

The use of e-Learning technologies in orphans training programs

Olga Volkova¹, Oksana Besschetnova², Polina Ananchenkova³

- (1) Belgorod State University, 78, Pobeda Str., 308015, Belgorod, Russia
(2) Balashov Institute of Saratov State University, 29, K. Marx Str., 412300, Balshov, Russia
(3) Academy of Labour and Social Relations, 90, Lobachevskogo Str., 119454, Moscow, Russia
E-mail: ananchenkova[at]yandex.ru

Abstract

There is an increasing number of orphans and children left without parental care worldwide according to national monitoring as well as individual scientific studies. Education helps to improve the efficiency of children's social adaptation and expand their world outlook. The research was carried out in 2016-2017 on the territory of three large regions of Russia (Belgorod, Saratov, Zabaykalye), and was based on the use of in-depth interviews with Information technology school teachers. The interviews of teachers (n = 84) confirmed the effectiveness of using multimedia with children without parental care at school training programs, especially in rural areas where they can have an access to different kinds of professionals, such as psychologists, social workers, practitioners, etc. via Internet resources, as well as they can create a virtual group of classmate and other children to share the learning materials, to discuss the most important issues concerning the children's adaptation and the methods of communication with their biological parents, potential foster parents, and another orphans. The remote training is conducted solely by posting information on the web-site of the organization, the use of tutorials, videos and audio materials. The most effective distance education technologies are videos, themed movies, cartoons, short stories. One of the main factors of learning by using video is that every Information technology school teacher can create his/her own video to share the experience of solving typical problems based on real life events.

Keywords: E-learning technologies, Children without parental care, School, Education.

1 Introduction

Currently scientists and practitioners agree that orphans and children left without parental care should be placed in foster care instead of institutions, if their biological parents' rights are terminated. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that only 15% of children have lost their parents while 85% of them have parents who are alive, but do not responsible for them (Ananchenkova, 2011).

In Russia the number of children left without parental care much higher than the number of foster families. The majority of adoptive parents prefer newborns or toddlers with good fiscal and mental health, without siblings. Other children are forced to live in orphanages until 18 years. In this connection, it is necessary to create the favorable environment for children, living in institutions for their full adaptation and integration into the society. According to the research

about 10 % of residential institutions' leavers are successfully socialized; the rest join the ranks of homeless, offenders, or commit suicide (Abelbeysov & Akimova, 2013).

In order to increase the efficiency of orphans' social adaptation it requires the implementation of new e-learning technologies in educational process of institutions, focused on independent life after leaving. Some of them are successfully used with different categories of children, for example, migrants. First, migrants have difficulties to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity in the host country, it is especially truly for migrant children who much faster than adults can integrate into the host community and lose their ethnic and cultural identity. Secondly, the Internet provides to children an access to wide range of educational resources regardless of the area of their residence. Most of these trainings are conducted in native language, in the traditional ethno-cultural context. Third, the content of distance learning can be individual, depending on age, previous education, personal interests, etc. Fourth, distance education can be used by migrant children as well as the whole migrant community. Fifth, distance education can include a range of disciplines and activities specific to particular ethno-cultural groups of migrants (linguistics, religious studies, history, literature, cooking, crafts, etc.) (Volkova, Besschetnova & Ostavnaja, 2017).

There are many educational tools that can help children to become active in their construction process of their knowledge and one of them is the concept of cartoon. Cartoon can be interpreted as a teaching resource that combines visual elements with textual information and then makes use of contextual clues like gestures, dialogues and animations to interpret a certain topic (Fun Learning, 2017).

Nowadays, scientists, computer engineers, and educators develop a special rank of electronic resources which help working with children with special needs (Fun Learning, 2017; Kid Game Learn videos for Kids, Toddlers & Babies., 2017; Elearning animation, 2017).

2 Data and methodology

The purpose of the research was to study Information technology school teachers' opinions about the problems and possibilities for the implementation of e-learning technologies in the educational process to improve physical, mental, emotional development of orphans. The research was carried out in 2016-2017 on the territory of three large regions (Belgorod, Saratov, Zabaykalye), located in Russia. The methodological focus was qualitative, based on an exploratory study. We used in-depth interviews with 54 Information technology school teachers who work in secondary schools where children left without parental care studied together with home children. The type of sample was solid. The vast majority of interviews were made in the working places of the respondents. Participants were guaranteed full anonymity and confidentiality of information.

3 Empirical results

The way of life inside the institutional care forms some negative personal characteristics such as parasitic attitude to other people, government or social services; warps their values; prevents from socially approved behavior regarding getting well education, well-paid job, family creation. Most of them are focused mainly on themselves, rarely to peers, and almost never on the society outside the institution (Abelbeysov & Akimova, 2013).

Modern distance education includes such main ways of information's transmission as electronic mail, television, information communication networks. The most popular e-learning technologies used at school are those which, on the one hand, do not require significant financial costs or technical conditions, and on the other hand, meet the goals and objectives of the study. Due to limited funding some schools cannot afford to buy licensed software (e.g., Soft E-learning, Upside Learning, Adobe, NetOP, etc.), but having the connection to the Internet, they can provide the educational activities of well quality.

