

LESSONS LEARNED BY PA EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC CRISIS OF 2020-2022: THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Guliya K Nurlybaeva¹

Institute for Social Sciences at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Russian Federation

Abstract

The analysis of the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on public administration (PA) education at RANEPА, Moscow is carried out by the author. The research methods included theoretical research concerning teaching and learning during distance and mixed education process, analytical research methods, the methodology of empirical research, comparative research methods. The latest works of the researchers of PA services and PA education during the Covid-19 Pandemic have been thoroughly studied. The materials of the research provided by the teams of teachers of the leading Russian universities concerning the work of universities during the pandemic had been taken into consideration. The participation of the author in the discussions at the Meetings of the International Consortium on PA Global Survey (Covid-19) headed by Dr. Alexander Aristovnik from Slovenia in 2020-2021 also helped to handle the problem considered. The data provided from the analysis carried out by the author at the Institute for Social Sciences (the ISS) of Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPА), Moscow, covering many profiles of study of future PA servants in the conditions of distant and mixed learning in the 2020-2021 and in 2021-2022 years of study, allowed the author to make some conclusions and give recommendations and some practical advice to teachers and education managers aimed to the improvement of the educational programs for PA students regarding the new conditions of distant and mixed learning during the pandemic. The main conclusion made on the results of the analysis is that digitalization at the time of the Covid-19 Pandemic in the period of distant and mixed learning should be considered to be the most important issue in public administration education. The ways of improvement of the educational process of the students – future civil servants – with due account of digital transformation of education process in a crisis situation are outlined. Recommendations for teachers and education managers concern the

¹ Guliya K Nurlybaeva, English Language Department, Institute for Social Sciences at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Moscow, Russian Federation. Email: goulyya21@mail.ru; Telephone: +7 (916) 6801640

implementation of digital methods of teaching in the distant regime, the curriculum development, e-learning and teaching technologies, new PA programs, the ways of improving the methodological support of distant learning and teaching.

Keywords: Public administration, public administration students, Covid-19 Pandemic, distant learning, digitalization, educational and training programs, recommendations for teachers and education managers

Introduction

In 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the whole world experienced significant changes in many areas of life and work. These changes made the life of people unpredictable. As the circumstances in which public administrations of all the countries of the world operated have changed, public administrations' work in all the countries had also changed greatly. As in the epoch of the pandemic past experiences and tasks could no more be used as a basis for new plans for better implementation of public services, the systems of public administration in all the countries of the world required development and modernization. This modernization should concern the changes in the system of public management development during the crisis, the choice of the legal regime during it, the choice of quarantine measures and limitations in economic activity of the citizens during the pandemic, the correction of the system of the executing of public functions and obligatory requirements of the state. The good governance and unification of efforts of all the governing bodies were also needed, and the good governance principles should be applied to state management.

All these challenges required changes in PA education, which should take into account all the changes in public management initiated by the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis. The impact of the pandemic on the process of learning at PA faculties during the crisis and after it had been analyzed based on the study of the latest literature on the problem and the experience of the Institute for Social Sciences (the ISS) of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), Moscow, in the 2020-2021 and in 2021-2022 years of study. The process of education of future public administrator at the ISS of RANEPA was chosen to be an example of the fight with the challenges brought about by the pandemic because RANEPA has been always considered to be the main institution of the Russian Federation providing human resources for public management and public administration in the country. RANEPA is the greatest university in Europe of the kind: more than 45 thousands of students study at all the subdivisions of the Academy in all the regions of Russia. Public administration reforms in the Russian Federation have been always worked out basing on the research work carried out by RANEPA experts and academicians.

The paper is designed as follows: after the introduction the latest literature concerning the priorities in PA education reforms in the times before and after the pandemic as they had been seen by the researchers of PA education was analyzed. The role of digitalization of PA administration in the world and in the Russian Federation was considered, and the impact of digitalization on PA education is revealed. The experience of distant and mixed learning in Russia during the pandemic in 2020-2021 and in 2021-2022 is summarized. The evaluation of the existing distant learning environment at the ISS of RANEPА, the methods, the strategy applied and the materials of the latest research carried out at the ISS of RANEPА are presented. A list of recommendations for teachers and PA education managers based on the lessons learned from the pandemic includes such aspects as the development of digital competencies of students, distant regime implementation, new pedagogy and digital didactics, socialization of students, internationalization and academic mobility of students, improving the qualifications of teachers and university management teams, research work and the development of meta-competencies of future public servants. The conclusion sums up the results of the study and provides emerging dilemmas for future research in the field.

