THE DIGITALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: TECHNOCENTRISM VERSUS ANTHROPOCENTRISM

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The paper compares two approaches to understanding and implementing digitalization of higher education – technocratic and anthropological ones. The one–dimensionality and riskiness of the technocratic approach, which is based on reducing the digitalization of higher education to informatization, is shown. Within the framework of the opposite – anthropological approach, the importance of the ideas of the new anthropology for overcoming the risks of dehumanization of higher education and depersonalization of educational subjects generated by technocracy, pragmatization, and the cult of the speed of change in universities is substantiated. The concept of "anthropopractics" and the anthropopractical principle of education are revealed. The principles of anti-reductionism, anthropocentrism and anti-technicism formed the methodological basis of the study, which allowed the author to present the anthropological essence of higher education as a space of practices of self-creation, human self-construction, auto-projecting, self-actualization. The results of the study can become a conceptual basis for overcoming technocracy and the implementation of multidimensional, multilevel anthropologically oriented digitalization processes in universities.

Keywords: digitalization of higher education, digital technologies, technocracy, anthropocentrism, new anthropology, anthropological practices

ТЕХНОКРАТИЧЕСКИЙ И АНТРОПОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОДЫ К ЦИФРОВИЗАЦИИ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

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В статье сопоставляются два подхода к пониманию и реализации цифровизации высшего образования – технократический и антропологический. Показана одномерность и рискогенность технократического подхода, в основе которого – сведение цифровизации высшего образования к информатизации. В рамках противоположного – антропологического подхода – обосновывается значение идей новой антропологии для преодоления рисков дегуманизации высшего образования и деперсонализации субъектов образования, порождаемых технократией, прагматизацией, культом скорости изменений в университетах. Раскрываются понятие «антропопрактика» и антропопрактический принцип образования. Принципы антиредукционизма, антропоцентризма и антитехницизма составили методологическую базу исследования, что позволило автору представить антропологическую сущность высшего образования как пространства практик самосозидания, самоконструирования человека, автопроектирования, самоактуализации. Результаты исследования могут стать концептуальной основой для преодоления технократизма и реализации многомерных, многоуровневых антропологически ориентированных процессов цифровизации в вузах.

Ключевые слова: цифровизация высшего образования, цифровые технологии, технократия, антропоцентризм, новая антропология, антропологические практики

Introduction

Digitalization of education is a multidimensional process, the prospects and risks of which are widely discussed today both in the academic environment, the pedagogical community, and at the management level of educational organizations. However, in practice, a technocratic approach to the digitalization of higher education is increasingly being implemented, embedding a person in the mega-machines of knowledge production and training. The key characteristics of digitalization of higher education are efficiency, speed and economy. The dominance of digital technologies as means over the goals, values and meanings of higher education makes it urgent to search for an anthropological alternative to the technocentric, instrumental approach.

Digitalization of higher education as a technological and anthropological process. Education as an anthropopractic space

Analysis of scientific publications on the topic has shown that digitalization of higher education is often considered as a technological process, the essence of which is reduced to the following aspects:

– the projecting of the digital educational environment taking into account modern innovations in the field of information and communication technologies, including their possibilities of resource and technological support of the digital educational process [1];

– restructuring of the educational process: teaching methods and tools, competency models, educational program models, approaches to evaluating teachers' work, and digital management of routine administrative processes in an educational organization [2];

– the use of digital educational resources and information and educational systems to solve various professional tasks of employees of the education system - managers and teachers [3];

– digital skills training in accordance with the parameters of the digital economy, the introduction of digital educational technologies, machine learning technologies, artificial intelligence, information systems for learning management [4; 5].

In general, within the framework of such an approach, essentially *technocentric* and *technocratic*, *digitalization* and *informatization* of higher education do not differ. The modern stage of digitalization of higher education is characterized, first of all, as an extensive process – the expansion of opportunities for the use of digital technologies; and infrastructural changes are considered as determinants that determine the aims and values of higher education. As a result, an educational environment is being formed, focused on media, digital technologies, but not on humans.

