education (Dolgireva, 2018). Thus, the changes taking place in the system of higher education reinforce the need for a sociological analysis of the teaching staff's professional activities in the context of the introduction of distance learning.

Materials and Methods

Domestic scientists are very actively considering the sociology of education. Many works of domestic researchers are devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the educational institution's functions (Kolesnikova et al., 2019). Researchers are actively considering institutional changes in the Russian system of higher education, the combination of university and postgraduate education, the strategy of continuing education. Of interest among scientists is the transformation of the social functions of education in the context of the modernization of the education system (Gorshkova & Sheregi, 2010), the importance of social management in the field of education (Rachipa et al., 2020). The modernization of the higher education system causes changes in the faculty's activities, which leads to studies of the teacher's activities in terms of a competency-based approach (Reznik & Vdovina, 2015). Of particular importance is works on students' self-determination in a university (Ganshina et al., 2019).

The transformational processes taking place in the higher education system introduce a varying degree of uncertainty into participants' lives in the educational process, which leads to a different kind of challenge and risk. In this regard, many researchers turn to risky environments in the educational process (Elina et al., 2019; Zubok, 2008).

The scientific literature analysis shows that higher education issues are of interest to scientists from the social and humanitarian fields. We have indicated the diversity of directions in the field of sociology of education. The reform of the education system is actively continuing today - a distance form of education is entering the life of higher education, which determines the importance of considering the reaction of higher education faculty to these changes, namely, to find out what challenges and risks in professional activity higher education teachers face in changing conditions.

The study of risks in the educational space is built based on the cultural-symbolic theory of M. Douglas and A. Vildavsky, the theory of systems of N. Luman, the modernist theory of E. Giddens, the concept of "risk society" by W. Beck. These concepts allow determining the types of risk and describing their distinguishing features.

E. Durkheim and M. Weber's institutional approach provides an opportunity to consider the tasks of vocational education. Within this concept's framework, the norms and rules existing in the educational process that govern relations between actors in education are defined and described.

Using the structural-functional approach allows us to determine the current education system's main features and functions (E. Durkheim and T. Parsons). It is worth noting that modern society changes are pushing us to the fact that it is essential to explore the education system using a multi-paradigm approach.

In this study, it is essential to identify the challenges and risks in higher education teachers' professional activities in the context of the spread of distance education. Therefore, we find it necessary to turn to the modernist concept of risk by E. Giddens and the theory of the determination of human behavior by A. Maslow, which will allow us to consider the specifics of higher education teachers' risks.

The process of globalization and technological progress contributes to the emergence of new knowledge and forms of learning. In connection with the sanitary-epidemiological situation due to the spread of the new coronavirus infection, the system of higher education in Russia is experiencing a phase of technological and technical renovation (Kasyanov et al., 2020). Mobility is a special feature of such an educational environment; university teachers, immersed in the education system's transformational processes, are forced to change social attitudes and adjust social behavior, which cannot but carry certain risks.

In the light of the fact that many reforms of higher education have already led to the adjustment of federal state educational standards and a change in the curriculum of the main professional educational programs, the compulsory component of the structure of the educational program are two humanitarian disciplines philosophy and history, sociology, political science and pedagogy act as elective and can be excluded from the curriculum (Kolesnikova et al., 2019). It is also more difficult for teachers of the humanitarian cycle of disciplines to adapt the practical training of their courses to online education format without having visual contact with students as part of live communication. In connection with these trends, teachers of the humanitarian cycle of higher education face risks in their professional activities, making them the object of our research.

Results and Discussion

The transformation of the higher education system poses a large number of challenges and risks in the framework of the teaching staff's professional activities. Teachers make individual decisions, not entirely guessing what outcome the choice of a particular strategy for action in a given situation will lead to. The risks the teachers face can provoke risks that students will face (Gafiatulina, 2020; Ponomarev et al., 2019).

Such risks may arise because teachers' successful mastering of new requirements for independent work and monitoring the results of knowledge acquisition depend on how they are ready to restructure their work.

We actively encounter the term "risk" in the pages of scientific literature, but it should be noted that there is no single understanding of this term. An active study of risks began in

the late XIX - early XX centuries (Matveenko, 2012). Understanding the risk lies in the course of action in an uncertain environment.

Let us turn to the sociological interpretation of the concept of "risk", which consists in a comprehensive examination of this phenomenon. As part of social science, risk means - activities related to overcoming the uncertainty in a situation of imminent choice. In this process, it is possible to quantitatively and qualitatively assess the likelihood of achieving a presumed result of failure or deviation from the target (Shmantsar, 2017).