The review of the latest literature concerning PA education priorities before and after the Pandemic crisis

The Covid-19 Pandemic changed the whole world entirely. It influenced both public administration work and PA education. All the problems for public administration and PA education acquired a new scale. The crisis in many areas posed many questions to the system of public management which required entirely new urgent decisions of public administration. The authorities took emergency and extraordinary measures: they closed the borders, stopped the work of many enterprises and services, they imposed restrictions on movement around the city. The Covid-19 situation has shown that one should not believe in and trust just one solution but this situation taught people to maintain a healthy level of doubt, always looking for new solutions. The concept of turbulence was developed to describe and analyze specific dynamics of governance. In the pandemic, Ansell, Sorensen, Torfing, and others explored the impact of turbulence on governance and formulated strategies to deal with turbulence problems. In their view, the public sector must meet turbulence with robust strategies where creative and agile public organizations adapt to the emergence of new problems by building networks and partnerships with the private and civil society (Ansell, Ch Sørensen, E., J. Torfing 2020, p.4).

As PA education should depend on the goals and challenges of modern systems of public administration, the urgent problems of public service education in all the countries of the world in

modern conditions have been analyzed by many academicians. The analyses covered the most important issues of solving the new urgent problems of PA work during new challenges of public service. The specific difficulties encountered by public services and public education of separate countries have been considered. What are the important issues that were covered by the academicians? Many papers were devoted to the promoting of Good Governance principles, values, practices, and their prospects for PA work and PA education. Good Governance principles had been studied by Ansell, Chris and Alison Gash (2008), Morse and Stephens (2012), Aristovnik et al. (2018, 2020). The researchers claimed that for better implementation of public services with due account of the principles of good governance the development and modernization of the system of public administration education were necessary which could promote good governance principles and values among PA students – future public servants.

An overview of the perceptions concerning the future challenges for public administration and PA education over the next 20 years (from 2015 till 2035) has been provided by a wide range of scholars and teachers across Europe. Jana Bertels, Geert Bouckaert, and Werner Jann (eds.) in their book "European Perspectives for Public Administration: The Way Forward", published still in 2015, presented the results of their broad qualitative survey which showed that teaching strategies for the future PA servants using comparative studies and interdisciplinary approaches should be applied. The main strategy to improve PA education for the future was the improvement of research approaches and research strategies concerning PA functioning and PA education. The most frequently mentioned tools for PA research were the dialogue and the development of networks. The respondents also stated that case-based teaching and best practices analyses should play a great role in teaching PA students. The respondents stressed the necessity to change the current PA curricula and pay "more attention to developments in Europe" and "international perspectives". They required to extend "cross-national projects, programs, and initiatives" and to foster "contacts between researchers from different countries to recognize different cultures and solutions." as well as "all forms of 'mobility, including long-term mobility of scholars in countries other than the home country and "exchange programs for scholars and teachers". As for the disciplines, there was the awareness that multidisciplinary has to be organized and developed. The great role of social sciences in the education of future public servants had been also stressed. The academicians mentioned that a balance between sufficient specialization and coordination of disciplines will be necessary to tackle complex problems and issues in the future (Jana Bertels, Geert Bouckaert, and Werner Jann, 2015).

Regarding implications for public administration, there seems to be a shared view that it is imperative to make public institutions and programs more flexible and agile so that they can transform and adapt themselves in response to turbulence and replace administrative systems by

trust-based systems. Some authors distinguished agile and adaptive governance. Adaptive governance originating from the evolutionary theory means the ability to deal with complex issues involving many stakeholders, diverging interests, and uncertainty about the actions to be taken while agile governance entails primarily working practices and methods that facilitate quick response to the arising problems (Janssen, van der Voort 2016, 2020). Adaptive governance is important in situations characterized by disruptive change, but no clear solutions exist and due to participatory decision-making. Agile governance in contrast to adaptive governance is based on change management and result orientation. (Hong, Lee 2018).

In many countries of the world, the reforms in PA education are closely connected with the problems of PA reforms. These reforms had been a subject of many conferences and journals' articles in Russia still before the Covid-19 Pandemic. The most important problem of Russian public administration before the pandemic had been the problem of the crisis phenomena in regions' life. The researchers from the Russian Federation have found that the problems of state management and regional management in the context of the global and local challenges of the modern socio-cultural environment required changes in the systems of public administration. The Russian Federation is a multicultural state, as compared to many states of Europe with monocultures. The effort has been made to analyze the problems and perspectives of public administration development in the modern Russian conditions of multiculturalism. The new monograph "Public Administration and Regional Management in Russia. Challenges and Prospects in a Multicultural Region" (Popkova E, Vodenin K, 2020) was published in 2020. The book emphasized the central role of public administration in solving the problems of state management and regional management in the context of the global and local challenges of the modern sociocultural environment. The book may be considered to be a significant contribution to the methodological provision of state management and economic development both of multicultural regions of Russia and other countries and a manual for PA faculties of Russian universities.

