

Prospects, Problems and Ways to Improve Distance Learning of Students of Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract: Today, the structure of education in the leading countries of the world is changing significantly. It is innovation that comes to the fore, the introduction of which can contribute to effective educational development. Separately, the relevance of the study of distance learning is added by the fact that the world lives in a pandemic, which requires a review of the current system of higher education and transfer it to the distance. The main purpose of the article is to study the problem and ways of improving the distance learning of students of higher education. Distance learning provides the opportunity to study when it is convenient for the student, at the pace that he chooses (within the established terms of the courses), in the place where he is (does not need to spend time on the road to universities to take current, and sometimes and final controls). The methodological basis is a system of complementary general scientific and special methods of cognition of socio-political phenomena, in particular systemic-structural, comparatively retrospective and structural-functional, interviewed, general methods of analysis and synthesis, etc. As a result, the problems and prospects of improving distance learning of scientific disciplines were investigated and the essence of the problems in the teaching of disciplines and ways to solve them were revealed. It is recommended that use proposed model of distance learning.

Keywords: *distance learning; educational process; professional training; information technologies and telecommunication networks; students; pedagogy.*

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1. Introduction

Today, not only the content, structure of higher education is changing, but also its form. The training of students at higher educational institutions should be built taking into account the social order and be maximally directed to the future professional needs of the employee, to form such a high level of their professional and general culture, professional competence that will maintain high professionalism in any field of work at the level of growing requirements society.

Therefore, the creation of an innovative educational environment with the help of distance learning is impossible without introducing a qualitatively new content in higher professional education, without raising the level of scientific and methodological support of the educational process, introducing innovative technologies and teaching methods, mastering students with modern means of interactive learning. The urgent scientific and methodological task in higher education institutions that train workers of various specialties should be the search for new effective forms and methods of higher education: from the development and introduction of new promising disciplines in the curriculum to the introduction of innovative teaching methods and forms using distance learning.

The main goal of creating a distance learning system is to ensure nationwide access to educational resources through the use of modern information technologies and telecommunication networks and to create conditions for citizens to accomplish their rights to education. Distance learning provides the opportunity to study when it is convenient for the student, at the pace that he chooses (within the established terms of the courses), in the place where he is (does not need to spend time on the road to universities to take current, and sometimes and final controls).

Therefore, the contingent of potential distance learning students can include those who are often on business trips, military personnel, geographically distant listeners, women on maternity leave, people with physical disabilities, those who combine study and work, and employees who improve their skills. It is worth noting that distance learning in the modern world is carried out using various technologies that differ in: the form of presentation of educational materials; the presence of an intermediary in the training system or a centralized form of training (Shabanov, 2015, p. 113); the degree of use of telecommunications and personal computers (Sharan, 2017, p. 34); on the technology of organization of control of the educational process; according to the degree of implementation in educational technologies of conventional methods of

conducting the educational process; by methods of student identification during exams (Zwick, 2018).

Classes in the framework of distance learning using computer telecommunications can be organized in various forums. Among them are chat classes, newsgroups, webinars, skype lectures, etc. The main goal of any teaching methods, various types of lessons is the assimilation of knowledge. In the modern educational system, considerable attention is paid to innovations and their impact on the educational process. Among the available learning models are passive, active, interactive. The object of our consideration is an interactive learning model, the main purpose of which, like other models, is primarily to create comfortable learning conditions in which all participants in the educational process must actively interact. The use of interactive teaching methods leads to certain changes in the construction and structure of classes. Classes become more intense and interesting. Interactive teaching technologies contribute to the active interaction of students between themselves and with the teacher. At the same time, interactive teaching technologies are combined on the direct interaction of students with the learning environment.

The main purpose of the article is to study the problem and ways of improving the distance learning of students of higher education.

The methodological basis is a system of complementary general scientific and special methods of cognition of socio-political phenomena, in particular systemic-structural, comparatively retrospective and structural-functional, interviewed, general methods of analysis and synthesis, etc.

