Chapter 15
Educational Interactions Quality in E-Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT
The chapter is focused on the problem of educational interactions within E-learning environment. The main questions are: how E-learning environment participants initiate and maintain communication and how an E-learning environment quality can be accessed via the educational interactions analysis? Two directions of E-learning environment interactions assessment are described: formalized assessment, carried out by a teacher on the account of basic educational interactions algorithms; students’ self-assessment. The first direction of assessment is proposed to be carried out with the use of basic algorithms of educational interactions in E-learning environment; while the second direction of assessment involves telecommunication reflexive educational technology.

INTRODUCTION
E-learning as a contemporary educational trend is being widely studied and discussed. Today E-learning is associated not only with a wide, structured and targeted use of computer technologies to support learning, but also with an active students’ role in the learning process and with a professor acting as a tutor overseeing the whole learning process. According to the psycho didactic approach (Noskova, 2007) the basic concepts of the E-learning environment interactions are considered as follows: social information, accumulated in the electronic educational resources; communications, or educational interactions, within various classes of educational objectives; flexible educational management activities in the E-learning environment with the use of diverse feedback, based on telecommunications.

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The main focus of this chapter is connected with the educational interactions within an E-learning environment: how E-learning environment participants initiate and maintain communication and how an E-learning environment quality can be assessed via the educational interactions analysis?

Educational interactions do not mean simply the information exchanges with the use of technical services. In focus are the educational interactions leading to the new educational outcomes. To build such interactions it is important to understand the psychological mechanisms that motivate actors to active social interaction in the Internet; to model the educational situations of high communication activity for students. Communicational capacity of an E-learning environment allows organizing group and individual interactions. Teachers need to learn how to perform the communicative acts not only in the direct interactions with students, but also in the community of self-learning students. These activities include: design, organization and support of group communications in an E-learning environment; individualized support of students. Expansion of social partners can enrich educational interactions with new meanings, attitudes, and values. Educational interactions give students the ability to position themselves in the virtual space (to discuss, to work together, etc.). Accordingly, teachers should not be the “interaction and communication center”, but preferably act as moderators and facilitators of students’ independent educational interactions.

BACKGROUND

In E-learning environment educational interactions have a different nature in comparison with a traditional educational environment. In contemporary research there are several directions in studying mediated interactions and communication in E-learning environment. Firstly, on-line communication is researched from various aspects: online and offline discussion strategies (Gao, Wang, Sun, 2009); computer supported collaborative work (Sela, 2013; Minocha, 2009; Chan, 2012), human-computer interaction (Konstantopoulos & Karkaletsis, 2013), communication theory (Oni, 2013; O’Connor, & Joffe, 2014). These scientific approaches are partly applicable to E-learning. However, scientific apparatus does not apply fully to the solution of educational problems. Therefore, we can conclude the need to find a common methodological approach to the development and assessment of educational interactions in E-learning environment.

Educational interactions in E-learning environment can be analyzed as a special type of activity. Human activities may be directed to the transformation of nature, the material world, symbolic systems, technology, and can be directed to other people as subjects of interactions. These last two aspects are the essence of the educational interactions.

E-learning environment can become not just a “zone of proximal development” learning (Vygotskiiy, 1978), as it happens in the classroom practices, but the area of actual self-development. Such self-development is relevant to a particular student, because it corresponds to personal aspirations in training and future professional activity. It stimulates the implementation of personal educational activities strategies, it reveals critical thinking, multifaceted vision of problems. Enriched with a personal information culture, such environment expands the range of formed competencies, especially in today’s network format. Moreover, modern cognitive strategies, willingness to share information, collaborative skills, self-actualization, and the desire to go beyond the standard, “anticipation” are being developed.
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