LEARNING AND TEACHING AMIDST AND BEYOND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: SUSTAINING AND ENHANCING STUDENTS' SOLIDARITY

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the issues of learning and teaching online at Russian universities, including during the COVID-19 outbreak. With movement and contacts restricted, all full-time students and all educators had to master new technologies in a very short term, develop special course layouts for remote teaching mode, and cope with the motivational challenges. The methods include but are not limited to content analysis of media publications, domestic regulations, and local normative documents. The concepts of macro-social and group (particularistic) solidarity together with the methodological position of the interplay between solidarity, autonomy, and agency, constitute the original theoretical ground of the research. Comparing in-person, blended, and complete virtual learning modes during COVID-19, the study discusses teachers' work overload, students' acceptance of distant modes of education, and their solidarity when interacting with university administrations and governments. The paper provides a meta-analysis by exploring the impacts of digital transformation and the Covid-2019 outbreak on justice, transparency, agency, and solidarity at universities. The findings show challenges and ways of self-realization of students and teachers in complex socio-economic, psychological, and educational conditions and are of decisive importance for teachers who develop and conduct philosophical disciplines online. Showing systemic shortcomings of the regional educational system, the paper raises our awareness of how emergency situation, political and managerial measures interact with challenges and coping practices of educational and non-educational actors.

Keywords: solidarity; agency; students; educational policy; emergency remote teaching (ERT); zoombie; digital fatigue.

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Aprender y enseñar durante y más allá de la pandemia de covid-19: mantener y mejorar la solidaridad de los estudiantes

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo explorar los problemas del aprendizaje y la enseñanza en línea en las universidades rusas, incluso durante el brote de COVID-19. Con movimientos y contactos restringidos, todos los estudiantes a tiempo completo y todos los educadores tuvieron que dominar las nuevas tecnologías en muy poco tiempo, desarrollar diseños de cursos especiales para el modo de enseñanza remota y afrontar los desafíos motivacionales. Los métodos incluyen, entre otros, análisis de contenido de publicaciones de medios, regulaciones nacionales y documentos normativos locales. Los conceptos de solidaridad macrosocial y de grupo (particularista) junto con la posición metodológica de la interacción entre solidaridad, autonomía y agencia constituyen el fundamento teórico original de la investigación. Comparando los modos de aprendizaje presencial, semipresencial y virtual completo durante la COVID-19, el estudio analiza la sobrecarga de trabajo de los docentes, la aceptación de los estudiantes del modo de educación a distancia y su solidaridad al interactuar con las administraciones universitarias y los gobiernos. El artículo proporciona un metanálisis explorando los impactos de la transformación digital y el brote de Covid-2019 en la justicia, la transparencia, la agencia y la solidaridad en las universidades. Los hallazgos muestran desafíos y formas de autorrealización de estudiantes y profesores en condiciones socioeconómicas, psicológicas y educativas complejas, y son de importancia decisiva para los profesores que desarrollan y dirigen disciplinas filosóficas en línea. Al mostrar las deficiencias sistémicas del sistema educativo regional, el artículo aumenta nuestra conciencia sobre cómo las situaciones de emergencia, las medidas políticas y de gestión interactúan con los desafíos y las prácticas de afrontamiento de los actores educativos y no educativos.

Palabras clave: solidaridad; agencia; estudiantes; política educativa; enseñanza remota de emergencia; zoombie; fatiga digital.

Introductıon

Being social gathering places that could pose a risk of infection, universities had to temporarily close their physical campuses to the public. This affected about 2 billion university students around the globe. To successfully reopen and to avoid downsizing staff after several consecutive closure orders by the government, universities worldwide expanded the use of fully distance mode.

In March 2020, all Russian universities switched to distance learning mode, and all students completed the academic year through videoconferencing platforms.

This paper represents the view and experience of philosophy teacher on the challenges of distance learning that have become more obvious and urgent during the pandemic in higher educational institutions (HEIs), by the case of BashSU with 30,000 students (BashSU, 2021a). To create a competitive advantage, BashSU have begun to introduce distance educational technologies for part-time students in 2014. BashSU had its own advanced training courses and created its own learning environment. Although distant learning has been here for a while,

BashSU's shift to full distant learning mode during lockdown made teachers and students face multiple challenges. Before pandemics, it has long been regarded to be no more than an alternative to conventional face-to-face (F2F) training that allows rural students not to travel a long distance and disadvantaged students to pay less. Distance learning technologies have remained being small and avoided components of education for a long, became mandatory and could not but altered students' and educators' perceptions of distance learning compared to the pre-pandemic period, similar to European universities.