The subject of the study is the process of conducting distance learning for students in leading higher educational institutions (for example, of the Law Faculty of the Lviv University of Business and Law and others).

In order to establish a state of readiness for the introduction of distance learning in individual educational institutions of Eastern Europe, we using the questionnaire and survey method, attracted two groups of students were formed on each of them - an experimental (experimental group - 84 people) and a control (75 people) group for our study. We have selected the students and teachers who have almost never encountered distance learning but want it very much.

2. Research Methods (Methods and features of the implementation of distance learning)

Remote technologies have many advantages, such as the opportunity to study in a place convenient for the student, at a convenient time for him, according to an individual schedule. You can use the information resources

of the educational institution, remote at a considerable distance, have constant contact with the teacher and the administration of the educational institution (Trachuk, 2018). All these factors, as well as the relatively low cost of training (compared with full-time education) have made distance education an integral part of training at various levels around the world (Filipenko, 2016, p. 253). The distance learning systems that are developed and used in the world today consist of (Ivanov, 2012, p. 12):

- educational institution as the organizational structure of distance learning;

- information resources - databases of educational and reference materials; - hardware and software for providing distance learning technologies;

- teachers of distance learning or computer training programs;

- students studying in distance learning (Kademia, 2018, pp. 18-19);

Features of distance learning:

- flexibility - students (pupils, students) studying by distance learning, as a rule, do not attend regular classes, but work at a convenient time for themselves in a convenient place and at a convenient pace; everyone can learn as much as he personally needs to learn;

- modularity - each individual discipline or series of disciplines that are learned by students (students, students), create a holistic view of a particular subject area; this allows you to form a curriculum that meets individual or educational needs from the list of independent academic disciplines;

- parallelism - training can be carried out in the process of combining the main professional activity with study or simultaneous training in two educational institutions;

- remoteness - the distance from the student's location to the educational institution is not an obstacle to an effective educational process;

- asynchrony - in the learning process, both the one who teaches and the one who learns can implement the technology of teaching and learning independently in time, i.e. according to a schedule convenient for everyone and at a convenient pace;

- mass - the number of participants in distance learning is not a critical parameter; they have access to many sources of educational information, and can also communicate with each other and with the teacher through communication or other means of information technology;

- profitability - this feature refers to the economic efficiency of distance learning (Burkina, 2014).

To implement distance learning, various software tools have been developed, which are collectively called distance education systems. Distance learning systems come in varying degrees of complexity. The classification of distance learning systems is based on course development tools. These systems provide the opportunity to develop distance learning materials based on visual programming or text editors (Kara & Yildirim, 2020).

At the second level of complexity are course management systems that allow to create catalogs of graphic, sound, video and text files. Such a system is a specialized database equipped with search engines for keywords (metadata), aggregation of educational content, workflow and the like. At a more complex level are learning management systems that allow you to manage the learning process - the user registry and their access rights, intended for course users, collecting and storing information about user actions. The most complex structural distance learning system is the learning and content management system, combining the learning process management system and the educational content management system.

3. Findings in the presented methods of the introduction and implementation of distance learning

The effectiveness of the use of distance learning technologies for students is associated with a significant expansion of the possibilities for students to master tasks defined by the curriculum and can be ensured by organizing a professionally oriented educational environment for distance learning and its integration into a single educational environment of higher education institutions. The advantage of distance learning technologies is the active stimulation of their development. Therefore, their development can be considered as a natural stage in the evolution of the traditional education system from a blackboard with chalk to an electronic blackboard and computer training systems, from a book library to an electronic one, from an ordinary audience to a virtual audience.

It should be noted that the process of teaching students using distance learning provides the following:

- receipt of all lecture materials on topics that should be formatted in publicly accessible formats;
- access to closed databases and specially designed software. This allows not only to gain new knowledge, but also immediately implement in work (in particular, distance students who mainly study on the job);
- all material is served in “portions” that correspond to any one topic.

