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PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Abstract. *The surge of distant learning in Ukraine's educational landscape has opened new possibilities for students and educators, breaking down geographical barriers and providing access to knowledge and skills. As Ukraine embraces distance education, it becomes imperative to navigate its potential and challenges, shaping the future of learning. This article explores the concept of distance education, drawing on the works of various academics and Ukrainian scientists. It reviews the current state of distance learning in Ukraine, delving into a study on the quality of distance learning in education institutions. The research reveals both the advantages, such as adaptability, and drawbacks, including limitations in flexibility. Challenges such as a lack of live communication and unequal access to technology are also highlighted. The article advocates for the digitalization of education, with collaborations with international partners, aiming to bridge educational gaps and elevate Ukrainian education to global standards. Despite challenges, the conclusion emphasizes Ukraine's progress in education and the support from the international community for educational initiatives. Financial assistance is deemed crucial for implementing these initiatives and ensuring quality education for all students.*

Keywords: *distance education, distant learning, innovations, online learning.*

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ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ТА ПРОБЛЕМИ РОЗВИТКУ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ В УКРАЇНІ

Анотація. *Розвиток дистанційного навчання в освітньому просторі України відкрив нові можливості для студентів та викладачів, долаючи географічні бар'єри та забезпечуючи доступ до знань і навичок. Оскільки Україна впроваджує дистанційну освіту, стає вкрай важливим орієнтуватися в її потенціалі та викликах, щоб сформувати майбутнє навчання. У статті досліджується концепція дистанційної освіти, що ґрунтується на роботах українських науковців. У ній розглядається сучасний стан дистанційного навчання в Україні, заглиблюючись у дослідження якості дистанційного навчання в навчальних закладах. Дослідження виявляє як переваги, такі як адаптивність, так і недоліки, зокрема обмеження гнучкості. Також висвітлюються брак живого спілкування та неоднаковий доступ до технологій. У статті пропонується діджиталізація освіти у співпраці з міжнародними партнерами з метою подолання освітніх розривів і піднесення української освіти до світових стандартів. Незважаючи на виклики, у висновку підкреслюється прогрес України в галузі освіти та підтримка освітніх ініціатив з боку міжнародної спільноти. Фінансова допомога вважається вирішальною для реалізації цих ініціатив та забезпечення якісної освіти для всіх студентів.*

Ключові слова: *дистанційна освіта, дистанційне навчання, інновації, онлайн-навчання*

Introduction. In the field of education in Ukraine, distance education, also known as online or distance learning, has rapidly gained importance. It has surged in popularity, offering new opportunities for both students and educators in the country's educational sphere. Online education provides wide access to knowledge and skills by eliminating geographical barriers, which is a significant advantage due to the safety concerns of students and educators in many places. As Ukraine explores distance education, it's essential to consider its potential benefits

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and drawbacks and make informed choices that will determine future learning for generations to come.

Today, there are numerous interpretations of the term "distance education." The concept has been formulated by such scholars as M. Thompson, M. Moore, A. Clark and D. Keegan. Distance learning involves a structured educational process where a student studies independently according to a teacher-developed program. The student is separated from the teacher in space or time but maintains communication through telecommunication means. This form of education allows for flexibility and convenience. It is important to note that distance learning does not compromise the quality of education.

Logical and systematic analysis of scientific works of scientists, and literary sources (dictionaries, encyclopedias, textbooks, scientific, regulatory, and legal literature) shows that the concept and content of distance education and distance learning are studied in the works of many domestic and foreign scientists.

The works of the Ukrainian scientists V. Bykov, O. Vasylenko, P. Dmytrenko, T. Kaliuzhna, K. Korsak, V. Kolos, V. Kukharenko, Y. Pasichnyk, P. Stefanenko, B. Shunevych and others, which established the conceptual basis of the system of distance education, are the basis for determining the concept and essence of distance education.