Criticism of the technocratic approach makes it possible to detect the anthropological risks of digitalization of education. Thus, the American philosopher T. Roszak notes that technocracy is characterized by a quantitative approach to understanding progress, a persistent desire for efficiency, order and further expansion of rational control [6]. According to the counterculture theorist, technocracy is based on the monopoly of experts on information and the emasculation of the subjective, qualitative content of human knowledge. The researcher beleives that the development of technics and technology causes the anthropological risks of people converting themselves into "purely impersonal automatons capable of total objectivity in all their tasks" [6], simplification and mechanization of culture. In the sphere of higher education, technocratism manifests itself, in particular, in the formalization and bureaucratization of the educational process, its subordination to the economic and political interests of the governing class: "We call it "education," the "life of the mind," the "pursuit of the truth." But it is a matter of machine-tooling the young to the needs of our various baroque bureaucracies" [6].

Media theorist N. Postman characterizes digitalization as a movement towards the culture of technopolis or totalitarian technocracy, which is characterized by the sovereignty of technics and technology and the devaluation of the traditional system of norms, values and meanings. The question of the meaning of education is replaced in technopolis by the idea of its effectiveness and economy, when the means dominate the goals. The purpose of such education, according to N. Postman, is to produce functionaries who know how to act, but do not seek to understand why [7].

As a result of the analysis of the expansion of the McDonald's model into various spheres of society, G. Ritzer believes that the spread of digital technologies and means of working with information contributes to

the McDonaldization of higher education. According to the researcher, the modern university is characterized by the pursuit of efficiency, acceleration of the educational process through the introduction of computerized exams; calculability, quantifiability of the quality of work and study, the predominance of a quantitative approach (scores, ratings, ranks, indices) over the quality of education and scientific work of teachers; predictability of behavior of subjects of education; control, regulation of the educational process through technology [8].

The opposite approach – *anthropological* – returns a person to the space of digitalized education. The appeal to philosophical anthropology allows us to include in the discourse of digitalization of education questions about how a person and human relations are transformed in the conditions of digitalization of education? how is a truly personal existence, joint productive activity possible in the conditions of replacing real communication with virtual, distant communication? will digitalized education retain its significance as a space for the forming of identity, self-determination and self-realization of a person?

Within the framework of the philosophical and anthropological approach, digitalization of higher education can be represented as *the transformation of a person and human relations* in the educational environment of a university, when digital technologies act only as driver tools in this process. Higher education, thus, turns from a "field" for technological tests, innovations into a space of anthropological practices, that is, self-improvement and self-creation, self-realization and self-expression, self-transcendence, social positioning and productive activity. Thus, the Russian psychologist V.I. Slobodchikov emphasizes that education should initially be built as a special anthropopractic, the practice of humanization of a person [9].

According to the Russian philosopher S.A. Smirnov, the image of a person should become a starting point for the implementation of educational practices, including in higher education. In the conditions of digitalization, the key for modern philosophical anthropology and the anthropology of education are the criticism of the formal, extensive approach to the implementation of digital educational practices and the search for anthropological foundations of digital pedagogy, the definition of qualitative, meaningful characteristics of education as a space for the formation and development of humanistical qualities in a person. As rightly notes S.A. Smirnov, "... by the content of education, we mean anything (competencies, skills, knowledge, skills, abilities, norms, procedures, etc.), everything that is already familiar and has filled its teeth, just not what the institute of education exists for – *new anthropology*" [10].

The new anthropology opposes essentialism, the subject of its interest is not the timeless, abstract essence of a person, *but anthropological practices as ways of self-creation, self-construction of a person, designing oneself.*

The new anthropology asserts the *anthropopractical principle in education.* Thus, A.M. Lobok considers the educational space as an anthropopractic space, where the image of a person capable of entering into a personal, subjective dialogue with different cultural worlds is created [11, p. 32].