The advantages of distance learning students in the first place should be noted (Cinar & Torenli, 2010):

- the flexibility of teaching students receiving distance learning in the choice of educational institution, place and time of study. Students have the opportunity not to attend classes, but to study at a convenient time for themselves and in a convenient place;

- the module principle is laid at the heart of the distance learning program, which allows to form a curriculum that meets the needs of students from a set of independent course modules;

- individualization of training, which allows to implement for the student an individual curriculum. It can independently choose the sequence of studying subjects based on an individual schedule;

- the cost-effectiveness of distance learning is manifested in the process of efficient use of training facilities and technical facilities, in a concentrated and unified presentation of information, in the use and development of computer modeling, which reduces the cost of training specialists; as well as the absence of the problem of acquiring training materials and textbooks;

- the information security of distance learning is characterized by the fact that students get access to the set of necessary educational materials in modern electronic form directly from the server of the higher educational institution where they study, and Internet resources;

- modern computer telecommunications are able to provide knowledge transfer and access to a variety of educational information at a level, and sometimes much more effective than traditional teaching aids.

It is also worth noting that there are certain components of the requirements for the distance learning program (Table 1).

Table 1. The requirements for the distance learning program

The distance learning program	
Component	Requirements
Training program	It is necessary to identify the existence of goals and objectives of the study of the course, the requirements for knowledge, skills of students; indicate the number of hours to study each topic
Training schedule	It requires the presence of course schedule of the activities of disciplines
Methodical recommendations to the program	Find out the availability of teaching materials, instructions for completing tasks, independent

	work, tests;
Learning assessment	The need to introduce criteria for evaluating student learning outcomes
Affiliation of print and Internet sources	The need to clarify the main and additional printed sources on the subject, Internet sources with the necessary active hyperlinks
Terminological dictionary	It is important to file in a glossary format, to characterize all terms in the dictionary
Declaration	Must be submitted in forum format
Theoretical material	Electronic training materials should be presented as separate topics and provided with a well-thought-out navigation system
	Multimedia teaching materials (video , audio) and presentations should be submitted in standard formats
Practical and laboratory work provided by the program	All of them should contain the basic structural elements : theme, goal , list of tasks, appropriate form for presenting the results of the work, relevant assessment criteria
Tasks for independent work in the program	Tasks for independent fulfillment provide for the presence of the basic structural elements, namely: the content of the training task, the course of its implementation, the list of individual tasks, and the deadline are justified
Modular control in the proposed program	It assumes the availability of educational and interactive tests for intermediate control of the level of assimilation of legal disciplines of student achievement
Final thematic certification after completion of training	The final thematic certification on the subject should contain the necessary number of test questions and tasks

For distance learning, all study materials should be written in such a way as to minimize students' searches for additional study material. They should provide detailed instructions for studying the necessary material from disciplines, and in teaching aids, control, training tasks, questions for self-control should be mandatory. These requirements define the structure of distance learning.

The use of interactive technologies in the educational process made it possible to determine other advantages, among which: distance learning in the information environment can be created by a teacher together with students, whose interaction is carried out using modern telecommunication

tools. Such a learning environment provides unique opportunities for students to obtain modern knowledge, both independently and under the guidance of a teacher. Students are not tied to a rigid schedule; they can choose the time of training themselves, as well as determine its intensity and duration. The effectiveness of distance learning is achieved through both complete and accurate coordination of the requirements and capabilities of the student.

Thus, the introduction of distance learning forms, based on modern interactive technologies, is provided by acquiring skills for professional work, creating comfortable learning conditions for students and can be used in developing programs for obtaining education. One of such technological platforms can be considered Moodle distance learning platform.

But it should be noted that in addition to the advantages, there are certain disadvantages of the Moodle distance learning platform (Table 2).

