The Use of Innovative Learning Methods in the System of Modern Economic Education in the Russian Federation

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Abstract **– We proposed ways to solve the issues by applying the latest learning models used in the formal and informal education processes, in particular, the methods of case study, brainstorming, gamification, and mass open online courses; considered the relevance of using the methods and their implementation in the economic and business education; and provided examples of successful application of the state-of-the-art teaching modes in Russia. The study has shown that a more thorough implementation of the theoretical background of the education process can be achieved by combining innovative and conventional methods.**

The obtained results can be used in developing curricula and education programs, as well as in the process of bringing the education system of the Russian Federation in compliance with the modern requirements.

Keywords **– innovative learning methods, economic education, entrepreneurship, case study method, brainstorming, gamification, mass open online courses.**

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1. Introduction

In order to affect high quality of the papers, the authors are requested to follow instructions given in this sample paper. Regular length of the papers is 5 to 12 pages. The need for a more intensive use of the state-of-the-art information technologies and leading innovative teaching methods in the education process with the purpose of its upgrade is directly dictated by the requirements of the new information society. In the situation of global computerization, conventional education methods become insufficient for the complete satisfaction of the future professionals' education needs, which consist in forming high-quality professional skills and competencies in them in order to make them competitive in the labor market. Such criteria as quality culture, learning outcomes, student motivation and reflection, student progression, competent teachers, IT infrastructure, student satisfaction are the most important in striving to achieve the highest quality of the study process at the university level [1]. This is particularly relevant in such knowledge areas as economics, management, business, and entrepreneurship that are highly dependent on innovations. Such qualities as professionalism, communicative skills, teamwork ability, leadership, as well as ability to identify and analyze issues come to the foreground [2].

Nowadays, economic education permanently remains one of the most demanded fields of education in the contemporary Russian society. For example, 15.7% of all specialized secondary school graduates (young semiskilled professionals) in 2016 were graduates with economic and management majors, which hold the first place among 42 major groups of majors. This value was even higher for the higher education: as of the same year, economic and

management students made 21.4% of all applicants for bachelor's, specialist's and master's education programs. The number of economics postgraduate students in 2016 made 12.13% of the total number of postgraduate students, coming second only to technical majors, which equaled to 28% [3].

Thus, taking into account the particular popularity of economic majors in Russia and the development of information and communication technologies, it seems to be undoubtedly relevant to implement innovations in the education process in the economic and business field. The objective of this research is a comprehensive analysis of innovative education methods and a study of their ability to influence on solution of problems associated with the formal and informal economic education in Russia.

2. Methodology

The study is consisted of analyzing the existing publications and synthesizing the sources (including the statistical ones). We provided a comprehensive review of the use of innovative learning methods by combining such various sources with the purpose of a detailed versatile description of this process. Besides, we conducted a comparative analysis that allowed us to compare a number of statistical indicators in Russia and abroad.

3. Results and Discussion

The most popular innovative methods that are currently being introduced in the economic and business education process are: the case study, brainstorming, gamification, and the application of mass open online courses.

3.1. The use of Innovative Methods

The conventional lecture-based methods used in business education are efficient for learning new material, but at the same time often cause a passive attitude among students. Such education is unidirectional and ineffective, as it lacks simulating real situations that the students can face in practice [2]. In this view, the application of interactive learning methods and modes seems relevant as they are not based on passive perception, but rather on the interaction of the students with each other in the course of active unassisted solution of specific tasks assigned to them [4].

3.2. The Case Study Method

The case studyis one of such methods, based on learning through analyzing and solving particular problem situations offered to students [5]. Students are essentially offered some information in the form of a particular situation (case) that they need to consider, analyze, and solve in some way, justifying their opinion. The analysis includes several stages: first individual work, then discussion in small groups of 2-4 persons, and finally general discussion when students try to come to a unified solution being the best one [6].

The case study method helps students to obtain knowledge based on their own experience, unlike the standard subject learning through a series of lectures prepared by the teacher in advance [7]. Using the case study method allows bridging a gap between the economic theory and its practical application aimed at solving complex problems. For example, reading such courses as Business Economics, Economics of Industry, Financial Management, Accounting and Management Review while educating mining economistsis aimed at implementing economy knowledge when considering industry-specific features [8]. Application of specific situations in learning makes it deeper, rather than superficial**,** improves the skills of independent work, and promotes a dialog and interaction between the teacher and the students.

