TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS & SOFTWARE ENGINEERING EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW STUDY

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The quality of software engineering education is influenced by the consideration of modern industrial trends, IT trends and software development methodologies. The transition to a new level of industry - “Industry 4.0”, characterized by robotics and cyber-socialization, brings a wave of new, never-before-seen challenges to the field of IT and programming. Under such conditions, it is impossible to achieve the desired synergistic effect without the formation of an appropriate informational and educational environment in institutions of higher education. One of the sources of the content of such an environment can be the publications of the world scientific community registered in international scientific databases. On this basis, it becomes possible not only to provide effective digital educational content, but also to choose and use the latest technological means of learning support. A targeted review of primary sources in the Web of Science Core Collection database made it possible to identify, select, synthesize and evaluate research evidence relevant to the research questions: (i) what technological trends are analyzed in research, (ii) what information technologies are considered in research, (iii) what strategies are reflected in publications to overcome the above challenges of SE teaching and learning. According to the results of the study, we offer to improve the educational and methodological support of software engineering education based on ontological modeling of the integration of the requirements of modern trends in the development of the industry and the IT sector, international recommendations and the capabilities of technological teaching aids. This approach is a good basis for the processes of intellectualization of information systems of the educational environment and the construction of appropriate technological educational tools on their basis.

Keywords: digital transformation, quality of education, information technologies, educational technologies, ontologies, educational environment

1. Introduction

Problem statement. In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to improving the quality of education in the processes of forming the intellectual potential of humankind. In our time of digital transformations, when software becomes the basis of technological development, software engineering (SE) is a key discipline in the field of computer education. Software development is influenced by many factors, such as technology, consumer preferences, and market factors. That is why SE is significantly different from other educational disciplines in its versatility due to the integration of technical and technological dominants with engineering approaches, economic categories and provisions of management. Due to the constant increase in the number of technologies in the industry, the coming years will also see an increase in trends in software development. Therefore, in order to develop modern and innovative programs, it is necessary to understand the latest trends and take into account the specifics of SE. In turn, this causes certain difficulties in the organization of the process of software engineering education (SEE) and requires constant updating of approaches, methodological support, methods and learning tools.

Analysis of the problem research in the world scientific literature shows that the development of software engineering is significantly influenced by modern industrial trends, as well as trends in information technologies and programming [1-3]. The transition to a new level of industry - “Industry 4.0”, characterized by robotics and cyber-socialization, brings a wave of new, never-before-seen challenges to the IT and programming spheres. Due to the complexity and rapidity of the development of software technologies, the basis for acquiring knowledge about SE and applying innovations in this area should be a shift in emphasis to the paradigm of a deep understanding of modern technological processes and the acquisition of professional skills based on...
practice. Obviously, in such conditions, it is impossible to achieve the desired synergistic effect without the formation of an appropriate informational and educational environment in higher education institutions, which is provided for by the relevant standards of higher education and requirements for internal education quality assurance. When designing and forming such an environment, the priority should be the implementation of means of intellectualization, the principles of open education and the European research space [4]. At the same time, it is expedient to introduce a transdisciplinary approach into this process as the most generalized and universal, which overcomes the limits and shortcomings of disciplinary fragmentation, provides a more complete picture of the world and relationships [5]. However, within the framework of the general problem of setting up an environment for educational activities in the field of SE based on such systems, the task of forming information resources that should reflect the above-mentioned technological trends is relevant. Based on them, it becomes possible not only to provide effective digital educational content, but also to choose and use the latest technological means of learning support.

One of the sources of such content can be the publications of the global scientific community registered in international scientometric databases, such as, for example, Scopus and Web of Science. To provide a comprehensive view of what was said on a certain topic and by whom, the systematic review method is effective. Such a high-level review of primary research on a targeted question identifies, selects, synthesizes and evaluates all high-quality research evidence relevant to the question at hand. As IT transforms and evolves so rapidly, such studies should be continually replicated to examine how these changes affect the gap between curricula and current industry expectations.

The research goal is a systematic study of sources aimed at finding informational, technological and methodological ways to solve the current problems of ensuring the improvement of the quality of education in software engineering in the conditions of digital transformation.