It should be noted that without risk, there is no progressive movement of society, just as there is no innovation activity. However, miscalculations and human errors in various fields of activity when using equipment and technologies, including humanitarian ones, pose new risks and threats to society's very existence.

Any risk has two aspects - environmental and activity. The living conditions of social actors in the face of uncertainty related to the environmental aspect, the activity aspect is the choice that the subject makes within the proposed conditions framework (Zubok, 2016).

In this work, we rely on the professional risk assessment, developed by MV Shmantsar, who defines professional risk as to the process of searching and checking by the employee the validity of options for reducing the uncertainty of the future when implementing new requirements for his professional activity (Shmantsar, 2017).

Based on these aspects, we will examine the modern challenges and risks of professional activity that teachers of the humanitarian cycle of higher education face in distance learning.

First, we will touch upon the risks that arose in the faculty of higher education's professional activities in connection with the general reform of the education system.

We have already noted that federal state educational standards are updated continuously, and many leading universities of the country introduce their own educational standards. It is reflected in the curriculum structure of all areas' main professional educational standards and training levels. Partial merging of the disciplines of the humanitarian block into one module (in many curricula, the module is socio-economic), in connection with this, there is a logical reduction in the share of the academic load of the disciplines of the humanitarian cycle, which leads to the optimization of the faculty of higher education.

Thus, one of the types of risks faced by teachers of the humanitarian cycle of higher education is organizational and management risk. As we can see, this risk is associated with a decrease in the share of classroom teaching staff and staff optimization. Nevertheless, risks have an environmental component and an activity aspect that encourages teachers to adapt to the new conditions of the educational process. Such risk as organizational and managerial risk forces teachers to actively develop new courses of disciplines based on the standards of the main professional educational programs and the labor market requirements. New disciplines are devoted to interesting students' technologies of business and interpersonal communication, coaching technologies, and many other relevant areas today. The humanitarian cycle disciplines are most often included in the variable part of the curriculum and can be considered optional.

One of the conditions for continuing labor contracts with representatives of a higher educational institution's faculty is active research. Here we see the risks associated with the increasing volume of teachers' research work and insufficiently effective system of its stimulation.

Competency risks arise. The increased volume of research activity encourages the teacher to actively engage in scientific activities, participate in the bidding companies for grants of various funds, cooperate with different partners to conduct research, and issue publications at various levels (monographs and articles) in foreign knowledge-intensive databases Scopus and Web of Science. The new reality of higher education requires huge professional, time, and material resources from the teacher in order to carry out active research work. In our opinion, it is more difficult for teachers of humanitarian areas of higher education to cope with overcoming this type of risk than teachers of natural-technical areas. Humanitarian researchers find it difficult to promote their research results due to reduced funding for grant activities. There is increasing competition among scholars in the humanitarian field, which reduces the chances

of receiving financial support from grant funds to promote their research activities.

However, competency-based risks are an incentive for many teachers of the humanitarian cycle to develop their research activities, pushing the faculty of higher education to look for urgent problems and propose strategies for resolving these issues, to participate in various competitions and grants, to seek financial support from government agencies and commercial companies to develop their research and promote the results. In changing conditions, the modern teacher of the humanitarian cycle should not only be a competent teacher who can correctly and interestingly present theoretical material for further familiarization by students but at the same time, the teacher needs to increase and develop research competencies. Failing to fulfill the higher school requirements, the teacher runs the risk of being unclaimed in the framework of professional activity even if he has a high level of education and significant experience in teaching in a higher educational institution.

We have already mentioned that currently, the teaching staff carries out their labor activity based on effective labor contracts signed with teachers as a result of the election (Kurbatova, 2013). Passing a competitive selection, teachers may face labor risks. The conditions of the competition dictate that each teacher must actively participate in public life, regularly improve his skills in the framework of the taught disciplines. The modern educational activity is also characterized by a large number of methodological works that accompany the educational process. Huge work is related to the development of work programs of disciplines and the fund of assessment tools, which require updating annually and should reflect the complexity of knowledge, abilities, and skills that students receive during the course, as well as materials aimed at checking the knowledge gained after completing the course. The teacher is burdened with conducting lectures and practical exercises and developing methodological recommendations, teaching aids, filling out reporting documents, conducting career-counseling work with schoolchildren, and opening and conducting programs of additional professional education. The success of the structural unit's quality management system depends on how well the teachers keep the documentation required. That is, the teaching staff must actively develop their resource potential, striving to be specialists of a high category.