Recent research has predominantly studied specifics of online education quality (Serkina et al., 2022; Suwarto et al., 2023), grade inflation (Karadag, 2021), and fully distant learning mode (Darginavičienė and Šliogerienė, 2022; Jandrić, 2020). There are relatively few publications on university bureaucracy (Babintsev et al., 2022), malpractices during pandemics teaching, regional educational policy in Russia and worldwide, and their paired impact on students' solidarity (Pushkareva et al., 2021) with government and higher educational institutions (HEIs) management.

Purpose of the study

This paper aims to identify factors that might have discouraged tutors and students from deriving the full benefits of online services during an urgent leapfrog into distant learning, and to reveal what teachers and the government had taken to successfully meet the challenges of students' (non) acceptance of entirely distant learning mode.

The research questions correspond to the unexpected effects and controversies of compulsory fully online learning during self-isolation period.

Research question 1: Why, regardless students' satisfaction with online distance training mode, they fomented the educational scandal that might turn into a regional political issue?

Research question 2: What do we know about the issues teachers encountered during the pandemic, and did solve and may or should solve them?

Method

This insider research applies the analysis of experiences of the developed content material, training techniques in philosophical disciplines, gender studies, and ethics for bachelors, specialists, and masters from all faculties regardless of their specialties, including those students specializing in Literature and Cultural Studies students at BashSU. The disciplines include Philosophy, Cultural studies, Ethics, Religious Studies, and Cultural Phenomenology. This analysis includes philosophical method of reflective judgement in form of discussions on the difficulties of online training sessions, online seminars, and independent work. It bases on practical experiences gained in coping with urgent issues of mastering videoconferencing communication mode from participants' homes.

Striving to bridge the gap between educational philosophy, theory, and practice, the paper applies the methods of content analysis while reviewing domestic laws on national level (Federal Assembly of Russia, 2020), local regulations on regional level (Head of Bashkortostan Republic, 2020), and universities' normative documents (BashSU, 2020; 2021b) as research material. It also uses media analysis of Russian Internet publications ("V BashGU Otvetili", 2020; Tadtayev et al., 2020; Suponkin, 2020; Nabieva, 2020) related to students' perceptions of e-

learning and higher education and their interactions with political an educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opposed to the standard ideological frameworks in educational and social studies, it follows phenomenological tradition (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015) and does not confine to regarding only internal factors of educational process traditionally analyzed in previous research. Instead, the paper moves in two directions simultaneousely: beyond the auditorium and university, and deeper to students' and teachers lifeworlds, without going into psychological and health-related details.

When considering students' and teachers' solidarity, the author believes that their cooperation, mutual aid, and interactions with regional and universities administration base on their educational freedom, self-government, agency, and autonomy. That is why the research methodology bases on culturally responsive and critical pedagogies (Mayo, 2020) and implies that solidarity exceeds phenomena of social cooperation (allyship) and consent (cohesion) (Hensby, 2016; Dutta, 2020), that only autonomous social actors with strong agency (Vavilina et al., 2021) are able to constructive solidarity, and that macrosocial and particularistic types of solidarity have different effects on social groups (Sirazetdinova et al., 2023).

Results
Regulations and technical issues of ERT

At Bashkir State University (BashSU)[†] and its branches, all students, including bachelor's, specialist's, master's, and postgraduate programs on full-time and part-time, passed final examinations and defended their graduation works online (Federal Assembly of Russia, 2020; Head of Bashkortostan Republic, 2020; BashSU, 2021b).

Although Moodle remains being a primary medium for interaction between e-students and lecturers in BashSU, the pandemic broadened the range of software framework for online communication, involving full-time students. When faced with an outbreak, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education recommended conducting classes online on major videoconferencing platforms for getting ahead of self-isolation issues that might affect mastering curricula and completion of programs. After the end of All-Russian compulsory distance learning period, the government directed Russian regions to independently determine training format. Regional leaders based their decisions on local epidemiological situation, specifics of majors and specialties, compliance with laws and regulations of the authorities and prescriptions from Rospotrebnadzor, the amount of foreign and non-urban students, and student dorms conditions (Aleshkovski et al., 2021).

