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**MODERN TRENDS IN DISTANCE LEARNING IN HIGHER
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS****ПРІОРИТЕТНІ НАПРЯМКИ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ У
ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ****Курченко Т.О / Кириченко Т.О.***PhD in Economics, Associate Professor / канд.екон.наук, доцент*<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9160-2124>*Sumy National Agrarian University, Sumy, Herasya Kondratieva 160, 40021**Сумський національний аграрний університет, Суми, вул. Герасима Кондратьєва, 160, 40021*

Abstract: *The article examines current trends in the development of distance learning in higher education institutions of Ukraine. The author analyses the key aspects of distance learning, identifying priority areas, including infrastructure and technical support, professional training of teachers, development of interactive learning resources, ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness, organisation of feedback and assessment, and psychological support for students. In particular, the challenges faced by the education system due to the war, psychological stress and logistical difficulties are discussed. Despite these challenges, Ukraine has demonstrated resilience, adapting to the new environment with significant investments from international organisations such as UNESCO, Google and Microsoft, which provide hardware, software and training to support online learning. Ukrainian universities are adopting platforms such as Moodle and using tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to improve the distance learning process. The article also focuses on the importance of improving the digital skills of students and teachers, which are necessary for effective online learning and training. The recommendations set out in the article are aimed at maintaining the continuity of the educational process and improving the quality of higher education in times of crisis.*

Key words: *distance education, constant professional development, higher education, assessment, training.*

Вступ.

In today's world, where digital technologies have become an integral part of everyday life, distance learning is becoming increasingly important. In higher education institutions distance learning is becoming not only an alternative approach to traditional teaching methods, but it is also an important component of the educational process. The purpose of this article is to identify the priorities of distance learning in higher education institutions, analyze current issues and develop recommendations for their solution.

Distance learning is defined as an educational process that is fulfilled with help of information and communication technologies (ICT) and does not involve direct contact between the teacher and the student. The main principles of distance learning include individualization, interactivity, accessibility and mobility of the learning process [1].

The distance learning in higher education in Ukraine has faced significant developments and challenges, particularly due to the ongoing conflict and its impact on the education system. The war in Ukraine has severely disrupted education, with over 3,000 educational institutions damaged, including 420 completely destroyed. Many students and educators face instability, psychological stress, and logistical challenges in continuing their education. Despite these challenges, Ukraine has



demonstrated resilience. Students and educators have adapted to teaching and learning under difficult circumstances, including power outages and air raid threats [2].

Significant investments have been made to support distance learning. UNESCO, Google, and Microsoft, along with the Global Partnership for Education, have committed over \$51 million to provide equipment, software, and training to facilitate online education. This includes donations of Chromebooks and free access to educational software [3]. Ukrainian universities have modernized their infrastructure, adopting platforms like Moodle and utilizing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to enhance the online learning experience [4]. A study profiling the digital readiness of Ukrainian students highlights the increased accessibility and inclusiveness of education due to its remote nature. However, it also points out the need for continuous improvement in digital skills among both students and educators to maximize the benefits of online learning. Digital competency frameworks have been developed to assess and improve the digital skills necessary for effective online learning, ensuring that students can adapt to various technological demands. Programs are being implemented to provide not only educational resources but also psychosocial support to address the mental health challenges faced by students and educators. This holistic approach aims to support the well-being of the educational community and ensure continuity in learning despite the ongoing conflict [3].

These efforts reflect a comprehensive strategy to maintain and improve the quality of higher education in Ukraine during these tough times. The integration of modern technology, substantial international support, and a focus on mental health and inclusivity are key components of this ongoing transformation.

Identifying the priorities for distance learning, it is worth focusing on the following aspects: infrastructure and technical support, professional training of academic staff, development of interactive learning materials, ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness, organisation of feedback and assessment, and psychological support for students.