Thus, the theoretical knowledge obtained by the students before is associated with real-life situations [9]. The case study method application as part of the problem-situation-based learning enables forming the logical thinking and agile independent decision-making abilities in students, teaches them to present their own viewpoint in oral or written form and justify it in a well-argued manner, adequately perceive others' opinions and evaluate them with a critical eye. The case study method allows raising the students' interest in the subject and their future profession, as well as developing qualities important for their professional activity, such as the reflexion ability, communicative skills, community commitment, and tolerance [4].

Although, thanks to developing additional skills in students, the case study method is more efficient compared to the conventional lecture-based teaching in economics, it also has certain drawbacks. In particular, it can be extended to an online educational environment, so it can only complement the conventional classroom study [10].

3.3. Brainstorming Method

Another method associated with case study is *the brainstorming method*. Brainstorming is a method of group-based educational activity, when students focus on seeking ideas to solve a particular problem. The purpose of brainstorming is to generate as many ideas as possible within the given time interval. Despite not all of the ideas proposed during the

brainstorming are useful, they often serve as the starting point for offering other, more feasible ones [11]. This method contributes to teaming up students, reinforces their communicative skills, develops their thinking and decision-making skills, as well as teaches them to respect different points of view [12].

Brainstorming usually consists of several stages. At first, the teacher raises a problem and discusses its various aspects with the students in order to avoid misunderstanding. Next, the problem is specified by formulating particular issues (which can already help propose certain solutions, thus eliminating the need for further brainstorming). The next stage is the brainstorming itself (including a warm-up session), during which the students propose various, sometimes absurd solutions of the problem, record and present them. Finally, all the ideas are evaluated and the ones featuring the best logic, novelty, uniqueness, usefulness, duration, value, etc. are selected [12].

3.4. Gamification as a Method of Raising Students' Motivation

Gamification is the application of game-design elements and game thinking in non-game contexts with the purpose of achieving the target behavior and interaction [13]. The prospects of this method are positively and increasingly influenced by computerization and the growing number of the smartphone, tablet, and other device users.

In both Russian and foreign education, non-digital game elements have been used for a long time. At the same time, due to the popularity of digital games among the younger generation, the involvement of game elements in the learning process plays a significant role currently [14]. The main age of a Russian gamer is 30 years [15], which lower than in the USA, where it is 34 years [16]. This makes efficient and mainstreams the use of game-based methods in the education process, as the youth makes up the majority of those who acquire formal and informal education.

Considering the fact that the major part of the issues of the contemporary education is associated with the lack of students' motivation for accomplishing education program tasks, we can state that the use of digital games raises such motivation. An important role in it belongs to the development of interactive training content with multimedia elements, gradual increase of complexity (with each successive task being more difficult), as well as awarding the applied efforts with points in order to increase the students' involvement and their motivation for further participation in the study and create a friendly competitive environment [17], [14].

Gamification essentially removes the margins between formal and informal education and motivates students to acquire continuous education. On the other hand, overusing it can result in exhausting the teacher's resources or accustoming the students to studying in exchange for a certain reward only. Taking the above into account, this practice cannot be deemed universal and should be combined with conventional education forms [18], [19].

3.5. Mass Open Online Courses in the System of Independent and University Economic Education

Along with the conventional classroom study at professional high schools and higher educational institutions, a major role in the system of modern economic and business education belongs to self-study, which is an essential element of continuous education. The advantage of this education type is that the choice of objectives and study methods is made by the student rather than the teacher, and the student evaluates his own results [20].

Online education has been playing an important role in the propagation of self-study over the recent years, which is due to the rapid development of the Internet. According to the research conducted by the Institute of Strategic Research and Economics of Knowledge of the National Research University "Higher School of Economics," the share of Russians aged 25–64 who are permanently involved in computer-assisted self-study (including online education) has increased from 0.8% in 2006 to 4% in 2016. The number of people using podcasts, online applications for mobile phones (courses or standalone lectures, master classes) for this purpose has increased in 2013–2016 from 0.9% to 1.3%; and those who use online broadcasts of lectures, reports, and webinars has increased from 0.5% to 1.8% (fig. 1).