In doing so, the Russian government and educational administrators managed to reconcile employees' and students' safety measures by providing quality education with by using online tools. Nonetheless, both university teachers and educational managers around the globe had and still face challenges of creating well-rounded learning environments and adapting learning programs to distant learning mode.

Synchronous video conferences became a solution to circumvent pandemic restrictions, providing the opportunity to virtually attend lectures and seminars. Universities applied the tools

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[†] In 2022, Bashkir State University together with Ufa State Aviation University were reorganized to Ufa University of Science and Technology, and became the 5th largest university in Russia by the number of students.

of contactless online presence considered as a substitute for the necessary moving at large distances or crossing the borders. At the same time, at the very beginning of forced isolation, minimal technical abilities and skills could not provide the replacement of F2F learning. The technical component of e-learning during pandemics was much inferior to foreign variants. This constituted an obstacle for either delivery of online sessions or doing and supervision of independent work. Before universities officially settled to use the Zoom platform and different online communication tools, they had not paid for licensed Zoom accounts. That is why teachers had to split the lectures of two academic hours into two sessions of 40 minutes each, which required reconnection. They also had poor telecommunications, for instance, no web camera or a headset with a microphone in their homes, and had faced a lack of computers at their workplaces. To purchase new gadgets was also a challenge due to the quarantine and movement restrictions that allowed to attend grocery or pharmacy no more than within 500 meters of home during first two weeks in April, 2020. Most of professors had a limited experience of teaching online (Karahisar and Unluer, 2022).

 Then, being new to Zoom and entirely to videoconference format, lecturers could select the incorrect settings or choose the wrong classroom in the schedule, unknowingly not letting the participants join the lesson. Methodists could place two different simultaneously going classes in the same classroom. A cough or another sound from the non-muted participant's location might fill the private spaces of each participant. Another issue was hacking of video conferences by turning loud music or streaming unauthorized video, hampering to finish the lesson in time and forcing an educational personnel to create new links for online lessons. Finally, a student could confuse links and data, finding as a result an empty classroom or a lesson unavailable to the visit.

Why do students become zoombies: malpractices or digital fatigue?

One of the most significant drawbacks of an entirely distance learning mode is the change in the communication mode. During lectures and seminars with physical presence, participants play their roles properly, and a lecturer directs social situations to the working atmosphere, drawing on students' conformity. A lecturer is used to keep all students in sight and decisively avert loud communication in offline F2F training.

During the pre-COVID-19 era, in ordinary distance classes or correspondence education, both tutors and students could postpone some of independent work activities and upload the exercise and the completed task at the flood without long-lasted synchronous communication. While the outbreak period, although tutors could show illustrations simultaneously to a big audience, it was physically and psychologically much more difficult to conduct many classes through the screen all day. Without keeping an eye to eye contact during the seminars, at some point lecturers felt like working with each student in turn, and not with a whole group. The online format implies a different mood, view of the working environment, and a set of tools for holding the audience's attention. Online platforms to some extent make participants to miss non-verbal elements of communication providing them with an implicit knowledge on what communicating people are going through. Moreover, talking heads and even a TED talk lose their learning efficiency after the listener spent a time getting over with an online environment. Due to more fatigue and less returns from students, tutors had been sitting at the computer and trying to

understand if there was someone still actively taking notes on the other side of the monitor at the end of the lecture.

For teachers, it is difficult to feel the audience and have a direct impact on students with limited online communication. Some lecturers checked the logs of entering and leaving the meeting, but they still have not seen what students have actually been doing. In Zoom, the lecturer may not notice those who use the pre-arranged photographs instead of online video connection, due to going over a presentation or not having every participant simultaneously shown on the screen. This applies especially to widely attended lectures for large groups beginning with several dozen people, where the student may turn on and off the camera periodically, replacing the image from the camera by photo or animation.

Lecturer may happen to see at the end of the meeting that the student has already started running on the treadmill or doing exercises, or petting a dog. Sometimes female students refuse to turn on their cameras and show themselves, allegedly because they are sick or have a poor internet connection. Later, participants may find that in fact these girls just glued the patches under their eyes, have not combed their hair, or sit in pajamas, clean their houses, or work with the cashier.

