

Oksana Sidorenko

► Digital competencies of educators. Before and after the pandemic: experience report from Chita Pedagogical College

The Chita Pedagogical College has focused early on the development of digital competences. At the core of all innovation are the digital didactics of Vocational Education. An educational communication network was established in order to create an environment which encourages teachers to enhance their digital competences. The transition to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic went smoothly at the Chita Pedagogical College.

The development of digital competences has been one of the priorities of Chita Pedagogical College for many years. In September 2012, the college-based regional resource centre (RRC) “ICT in Education” was created as part of the regional programme of modernization of Vocational Education. The Centre has taken on the role of an aggregator and promoter of the digitalization of the educational process. The college staff had a high level of ICT competence and a willingness to work flexibly in a fast-changing environment.

Corporate training is gradually shifting from eliminating basic digital deficits to group training and meeting individual needs. The main issues concern the introduction of computer technology in the educational process.

The change is driven by the activities of the experimental site “Innovative model for the implementation of formal, non-formal, and informal education based on media didactics (in a regional resource centre).” The discussion on corporate training in teams is changing. The college teachers broadcast their own experience in advanced training courses for educators in the Zabaykalsky Krai and act as facilitators and experts.

The established educational communication network and the high level of digital competence of the teaching staff allowed the college to win a grant totaling RUB 42 million. It also enables the creation of new, innovative IT laboratories and simulation rooms for the “Teaching in primary classes,” “Pre-school education,” and “Physical education” disciplines. Currently, all college classrooms without exception are equipped with interactive white-

boards and projectors. The digital didactics of Vocational Education is at the core of all innovations, and almost all the teaching staff is involved in innovative activities.

This presents us with new challenges in improving teachers' digital competences. The teacher is immersed in a continuous process of renewal:

- ▶ Updating the content requires a mastery of the technology of creating and presenting multiformat electronic content
- ▶ In solving the above task, the teacher learns the basics of pedagogical design and content curation
- ▶ The organization of the educational process in a remote format during the pandemic allowed teachers to master the roles of the navigator of the online environment and the designer of the digital trajectory, both for groups and individual students
- ▶ A continuous analysis of educational activity makes current trends and requirements for the teacher the norm
- ▶ The role of the teacher changes from accompanying to environment-forming.

Improving digital competences no longer requires specially organized activities; the environment of the educational communication network itself does not allow the teacher to remain at a low level of digital competence development. All of the college's activities are permeated by digitalization. Thanks to this, the transition to 100 percent remote learning in March 2020 went fairly smoothly for the Chita Pedagogical College.

The emergency training was more about organizational issues and algorithms for living and working under new conditions: connecting to college resources via remote access (algorithms and video instructions, set-up of devices); designing new communication events and online meetings (seminars, professional development); multiformat electronic content, netiquette rules, maintaining eye contact (24/7 control and support), etc.

It was during this period (April 2020) that the Pedagogical College participated in the Day of Digital Technology Readiness of the Higher School of Economics' Education Innovation Lab. All teachers underwent online testing, and a digital profile of the organization was created based on the results. The team showed a high level of technological readiness for digital innovation (74 percent of technological optimists, 74 percent of pioneers, but also 12 percent of technological pessimists).

Both the current challenges and the outlook show that improving educators' digital competences will remain a priority for our College for years to come, given the volatility of the COVID-19 situation. And by solving these issues, we will be fully justified in saying that the digital didactics of Vocational Education has become a reality.