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## **THE ESSENCE AND ROLE OF DISTANCE LEARNING IN THE FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF THE FUTURE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER**

### *Abstract*

This article delves into the pivotal theme of formation of professional competences among future foreign language teachers within the framework of distance learning. A comprehensive research was conducted to explore the multifaceted concept of “distance learning,” which entails indirect interaction between educators and learners the adept utilization of information and communication technologies, digital resources, diverse electronic devices, electronic communication tools, and telecommunication services. The study meticulously traverses the evolutionary trajectory of distance learning, including correspondence education, case study, broadcasting learning, and networking learning. Additionally, it casts a discerning spotlight upon distinct models of distance learning, such as distance learning based on a single university with the traditions of classical education, distance learning based on the cooperation of several educational institutions, and distance learning at universities specially created for this purpose. The article further navigates through the intricate organizational and methodological constituents intrinsic to distance learning. This intricate tapestry comprises the domains of marketing, educational and material, financial and economic, and identification and control subsystems. Notably, the article undertakes an exhaustive exploration of the strengths and weaknesses inherently associated with distance learning.

**Keywords:** formation of professional competences, future foreign language teachers, distance learning, distance education, higher education institution, information and communication technologies (ICT)

**Introduction.** In the wake of the global pandemic, higher education systems worldwide were compelled to suspend in-person instruction on a massive scale and swiftly transition to providing distance education services. This abrupt shift presented significant challenges, primarily due to the limited time frame within which countries had to adapt, compounded by a multitude of factors.

Distance learning posed challenges not only for students but also for educators and government bodies such as the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These stakeholders faced the formidable task of organizing and implementing a comprehensive and systematic protocol for distance education in higher education institutions.

While distance learning has been the subject of extensive research, many of the findings and recommendations were not specifically tailored to the unique circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the novel

reality in 2021, it becomes even more pertinent to investigate the educational processes within universities and understand their implications within the current context.

Article 1, Paragraph 38 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” provides a clear definition of distance learning as “a form of instruction conducted through teacher-student interaction at a distance, utilizing information and communication technologies and telecommunication tools” (Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2011). These legal provisions form the basis for the integration of subjective concepts in forming the professional competences of prospective foreign language teachers in higher education institutions.

Consequently, it is no coincidence that distance learning is highlighted as a methodological approach for the modernization of the entire education system within the regulatory documents outlining the educational development strategy in our country. Moreover, the outbreak of the

COVID-19 pandemic has further accentuated the significance and relevance of distance education within the realm of domestic pedagogical theory and practice, as the transition to distance learning technologies became imperative during this challenging period.

Hence, it becomes imperative to undertake a comprehensive exploration of the concept of “distance learning,” meticulously analyze its essence, and ascertain the various approaches through which it can enhance the professional development and formation of aspiring foreign language teachers. Extensive scholarly literature demonstrates that the issue of distance learning is not solely focused on enhancing the educational system for learners during the teaching process; rather, it also serves as a potent tool for fostering the acquisition of professional competences among future foreign language teachers. Therefore, let us now delve into a detailed analysis of the key concepts delineated above.

**Main part.** According to the Pedagogical Dictionary, distance learning is defined as “a methodically organized technological approach aimed at purposefully managing the educational activities of students who reside at

a considerable distance from the educational institution, regardless of their educational level or stage of training” (Zagvyazinskiy et al., 2008). In this context, distance learning entails employing various tools and methods of logical pedagogical communication between the teacher and the student, necessitating a minimal number of compulsory in-person sessions.

To facilitate distance learning, a range of didactic materials, including electronic resources such as work programs, methodological guidelines, textbooks, reports, and educational tools, as well as audio and video courses, are specifically developed and utilized. Additionally, automated learning systems, electronic libraries, and other technological resources are employed to facilitate the delivery of educational materials, manage and monitor the educational process. These approaches are particularly advantageous for offering specialized programs that cater to specific educational requirements.

Studying the evolution of distance learning, we highlight several of its stages (Nasibullov, 2013). The stages of the evolution of distance learning are shown in the figure below (Figure 1).