At first glance, it was easier to attend classes without traffic jams, having to leave the house, and even picking up clothes. If the teacher required no video presence in classroom, a student might not change clothes at all, doing exercises and preparing meals instead.

Most of the lecturers met "zoombies", or classroom zombies, who are present in the participants list, but completely passive, not showing signs of life and not participating in the online classes (Toney et al., 2021). Some lecturers might not know about the tools of faking presence and participation while the absence of real "presence".

Zombification of students may derive from technological depletion. On the one side, feeling physical presence regardless of actually meeting, some students may experience less anxiety, interacting more courageously online than in the traditional classroom (Thrasher, 2022). On the other, traditional video conferencing leads to the users' fatigue with Zoom and Bigbluebutton synchronous online lectures. The high risk of Zoom fatigue correlates with long-hours videoconferences. Zoom fatigue relates to symptoms such as exhaustion after prolonged use of technologies (Nadler, 2020) associated with digital pressure, "contributing to destabilizing systems, impaired work, tension, and a change of lifestyle" (Romanenko et al., 2022).

For many students, remote communication mode has an additional relaxing effect, blurring the line between extracurricular and academic activities, and between work, non-work and study time. Asynchronous interactions generate changes in sense of time and the illusion that everything is done on time. Together with the amended regime, home and family matters, entertainment, and full-time job become distracting factors while mastering the study program. This may turn into a stressful end of the semester. As philosophy seeks to design a way beyond conventionalized and stereotyped reasoning patterns, students find it impossible to pass a philosophy course successfully, following the previously assimilated algorithm of faking attendance at online lessons. While in-person consultations some students also reported that they faced a lack of live communication with groupmates, sharing problems with close friends, discussing education issues with teachers, and asking for help.

In addition to traditional academic fraud in distance education identified in 2019 (Sirazetdinova et al., 2019), one should name the following malpractices during synchronous videoconferences:

• discipline issues, i.e., doing unrelated affairs during the lecture;

• non-participation in the seminar or colloquium under the pretext of a bad connection;

• request to send a presentation instead of writing down a lecture, justified by having sound problems that disappear when obtaining estimates and grades at the end of the same lesson.

Lecturers' overload

The main advantage of fully distant learning mode was tutor's time- and effort-saving when creating a pool of appraisal tools, designing and checking lectures, seminars and homework. On the other side, some video design and audio recording tasks to post online require participation of professionals who were overloaded with a large number of applications. Other issues were a difficulty of conducting creative classes and an increased time and effort expenses to control the non-test tasks performance. Meanwhile, a large number of hours spent, administrative work, bringing in line with standards and regulations, and teacher-student ratio of 1:30 together negatively impact a workforce stretched to its limits. This proportion imposes certain challenges while scheduling and distance learning organization. During pandemics, students follow the same curricula as before pandemics, and the number of hours remains, while completing online forms and grading the papers takes longer and is relevant to the neoliberal model but not to existing curricula (Hunsinger, 2020). Even for pre-pandemic, the scheduled time for preparation and control is far less than the actual lecturer's spent time. That is why, tutors frequently consider the differences between new educational tools compared to currently used ones as shortcomings of online education.

Teachers also suffered from digital fatigue. While traditional offline seminars are usually more spontaneous, online lessons take much more time to prepare materials, and teachers put in more effort to keep discipline. When tutors have just begun trying different platforms on their own, they have overwhelmed with computer work and looking at the screen. When lecturers have to reply where the student can send a message or make a call, i.e. Facebook, VKontakte, Moodle, Google Class, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google and Yandex services, Viber or WhatsApp messengers, it dazzles in their eyes. Moreover, the quality of mastering the material by students was not entirely predictable, and along with the conduct of classes, all teaching staff had to learn new ways of educational material presentation.

Only a part of the tutors had an extensive experience in conducting online classes, and prepared materials mostly for distance learning of part-time students, rather than online classes of full-time students. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, offline presentations were limited by a schedule, and a lecturer in most cases could only chalk simple schemes on blackboard. Tutors had access to a few audiences equipped with a projector and to even a lesser amount of computer classes. That is why, in large they did not feel the need for an advanced visual design, and had not had pre-recorded video lectures on compulsory subjects.