Analysis of recent research and publications. For more than half a century of development of software engineering, many publications ranging from fundamental editions to current publications in scientific journals and conference proceedings have provided a broad panorama of topics covering all stages and technologies of developing software systems. Software engineering has changed significantly over the decades, and, being a new engineering discipline, it is still evolving. This is confirmed by a systematic analysis [1] of a number of publications over a certain period, each of which offered its own sets of principles for SE development.

In [2], based on a systematic review, the author determined the main phenomena influencing evolution of SE practices, which helped to assess how this field got to where it was and where it is now. This article also identifies some of the major sources of change that will affect the practice of software development over the next several decades and identifies some strategies for assessing and adapting to these sources of change.

In [3], a classification of many articles was carried out based on studies of trends in software development, processes and practices, approaches to learning, and the evolution of IT over time. It is shown that many trends other than Agile Software Development are relatively underrepresented in academic organization. The study’s findings point to existing gaps between the software industry and education, providing useful insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners. An example of one such publication is [6], in which, based on a comprehensive survey of IT professionals and companies, it is determined that balancing technical/non-technical skills and adjusting curricula to better prepare students for industry is a constant challenge for higher education institutions.

At the same time, the proliferation and widespread use of agile methods have created enormous challenges for innovation in SEE. These pedagogical innovations should be aimed at strengthening the skills of students to achieve optimal results in the industry. However, recent research still points to differences in what the industry requires. The main goal of the article [7] is to collect and analyze scientific data on the skills necessary for the formation of flexible high-performance teams. In this work, a systematic literature review was carried out to get a visualization of the scientific contributions available on this topic.

Taking into account the fact that in software development, knowledge is constantly updated, a systematic review study [8] shows the need to focus attention on providing suggestions for tutorials updating. The results of the work indicate the top 20 main topics in the educational programs of SE field. At the same time, work [9] features a study of the problems and prospects of SEE based on a questionnaire survey of teachers and experts. The results showed that the most used in software engineering lectures is the problem-based learning approach, followed by gamification methods and role-playing games, which are new trends to engage students. These conclusions are also confirmed in the article [10], which provides a systematic reflection of the issues of gamification in software engineering education. Based on literary sources, it is also shown that the application of gamification in SEE is now more aimed at attracting students and, to a lesser extent, improving student knowledge.

Another systematic review [11] aims to characterize the teaching and learning of the “Software Requirements” discipline introduced as mandatory in most software engineering curricula. It is noted that the process of teaching and studying this discipline is associated with a number of problems for both teachers and students. To mitigate these problems, some review articles suggest techniques such as providing students with realistic and applied environments to create more engaging and practical learning.

Systematic reviews can provide useful knowledge for the practice of software engineering by consolidating and synthesizing empirical studies related to a specific topic. The work [12] used data obtained through a tertiary study, i.e. by conducting a systematic review of published systematic reviews. It is argued that the use of such more rigorous studies can lend greater authority to the findings of systematic reviews and help build a body of robust empirical evidence that is relevant to teaching and practice.
Thus, the scientific and methodical prerequisites of education in SE field require further research in the context of the priorities of modern technological trends. The conceptual basis of the study of these issues is progressing, and the features of the educational environment are constantly developing. Therefore, the relevance of the task consists in taking into account these processes in the methodical principles of teaching in the design and development of a quality software product and ensuring their wider coverage in educational activities.

2. The theoretical backgrounds research methodology

The starting point of the research, which follows from the analysis of sources, is the recognition of the tangible impact on the content, methods and organizational forms of training in SE of the characteristic features of the industry and the IT sphere, which at the current stage consist in the growth of the dynamics of technological changes, in a sharp increase in the amount of information needed for processing and learning.

Researchers and specialists who offer innovative approaches to support SE educational process, in their majority, rely on relevant models and methods, among which the prevailing ideas are: a harmonious combination of related disciplines and various industry technologies; the importance of creating appropriate training programs and choosing a suitable teaching method on the relevant topics of technological trends; cooperation of subjects of the industry regarding the common goals of education.