The connection of PA reforms with the reforms in PA education can be seen from the article "Grand Challenges in Public Administration: Implication for Public Service Education, Training and Research" (2019) by Teresa Gerton and Joseph Mitchel from NAPA (NAPA – THE USA National Academy of Public Administration) which summarized the new paradigm in PA education connected with new challenges (Gerton Teresa, Mitchel Joseph P., 2019). It was identified in the article what universities having faculties of public administration, public affairs, and public policy can do to help people address the Grand Challenges in Public Administration. Public affairs faculties can further connect public administration to other disciplines, expand the curriculum and programs, and incorporate new ways of learning. This should require a new

paradigm for education and training. Under the new standards, graduate programs in the field should include a set of competencies determined by the department's mission and public service values across the following five areas: leading and managing in the public interest; participating in the policy process; analyzing, synthesizing, thinking critically, solving problems, and making evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment; articulating, applying, and advancing a public service perspective; and communicating and interacting productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large. To help prepare the next generation of public administrators public affairs schools and faculties will need to fully incorporate each of these areas into their programs (Gerton Teresa, Mitchel Joseph P., 2019).

The 'grand challenges' in reforming Russian public services and implementation of the new paradigm of their functioning was revealed in the book "Society and Pandemic: the Experience and the Lessons of the Fight against COVID-19 in Russia", which was published in Moscow in 2020 (V. Mau, G. Idrisov, Ya. Kuzminov, A. Radygin, V. Sadovnichy, S. Sinelnikov-Murylev., 2020). The research had been carried out by the scientists and specialists of leading Russian universities and scientific centers. The book was written by a large team of authors united by the desire for a strategic and tactical analysis of the situation. Among them are RANEPa, Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow State University, and some others. They put forward proposals for measures aimed at confronting the pandemic and forming post-crisis development. The system of measures taken in Russia to combat the epidemic was discussed in detail. The most pressing problems of spring-summer 2020, which have arisen in the fields of health care and education, social and economic policy, the public administration system in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, had been analyzed. The authors of the book believed that the analysis and conclusions presented would allow them to analyze what happened in these difficult months to better understand and evaluate the decisions made, to understand which ones were dictated by the current situation, and which ones are designed for the long term. This book can be of interest to researchers, teachers, students, graduate students. It may be of help in building a new education system for a wide range of future public servants studying at PA faculties of universities.

To sum up, all that was said about PA education in these papers and books, we can mark that the priorities of the development of public administration and PA education of future public servants had changed since the Covid-19 Pandemic shattered the world, the pandemic being one more new 'Grand Challenge' for the whole system of PA and PA education at all the universities having PA faculties and teaching future public servants.

Digitalization of state and regional management, PA services and PA education in Russia

For the fulfillment of the tasks and goals of public administration, the digitalization of state and regional management which had started long before the pandemic and has become extremely important at the moment has been strongly needed. The digital transformation of the state sector, an urgent need in digital instruments of providing public services and the control of the citizens' contacts during the pandemic, the digital instruments of the monitoring the pandemic changes required many new parameters of digitalization of public administration services.

The digitalization of public administration in the Russian Federation has been one of the main strategic tasks and a priority goal of national development still before the Pandemic. Public administration digitalization program rests on the National Program of 'Digital Economy'. Deputy Head of the Analytical Center of the Government of Russian Federation, Head of the Project Office for the Digital Economy National Program of Russia in his article "Coronavirus Pandemic Changes the Role of 'Digital Economy' National Program" G. Kharitonov (Kharitonov G., 2020) spoke about the National Program of 'Digital Economy.' He explained how the program had been adjusted and what new trends and measures in the ongoing digitalization process had taken place. All these measures changed the conditions of public administration functioning in Russia. As part of the adjustment of the "Digital Technologies" federal project, the approach to support projects developing digital technologies has been altered. Emphasis was put on support for IT solutions aimed to ensure efficient interaction amid social distancing – the possibility of remote work and education, the development of diagnostic systems, health monitoring, and online services. In his second article "Pandemic boosts digital transformation of public administration" (Kharitonov G. 2021) G. Kharitonov spoke about "unprecedented boost to the digital transformation of public administration processes in Russia. The author mentioned that the course towards massive and systemic digitalization of industries and economic sectors has been chosen, and the national program is naturally adjusting to new realities; changes are being made to every federal project of the program. The forced digitalization has become one of the most pronounced consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. In the opinion of the expert, the accelerated processes of the digital transformation of Russia's public sector under the influence of the coronavirus pandemic raised the task of the soonest improvement of public activity in the field of openness, collection, use, and security of data in the first turn. Secondly, a huge number of public services provided to the population moved online, and the number of services available from home via the Public Services portal grew manifold. Thirdly, new models of control over the digital transformation of regions have been developed and implemented. The expert noted the existence of barriers to further digitalization of all economic sectors, such as the lack of relevant regulations and the insufficient level of digital awareness of the population in the implementation of digital technologies. He also commented on the relevant research of Google and the Russian Presidential Academy of National