Distant learning in Russian HEIs has brought not only a new working regime (Darginavičienė and Šliogerienė, 2022) and the need to publish in uncertain circumstances (Artigas, 2020), but also an inevitable simultaneous combination of the teacher and family roles. With their own children's distance education at school, lecturers had to share one personal

computer among all family members with coinciding timetables. Full-time distant learning seemed to encroach on the border between lecturer's private and professional life. It is impossible to do science and university teaching in snatches, as they require total immersion and full dedication. Every lecturer should have an opportunity to separate scientific writing, reflection, and professional teaching from everyday issues, domestic matters, and parenting.

Except exacerbating the role balance issue, their work productivity was affected by a forced long-term stay in an enclosed space with spouses and children who constantly need movement and attention. The apartments in Russia are notoriously small (Zhelnina, 2022), and along with Bashkortostan's sharply continental climate, this produces feeling cold when turning off central heating and makes emotional tension a special challenge. This hypothesis finds support in mass purchases of climatic equipment, conditioners and moisturizers, along with tablets and laptops soared in price.

Although an interactive regime is considered to be providing an informal setting productive for generation and assimilation of new knowledge, lecturers and students use Zoom from their homes. Most lecturers show their real pictures along with home environment, which is not normally intended for prying eyes. Moreover, they unwittingly present inside multiple other private homes, see utilities, communications, and suddenly emerging children and pets in the frame. The boundaries of private life became permeable for the public.

By contrast, separately living tutors might experience loneliness or lack of live communication. This is evidenced by the increasing number of new companion animal owners, social network communities helping dogs to get adopted, and overall pets population. For many, having pets have become a chance to walk and reduce the loneliness, as self-isolation rules allowed leaving the house by no more than 500 meters to visit a pharmacy or a store, or to walk a dog. The patrol on the streets was very intense, especially during the first weeks, and police was stopping and checking every passerby's documents.

Students' solidarity and social justice vs digital gap and ınequality

As Bashkortostan is a highly agrarian region, Bashkir universities traditionally attract large numbers of students from rural areas and small towns. They have difficulties with Internet availability, visiting Internet platforms, and even mobile network coverage issues such as weak (or even no) mobile signal reception. For high-quality of training, they should have modern and reliable equipment, whereas not everyone can afford an urgent purchase of new equipment.

A compulsory online format of lectures and seminars during the COVID-19 pandemic produced a digital gap in virtual classes due to the lack of access to a stable Internet connection. The accessibility of online learning tools depends on both high-speed Internet infrastructure and having devices, such as laptops or tablets. Rural and low-income students frequently do not have financial resources necessary for their immediate purchase of these technologies. This disadvantage may increase the gap in training and achievements between students with high and low socio-economic statuses. In addition, out-of-town and international students were sent home from the university dormitory or, instead, self-isolated, being provided with delivered meals.

The first series of confrontations between HEIs students and educational administrators on the issue of studying costs reduction marked the start of the Covid-19 outbreak. Moscow State University students who paid 240-570 thousand rubles per year and faced constrained access to learning materials during the lockdown, prepared a collective lawsuit claiming to revise education

tariffs (Tadtayev et al., 2020). Universities could not independently lower the prices of training, having to equip their offices with additional computers, microphones, and headphones ("V BashGU Otvetili", 2020). To maintain practices of individual approach to teaching in relation to each student, the groups of students had not been brought together in online mode, having their previous schedules. Moreover, all educational institutions are obliged to keep a certain level of payment guaranteed by legislation to all employees in the absence of real work at idle time. Instead of lowering tuition fees, universities provided material assistance to disadvantaged students. To the beginning of the next 2020-2021 academic year, the Russian government decided to fund much more budget places for all training directions (Nabieva, 2020).

The second opposition of students and administrators happened in October-November of 2020. Students countered to the return of offline learning (BashSU, 2020), claiming that they would get infected through the fault of universities. Despite all the shortcomings of entirely distant learning mode, Russian students considered it possible to continue their training in online format. Moreover, they were outraged by the termination of entirely distant learning mode for senior courses, and signed an online petition asking educational and regional leaders for exemption from physical attendance of classes and leaving them at online distance learning regime (Suponkin, 2020).