These approaches align with the Global Computing Education paradigms have been outlined in the latest release of the CC2020 Computing Curricula report series from the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and the IEEE Computer Society (IEEE-CS). After a long hiatus from the release of the SE 2014 (Software Engineering Curricular Volume), international organizations have returned to considering the guiding principles of bachelor’s programs in computer professions, in particular SE. One of the four main principles followed by the task force in the development of CC2020 is related to the need to take into account future trends and visions from industry in the educational process, to monitor changes in technology and research from the entire spectrum of society.

From the analysis of this document and other sources, it can be concluded that all computer disciplines, especially SE, should focus on professional know-how of industrial and information technology trends. On the other hand, computer disciplines, like no other, need the support of the educational process precisely by means of information technologies. Actually, these two factors raise questions about the need to understand the agenda of the global scientific community in these areas, and identify publications which indicate promising research in this field.

This systematic literature review following the guidelines proposed by [13, 1] and other authors should include at least three main stages: planning, conducting and reporting. At these stages, it is advisable to implement the same steps. First, to identify the research questions related to a specific topic, including the definition of components and acceptance criteria. Next, define a comprehensive strategy for the systematic search of research candidates and implement it. The necessary data should be extracted from the received corpus, and the results should be interpreted and presented. Finally, it is advisable to evaluate the validity of the conclusions based on the relevant bibliography.

Research questions are the starting point of a systematic review, as research directions and methods of data analysis are determined based on them. This study has in mind the following research questions:

RQ1: What technological trends are analyzed in the research?
RQ2: What information technologies are considered in the studies?
RQ3: What strategies are reflected in the publications to overcome the above challenges of SE teaching and learning?

As inclusion and exclusion criteria, at least at the beginning of the study, we rely on the relevance and pertinence of search results for various search queries. The study suggests looking at Elsevier search engine results in the Web of Science Core Collection when searching by publication title, keywords, and abstract. In addition, the criterion of the number of publications found for the search terms is used.

Searching for sources begins with the formation of a text corpus of research based on search queries that reflect the subject area, using relevant keywords such as software engineering, training, education, etc., and their combinations. Publications are considered for the generally accepted time span of 5 years, i.e. for 2017-2021.

Further, in the obtained data array, we select publications that consider modern technological trends that already exist or are expected in the near future and cause a constant increase in the information load in the field of SEE. The list of trends is prepared based on CC2020 and information from leading IT companies, as well as work [2], which identifies some of the main sources of changes that will affect the practice of software development over the next few decades, as well as some strategies for evaluating and adapting to these sources of change. On this basis, Ishikawa diagrams (Fig. 1) were developed to identify the most significant factors (reasons) that affect the final result. This chart helps identify the main trends that make the most significant contribution to the picture of the subject area.

The next step is to select publications in a different direction, namely by technologies and learning tools, the totality of which is determined based on the modern stage of their development and application (Fig. 2).

In the future, it is necessary to work out the statistics of the results in order to find answers to the proposed research questions.
3. Research findings

The implementation of the proposed methodology was started with a search query (educati* OR learning OR teaching OR training OR curriculum* OR course) AND software engineering, which provided a significant number of results. Their preliminary analysis showed low relevance of the search. Further refinements resulted in a search for teaching AND “software engineering”, which produced a report of 746 results, of which 568 were conference proceedings and 170 were articles. The conducted analysis has already shown a sufficiently high pertinence of the results, as a result of which a decision was made to conduct further research on this corpus.

Regarding the general characteristics of the obtained material, it should be noted that the number of citations of the selected works at the time of the research was 1718, that is, on average; it is not much – only 2.5 per document. From the chart of publications and citations due to a decrease in the number of publications (Fig. 3), it follows that starting from 2019, a significant decline in the number of publications, and later in the number of citations, began. To some extent, this can be explained by the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, but other searches do not clearly support this assumption.
The decline of researchers’ interest in the topic of software engineering education is rather related to “reaching a plateau” - the saturation of publication materials after more than forty years of research in this field and a certain stabilization of the development of international recommendations on computer education.

According to Elsevier’s criteria, the work that best meets the search conditions is [14]. This work examines Flipped learning of software engineering and proposes a method of its reformation based on the project approach. The work that received the largest number of citations – 60 – is the above-mentioned work [1].

