

The First and Still Only Distance Masters' Educational Program in the Republic of Armenia

In 2010 the Government of RA ratified the "Order of distance higher and after-graduate professional education". Great number of higher educational institutions and organizations started to carry out distance education. But till now they are limited in training system and short-period courses. The first and still the only distance educational program in the Republic of Armenia is "Business Administration", which the Public Administration Academy of RA along with the International Scientific and Educational Center at the National Academy of Sciences of RA have been carrying out since 2017. The graduates of the program will be awarded with joint diplomas from both institutions. There were 15 Master students in 2017-2018 academic years, and this year they are 19. The teachers are specialists who have been trained in special courses for distance education. The purpose and advantages of distance education are to let the students of higher educational institutions get opportunity to study their main and supplementary higher educational program without leaving their place of living or temporary place of living. Moreover, this type of education allows to study and get diploma in the most authoritative institutions. This is the general advantage of distance education, but it's not the only one. The accessibility also matters. It's cheaper. At the same time, in the case of this type of education the use of internet technologies clears the way for the handicaps and people with special needs to higher education, which is one of the supreme trends of social policy in all developed countries. Because distance education is carried on through internet, it offers the students to choose the most suitable time for learning. It is advantageous especially for the working people or those who have child/children, who have difficulties with time management. They can choose their own schedule and the "intensity" of learning. The process of distance education also includes "live" lessons. They help the students to digest the course better, provide feedback and advance the learning, teach how to formulate questions, and allow them to define the educational requirement of the student. Distance education is operated by means of e-platform. Forums, online tasks, webinars, case studies, self-check tests, online lectures... all these only on e-platform. The students meet the teacher only twice a year during final exams of the term. In the case of this type of education a new educational environment is founded, and the students clearly realize what kind of knowledge, skills and capacities they need. They are offered to get knowledge independently, to use the advanced information resources (data base, knowledge base, computer systems, multi-media, educational and checking systems, video materials, records, e-libraries, as well as e-books and handouts). The professors draft online meetings for the students by providing educational interactivity. In case of having questions, the student usually may operatively discuss it with teacher with the help of regulation tools of the platform. The main peculiarity of distance education is not the teaching in its classical sense but self-education, independent activities of the student to receive knowledge, capacities and skills. As the Head of the Center for Distance Education at Public Administration Academy of RA **Hasmik Stepanyan** says, distance education has no alternative for a considerable layer of society. "First of all, distance education is an innovation in education" she said. "In our days, when IT rules almost every field, education cannot be restricted in just classroom format. Moreover, the international experience has proved the privileges of distance education". The experience of distance education of the last year has shown that the student needs to have not only skills in information and telecommunication technologies, but in time management, too. As for the Masters' program on "Business Administration", Hasmik Stepanyan stated that it was interesting mostly for the people who seek for knowledge in business, but they have no time to attend the lessons. The Head of the center for distance education mentions that she really enjoys the teaching on distance education platform. She also assured that skillful professionals are involved in distance education

program. Touching upon the peculiarities of distance education, the teacher of “Business document flow” **Gayane Hovahannisyan** notes, the role of the teacher in distance education radically differs from the one in traditional education. The latter is not a source of information for the group of students, but a supervisor of self-learning of the students through individual educational program. “The teacher is responsible for drafting distance course, as well as maintenance of e-environment where the students work hard” she said. “The distance education offers the way to stress the individual cognitive activity of the student taking into consideration the thesis that a person can gain permanent knowledge and skills by means of his/her active work”.

If you prefer traditional education, so the specialists state that traditional education is in crisis in the world. The inaccessibility of traditional education, conservatism, restrictions and momentum make hinder from the further advancement of education. While the need for knowledge is increasing, new methods are required to satisfy this need in order to orientate in the today’s technologically and educationally accomplished environment. And if you prefer modern education, it means your choice is distance education. Thanks to distance education you will be involved in information society, i.e. intellectual society, which is based on knowledge and information. The effectiveness of distance education is conditioned with implementation of telecommunication technologies, which are the bases for drafting and realization of distance education. This type of education is perspective especially in the sense of sustainable education. Today we can confidently say that distance education has already proved its essentiality. Moreover, the advancement of distance education has been recognized as the pivotal trends in main educational programs of UNESCO.