One can assume that this dramatically change in students' opinion is not least because of teachers' success to resolve technical and organizational issues of online education. Another reason is that poor financial situation remains being a major concern of students.

After six months of being enabled to pay for education and everyday needs, they had difficulties to leave their jobs and expressed a willingness to combine education with work. The readiness of the government and the universities to make concessions may indicate their awareness of the fact that the unofficial load not displayed in the curriculum, the lack of equipment, and behavior regulations of distance classes are not local Bashkortostan's but systemic issues of national concern.

During the pandemic's first wave, the closure of educational institutions caused the most harm to vulnerable and socially disadvantaged students. It also exposed and increased significantly the global inequalities in the access to education, and decreased the justice in education (Kodelja, 2020). In contrast to Europe, where digital inequalities are not merely consequences of the forced adoption of online learning mode (Šimenc, 2021), Russia has already had regional disparities in educational quality and accessibility. The imbalance of state-funded and fee-paying paid places makes the strongest high-ranking students and competitors mostly leaving in Moscow or St. Petersburg. Pandemics only added additional issues of digital gaps, such as poor Internet connection or communication equipment shortages limiting access to distance learning tools.

Job and financial independence vs independent work

In line with BashSU's curricula, philosophy and cultural studies courses for full-time students have an average ratio of classroom work to independent work of 3:7 measured in academic hours. Not raising the question of reasonable and allowable limits of classroom-independent corridor, this paper focuses on how to organize students' independent work online with the usage of informational technologies.

Even for full-time students, independent work is in a primary position. Standard auditorium work consists of 76 academic hours of independent work and 32 academic hours including 12 lecture hours and 20 practical studies hours. Long-overdue reforms shifting the focus from classroom work to independent work contributes to academics' difficulties with regular replacement of educational standards. Universities improve their infrastructures and adapt educational programs anew to every next generation of government's Federal State educational standards. The reforms have increased the level of administrative control as well as interference in the structure and content of university education in Russia, which leads to the weakening of Russian higher education (Panfilova, 2011).

Throughout the coronavirus outbreak, students were often employed in unskilled work and this caused them not to enable their cameras and microphones, only connecting to the meeting with profile pictures or blank screens with no real-time image displayed.

With an official return to offline education, full-time students did not want to leave their jobs and give up salaries. That is why they frequently asked teachers to continue conducting classes online with a use of Zoom and VKontakte. For master students, attending classes over the Internet is easier and more affordable, as they commonly work on a specialty and have already gained learning and information processing skills than bachelor students. Bachelor students are more frequently interrupted by their customer service, and have to speak in a whisper from under the bar counter, as their first duty is to stand ready to meet every visitor, and employers fine or fire them for doing extraneous affairs.

A formal increase in a number of independent work hours has not provided the surge in independent factual work. When a student turns in a good essay paper, this does not guarantee that it was not ordered from a specialized company or generated online by AI tools (Tlili et al., 2023).

Here, the author must clarify that a focus on job placement, discipline, and education quality issues are due to educational reform, namely, with commercialization and a decrease of classroom hours. Formally, Russian bachelor and master students have a higher quantity of independent work hours compared to specialists before the educational reform. Paradoxically, a formal increase of independent work hours led to the decrease of time dedicated to learning. Students rarely utilize their newly available time to get involved in the library or to explore additional learning materials at home. Having cut back their classroom training hours, the new generation of students is more likely to regard independent working hours as extra time, and spend it to take a job or to indulge in more enjoyable activities. That is why, the lower number of auditorium hours resulted in a sharp decline in the quality of training. Specialist students in Russia have more either intensive classroom training and real independent work under a teacher's operational control on each lesson with regularly and publicly announced results than bachelor students. Most of the budget-paid students had been oriented themselves to strong students. They made efforts to improve and boost their academic performance so as to partially cover the educational supplies and food expenses, not be expelled from the university, and not return to their villages. Being a student from a low-income family, the author of this paper had to get a job, at least, during vacations and holidays to ensure seasonal clothing, while those who were to take care of their parents worked at night and used to miss classes for normal sleep.

Discussion

This paper investigated how Russian students learned and completed courses of philosophy entirely at a distance, and how teachers of philosophy and other humanities organized students' classroom and independent work, and adapted their courses to a completely online environment. To increase students' involvement, they modified their approaches traditionally based on lecture talks and F2F dialogues.