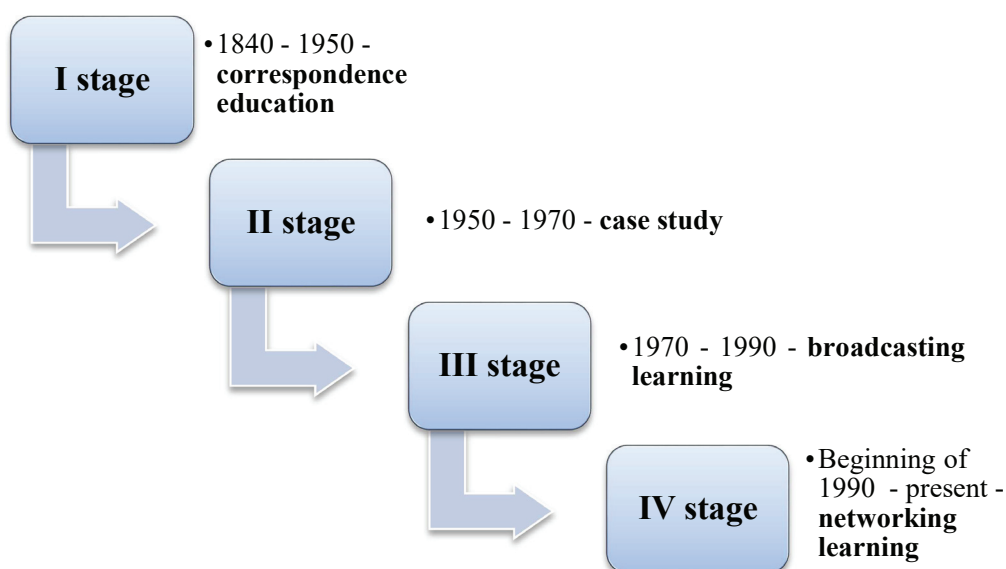


Figure 1. Stages in the evolution of distance learning

In his work, R.R. Nasibullov (2013) outlines the historical progression of distance education, highlighting two primary directions of development:

The first direction involves correspondence education, which emerged during the formative period of distance education. This form of education relied on correspondence as a means

of communication, initially through conventional mail and later transitioning to electronic correspondence.

The second direction centers on the advancement of distance communication systems that leverage telecommunication technologies, as well as audio and video recording tools, within traditional face-to-face education and training settings. The evolution of such tools facilitated the dissemination of daytime classes to distant (remote) audiences situated at a distance.

Foreign scholars have extensively examined distance learning within the realm of educational activities, resulting in the proposal of various definitions. Several notable definitions include:

- a form of independent learning through self-study texts and remote communication (Sampson, 2003).

- encompassing the separation of teachers and students, allowing for scientific courses to be conducted in an educational environment (Harsasi & Sutawijaya, 2018).

- the provision of various forms of training to learners at their place of residence or workplace, eliminating the need to attend an educational institution physically (Mahasneh, 2020).

- a process occurring in either a synchronous or asynchronous environment, facilitated by diverse devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops). With internet access, students can engage in communication with teachers and fellow students independently, regardless of their location (Singh, 2019).

The analysis of the aforementioned definitions highlights the underlying theme of distance learning, namely, the indirect interaction between students and teachers facilitated by the advancements in information communication technologies, digital resources, various devices, electronic communication tools, and telecommunication services. These technological developments have revolutionized the educational landscape, enabling remote interaction and collaboration between participants in the learning process.

Expanding on the notion of “distance learning” within a broader framework, Fursykova et al. (2022) define it as “an individualized form of organization of professional training, which takes place through the indirect interaction of

distant participants in the educational process in a specialized environment that operates on the basis of modern psychological, pedagogical and information and communication technologies”. According to these scholars, distance learning can be regarded as a form of education that enhances the professional development of future teachers. This perspective underscores its efficacy as a valuable method for training prospective specialists in the field.

The issue of distance learning has been extensively explored by Russian scholars, including A.A. Andreyev (1997). He addresses the intricacies surrounding the definition of “distance learning” and proposes the following definition: “distance learning is an educational approach that encompasses both full-time and part-time education, incorporating a combination of traditional and innovative methods, tools, and learning formats. It relies on the utilization of computer and telecommunication technologies within the educational process” (Andreyev, 1997).