Effective distance learning requires a modern technical infrastructure and resources, including high-speed internet, data storage servers, and platforms for online classes and communication between teachers and students. Teachers' training is a core issue especially for working in a distance learning environment. This includes not only mastering technical skills, but also methodological training in developing interactive resources and providing effective feedback. Feedback is an important part of the learning process, especially in distance learning. Effective feedback methods include regular online consultations, chats and forums, and automated assessment systems that allow students to be promptly informed of their progress.

It should be taken into account that distance learning is associated with increased levels of stress and isolation among students. Therefore, the provision of psychological support and counselling for students is an essence that can reduce anxiety and increase motivation to learn.

Distance learning should be accessible to all students, regardless of their physical abilities or socio-economic status. This includes adapting learning materials for students with disabilities and providing technical support for those who do not have access to the necessary resources [5].



Distance learning has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include the possibility of involving a large number of students in training both within one class/lecture and a course of study; creation of a unified educational environment, the possibility of studying at a convenient time, access to a large number of training resources. A number of problems that also arise when organising distance learning include the following ones: many students do not have appropriate technical support and high-quality Internet connection; the problem of financing; the lack of readiness of teachers/students for the new format of the educational process; students' lack of experience of working independently and insufficient motivation to develop themselves and acquire knowledge, skills and abilities without constant supervision of the teacher; difficulties in students' assessment.

Conclusions.

Distance learning is a set of information technologies and teaching methods that provide education without the physical presence of students in an educational institution.

In Ukraine, distance education has been gradually introduced for over a decade. The quarantine measures of 2020, when all higher education institutions were switched to distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, gave a significant impetus to the development of distance learning technologies. To ensure the successful implementation of the educational process, all higher education institutions have created modern online platforms, which collect all the electronic resources of a particular university. University e-learning systems usually include developed e-learning courses, personal accounts of students and teachers, a grade book, and a catalogue of elective courses.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the accelerated development of the latest information and communication technologies, as well as new opportunities for participants in the educational process, necessitate the updating and further development of the learning environment of educational institutions.

To make the learning process in higher education institutions more efficient, starting in 2024, part-time education will be replaced by distance learning. According to the initiators of the changes, this will allow students to study remotely, but without losing the quality of education. The government has proposed that higher education institutions focus on developing distance learning. Unlike part-time and evening classes, distance learning does not require regulation, and students can choose the time and place for classes within their study schedule. To implement distance learning, educational institutions can create distance learning centres as their separate structural units.

The organisation of distance learning in higher education is a process that requires consideration of numerous aspects. Priority areas of this process include technical support, teachers' training, interactive resources development, accessibility, feedback and psychological support. Implementation of these core features will ensure high quality distance learning and increase its effectiveness.



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Анотація. У статті розглядаються сучасні тенденції дистанційного навчання у закладах вищої освіти України. Автор аналізує ключові аспекти організації дистанційного навчання, визначаючи пріоритетні напрямки, які включають інфраструктурну та технічну підтримку, професійну підготовку викладачів, розробку інтерактивних навчальних матеріалів, забезпечення доступності та інклюзивності, організацію зворотного зв'язку та оцінювання, а також психологічну підтримку студентів. Зокрема, розглянуто виклики, з якими стикається система освіти через війну, психологічний стрес та логістичні труднощі. Незважаючи на ці виклики, Україна демонструє стійкість, адаптуючись до нових умов за допомогою значних інвестицій від міжнародних організацій, таких як UNESCO, Google та Microsoft, що надають обладнання, програмне забезпечення та тренінги для підтримки онлайн-навчання. Українські університети впроваджують платформи, такі як Moodle, та використовують інструменти, такі як Zoom та Microsoft Teams, для покращення дистанційного навчального процесу. Стаття також акцентує увагу на важливості підвищення цифрових навичок студентів та викладачів, необхідних для ефективного онлайн-навчання. Викладені у статті рекомендації спрямовані на підтримку безперервності освітнього процесу та підвищення якості вищої освіти в умовах кризи.

Ключові слова: дистанційна освіта, підвищення кваліфікації, вища освіта, оцінювання, підготовка.

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