Economy and Public Administration carried out in 2020-2021. Google and RANEPA polled 1,000 people. According to the poll, digital technologies facilitate analysis of corporate and process efficiency (51%), allow effective control over the work of employees (44%), and expedite the decision-making process and open up new opportunities for control over the implementation of such decisions (41%). Over the pandemic period, 19% of Russians attended online courses and 10% received additional education or learned a new profession. It has been found that on the one hand, respondents feel cautious about digitalization prospects despite the overall technological optimism, as the pollsters said. The population expects job reductions in traditional economic sectors as a result of digital transformation. The fact that business seeks to optimize work processes fuels such fears. On the other hand, the risk of losing oneself on the labor market encourages Russian citizens to learn new professions and to acquire additional skills. Nearly half of the respondents (45%) said they had encountered difficulties in acquiring digital competencies.

Our study is based on the assumption that digitalization will not only moderate the state and regional management and strengthen good governance relationships of citizens during the pandemic but it will help to master the educational process of future public administrators in the period of distance and mixed learning at the time of the pandemic.

The process and the results of the digitalization during distance and mixed learning (English language training) of the students of the ISS of RANEPA, Moscow, have been analyzed covering many directions and profiles of study of future public administrators in the conditions of distant and mixed learning in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 years of study. To get the justification of the hypothesis proposed, a survey was carried out at the ISS of RANEPA. We attempted to analyze the digitalized distant process of study, to compare the results and elaborate recommendations for the practitioners as well as for educators working in the field of PA education during the conditions of the pandemic.

The experience of distant and mixed learning and testing of students during the pandemic in Russia

The pandemic has become a real challenge not only for public administration but for higher education systems around the world and of course for PA education as well. In just a few weeks, 95% of students around the world were forced to switch to a distance or mixed learning regime. Distant learning of PA students has been one of the most serious challenges for PA education during the pandemic. The instant transition to various forms of distance learning in March 2020 made it possible to test new technologies, the introduction of which in previous years was complicated by the lack of funding, the necessary level of technical equipment, technical skills, and the proper level of motivation. Most universities responded to the pandemic by switching to

distance learning, closing their campuses, introducing new communication formats for students and teachers, the provision of necessary hardware and software.

The reaction of Russian universities to the pandemic was similar to the global one. Universities switched to distant learning regimes, student campuses were closed. Most universities helped teachers and students in providing the necessary equipment and software, supporting IT volunteers when switching to distant learning. At the same time, Russian universities have adopted non-standard measures for the employment of students during the epidemic.

Distance learning during the pandemic had become a serious challenge both for higher education in general and for PA education as well. The surveys concerning the transition of Russian higher education to distant learning had been carried out in 2020 by the leading universities of Russia (MGU, HSE, RANEPa, and some others) when the pandemic just started and both teachers and students had not yet passed to distant learning regime on a full scale. At that time some steps were taken by the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia to fight the epidemic. On March 14, 2020, the Ministry recommended that universities, when implementing educational programs, should provide only an electronic form of information and educational environment for the organization of work of students and teachers. By March 23, 2020, according to the surveys, more than 80% of higher education institutions made the transition to the distant format of the activities of universities. From the very beginning, the Ministry abandoned the detailed regulation of the work of universities during the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of the initiative of university teams depending on specific conditions. Different methodological materials were prepared for distance studies. They concerned not only the organization of distance education, but also the work of campuses, the employment of students, the organization of student volunteering, and the psychological support of students and teachers.