The identified initial decrease in the motivation of schoolchildren and HEIs students in different regions thought to be a consequence of emergency transition to entirely distance learning mode in the context of a pandemic (Leonidova et al., 2020), but it seems to indicate deeper issues at least at the national level.

Among the technical, different surveys participants named the shortage of equipment and educational platforms' reliability (Leonidova et al., 2020), Internet bandwidth and capacity limitations, network overload and disruptions (Aleshkovski et al., 2021; Kamal et al., 2020). As many have lost their jobs and source of income during and due to pandemics, this category of the issues could be resolved by the state and private companies' assistance.

The second, organizational issue consists of the absence of a unified strategy and common online learning methods coupled with high teaching loads (Leonidova et al., 2020). Recent studies have found that the need for designing more learning materials and visual aids within tight deadlines (Coman et al., 2020) increased teachers' time burdens during entirely distance learning compared to F2F format (Karataş et al., 2021; Zaheer and Munir, 2020). BashSU administrators had not set aside time for teachers to prepare new learning materials, as it was supposed that online lectures and seminars could use the same materials or just confine to conversations via video presence environments. Although the advantages and disadvantages of distance education were studied more than twenty years ago (Moore and Kearsley, 1996), Russian university administrators had not known or applied this information in outbreak period educational regulations. Additionally, Zoom teachers tend to question the student's concentration on learning, especially with the student's camera disabled.

Hence, to deal with the third challenge of motivation decrease, educational regulations need to ensure not only students' physical and mental health (Leonidova et al., 2020; Aleshkovski et al., 2021), but also to relieve teachers' congestion and reward their work overload. Although parents of schoolchildren' reported concerns regarding their health and the absence of offline conversations that may make them "turn feral" (Leonidova et al., 2020, p. 214) and the Russians' need for sustaining close human relationships, this study has not dealt with the details of physical and psychological health. Instead, the paper highlights the ways to increase students' involvement and lower teachers' stress load, as even Western STEM students with their broader access to world-class technology, highly valued and preferred live interaction compared to the more "cold" online learning (Lautenbach and Randell, 2020).

The results mostly fit into existing patterns of private-scientific research that emphasize selected issues of distance education. The specifics of present research derives from its methodology, mainly, including the factor of interpersonal, group and macrosocial solidarity into analysis of paradoxical complement of students' satisfaction with their public scandals. Additionally to technical, organizational and motivational challenges, it calls to further societal processes affecting students' behaviors either teachers' adaptation strategies while their interactions with educational and governmental institutions. The results also show that when

entering the university, students build the grounds of their future financial independence and autonomy.The second factor determining the studied contradiction, missing in current research of Russian higher education conditions, is full-time students' seeking for employment that negatively affects their home self-work.

One of the perspective tools for involving students without digital fatigue could be an immersive design of the courses. For instance, the *Spatial* startup gives users the option to select a full-length photorealistic 3D avatar and to hold conversations similar to F2F meetings for free. However, the users need to have access to high-quality headsets (Wiederhold, 2020), while teachers must choose available and simple apps that are free for students and run on low-tech gadgets.

Virtual reality apps, such as *BigScreen* (bigscreenvr.com/) and *vTime* (vtime.net), enable young people to enjoy practice their foreign language skills simultaneously with fellow students and foreign students connecting from other countries. Although the apps of this kind may have compatibility limitations with operating systems or video drivers, or require virtual reality sets, they provide more motivating and less stressful learning environment and attract more participants compared to other software, such as Skype (Dhimolea et al., 2022).

Students have benefited from using vTime in view of developing their intercultural communicative competence and experiencing the sense of sheer physical presence, regardless of whether the person is actually there (Steidle et al., 2023). Moreover, students can feel less anxious in an online environment with augmented reality than in the traditional classroom (Thrasher, 2022). Proposing various possible locations, such as a virtual beach, vTime contributes to their feelings of social attachment in an online space.

Depending on the subject goals and the studied material, teachers may select virtual locations as a part of the tasks for their students. For example, some of the most extraordinary breathtaking locations, like a seabed or the Earth's orbit, promote the advanced skills to clarify, specify and operate tough scientific terms and complex definitions. Teachers may design their tasks to support their students' agency and to boost their theoretical and practical understanding of philosophy and other humanities.