L.P. Khalyapina (2000), a prominent scholar in the field, conducted extensive research on distance learning systems and their application in enhancing the effectiveness of foreign language instruction. According to the scientist, the integration of information and communication technologies, particularly through global computer networks, enables individual students to directly connect with native speakers of the language being taught in traditional classrooms. This interactive engagement facilitated by technology proves instrumental in successfully addressing the challenges associated with developing various oral communication skills in foreign language learning. Consequently, distance learning serves as a valuable medium for acquiring proficiency in a foreign language.

D.M. Dzhusubaliyeva (1997), an esteemed Kazakh scholar, made significant contributions to the exploration of distance education. In her doctoral thesis titled “Theoretical foundations of the formation of information culture of students in the conditions of distance education,” Dzhusubaliyeva (1997) presents distance education as a novel form of education distinguished by its multifaceted educational services, distinctive teaching methodologies, and

heightened engagement of the participants in the educational process. Furthermore, she identifies

four distinct forms of distance education, as depicted in Figure 2 (refer to Dzhusubaliyeva, 1997).

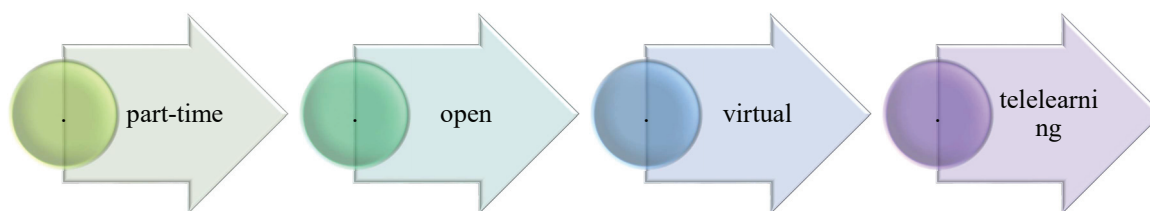


Figure 2. Forms of distance learning according to D.M. Dzhusubaliyeva

E.S. Polat et al. (2004) thoroughly examined the theory and practice of distance learning in his research. He arrived at the conclusion that pedagogical technologies in distance learning encompass a comprehensive array of teaching methods and approaches that are instrumental in realizing the distance learning process in alignment with the chosen instructional framework.

However, despite the variations in terminology, it is evident that the definitions provided by various scholars converge towards a common understanding. This can be observed through a content analysis of their opinions, as depicted in Table 1. The table presents a comprehensive overview of the key elements and characteristics encompassed in the concept of “distance learning” as defined by these scholars.

Table 1. Content analysis of the definitions given to the concepts of “Distance education”