Still in 2019, the studies carried out by the Higher School of Economics and the RANEPa concerning the readiness of universities for a distant regime of study and the level of digital literacy of teachers showed that 60% of teachers rarely or never delivered lectures and classes in distant format or webinar format.²

Thus, by the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the distant learning format was used by teachers on a rather limited scale. Many university professors and teachers did not have the competencies and skills necessary for the high-quality organization of distance learning. The software applications used by the teachers and students such as Moodle, ZOOM, MSTeams, Webinar, Skype, etc. were not specially adapted for lectures, seminars, and other types of group work. Nevertheless, the easiness of their use made it possible to quickly organize interaction

²This chapter uses data and ideas from the report of a group of leading universities "Stress test lessons: universities in and after a pandemic." URL: https://www.minobrnauki.gov.ru/ru/press-center/card/?id_4=2777.

between teachers and students during the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, control measures during written work and other forms of inspections, such as 'proctoring' (distant control of student actions in the learning environment), for example, turned out to be more difficult (V. Mau, G. Idrisov, Ya. Kuzminov, A. Radygin, V. Sadovnichy, S. Sinelnikov-Murylev., 2020). As far as PA education is concerned, by the year 2021 the PA faculties of most universities coped with the transition to a distance learning regime. The RANEPA as a leading PA university following the instructions of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia surveyed university professors and students working in new extreme conditions. The survey showed that the PA faculties of the university were able to switch to a distant teaching format, quickly developing the materials necessary for teaching and using the available information resources of the Internet, educational platforms, and online courses. 40% of respondents admitted that the use of distant educational technologies as accompanying face-to-face training can be quite productive. For some teachers, the distant format turned out to be more convenient both in planning their working hours and in organizing training. Moreover, 15% of teachers felt that the quality of education with the transition to distant learning became much better (V. Mau, G. Idrisov, Ya. Kuzminov, A. Radygin, V. Sadovnichy, S. Sinelnikov-Murylev., 2020).

Student surveys of the Higher School of Economics (HSE) carried out in 2020 showed that less than half of respondents (46%) believed that their training became less effective after switching to a distance learning regime; 40% postponed their home tasks more often for later. However, more than a third of students (36%) noted that they liked the distance learning regime more than the full-time one. Surveys of over 750 students of Moscow universities (RANEPA, REU named after G.V. Plekhanov, Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov, MGIMO, HSE, MGLU), carried out in March and June 2020 showed that the distant regime of education in the conditions of self-isolation aggravated the significance of face-to-face communicative contacts of participants in the educational process. The process of socialization, establishing the connections necessary in the future, has been violated. Students' personal qualities usually formed in the conditions of direct face-to-face communications of students and teachers in educational organizations, especially necessary for PA students, could not be formed properly in the period of the quarantine.

Despite these difficulties, the students, in general, were more positive than teachers in assessing the experience of distance learning. By the end of the academic year 2020 (June), the proportion of students who did not consider the distant regime to be less effective than full-time was 34%. The most important challenge was the lack of access to distance education. At the beginning of the self-isolation period, more than 10% of full-time students did not have technology that met all the functional requirements for distance learning, while among students from low-income groups, this proportion reached 30%. The Ministry of Education and Science of Russian Federation

proposed recommendations to support such students, but the forms of support themselves were chosen by the universities. Most universities formed special emergency management structures for making operational decisions and their implementation. According to various estimates, about 70% of universities used best practices from leading universities and were able to restructure their activities with varying degrees of success (V. Mau, G. Idrisov, Ya. Kuzminov, A. Radygin, V. Sadovnichy, S. Sinelnikov-Murylev., 2020).

The experience of the process of digitalization of educational process and the process of distant learning and distant testing during the pandemic in the ISS of RANEPA, Moscow

All the necessary measures concerning the digitalization of the educational process and the introduction of the distant and mixed learning regime were also taken by the leaders of the ISS of RANEPA, Moscow. These measures helped the teachers and students to overcome some difficulties connected with the pandemic and finish the study year 2020-2021 successfully. As the general surveys provided by the leading educational institutions of Russia covered only 2020 when the Covid-19 Pandemic had only started, the author considered it useful to make the research on the problem in 2021 interviewing PA students of the ISS of RANEPA when the situation in PA education in RANEPA had become clearer.

The survey was carried out by the author at the Chair of English Language study of the Institute for Social Sciences (ISS) of Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), Moscow, at the end of the year of study 2020-2021 (May-June). The goal of the survey was to find out how the students of PA faculties had answered the serious Covid-19 Pandemic challenges. A Questionnaire was compiled containing 20 closed and open questions concerning distant learning of students during the 2020-2021 year of study at the time when the distance process of learning and the digitalization of this process had become routine and widespread practices. The participants of the survey - 96 PA students of 1-3 courses of the ISS - had been asked questions concerning the new conditions of learning during the year. The respondents' group covered many directions, educational programs, profiles, and specialties of the ISS, RANEPA Moscow. Most of the directions concerned the Liberal Arts faculty. They are Foreign Regional Studies, History, Journalism, Management, Psychology, Public Policy and Social Sciences, Sociology, Advertising, and Public Relations, Arts and Humanities. The results of the interviews taken at the end of the 2020-2021 year of study showed that 68% of the students easily switched to distant learning since they had a good knowledge of information and communication technologies. However, this did not mean that all the students were satisfied with the distant learning regime and would like to continue studying distantly in the future. Only 60%

