

## **SOFT SKILLS FORMATION AT DISTANCE LEARNING OF THE TECHNICAL SPECIALTIES STUDENTS IN WEBINAR-ORIENTED PLATFORMS**

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Successful employment of university graduates in the technical specialties and their further career depend not only on professional competencies formed during learning of special courses, but also the possession of so-called soft skills. Soft skills are not connected with the specifics of a particular job and are determined by personal qualities (responsibility, discipline, self-organization), social skills (speed of adaptation, communication, including listening; teamwork, emotional intelligence) and organizational skills (time management, leadership), thinking skills (problem solving, critical and creative thinking).

Over the past year, due to strict quarantine measures and restrictions on the people number in classrooms, the focus in education has shifted towards distance learning. Distance learning in most educational institutions is conducted using learning management systems like as Blackboard, Canvas, and Moodle or webinar-oriented platforms from leading manufacturers, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet. That leads to a change in traditional forms and methods of competencies forming.

The tools of webinar-oriented platforms for distance learning include:

- audio, video conference;
- demonstration of working software (screen sharing);
- demonstration of presentations and files of various formats;
- whiteboard;
- text chat;
- common simultaneous work with whiteboard and documents;
- additional virtual rooms for group training (breakout / session rooms).

Let's consider the formation of general competencies during learning in webinar-oriented platforms using these tools:

### 1. Team work:

Breakout / session rooms make it possible to divide the students into small groups that work in teams on different tasks in individual rooms, without interfering with other teams.

Screen sharing, group chat, whiteboarding, and document sharing (Google drive) help to develop teamwork skills.

### 2. Leadership, time management:

Teamwork in session rooms without teacher requires the identification of a student who will take on the leader or facilitator responsibilities, be able to organize work and keep track of time.

3. Problem solving, critical thinking:

Teamwork in session rooms makes it possible to implement the methods of creative thinking activating, such as brainstorming, etc.

Use of the notes on whiteboard allows each student to express and record his opinion.

4. Discipline, self-organization:

Starting and finishing of distance classes by the electronic calendar (Google calendar, etc.) requires from students to have the discipline and self-organization skills to plan their work, to come to class by link, to perform and to send work for review on time.

5. Emotional intelligence:

Most systems give the ability to express emotions in group chats (fig. 1). It is a feedback tool for the teacher and a means of emotional intelligence development, the ability to express and control his own emotions for the student.

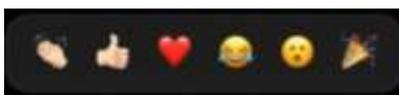


Fig. 1 – Emotions in group chat in Zoom

6. Ability to listen and work presentation:

Distance lectures form the ability to listen, and the presentation of one's own work forms the ability of project presenting.

7. Motivation:

First, working in teams allows including the competition spirit.

Second, many distance learning systems include analytics elements, showing the average score, the student's place in the overall ranking, etc. This information can motivate to learn better to move up the ranking.

Therefore, along with the formation of professional competencies, distance learning in webinar-oriented platforms provides formation of important career skills that will help to integrate successfully into the work process and ensure high productivity in the future. In addition, distance learning allows diversifying of the learning forms and methods, introducing additional working forms, such as the development and defense of group mini-projects, work in virtual laboratories, etc.

## References

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