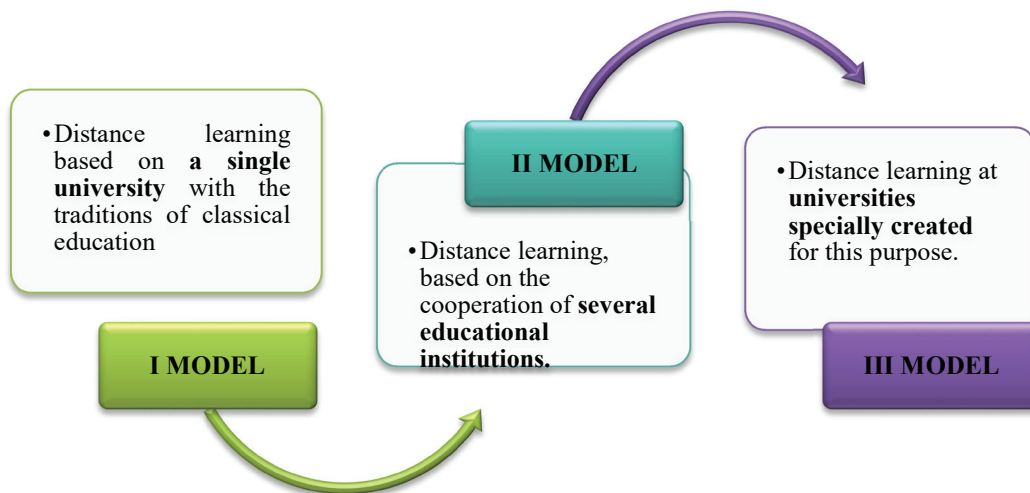
Author	Definition	Main idea
1	2	3
E.S. Polat, M. Yu. Bukharkina, M.V. Moiseeva	Distance education as a purposefully organized and systematically implemented process for acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities	knowledge, ability, skill
A.A. Andreyeva, E.S. Polat, A.V. Khutorovskoi	Distance learning as a spatial separation between the student and the teacher, while maintaining constant contact through special methods that determine the structure of the training course, the form of monitoring, and the methods of communication facilitated by basic Internet technology	space, communication, internet technology
A.A. Andreyev, V.I. Soldatkin	Distance education as a new form of education, emphasizing the independent learning of students, which enables dialogues between the student and the teacher through telecommunication tools at any given time	
Karpenko T.E., Seri L.T.	Distance learning as an element of open education, catering to learners who are unable to attend physical classes for various reasons. These learners work from home or office, engage in self-study of e-courses, complete assignments, and interact with peers and teachers through the Internet. In essence, they assume responsibility for autonomous learning	
Ignatovich T.V.	Distance learning is a form of learning, and e-learning serves as the digital technology and telecommunication system through which this form of learning is implemented within a virtual environment	

Khmel O.V.	Distance learning as a purposeful process that involves the interaction of all education participants, including teachers and students, throughout the stages of education, regardless of their physical presence in time and space. It relies on a wide range of traditional and ICT tools	
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Overall, these definitions highlight the purposeful organization of distance learning, the separation of learners and teachers in space, the utilization of technology for communication and learning, the emphasis on independent learning, and the flexibility provided by digital tools and virtual environments.

**Materials and methods.** D.D. Dzhantasova (2010) defines distance learning as an educational methodology founded upon a paradigm that

fosters indirect interactive engagement between educators and learners. This is achieved through the purposeful integration of contemporary information and communication technologies. The author astutely recognizes the existence of diverse models of distance learning through her scholarly inquiry. Particularly noteworthy is her observation of three distinct models of distance learning prevalent in Western developed nations.



**Figure 3. Distance learning models**

*The first model*, characterized as distance learning rooted in a single university steeped in classical educational traditions, represents a framework where academic institutions possess an abundance of intellectual resources and pedagogical expertise. This wealth enables them to meticulously craft and deliver pedagogically valuable courses spanning diverse fields of knowledge. This is accomplished through the astute application of modern information and communication technologies (ICT), including multimedia and hypermedia. In this model, pedagogy predominantly hinges on case-based teaching methods, encompassing printed manuals, audio and video cassettes, as well as telecommunication technologies.

Renowned institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge (England), Sheffield (Scotland), Baltic (Sweden), and Open University (Turkey) exemplify the adoption of this approach to distance learning.

*The second model* manifests as a collaborative endeavor, where multiple educational institutions join forces to design, create, and implement distance learning courses. This collaborative synergy not only augments pedagogical efficacy but also yields cost reductions in the development of such courses. Collaborative initiatives can transpire both at a national and international scale. Notable instances of this model encompass the Northern Colleges of England, an alliance of nine traditional

Australian universities renowned for open learning, and the Baltic University in Sweden, which unites over fifty universities within the Baltic region in a concerted effort.

The third model revolves around institutions purposefully established to champion distance learning. These universities place a premium on cultivating active and self-directed student involvement. Learning methodologies encompass an array of resources, including textbooks, specialized literature, audio and video tapes, and computerized course materials. Crucially, computer teleconferences feature prominently within the pedagogical landscape. Eminent examples of this model's implementation encompass the Open University in Great Britain, the Spanish National University of Distance Learning, and the Dutch Open University, all of which exemplify

an unwavering commitment to this form of distance learning organization.