of the respondents liked this regime of studies and were satisfied with it. A significant part of the students (20%) faced financial and other difficulties during this period, and 22% of them lacked the technical means and gadgets necessary for distant learning at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. Some students (56%) were forced to leave campuses and lost access to the technical and information infrastructure of the university. For some of them, the time factor also became a problem: they lived in different time zones and there was not sometimes the opportunity for them to visit virtual classes. This fact reduced the effectiveness of their work during the year of study. 36% of students said that they should prefer the earlier format of study (face-to-face studies), but 86% of students said that for different reasons they should prefer a mixed format of study (both distant and auditorium studies). All the students of the third course (100%) found the collective project work during distant studies very useful because it makes it possible for the students to communicate with each other and helps to develop communicative competencies of PA students.

The digital instruments and digital environment offered by the leadership of the university during studies and the instruments for the assessment of the results of studies such as LMS, Moodle, ZOOM, MSTeams, Webinar, Skype proved to be very useful for the students of the university during the crisis, and, in the students' opinion (84% of the respondents), they should be used in the educational process in future. Though 70% of the respondents found their learning system less effective during the pandemic, 74% of them found the system of distant learning organized by the ISS of RANEPА quite satisfactory. Distant testing of students carried out at the time of the pandemic in 2021 showed that the results of written and oral English language tests providing the assessment to the results of teaching during the first and second semesters of the study year 2020-2021 did not differ much from the results of the previous years of study due to both good work of teachers and a good adaptation of students to the new conditions of the study. Online tests and examinations could not be considered a big challenge both for teachers and students (80%) of the ISS of RANEPА, Moscow.

The respondents marked that the current situation certainly influenced the level of internationalization of higher education of PA students, and the pandemic had been the reason for a decrease in academic mobility of students. The study proved that the respondents (20%) changed their plans concerning their academic mobility. Many of them postponed their visits to other countries. The students of other countries could not come to Russia for RANEPА international programs. Only one girl of the ISS of RANEPА (who was in the second year of study) visited the Netherlands during the period of the pandemic.

Even though our survey did not claim to be representative due to the limited quantity of the respondents, still the research made it possible to outline a picture of the state of the teaching process during the pandemic, to form a general vision of the situation in the process of distant

learning of PA students during the 2020-2021 year of study and make some conclusions concerning the state and the improvement of the system of education of future PA specialists in crisis time. The results of the study proved that distant learning allowed overcoming the coronavirus crisis in the education of future PA administrators at the ISS of RANEPa, Moscow. The results of the analysis also showed that the system of teaching of future public servants at universities required some future changes even in standard conditions of PA students' education. The author is grateful to the responders who found the opportunity to give detailed interviews, without which it was hardly possible to talk about any detailed analysis in this paper.

Recommendations and points for practitioners: the lessons for PA education learned from the pandemic crisis

The most important challenge to public administration work in 2020-2021 has been the need to provide public services in the pandemic. The most important task of public administration was to develop technological and managerial solutions that could help to withstand peak loads for the economy and the social sphere. The problem of digital infrastructure and digital literacy of the population and government was extremely relevant during the pandemic. The most important challenge to PA education at this period had been the need to provide the ongoing teaching and learning process for PA students in a digital regime and to use the crisis circumstances for creating the new necessary competencies and skills in PA undergraduates and graduates.

The author studied the literature on the subject and took part in the discussions at the Meetings of the International Consortium on PA Global Survey (Covid-19) headed by Dr. Alexander Aristovnik from Slovenia in 2020-2021. The study provided by the teams of teachers of the leading Russian universities concerning the work of universities during 2020 - the first year of the pandemic – made it possible to get the new materials that had been also taken into consideration. All the above-mentioned studies and the latest data provided from the analysis carried out in the ISS of RANEPa, Moscow, in 2021 (May, June), allowed the author to make some recommendations for teachers and education managers and give some practical advice for the improvement of the educational programs for PA students regarding the new conditions of distant and mixed learning during the pandemic. Recommendations for teachers and education managers concerned such aspects as the development of digital competencies of students, distant regime implementation, new pedagogy and digital didactics, socialization of students, internationalization and academic mobility of students, improving the qualifications of teachers and university management teams, research work and the development of meta-competencies of future public servants.