Table 2. The benefits and the disadvantages of the Moodle distance learning Platform

Benefits of the Moodle distance learning Platform	Disadvantages of the Moodle distance learning Platform
Ability to use various database management systems	Not always suited to create complex learning activities
Intuitive interface and easy maintenance, management and use	Often poorly integrated with external applications
Ensuring the conditions of the educational process	Does not contain a clear plan in the process of training in a specialty;
Simplification of the distribution of electronic materials among students	Communication options are greatly limited.
Compatible with all formats of electronic materials.	Technical support "from the manufacturer" is inadequate.
The use of teaching materials that are not available during traditional classes of distance learning courses	The lack of the ability to search quickly

To solve the problems arising in the teaching of disciplines, it is important to provide a combination of a large arsenal of modern technologies of distance learning, which will help to increase the efficiency of studying fundamental disciplines. The choice of appropriate technology should be made based on the specifics of the content of the topic. The latest

training technologies for future specialists will help teach them to think outside the box, quickly find a way out of difficult situations, make responsible decisions, generalize and systematize knowledge, which is necessary for the successful assimilation of theoretical knowledge and the ability to use the knowledge gained.

In general, to improve and disseminate distance learning technologies, it is necessary to solve problems in the field of development and implementation of innovative technologies. In order to successfully solve them, it is necessary to implement the following priority measures and directions (Casarotti et al., 2002):

- development and implementation of a distance learning program;
- development of scientific foundations that are able to provide innovativeness and distance forms and levels of education, programs and curricula;
- scientific substantiation of the market of educational literature, computer and multimedia databases, eliminating the possibility of its monopolization;
- ensuring the transition to interactive methods and the practical orientation of distance learning;
- creation the project of support system, innovations for the introduction of distance learning technology.

An analysis of the scientific and scientific-methodological literature on the issues of professional activity of teachers shows that in the context of using distance learning technologies, it is not the structure of their activity that changes, but the means of its implementation, the functional orientation and the nature of the interaction between teachers and students. At the same time, the content of the teacher's activities is also changing, which, in the context of the implementation of distance education, should not be aimed at passively conveying information to them, but at designing a process for managing their activities for the development of educational information within the distance course.

But today, not every teacher is well acquainted with the latest technologies, it is difficult for them to switch from the approved and well-known traditional form of conducting training in a new distance form. In addition, the development of electronic distance learning courses at the initial stage requires a lot of effort and a waste of time from the teacher. And although there is an opinion that the teacher does not need a lot of time to develop such distance courses.

It should be emphasized that the effectiveness of both distance learning and the process of their professional training depends on the quality mastery of the teachers by distance technologies.

As a university teacher, he has (Christensen, Anakwe & Kessler, 2001):

- thoroughly know the methodological features of the elements of the didactic system, the teaching subject that teaches;
- have a method of teaching the subject;
- to know pedagogy (including didactics), psychology, to have pedagogical skills, advanced pedagogical technologies;
- to have an optimal set of forms of organization of training, principles and methods, tools and techniques of teaching legal disciplines.

So, the nature of the work of a distance learning teacher implies that he has a significant set of professional knowledge and skills. The main ones are as follows:

- knowledge of the regulatory framework of the distance learning system, requirements for its methodological support and equipment of the educational process;
- confident possession of a personal computer, peripheral devices, standard programs and software;
- the ability to analyze software in terms of its didactic capabilities;
- knowledge and possession of various telecommunication facilities (e-mail, real-time communication) for the exchange of information with students;
- the ability to organize and conduct teleconferences and teleconferences, thematic chat;
- possession of telecommunications etiquette;
- the ability to work with information resources of the network (network databases, information systems, etc.)
- knowledge of the types of motivation that determine the educational activity of distance learning students, the ability to provide them with psychological support at the initial stage of training;
- knowledge and mastery of the principles of a personality-oriented approach to learning and others.