According to G.S. Dzhuzbaeva (2010), distance learning can be defined as an educational approach that utilizes scientifically grounded methods, supported by information, computer, and telecommunication tools. The term "distance education" refers to the dissemination of specialized educational content to the masses, utilizing satellite television or radio, computer telecommunications, and other communication media. The author's definition emphasizes the cognitive activities conducted within specialized educational environments, wherein information is exchanged mutually for the purpose of cognitive learning (Dzhuzbaeva, 2010). In the author's work, the organizational and methodological framework of distance learning is presented through four subsystems (refer to Figure 4).

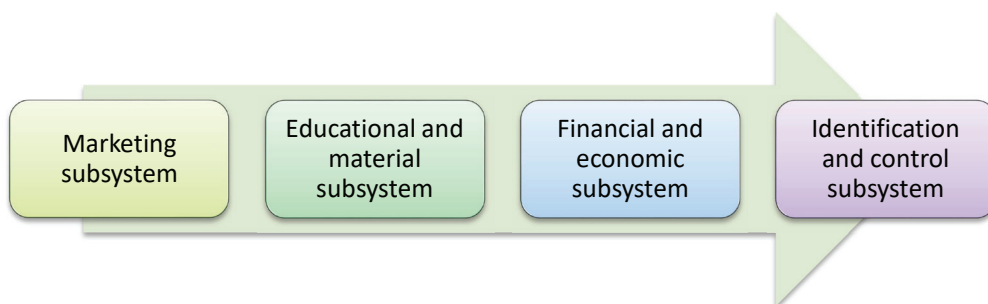


Figure 4. The system that forms the organizational and methodological basis of distance learning according to G.S. Dzhuzbaeva (2010)

In his research, B.J. Nurbekov (2010) conducted an analysis of the theoretical and methodological foundations of distance learning (DL), leading to the identification of various development trends. These include: focusing on DL expansion, focusing on DL internationalization, focusing on transformation of key DL concepts, personality oriented DL, innovative development of DL,

integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) and pedagogical technologies, as well as the integration of verbal, visual, and modular thinking. These trends highlight the evolving nature of distance learning, emphasizing the importance of adapting to new technologies and pedagogical approaches to enhance the educational experience.

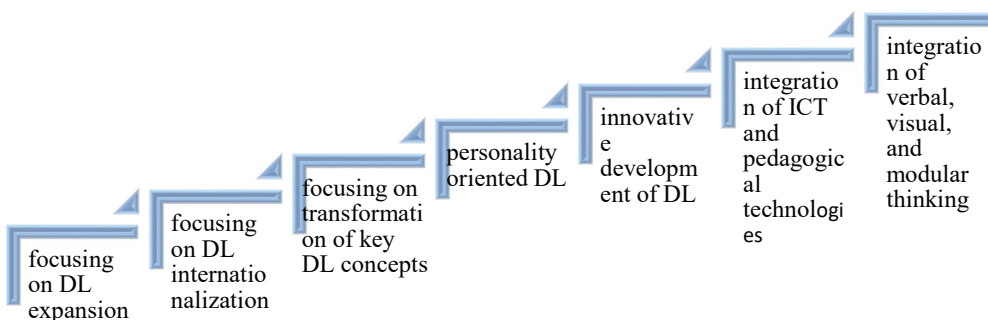


Figure 5. According to B.J. Nurbekov (2010), trends in the development of distance learning

Based on the works of B.J. Nurbekov (2010) and G.S. Zhuzbaeva (2010), we can classify the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning as follows:

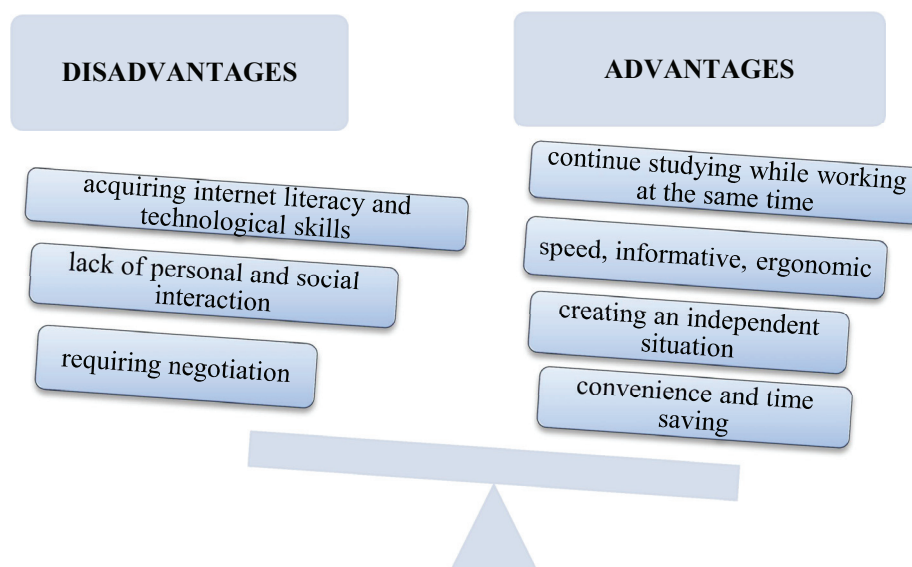


Figure 6. Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning according to B.J. Nurbekov (2010), G.S. Dzhuzbaeva (2010)

**Results and discussion.** In addition to the aforementioned perspectives, foreign scholars, including De Paepe et al. (2018), have highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning in their research. Advantages of distance learning, as identified by these scholars, encompass the following: self-learning, flexibility in time and space, time-saving, cost-effectiveness.

However, the scholars also shed light on the disadvantages of distance learning, including: feelings of isolation, struggle to stay motivated, lack of personal interaction, difficulty getting immediate feedback, need for constant and reliable access to technology, and sometimes some difficulty with accreditation.

It is essential to consider these advantages and disadvantages when evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of distance learning approaches. Additionally, the specific circumstances and context in which distance learning is implemented can influence the extent and significance of these advantages and disadvantages.

An important contribution to the field of our research comes from T.Yu. Andreyeva (2012), who, in her doctoral thesis titled “Preparation of future teachers of foreign languages for the organization of distance learning,” explores various aspects of distance learning in the context

of foreign language education. The author delves into the content, methods, organizational forms, and tools employed in distance learning, with a particular focus on addressing language-specific tasks such as lexical, phonetic, grammatical, and communicative skills encompassing reading, speaking, writing, and listening (Andreyeva, 2012)).

Drawing from her research findings, T.Yu. Andreyeva (2012) proposes pedagogical conditions that can effectively prepare future foreign language teachers for distance learning in educational institutions. These conditions include:

- 1) Professional orientation: Ensuring that students receive appropriate training in information cycle subjects that align with their professional goals as language educators.
- 2) Integration of a specialized course: Incorporating a dedicated course, such as “Practice of Distance Learning in the Moodle Environment,” into the curriculum. This course would employ a modular approach, presenting preparatory content in accordance with the key components of foreign language teaching.
- 3) Practical activities: Facilitating practical exercises for students to create interactive distance learning courses tailored to educational objectives.

4) Teacher training: Equipping foreign language teachers with the necessary skills to work in an information-educational environment that supports distance learning.

The conclusions drawn from Andreyeva's work emphasize the effectiveness of incorporating distance learning into the professional training of future foreign language teachers. Therefore, the

pedagogical conditions proposed by the author hold significant relevance and applicability to our own research objectives.

Furthermore, G.G. Blokhovtsova et al. (2016) examines the perspectives of distance learning development and proposes various types of distance learning lessons. These lessons are depicted graphically in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Types of lessons on distance learning proposed by G.G. Blokhovtsova (2016)

Chat-lessons: These lessons are conducted synchronously, allowing all participants to access the chat simultaneously. Through this format, real-time interaction and discussion among students and instructors are facilitated.

Web-based classes: This category encompasses a wide range of educational activities such as classes, conferences, seminars, business games, laboratory work, and practical sessions. These classes are conducted using the Internet and other telecommunication tools, enabling remote participation and collaboration.

Teleconferences: Teleconferences involve the convening of participants through remote telecommunication devices. This format facilitates meetings, discussions, and knowledge-sharing among individuals who are physically separated but connected virtually (Blokhovtsova & Volohatyh, 2016)

These classifications provided by Blokhovtsova & Volohatyh (2016) offer valuable insights into the diverse formats and modalities of distance learning, enabling educators and institutions to choose appropriate methods based on their specific educational goals and requirements.