Digital competencies of the students The problem of digital infrastructure and digital literacy of the population and government was extremely relevant during the Covid-19 Pandemic. At this time it was extremely important to have a digitally literate public administration workforce, following the main ideas of the European Digital Competence Framework for citizens. These are: 1) information and data literacy; 2) communication and collaboration; 3) digital content creation; 4) safety; 5) problem-solving. (The European Digital Competence Framework for citizens, EC, June 2016). As the problem of digital literacy of future public servants will be also relevant in the future, PA education managers should include the important issues of digital literacy of the students into the curricula and programs of PA faculties. For this purpose, the university teachers should be well prepared for the task of the development of digital competencies of future PA servants.

Distant and mixed learning The transition to a distant learning regime revealed the "technological" inequality of students in access to education, so the creation of better access to distant learning should be an important task for education managers. The development of distant educational technologies will require more investments in the digital infrastructure of any university and in solving a number of problems, the most important of which are: the creation of services for distant work (for example, a system of proctoring, a service for distance admission of students to digital environment); providing the development of the digital educational environment of the university on the basis of the Federal project "Digital Educational Environment," the National project "Education," as well as the National project "Digital Economy"; the implementation of security technology solutions in a digital environment; development and implementation of programs for the development of digital tools and digital content required to organize and carry out on-line practical exercises, virtual laboratories, the use of simulators; the installation of new applications that allow to organize distant training better, and installation of new proctoring services.

New pedagogy and digital didactics The pandemic made the development of new pedagogy and digital didactics relevant. Here, one possible solution can be to increase the proportion of components that provide students with an individual approach or training in small groups in narrow areas, while reducing the proportion of educational components aimed at transferring basic knowledge. New digital didactics require increasing the number of online courses and providing the development of an online course platform for all PA students. These online courses and methodological materials should be developed in digital format, and access to digital library resources should be expanded. In addition, it is required to create a system of methodological support for teachers, including the development of methodological materials on the use of distant educational technologies. The pedagogical and methodical solutions should be worked out for the

digital environment for the process of teaching and learning of future PA specialists in the post-Covid epoch.

Socialization With an increase in the share of distant learning, it would be necessary to pay special attention to the issues of socialization of students, the strengthening of their ties with the university and other students. This socialization is quite necessary for PA students because it helps them to learn how to communicate better with the citizens in the future – one of the important professional competencies of public administrators. In addition to traditional mechanisms, universities could provide the following mechanisms for socializing students using distant technologies: the creation of virtual project groups that perform tasks together; the creation of volunteer groups distantly helping weaker students; development of IT volunteering - assistance in distant learning and teaching - for both students and teachers; as a volunteer activity - distant tutoring of weak students and junior students. The respondents mentioned command work during the pandemic - project management and participation in students' conferences - as an important part of the curriculum. This high appreciation of command work during the projects by the students means that they value the development of such soft skills like creative thinking, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. They also value the practice of command work which had been transferred to the digital environment during the pandemic. All these competencies will be useful for future public servants, so teachers should pay attention to introducing this type of work into the curriculum.

Internationalization and academic mobility The current situation also affected the level of internationalization in higher education in general and in PA education as well. As far as academic mobility is concerned, in the current conditions, it should be necessary to ensure the possibility of virtual mobility of students and for network interaction of universities of other countries having faculties of PA servants. Students should be allowed to study distantly for a semester or a whole year in the universities that provide full distance learning. They should also be able to choose certain courses (modules) in these universities, followed by the classification of the corresponding disciplines (courses, modules) mastered at the university where the student is studying. It should be also necessary to work out options for continuing studies by foreign students who have left the Russian Federation, including the implementation of distant educational programs.

Improving the qualifications of teachers and university management teams The pandemic also revealed the inability of teachers and management teams of some higher education institutions to work in crisis conditions. In this regard, it is necessary to change the approach to improving the qualifications of university management teams. So systematic training of management and teachers is required. It is also necessary to review the methods of control and supervisory activities taking into account the experience of the pandemic. The emergency transition of universities to

distant work in the conditions of the pandemic showed that university teachers often found a distant regime of learning as a negative phenomenon, although they saw some positive prospects of its development. Mass retraining of university teachers is needed, aimed at introducing new formats and technologies.

Research work It is necessary to stimulate research work at the universities training future PA servants aimed at studying the transition to the distant regime and digital environment. It should be advised to carry out the research aimed at identifying the most effective forms of material submission during distance learning, the optimal duration of the lectures and seminars. Two spectrums in PA research strategies are the following: while some of our colleagues are convinced that short-term problem solving is important above all else, other PA scholars expressed the need for more long-term problem thinking. In both cases, digital competencies and digital literacy are needed, especially in the epoch of online education (V. Mau, G. Idrisov, Ya. Kuzminov, A. Radygin, V. Sadovnichy, S. Sinelnikov-Murylev., 2020).