Although there are more advanced tools for entirely distant learning mode, each of them must meet the requirements of the Russian educational system, providing universal access of HEIs staff and students to appropriate communications hardware and software ensuring the availability of selected tools and environment.

Wiederhold (2020) claims that VR is one of the ways to overcome digital fatigue, although the equipment required for VR programs, namely VR headsets, can be expensive. Combining virtual learning environment (VR) and augmented reality (AR), with online platforms, teachers may counteract technological depletion, provide a more authentic way to practice skills, and raise students' engagement (Hua and Wang, 2023).

Recent surveys in Malaysia, USA Australia, UK, and Canada (Bokolo et al., 2022) found that mixed learning combining F2F education with web-based technology is most attractive for students. Accordingly, one can assume that neoliberal policy will promote an experience of holding online and hybrid classes as a new norm, since they promise less financial, and expenses and time than traditional education. Justifying major investments, distant online education showed more "efficacy" from the neoliberal viewpoint that evaluates everything by profit and puts the mission of disseminating knowledge to a secondary position. If few can afford fully F2F

classes, they might gain "elite" status and become affordable for only specially gifted students and those from wealthy families.

Although not having accepted VR and AR tools for remote education, Russian teachers managed to solve technical, organizational, and motivational issues, as students' initial resistance to online learning mode turned in the next semester to insisting on making it the only educational format. Bashkortostan Republic is a prime example of changing attitudes and behavior related to distance learning among Russian students. As to other Russian regions, surveys indicated a "successful digital transformation of Russian HEIs", evidenced by a shift from strongly negative perception (due to uncertainty in attestation graduate work defense, headsets and other equipment expenses, and disbelief in virus spread in some cases went to the extreme of conspiracy thinking (Kazarinova, 2022.) to growth of acceptance of online learning mode (Aleshkovski et al., 2021).

Conclusion

While analyzing Russian experiences of fully distance learning mode and its consequences for teachers, students, and universities management, the paper moved beyond the limits of COVID-19 emergencies restrictions effects. While answering the research question 1, the Results subsections shown forms and motivations of Russian students' particularistic solidarity while claiming for better learning conditions from local governments and university administrations, as well as some imbalances in Russian educational system that could trigger students' petitions. These results might be applied in the improvement of justice in Russian universities for greater solidarity among knowledge professionals and future employees studying at universities, and overall macrosocial solidarity on the national level.

Although the paper analyzed only a few Russian regional HEIs teachers experience during COVID-19 outbreak, these examples are likely to illustrate thousands of stories taking place at universities worldwide. The analysis of BashSU teachers' and students' experience has revealed typical issues that can be categorized as technical (reorganization and creation of working tools), organizational (design and layout), and motivational (regulating relationships) as per the changes caused by the outbreak.

As coping strategies of teachers identified in the research question 2, the results suggest that teachers had to quickly master the existing educational tools and methods that they had not used or used rarely, not knowing their advantages and disadvantages. Their equal solidarity with students, government, and their universities made them undoubtedly more attentive to the needs of distance students and ways of presenting learning material to retain mostly commercial full-time students and to ensure the university's proper function. They coped with the task, as after the first a riot against the entirely distant learning mode, students did not want to go out and return to the offline auditorium. As such, the outbreak had not changed the whole educational system and had not opened new forms of education. This should be due to the combination of teachers' high qualifications with deeper systemic imbalances of national educational system not depending from teachers individual and joint efforts to sustain high level of education. This may also show that despite of remaining socioeconomic differences, Russian society produces educational environment and leaves open the possibility of mutual understanding among students, teachers, and public administrations.

Not following the lead of students' excessive and unreasonable demands, the government became a mediator of HEIs and students' pandemic interaction. The rise in budget funding was a sign of being ready to back state support and keep the dialog with students and their parents, providing greater predictability of the social environment for families facing multiple pandemic challenges. This paper also cannot avoid noting the strong agency and particularistic solidarity of the new generation of students and their parents, who are ready to bid with the authorities, compared to their teachers who serve the powers and depend on students' tuition fees and satisfaction.

Interest conflict declarations
The author does not have any interest conflict.

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