In the table 1 – 3 provide data on the top 10 by the number of publications, respectively, by authors, countries, and institutions with which the publications of the sample are affiliated.

Table 1. Top 10 authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Number of publications</th>
<th>Percentage of 746</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mottok J.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reuter R.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tiwari S.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Conte T.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oliveira SRB.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Singh P.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brockmann P.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gold-Veerkamp C.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Steinmacher I.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vescan A.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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Table 2. Top 10 countries

<table>
<thead>
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<th>№</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Percentage of 746</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>104</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>13.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7.77</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>England</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Finland</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 3. Top 10 institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Number of publications</th>
<th>Percentage of 746</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Universidad politecnica de Madrid</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Universidade Federal do Para</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Babes Bolyai university from Cluj</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Technical university of Munich</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dhirubhai Ambani institute of information and communication technology</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>KU LEUVEN</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>California State University system</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Carnegie Mellon University</td>
<td>7</td>
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Based on the results of the selection of publications, a diagram was constructed (Fig. 4), which includes 15 trends from those shown in fig. 1, which have the largest number of publications. The given data shows a percentage of the sample size (out of 746).

According to the diagram in fig. 4, without taking into account the possibility of using several terms in one work, almost a third of the works (32.6%) consider modern technological trends. The chart does not include such trends as Industry 4.0 (1 publication), Digital transformation, Digitalization (4), System of system (1), Quantum computing (1), Lean Startup (1), COTS (1), Real Time (7), Global connection (0), Merger of technologies (0), Enterprise Agile (0), Cognitive technologies (0), Data science (4), Blockchain (0), Ambient computing (0), Biocomputer (0), High-performance computing (1). In fact, the general term Industry is mentioned in 133 works (17.7%), which indicates a significant attention of researchers to industrial challenges.

Similarly, the diagram of fig. 5 was constructed, which includes 15 means of information technologies supporting the educational process from those shown in fig. 2, which are featured in the largest number of publications. Not included in this chart Reusability (1), Continuous Software Engineering (0), Microservice architecture (1), Low-Code / No-Code (0), Rust (1).

Fig. 4. Chart of the number of publications considering current technological trends

Fig. 5. Chart of the number of publications dealing with technological learning tools
According to the diagram in fig. 5, without taking into account the possibility of using several terms in the work, already more than half of the works (53.4%) consider issues of issues of technological means of education.

In this way, two groups of publications with a total volume of approximately three quarters of the corpus were formed, the analysis of which mainly provides answers to the review questions RQ1 and RQ2. But what do the authors of remaining quarter of the works write about? As a result of a more careful examination of this ensemble of publications, several significant collections of works were found that considered certain technologies and teaching methodologies (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Chart of the number of publications considering other technological means and methodologies

A group of other fairly diverse publications was also identified. In relation to technological trends, traditional methodologies are mentioned: Project Management (44), Business Information Technology (1), Model-Driven Engineering, or Model-Based Software Engineering (5), Software Language Engineering (1), Empirical software engineering (7), Requirement engineering (4), HCI -Human computer-interaction (9), Programming paradigms (4), Software quality (1), COCOMO (1), as well as new trends such as Green and Sustainable Software Engineering (2), Search-based Software Engineering (1), Cyber-physical systems (5), Multi-Agent Systems (2), Big Data (5), and some others.

In a group of other articles devoted to educational technologies, such concepts are used as Smart education, Android-based teaching (2), STEM (4), Collaborative Learning (4), Cooperative Learning Method (3), Eye Tracking (4), MOOCs - Massive Open Online Courses (4), Conceptual data modelling (2), Software Testing Educating (23), Teach Requirements Engineering (6), Startup Software Development Education (5), Micro-Learning Application (1), and some others.

In order to find an answer to RQ3, naturally, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of publications that simultaneously used terminology from two or even three groups of publications identified as a result of the review. Consequently, 215 such works were found (28.82%).