Thus, we can identify inexpensive and available Internet technologies, provided by schools through distance education to children left without parental care:

1. Skype. This software allows to support video chat, video conferences in real time. Using Skype the teacher can control and compare results at one-time (for example, the total dictation, contest papers, workshops, etc.) as well as bring together several participants for a group work project.
2. Video broadcast. As a rule, students are interested in such educational materials as master-classes, screenings of sport or creative activities (dancing, yoga, gymnastics, cooking lessons, crafts, etc.). In addition to that, one of the most popular types of activities is an invitation of a special guest (coach, instructor, master, etc.), and organizing a discussion.
3. Teleconferences. They are a kind of video broadcast and are used for making various kinds of competitions or trainings (presentations in the TED style, debates).
4. Cartoons. They entertains children in their learning process in a way that they do not even know they are learning. It helps them to work out their imagination especially through the use of colourful characters, funny animations and proper music. In short, the children are doing fun learning activities and at the same time building proper knowledge (Fun Learning, 2017).

Working with children, we recommend the use of electronic resources that contain cartoons, short stories, training programs (Fun Learning, 2017; Kid Game Learn videos for Kids, Toddlers & Babies., 2017; E-learning animation, 2017). The study shows that the introduction of e-learning technologies in educational process allows children to be enrolled in residential facilities, to expand the knowledge of the world, to get the access to information resources, to develop communication skills as well as self-presentation.

Information technology school teachers have identified some specific physical and psychological characteristics of children left without parental care which can be corrected by using e-learning technologies (Table 1).

Tab. 1 – Physical and psychological characteristics of children left without parental care by using e-Learning technologies

	Characteristics of children	Answer (%)
1	Unstable academic motivation	92 %
2	Increased emotional sensitivity to other people' opinions	75 %
3	Unpredictable emotional and behavioral reactions	78 %
4	Low motivation to sports activities	87 %
5	Low motivation to the world' exploration	89 %

The use of distance learning technologies allows to diversify methods of studying school subjects and to form an active learning environment (Table 2).

Tab. 2 – The directions of education, used by Information technology school teachers

	Directions of education	Answer (%)
1	Modernization of existing educational programs	87 %
2	Approbation and introduction of innovative technologies (information and communication, problem-search)	96 %
3	Empowering virtual space to meet socially approved interests of children	91 %
4	Improving the system of monitoring and information security	98 %

Thus, according to the respondents' answers, e-learning technologies help children, living in out-of-home care better learn the material, supporting it by audio and video effects; to improve their academic achievements; to make easier the process of adaptation to the new school environment; to increase self-esteem and personal social status.

The results of the research can identify several groups of children's educational and creative interests in the virtual space (Table 3).

Tab. 3 – Children's educational and creative interests in the virtual space

	Children's interests	Answer (%)
1	Sport events, physical training exercise, yoga, etc.	19 %
2	Dance events, fashion show, learning dance moves	21 %
3	Technical art, modeling, handmade crafts	7 %
4	Training sessions for artistic creation, the formation of practical art skills (embroidery, beading, patchwork)	18 %
5	Information technologies and practical skills (search the information in the Internet)	17 %
6	Reading (scientific, academic literature, fiction, etc.)	2 %

Along with advantages, we should highlight some disadvantages of distance e-learning education which are typical for children living in institutional care (the absence of the personal computer and the open access to the Internet; insufficient computer literacy training; the lack of strong motivation and hard self-discipline; small practical experience about the real life outside the institution).

Conclusion

Thus, the integration of modern information technologies into education system of institutional care for children left without parental care allows solving the following problems:

(1) to improve the quality of education through the access to many information resources and interactions with highly qualified teachers, tutors and other professionals in order to fill the gaps of missing skills on the school subjects;

(2) to receive supplementary education which will contribute to the development of their creative abilities and socialization;

(3) to develop initial professional skills by using the latest computer technologies as the basis of their future profession;

(4) to get the experience of communication with other peers, to get involved in different kinds of social approved activities outside the institutions;

(5) to equalize chances for getting good education for children leaving in institutions compared with home children;

(6) to create the network of students' social contacts living in different boarding schools or residential care, located in Russia's regions;

(7) to participate in scientific, creative competitions, festivals, group work, discussions with their peers abroad.

Acknowledgement

The article is prepared with the financial support of Russian Foundation for Basic Research (project no. 16-03-00057).

References

1. Abelbeysov, V.A. & Akimova, L.V. (2013) *Sotsializatsiya detey-sirot i detey, ostavshihnya bez popecheniya roditeley, v detskih sirotskih uchrezhdeniyah v Moskovskom megapolise: monografiya [Socialization of orphans and children left without parental care in orphanages in the Moscow metropolis: monograph]*. Izdatelstvo Novyie pechatnyie tehnologii, Moscow, 206. (in Russian).
2. Ananchenkova, P.I. (2011) Transformacija semejnyh cennostej v sovremennom rossijskom obshhestve [The transformation of family values in modern Russian society]. *Trud i sotsialnyye otnosheniya* 4, 45-53. (in Russian).
3. *Elearning animation*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_pRd5wyoFE, accessed 2017.
4. Fun Learning. Centre for Innovative and Lifelong Learning. <http://vcilt.uom.ac.mu/cill/index.php/fun-learning>, accessed 2017.
5. Kid Game Learn videos for Kids, Toddlers & Babies. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaZhEPIIvA3iGuszErTMLFA>, accessed 2017.
6. Volkova, O., Besschetnova, O. & Ostavnaja, A. (2017): Distance education as a way of saving ethnic and cultural identity of migrant children. In *E-Learning & Software for Education*, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 1, 257-262.