The solution of psychological and pedagogical problems of effective use of information technologies in the educational system is the subject of the works of K. Kugai, I. Makhovych, M. Vyshnevska, V. Krasnopolsky, Y. Mashbyts, T. Yashchun and others.

The problem of theoretical and methodological foundations of distance education in higher education is thoroughly disclosed in the dissertation research of P. Stefanenko [8].

Setting objectives. The modern world is experiencing significant transformations in the education sector, driven by the rapid development of technology and the growth of access to the Internet. Ukraine, as a modern country with ambitions in the field of education and a desire to improve its quality, cannot stay away from this global phenomenon. Distance education has become a relevant and important aspect of the Ukrainian educational system. First of all, this article aims to review the current state of distance learning in Ukraine and study the benefits and drawbacks of online education. Examine the advantages offered by distance learning, including its adaptability and convenience, while also recognizing its limitations and obstacles.

Research results. Distance learning was introduced in Ukraine over ten years ago. The current challenges faced by the Ukrainian education system necessitate the development of an educational framework that guarantees a transition towards lifelong learning.

Recent academic publications underscore the robustness of Ukrainian higher education and highlight the country's commendable literacy and educational achievements. These studies highlight the population's education, attributing the successes to significant government investments in the education sector. Ukrainian higher education institutions are widely recognized for their emphasis on natural sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which has enabled a cadre of globally competitive professionals in engineering, computer science, and information technology. It is crucial to safeguard these strengths during challenging periods. However, ongoing geopolitical conflicts have led to a worrying trend of declining student enrollment, according to recent research. This presents a threat to Ukraine's future workforce and subsequent economic growth [9]. Thus, the promotion of top-notch distance education emerges as a critical strategy to provide a lifeline to thousands of students abroad and to strengthen Ukraine's educational resilience in the face of complex circumstances.

In 2022, the Head of the State Education Quality Service and an expert from the Support to Ukraine's Government Reforms project revealed the primary outcomes of a study investigating the quality of distance learning in general secondary education institutions in

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Ukraine. The study concluded that the educational process within the realm of distance learning exhibited reduced flexibility and constraints across various aspects of activity [7].

It was also found that 7% to 16% of teachers reported that students obtained learning material independently, with this trend more noticeable in rural areas, especially in primary education. The research additionally revealed that 55% of educators in rural regions and 47% in cities posted materials for self-study at primary and secondary levels on a specialized web service on a daily or several times a week basis.

Additionally, a survey was conducted with students regarding their preferences for changes to the organization of distance learning at their school. The vast majority of students indicated that they require explanations from teachers instead of self-study, presentations of educational materials to enhance their comprehension of lesson topics, and more time to clarify new topics.

Parents most frequently listed illness, lack of access to the Internet or an unreliable connection as reasons why their children were unable to study and work on educational material independently.

In primary school, 29% of parents reported that their children could not access online platforms without assistance. A further 20% of respondents noted that their children were staying with grandparents, who lacked appropriate conditions for learning, and 13% of parents explained that their children could not study independently because they lacked the skills to learn the material on their own.

Distant education has had an impact on students' learning achievements. Although most teachers think that students' grades have remained the same, this is not the case for mathematics, foreign languages and chemistry. Around 50% of the surveyed teachers noted a decline in academic performance in these particular subjects [2].

One of the main challenges to achieving good learning outcomes in distance learning is the lack of 'live communication' as mentioned by teachers.

The majority of teachers fail to admit the cause of the decrease in students' learning outcomes in the peculiarities of performing their professional duties, such as:

- lack of feedback on student progress;
- lack of appropriate skills in working with distance learning technologies;
- use of different electronic platforms and channels of communication with students.

The research showed that not all teachers are provided with the equipment and high-speed Internet to carry out distance learning. Primary school teachers are better provided with working computers/laptops than their colleagues in basic and upper secondary schools. Some teachers say that the lack of technology prevents them from using distance learning technologies effectively.

A significant problem is that at least a third of students in villages do not have the means to study online. Primary school students in villages are less likely to have their own learning tools (smartphone or laptop/computer) than those in basic and senior schools.