A.A. Popov and I.D. Proskurovskaya are developing a new type of pedagogical anthropology - humanitarian, or practical anthropology, based on knowledge about the anthropopractics of self-determination and the image of a person as a "potential". The researchers substantiate the need for a methodological transition from a "capable person" to a "possible person" – an anthropological ideal commensurate with the modern educational practice of an open post-industrial, digital society. At the same time, anthropological practices of self-determination are opposed to the practices of objectification in education [12].

As they develop the idea of anthropologically oriented education V.I. Slobodchikov and E.I. Isaev, perceive the essence of anthropopractics in "conscious and purposeful projecting of such life situations (including educational ones) in which truly personal self-determination and the acquisition of subjectivity in activities, in public life, in culture and in one's own life become possible" [13]. Anthropological practices are practices of cultivating human subjective abilities in educational environments, which implies special work in the space of a person's subjective reality – the forming of autonomy, self-organization and self-determination of a person, its self-development and self-education, actual self-confidence and empowerment in its own life [13].

The new anthropology considers education as a system-forming sphere of society's life, a condition of anthropological and social dynamics, which is contrary to the understanding of education as a subsystem subordinate to economics and politics and "catching up" with them. Within the framework of this approach, education as an anthropopractic is contrasted with the development of knowledge, skills, competencies, etc., the improvement of the "raw" human nature for the purposes of socio-industrial consumption [13].

The idea of actualization of human potential should become the basis of constructive, humanitarian practices of education in the conditions of digitalization. At the same time, reflection, interpretation, self-determination, goal-setting, socio-cultural personification and self-organization as the constitutive foundations of such educational practices are opposed to the direct integration of a person into existing socio-economic and political processes, and the disciplinary educational space is an anthropological space [14, p. 258].

The Russian philosopher L. M. Andryukhina identifies new types of creative *anthropopractics* that provide autonomy, self-determination and creative self-realization of an individually reflecting person, along with *"production" anthropopractics* that embed a person in the mega-machines of production and training [15, p. 184]. L.M. Andryukhina emphasizes the connection between anthropopractics of education and creative self-realization of a person. The technocratic approach only contributes to the assimilation of predetermined algorithms of activity, while preventing the actualization of creativity, which means that education does not focus on the holistic development of a person capable of concentrating resources to identify and solve problems, generate and creatively implement the idea, goals and objectives of activity in conditions of uncertainty, variability, openness of the future [15].

Thus, from the point of view of the anthropological approach, the digitalization of education can be considered as a process of formation, development and transformation of anthropopractics, the essence of which lies in the creative attitude of a person to the world and itself, self-transformation, overcoming its own passivity, creativity that brings intellectual pleasure, free and responsible choice of life path. As it is noted by D.A. Gusev, the purpose of higher education is anthropological in nature – it is the orientation of a person in the world (natural, social, cultural) and self-identification in it, "in order to build their own grounded and conscious both life in general and professional, in particular, individual development trajectory and the meaning of their personal being" [16, p. 95, 96].

In general, the approaches presented in the studies of Russian philosophers, psychologists and educators to the definition of the concept of "anthropopractic" and the justification of the anthropopractic principle in education can serve as the basis for the conceptualization and implementation of digitalization of higher education not only as a technological, but also as an anthropological process.

Conclusions

The paper substantiates the importance of the new anthropology as a theoretical, methodological and ideological basis for the study of digitalization of higher education. The key methodological principles of the anthropocentric approach are anti-reductionism as a disidentification of digitalization and informatization of education, anti-technocratism and anti-manageralism – the understanding of education as a space of anthropopractics, free from the imposition of a culture of speed and the dominance of an extensive, quantitative approach to understanding and implementing the process of digitalization. Anthropocentrism is a struggle not with digital educational technologies, but with technocracy that threatens the values of the academic environment, eliminating the anthropological and axiological content of education.

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