The development of meta-competencies of future public servants The consequences of the crisis will be felt in PA servants' education system for several more years, so it might make sense to pay attention to the development of meta-competencies of future public servants which means the synthesis of social, cognitive and functional competencies and skills. 'Meta-competence' is the ability to quickly adapt to new conditions, the readiness to quick training, and the readiness to transfer knowledge to the new objects of activity. During the pandemic, PA students had to learn not only theoretical disciplines of standard PA curriculum but new knowledge and practical skills which had been integrated into their training courses. Among them are soft skills such as creative thinking, the skills of command work and communication, and problem-solving skills. Thus a new set of knowledge and competencies acquired by PA students during the pandemic should be included in the programs of study: digital, technical competencies, communication skills, crisis communication skills, and so on. Such meta-competencies should help students to pass to the development of specific professional competencies of future PA servants.

Conclusion

During the Pandemic all the problems for public administration and PA education acquired a new scale and provided entirely new urgent decisions. The most important challenge to public administration in the epoch of the Covid-19 Pandemic was the need to provide public services and to make it possible to develop technological and managerial solutions that will help to withstand peak loads for the economy and the social sphere. The study of the latest literature on the challenges of PA and PA education, the participation of the author in the Meetings of the

International Consortium on PA Global Survey (Covid-19) headed by Dr. Alexander Aristovnik from Slovenia, the results of the analyses provided by the teams of teachers of the leading Russian universities concerning the work of universities during 2020 - the first year of the pandemic - and at last the analysis of the PA education during the pandemic carried out in the ISS of RANEP, Moscow, in 2021 allowed us to make some recommendations for teachers and education managers and give some practical advice for the improvement of the educational programs for PA students regarding the new conditions of distant learning and digital environment during the pandemic. The main lessons for PA education learned from the pandemic are the following:

- As the problem of high-quality digital infrastructure and digital literacy of the population and government was extremely relevant during the Covid-19 Pandemic, it will be also relevant in the future both for public servants and for PA students. It means that PA education should introduce the important issues of digital literacy of the students into the curricula and the programs of PA faculties. For this purpose the university teachers should be well prepared for the task of the development of digital competencies of future PA servants;
- An increase in the share of distant and mixed learning during the pandemic required from the teachers and education managers to develop its forms and to calculate the optimal amount of time allocated to distant learning, taking into account the subjects studied and the course at which the students are studying, as well as to expand the practice and opportunities for students to independently choose the part of the educational program that is taught in distant regime;
- The shift to distant technologies during the pandemic helped educational organizations, teachers, PA students, and their parents to see new opportunities and gain new experiences, what, of course, will benefit them. The current situation made it possible to test many technical solutions, improve the software of various online training platforms. The pandemic revealed what components of the educational process of future PA servants could be introduced online and which of them required face-to-face interaction.

The lessons learned from the pandemic showed how digital technologies and distant learning should be incorporated into modern educational programs of PA students. The important task for teachers and education managers now is to find the right balance between face-to-face and distant regimes of teaching. The analysis of the lessons and risks of PA education transitioning to the distant regime in response to the pandemic suggests that distance education could not replace fully the traditional face-to-face education. Most likely, in the future, the transition to mixed training will be carried out on a large scale. In this regard, the issues of moving away from strict regulation

and standardization of the educational process will require additional elaboration at the legislative level. Even though our survey does not claim to be representative, the results of it combined with the studies in the field of PA and PA education challenges during the Covid-19 Pandemic still allow us to outline a general vision of the situation in the learning process of PA students during the pandemic and make some conclusions concerning the state and the improvement of the system of education of future PA specialists. The results of the analysis also made it possible to conclude that though the pandemic had a negative impact on PA education it has in some respect had catalyzed innovations, had strengthened public service curricula, imparted public service values to a broader group of students across all disciplines, and amplified the capacity of PA faculties to inspire and prepare the next generation of public servants.

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Author biography

Guliya K Nurlybaeva has research experience in the relevant fields, including an MPA with distinction from London Metropolitan University, PhD (Pedagogical Sciences, 2007), five years' work experience as an associate professor at the Department of Language Training of RANEPА Institute for Social Sciences; more than 70 publications in Russian and foreign periodicals, including monographs and textbooks concerning education in the field of PA; academic research and the establishment of the UNESCO Chair at the Academy of Law and Management, Moscow; international cooperation with foreign organizations in the sphere of training specialists in the field of public administration and language teaching; participation at international and Russian public administration conferences; and the supervision of students' research work, reviewing masters theses, etc.