Economic risks are also worth mentioning. The emergence of this type of risk among university teachers is due to the economic support of the faculty of higher education's professional activities. The amount of funding for higher education from the state is declining (this is especially noticeable in the humanitarian areas), which dictates for each teacher in the humanitarian cycle the conditions under which the teacher should strengthen the university's financial position through his professional activities. One way to overcome the economic risk is developing higher school teachers' new relevant training programs, additional professional education programs, and summer schools for university students. Teachers of the humanities can also create and implement in the educational process new educational programs on a commercial basis, which are in demand among students and whose graduates will become qualified specialists in a particular sector of the economy.

In addition to the risks we have listed, the humanities teacher faces a new, very relevant risk at present - the information risk associated with the spread of distance learning in the framework of higher education programs.

Distance learning is a teaching activity in which organized interactive communication both between the initiator of learning (teacher) and students (actors), and between the actors of distance learning and interactive information resource covering all inherent in the educational process components (objectives, contents, methods, organizational forms, training tools), carried out in the context of the implementation of the capabilities of information and communication technologies (Explanatory Dictionary, 2012).

Russia has embarked on a breakthrough scientific, technological, and socio-economic development of the Russian Federation; information technology is actively penetrating society's life and becoming an integral part of the educational process (Grigorieva et al., 2019). In this regard, information risks associated with the low quality of mastering new technical means by teachers of humanitarian disciplines appear in their professional activities. Higher school teachers need to use information and communication technologies in the educational process actively: the use of multimedia tools in the learning process, various presentation

materials, the introduction of online courses in the curriculum, the use of online platforms for distance learning, corporate mail-in correspondence with students; all that encourages humanitarian disciplines teachers to master new information and communication competencies allowing the teachers to develop their information and communication skills.

Such a type of risk is frightening for teachers of the older age category since it is challenging to learn new technologies and actively maintain an online learning format without live communication with the audience. The distance-learning format is less scary for young teachers, but it takes more time to prepare a course in the humanitarian cycle disciplines. Modern technologies allow you to conduct many different training options, even training can be carried out remotely, breaking the group into small classes and providing video and audio communication with students doing exercises, but Internet outages and sudden blackouts can complicate the learning process. Working with students through the monitor screen is hampered by the fact that the teacher cannot see the student's reaction to the information provided, which requires the teacher of the humanitarian cycle to build demonstration material clearly and concisely. As part of online education, students must necessarily have a unique opportunity today, namely, giving feedback to the teacher by writing a message in a general chat or by asking a question during an online lesson. Such reflection within the distance-learning format is very important for the teacher's more effective work in particular and educational activities in general.

For classes in a remote format, the teacher needs to have a high communication skills level (Ikilikyan et al., 2020). The teacher needs to interest the audience with his lecture to explain the material captivate the student. From these skills of the teacher, the effectiveness of mastering the course by students will depend.

Overcoming the information risk in the conditions of distance learning consists in the fact that the teacher of the humanitarian cycle of higher education should develop information and communication competence, computer literacy, knowledge of psychological and pedagogical principles when organizing the educational process in the distance learning system, which will ensure interactivity throughout the learning process and increase the motivation and involvement of students in the learning process.

Conclusion

The analysis of the existing challenges and risks showed that, in their professional activities, teachers of the humanitarian cycle as part of the reform of the higher education system, which is associated with the spread of distance learning, face organizational and managerial risks, competency risks, economic risks, labor risks, and information risks. It should be noted that the degree of freedom of the faculty in connection with the identified risks is gradually limited.

If we take the conditions for distance learning distribution, then now they are not obligatory for educational programs. However, they are often advisory in the form of including one course or module of the course in the curriculum. In the threat of the spread of coronavirus infection, most universities (on the recommendation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation) decided to switch to distance learning until the situation stabilizes. Whether such forms will be widespread in the framework of higher education is still unclear.

We believe that while there is relative independence in choosing options for resolving the identified risks, the teachers of the humanitarian cycle of higher education can search for the most optimal ways to improve the quality of the educational process and research work effectiveness. The modern reality is changeable, and on this basis, the success of introducing innovations arising in the context of reforming the system of Russian higher education, their adoption by the faculty depends on the personal intellectual resources and labor potential of each teacher, the willingness of teachers to participate in the implementation of transformations.

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