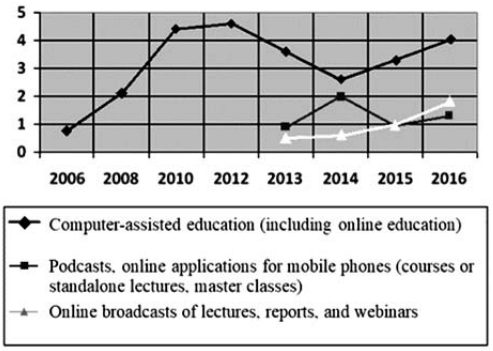

Figure 1. Innovative technology in the self-study of the population of Russia aged 25 – 64 years (2006 – 2013), %

At the same time, the population of Russia is not yet sufficiently involved in the process of continuous education, unlike the population of European

countries. In particular, only 17% of Russians aged 25–64 mentioned that they were in a certain way acquiring continuous formal or informal education. At the same time, this indicator equals to 25% in Poland, 52% in Germany and the UK, and 69% in Switzerland [3].

Since recent years, the leading role in university education and self-study both in Russia and abroad belongs to mass open online courses (MOOC), being Internet courses featuring interactive participation and free access [21]. One of the main attributes of such courses is what distinguishes them from conventional e-learning courses—a focus on an unlimited number of students (mass-market nature). Their strength in the context of modern education consists in the significant reduction in the cost of professional education. The courses are affordable for the wide audience thanks to their low price or even free-of-charge basis, as well as most frequently a small number of formal conditions for enrollment. The study is usually organized via the Internet and does not depend on the students' location [22], [23]. This factor is particularly important for people restricted mobility who are also interested in acquiring education, such as disabled people and people with limited abilities, including hearing impairments, musculoskeletal disorders, etc. [21].

The use of such courses in the higher education in Russia is particularly relevant at the current stage, considering the fact that 98% of Russians aged 16 years believe that education should be free of charge while the average value of this indicator in the world makes only 89% [23].

From 2012 till 2017, the share of teachers employed with Russian higher education institutions who use MOOC materials in their teaching process has increased by 12 times: from 0.9% in 2012 to 10.4%. Teachers of the leading higher education institutions in Russia are also actively joining the process of MOOC development. For example, as a result of signed contracts between Russian universities and the National Platform of Open Education, the curricula of academic groups include the online lectures of professors from various higher education institutions of the Russian Federation [23].

Among the most popular Russian MOOCs, the online platform of the National Open University INTUIT founded in 2003 is distinguished. As of today, the platform offers over 700 courses for various knowledge areas, 90 of which are related to economics. The inter-university e-learning platform Universarium, established in 2013, currently offers over 170 online courses, 30 of which are related to economics and management [24]. Another popular platform is the portal of the educational project Lektorium, offering video lectures and online courses in various knowledge areas.

On the US platform Coursera, one of the leading online learning websites, some other organizations are also represented in addition to Russian higher education institutions. For example, the platform hosts the MOOC "Banking" by the Sberbank Corporate University. At the same time, the problem of the majority of such Russian online courses is that they are offered in Russian, which seriously affects their market prospects and makes them inaccessible for foreign students. In these conditions, it is necessary for Russian universities to develop English-language courses, which would help foreigners understand the current economic situation in Russia and be useful for foreign organizations who make or consider making business in Russia [25].

The experience of neighboring Belarus in the field of business education shows that the use of purely distant learning methods developing insufficiently fast in the country does not allow achieving the desirable results. According to analysts, the optimal option is to implement combined education programs in this field, which include both classroom and distant learning [26]. Such an approach should be implemented in Russia as well, as MOOCs cannot replace a full-fledged education due to a number of drawbacks: insufficient interaction with the teacher, different levels of initial knowledge, as well as a significant volume of unassisted work. As a result, only a minor part of students completes such courses [21].

4. Conclusion

As shown by the research, there is a rather wide range of innovative learning methods suitable for the economic and business education in Russia. These include both unconventional approaches to the university education (the case study method, brainstorming) and the methods that are essentially non-typical education modes and can be applied in informal e-learning (MOOC, gamification, etc.). These methods help successfully solving the issues of the contemporary education process, such as lack of students' motivation, their passive attitude, insufficient practical implementation of the obtained knowledge, which is crucial for the competitive ability of a professional.

A number of learning methods have actively been used in Russia over a long period, while others just start being implemented in the education process. One way or another, the efficiency of alternative methods directly depends on their combination with conventional methods and enables a more complete practical implementation of the theoretical background of the education process. When forming education programs in each particular case, it is necessary to evaluate the positive and negative

factors of the application of innovative methods, as well as use the experience of other countries as reference (primarily, the neighboring countries and the leading Western states).

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