# ЮГОЗАПАДЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ "НЕОФИТ РИЛСКИ"

# ФАКУЛТЕТ ПО ИЗКУСТВАТА

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# DISTANT LEARNING – CHALLENGE AND SOCIAL NEED IN THE EUROPEAN FAMILY

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There are more definitions of distant learning, i.e. there is much confusion concerning the usage of the term distant learning1. When we try to define distant learning we should have in mind the following components:

- In the course of distant learning the teacher and the pupil are distant in space and time so distant learning differs from classic education concerning distance;
- Distant learning is organized by the educational institution which also puts together and plans the curriculum; this distinguishes distant learning from personal, informal education (self-education);
- Educational institution offers possibilities for two-way communication and this makes distant learning different from other forms of the usage of information technologies in education which are one-way;
- The teacher and the pupil are connected (they communicate) by means of various media such as printed materials, audio and video media, as well as by means of computer webs that are increasingly present in interactive learning.

Based on these components it can be concluded that distant learning is learning distant in time and space and it is organized by an educational institution which plans and organizes the teaching plan and provides two-way communication between the teacher and the pupil. The concept of open learning is most often connected with the usage of new information-communication technologies (media) which represent a powerful means for the objectification of learning. Flexible form means independence from distance between the source of information and the pupil, independence from time, choice of teaching contents, teachers, literature, course or level of education, choice of institution and similar.Distant learning is independent autonomous learning which depends on didactic designing of materials and keeping to didactic principles in teaching. We should take care of the fact that these definitions are not final and permanent because they are liable to changes, testing and revising, but when speaking about distant learning it also means speaking about open flexible education. The connections between open and distant learning are quite close and significant. Open education is flexible education and makes education more available to pupils than traditional forms of education, while distant learning is a form of learning and one of the ways of realizing open education. *John Daniel* in his work "Open Learning and/or Distance Education" says: "*open education can, but does not have to include distant learning, while distant learning can, but does not have to contribute to open education*"2.

From 1995 to 1999 in Europe 166 project programs were realized concerning open and distant learning3. These projects were realized with the help of the European Union and the Minerva program. This program is a part of the global program Socrates4 that tries to speed up the European cooperation in usage of information and communication technologies in education and also the open distant learning. This program's duration is until 2006 with the following activities:

- Identification of potential users
- Planning and realization of perspective studies needed by the society
- Analysis and observation of the results of distant learning
- Identification and dissemination of best methods in distant learning
- Creation of a web system and integration of organizations and teachers that realize distant learning
- Promotion of European education and comparing it to other models
- Development of the Internet (in European frames) and development of qualitative multimedia net which will be used for educational purposes.

So far three categories of activities can be identified and they are as follows: understanding, creation and distribution of the material. Many of these projects had difficulties in understanding the very process of teaching and using the materials, which contributed to the appearance of different results and interpretations. Through the analysis of the process and the findings indications can be found of how much this manner of learning is effective, and how and how much the existing technology can be objectified.

Distant learning comprises including different technologies which enable indirect contact between the teacher and the pupil. The educational or other institution offering these services distributes the material to the pupils in a classic or electronic manner by mail, radio or TV broadcast, modern electronic media (Internet), or another communication model. Most of the time pupils learn by themselves, without direct support by the teacher. This type of education makes use of new technologies and interactive learning methods and it is adaptable to pupils of different ages, abilities, but also to users with the different level of education. The users of this kind of education can use these services depending on their determination and motive: acquisition of a certificate/diploma, professional and expert improvement, urge for acquiring new knowledge, hobbies, advancement in career, research work etc. Distant learning can be organized in various ways depending on the technology used, or on the structure and level of education. It can also be distinguished by the contents, i.e. by the needs and interests of users. If we consider the duration, some programs for distant learning are structured in time, i.e. they have a definite time limit for the fulfillment of the proposed tasks, while other programs do not have a time limit and the realization of the tasks depends on the working pace of the learner itself. Furthermore, the standards for the evaluation of each user respectively are accurately determined. The proposed courses usually consist of several levels hierarchically

structured from elementary to most complex tests and tasks. The work is followed continuously and it finishes with the final exam, i.e. evaluation of the entire work. This evaluation could be marked with either a certificate or a diploma as an equivalent and is a relevant document for the acquired knowledge. The certificate or the diploma are not obligatory as some users simply do not need a written document because their wish is to acquire new knowledge or new skills which they would be able to apply in a particular area of their lives.

Courses with time limit have to provide a high level of following of the proposed material (continuity) and the evaluation of the pupil's knowledge. Such courses have a higher level of interaction between the source or the personal medium (guide/mentor) of the course and the user. With those courses that users get a diploma with the aim to acquire a certain skill or to get the needed information, the process of supervision of users and the evaluation of their knowledge is very small or non-existent at all. During such courses the users predominantly learn independently, with their own pace and time and they are themselves responsible for the quantity and the quality of the newly acquired knowledge.

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Because of the fast paced changes in Europe and European economy, beside regular education there is a compelling need for a flexible, efficient and easily available system of an improvement, innovation and acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Dramatic cultural changes as viewed by the young generation are a powerful factor in the technological-communication influence in the process of socialization, change of structure, function and dynamics of the family, as well as globalization of cultural and information offers. Under the influence of these factors education will suffer changes especially because of changes in the source of information and the usage of media. The enormous increase of personally available information and the usage of global digital media will enable independent learning at home. This process is also helped by technology supported learning, distant learning, flexible learning, learning through work and home learning.

Key words: distant learning, changes, education, media, technology.

1 In literature besides distant learning there are several terms such as open flexible distance learning ODL, integrated study, but also network study.

2 Daniel. J., "Open learning and/or Distance Education: Which One for What Purpose?", London, 1999

3 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/minerva/ind1a.html

4 Comenius (school education); Erasmus (higher education); Grundwig (adult education and life-long learning); Lingua (learning of European languages); Minerva (information and communication technology in education and distant learning); Leonardo da Vinci; Media Plus, etc.

## РАЗВИТИЕ НА СТЕРЕОТИПИТЕ ЗА СОБСТВЕНАТА И ДРУГИТЕ НАЦИОНАЛНИ ГРУПИ ПРЕЗ ДЕТСКА ВЪЗРАСТ

Зорница Ганева

Актуален социален, психологически и педагогически проблем в световен и национален мащаб е не намаляването на актовете на расизъм и ксенофобия, проявите на предразсъдъци и стереотипи на етническа основа. Ежедневният живот ни показва, че предразсъдъците могат да приемат различни форми, от най-ясно изразени, груби и категорични, много от които са характерни за детството, до "най-меки" или прикрити, "маскирани", по-характерни за юношеството и периодът на възрастността. Стереотипите за собствената и другите национални групи са културно – психологически конструкт, чрез който структурираме света, в който живеем и който развиваме още от ранна детска възраст. Именно на разкриване на особеностите на процеса на развитие на стереотипите за собствената и различните националности през детството е посветена настоящата статия.

В проведено изследване от Пиаже и Уейл (1951) с деца от Женева става ясно, че на 5-годишна възраст те знаят името на **страната, в която живеят и собствената национална група**, към която принадлежат.