Research conducted by A.B. Adranova (2020) focuses on methods for ensuring information security in distance education. The author highlights the importance of distance learning as a key pillar, emphasizing the need for high-quality and efficient processing of information flows within higher education institutions. Additionally, A.B. Adranova (2020) emphasizes the significance of maintaining a continuous and stable cycle of distance learning work while

safeguarding the confidentiality of personal information for both teachers and students. The research also presents the structural elements within the distance learning system, including external information sources, individuals and legal entities, international relations, and information funds, among others.

Mailybayeva et al. (2021) identify several organizational and pedagogical conditions that contribute to effective work in the distance learning system. In particular:

The first condition - the introduction of general training and vocational orientation, vocational-specialized courses into educational programs or additional educational programs of teachers in professional development courses;

The second condition – the utilization of modular-rating and distance learning technologies;

The third condition – the organization of independent work within the electronic information-educational environment;

The fourth condition – the inclusion of learners in distance learning activities while fostering an understanding of potential challenges that arise in this mode of education (Mailybayeva, 2021).

**Conclusion.** The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for the education system worldwide, prompting a shift away from traditional in-person schooling. Analysis of the literature let us highlight the difficulties encountered during the pandemic-related transition to distance learning, including inadequate access to computers and equipment among families with school-aged children, challenges with information accuracy and



usability on educational platforms, increased technological learning curve for older teachers, reduced objectivity in assessing students' knowledge, decreased student motivation, and the emergence of paid subscriptions for teachers on certain platforms supporting distance learning.

These findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of distance learning, underscoring the need for comprehensive approaches to ensure effective implementation and address the challenges faced by educators, students, and institutions in adapting to this new educational landscape.

In conclusion, based on the aforementioned discussion, it is evident that the issue of distance learning in the context of formation of professional competences of future foreign language teachers necessitates further investigation. Successful organization of distance learning hinges upon

several crucial factors, including the appropriate selection of methods and models, the exploration of innovative conceptual approaches to information technology integration in education, and the comprehensive training and retraining of foreign language teachers who are equipped to facilitate distance learning effectively. Furthermore, there is a growing need to harness the potential of modern web technologies and online tools in order to enhance the overall educational experience. It is imperative to address these considerations to ensure the optimal implementation of distance learning in the training of future foreign language educators. Further research in this area will contribute to a deeper understanding and improved practices in the field of distance learning for language teaching.

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## **ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS USING SACERS INTERNATIONAL SCALES: A BIBLIOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE**

### *Abstract*

To establish optimal conditions for school-age learners' best educational outcomes, research-evidenced documentation is a requirement prior to any significant change. This bibliometric analysis investigated articles published on School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) from 2017 to 2023 (n=10). Data collection involved identification, screening, exclusion, and eligibility stages. The bibliometrics R-package was used for data analysis on the Bibliometric cloud-based platform, focusing on publication patterns, citation networks, and bibliographic insights. Key findings indicate limited research-related publications on SACERS, possibly due to country-specific adaptations and variants in local languages. The scientific production varied annually, with few publications during 2017-2023. Canada, Russia, and the USA led SACERS research, implementing changes based on findings in target educational institutions. It was also found that research publications imply a university's intellectual and epistemological contribution; this also offers insights for academic institutions to enhance research strategies and academic influence. Based on these findings, we concluded that SACERS is an invaluable tool for globally evaluating educational environments. Its comprehensive assessment empowers educators to foster enriching learning environments for all students.

*Keywords:* SACERS scale, assessment, school-age children, bibliometrics, educational conditions.

**Introduction.** In an increasingly interconnected world, the quality of educational environments has become a subject of global significance (Care et al., 2016). Educational settings during early childhood and school-age years play a pivotal role (Baeten et al., 2013) in shaping the foundation of learning and development. A significant challenge in contemporary society is the need to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students. Educational institutions are expected to establish optimal conditions, encompassing material, technical, informational, methodological, psychological, pedagogical, staffing, financial, and economic aspects, to achieve the best educational outcomes. These conditions not only