Therefore, for example, in work [15] four terms from different groups are used - Large-scale engineering, Learn environment, gamification, flipped. The purpose of this study is to apply an innovative pedagogy called the flipped classroom to create a student-centered learning environment for software development, particularly in the direction of industrial scale projects. In work [16] 8 terms are used – IoT, Global Software Engineering, e-learning, Smart education, Collaborative learning, cloud-based learning, web learning, Project-based learning. The paper presents a series of distributed virtual intellectual e-learning courses conducted by universities in Japan, Germany and Sri Lanka based on contextual and project-based learning, collaborative learning and teaching using video conferencing and cloud platforms. These innovations are offered in response to industrial challenges in the ability to manage distributed projects and cross-cultural communication skills to collaborate effectively in international teams. In [17], which also features several terms from different groups, the use of special software for real-time collaboration of distributed companies as a learning tool in the field of SEE is proposed. This paper concludes that students actively participate in such challenges and are more motivated to practice their skills during online exercises.

A significant contribution to improving the industrial relevance of higher education in SE is teaching more efficient ways of working as a software developer. One of them is the automation of repetitive parts of work
to help focus on tasks that directly create value for customers and the business. For this, the achievements of artificial intelligence and robotics should be involved. The document [18] notes that robots are a popular platform for introducing novice programmers to computing and artificial intelligence. The paper presents a platform for students to safely and easily program high-performance robots using JavaScript. At the same time, the article [19] advises to combine the teaching of artificial intelligence and software engineering, since both are engaged in modeling real cases, having common elements. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of students following the best practices of industrial teams.

The conducted review shows a significant variety of means and methodologies of training in SE, which are considered in the publications. To ensure the use of these tools and their support, it is necessary to create an appropriate learning environment based on infrastructure platforms, in particular cloud technologies. As can be seen from the above data, these issues are given attention in many publications.

Accordingly, a significant number of terms and definitions are used in the publications, which creates a related serious problem of differing understanding and/or interpretation of terminology. This problem is inherent in many spheres of communications, in particular, the educational middle. Appropriate information models, in particular based on computer ontologies, which have recently gained considerable popularity in various fields, can help alleviate such communication problems [20]. In [21], one of the first issues raised was the use of ontologies in software research and software projects. Mainly, this work highlights two applications of ontologies in software engineering and software technology: sharing knowledge about a problem domain and using a common terminology among all stakeholders. In turn, the goal of the article [22] is an attempt to propose an ontology for informational decision support in Software Engineering Management tasks.

Having ontological approach, it is possible to display the relationship of the terms used in the publications of the sample (Fig. 7). A fragment of such an ontology provided to simplify visualization. This example is actually a meta-ontology of the domain to which this study is devoted.

![Fig. 7. Meta-ontology of terms used in publications](image)

Within the framework of the general problem of setting up the environment of educational activity based on information systems, the task of developing reasonable methods of processing informational educational resources is relevant. Ontological modeling is a good basis for the processes of intellectualization of such systems and the construction of appropriate technological software tools on their basis.

4. Conclusions and prospects for further research

The global industrial demand for highly qualified software engineers in the context of digital transformation is continuously growing. Many countries are constantly experiencing a shortage of developers. On the other hand, the
results of the analysis show that there is a gap between the industry, technological trends and education. Many current trends are reflected in publications to a minor degree.

The industry’s need for software engineers will grow faster than educational institutions can train new personnel. It is believed that the main reasons for this deficit lie in the slowness of the adaptation of the education system to the current needs of the market and in the difficulty of students acquiring relevant practical skills. Thus, the key solution should be to increase the level of industrial and market relevance of education.

In today’s conditions, educational activities in general and SE in particular, are characterized by constantly growing unstructured textual and multimedia content, which is demonstrated by the conducted research. In practice, processing this content is associated with tangible problems. This controversy gives rise to the restraint of innovative development of the field of SE education, which negatively affects the pace of its actualization. To some extent, it is proposed to fill the above-mentioned gaps on the basis of information modeling of the educational environment and the introduction of appropriate progressive information technologies to support the educational process.

Systematic reviews of research literature, similar to the one conducted, can be the basis for the formation of information resources maintained by information systems supporting educational activities. These resources can be used not only by educational authorities and by university teachers for the formation and development of relevant educational and methodological materials, but also directly by students in the educational process.

References

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