The survey shows that digitalising education is a key aspect of education reform in Ukraine. Local IT firms and international allies are aiding Ukraine in the implementation of this initiative. The Education Minister agreed to collaborate with Mark East, CEO of Microsoft Education, during the 2022 World Education Forum. Their discussion centred on how to provide supplementary support and improve the education system in Ukraine.

In addition to the promising development of a digital education passport, which streamlines and showcases academic backgrounds for efficient candidate identification, digitalization in higher education holds broader implications. Inspired by successful models in the US, educational programs can be established to address knowledge gaps intensified by COVID-19-related disruptions under martial law. These programs aim not only to compensate

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for educational losses but also to provide innovative solutions for a dynamic learning environment [5].

Compensatory measures, often discussed in the context of schools, are equally imperative for higher education. Ensuring that higher education receives the same attention is crucial for sustaining academic excellence and fostering the continuous development of a skilled workforce.

Moreover, the extension of international prospects is a pivotal consideration. Elevating Ukrainian higher education to meet global standards involves active collaboration with leading universities worldwide. This strategic partnership facilitates knowledge exchange, and cultural enrichment, and aligns educational practices with the best global standards, reinforcing Ukraine's position in the international academic landscape.

The insufficient integration of Ukrainian higher education into the global and European educational and research spheres poses a considerable impediment to the progress and qualitative transformation of the nation's academic landscape. Recognizing this, active efforts are underway to strengthen international collaborations, deemed crucial for the future of national higher education. The worldwide academic community is exceptionally receptive to Ukrainian participation, emphasizing the importance of forging partnerships with leading global universities [4].

Encouragingly, this trajectory is gaining momentum. Ukrainian universities are swiftly establishing collaborative programs, such as the exchange initiative with the University of Kassel in Germany. This program, tailored for Bachelor students in the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Finance and Business Management, welcomes both Ukrainian and foreign students, offering education in Ukrainian or English. Numerous similar international cooperation initiatives are in place, exemplified by the Unity Initiative—a collaborative venture offering joint degree programs between Ukrainian and British universities. Currently encompassing 79 UK institutions, this initiative seeks to provide extensive support, reinforcing the international standing of Ukrainian universities and fostering a vibrant, interconnected academic community.

As distance education in Ukraine continues to evolve, the integration of international experience becomes pivotal for its accelerated development. By harmonizing advanced distance learning technologies with classical education methods, there is immense potential for rapid progress in the field. However, navigating this journey requires addressing several crucial tasks in key areas [3].

Management and organizational support are imperative, ensuring a seamless transition to distance education. Logistical and financial support is essential for sustaining these initiatives, and recruiting qualified staff attuned to the demands of remote learning is crucial. Methodological support, tailored to the specifics of distance education, plays a pivotal role in enhancing its effectiveness. Simultaneously, promoting the adoption of distance learning in both the educational and labor markets is vital for its widespread acceptance and impact.

Presently, online learning in Ukraine is in the early stages of implementation within higher education institutions. While the distance education system is designed to complement traditional methods, its influence extends beyond, contributing to the advancement of online learning both nationally and globally [1]. This transformative impact is integral to the ongoing enhancement of the Ukrainian higher education system, marking a significant stride towards a more accessible and versatile educational landscape.

Conclusion. Today, the Ukrainian distance learning system faces many challenges. Despite the tough political situation, Ukraine is making progress and devising both short and long-term plans for the development of higher education. Ukrainian universities are becoming stronger as they develop strategies to continue reforms in education. In terms of

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internationalisation, in the coming years, the state plans to increase the volume of educational services, support global humanitarian and cultural values and initiatives, and integrate foreign students into strong and resilient higher education institutions in Ukraine.

The international community supports and agrees to provide all possible assistance to the education sector in Ukraine. Therefore, financial assistance from partners is also important for the implementation of educational initiatives, which will also provide resources, necessary to provide quality education to a wide range of domestic and foreign students.

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