It should be noted that scientific and pedagogical workers and methodologists of universities in which distance learning is organized should improve their skills in organizing and mastering distance learning technologies (Bodnenko, 2018, pp. 25-26). The qualifications of teachers who upgraded their qualifications should be confirmed by a document on advanced training in the field of distance learning (Borzenko, 2017).

It is important to note that the unified information environment of distance learning, which allows the teacher to move to a new level of relations with students, is not only to give them a certain amount of knowledge, but also to direct them to an independent way of finding information (Chuzhikova, 2019, pp. 42-45). In this case, the activities of the teacher, as the organizer of self-educational activities of students, a competent consultant and assistant, should include:

- development of a system of independent work, covers the vast majority of topics of the curriculum in law;
- the study of individual abilities of students and their accounting in the organization of cognitive activity;
- preparation of tasks of varying difficulty, the use of which will contribute not only to increasing the level of knowledge of each student, but also their gradual transition to a higher level;
- monitoring and evaluation of students' academic achievements, by diagnosing their activities and development.

Thus, the effective implementation of distance education in higher education is possible only if the teacher adapts the scientific and methodological support, mastering the latest knowledge and technologies of modern computer technologies in the educational process, and accumulating their own professional experience in their use.

4. Results and Discussions

The study we conducted was accepted by the ethics committee (REC) and all participants in the study gave informed consent to participate in the study (they were informed about the possibility of recall, without other consequences for their status, etc.).

To identify the effectiveness of the introduction of distance learning in the training of students, we conducted a pedagogical experiment. Students of the Law Faculty of the Lviv University of Business and Law were selected to organize the experimental work. Two groups of students were formed on each of them - an experimental (experimental group - 84 people) and a control (75 people) group. The experiment was carried out with the same work program of scientific disciplines taught at the university. In the experimental group, training was carried out taking into account factors that, in our opinion, contribute to the effective implementation of distance learning in the vocational training of students, and the control group studied without changes, according to the traditional program.

At the initial stage, the real state of its use in students was revealed. To this end, we conducted pedagogical observation, questionnaires,

individual and group conversations with students and teachers. Comparison of the diagnostic results of students in the experimental and control groups before and after the experiment allowed us to conclude that the students in the experimental group significantly increased indicators for all certain criteria, while in the control group the process of using distance learning was uneven. The results of the experiment showed that, firstly, the majority of students in the control group were dominated by a low level of assimilation of experience in implementing methods of activity using distance learning, and in the experimental group an average and sufficient level. Secondly, continuing education for developing distance learning courses and supporting distance learning as a tutor was not always carried out.

The results of processing experimental data by methods of mathematical statistics (Pearson criterion χ^2) showed the effectiveness of the proposed conditions for the formation of professional competence of students in the process of distance learning.

The results of our experiment indicate a high level of awareness by future specialists of the role of distance learning as an effective form of organizing legal education. In particular, among the respondents, the vast majority of teachers and law students consider it necessary to more actively use the possibilities of distance learning in the educational process.

Elements of the questionnaire include a number of key questions for respondents that related to distance learning and its implementation.

To the question: "How do your students feel about doing distance learning courses?" - Most teachers noted that for their students, completing tasks in distance courses is a new form of work, it is interesting for them.

As for the question: "What problems and difficulties did you encounter when using the possibilities of distance learning?" - that the majority of students answered more or less predictably, namely: not always it easy to understand the information presented in the topic and studied independently; inconvenience arises in accessing the program, in transmitting information.

Based on the results of a survey of students and teachers of the Law Faculty of the Lviv University of Business and Law, it is proposed to introduce a standard algorithm for developing a distance course for studying legal disciplines with the selection of 9 main stages (Fig. 1):

- determination of the goals and objectives of the course;
- preparation and structuring of educational material;
- preparation of video and media fragments;
- selection of recommended literature and references;

- development of a system for monitoring and assessing the level of students' knowledge;
- development of semester classes at the rate;
- loading materials into the learning environment;
- launch a distance course in a logical sequence;
- modernization of the course based on the results of testing.

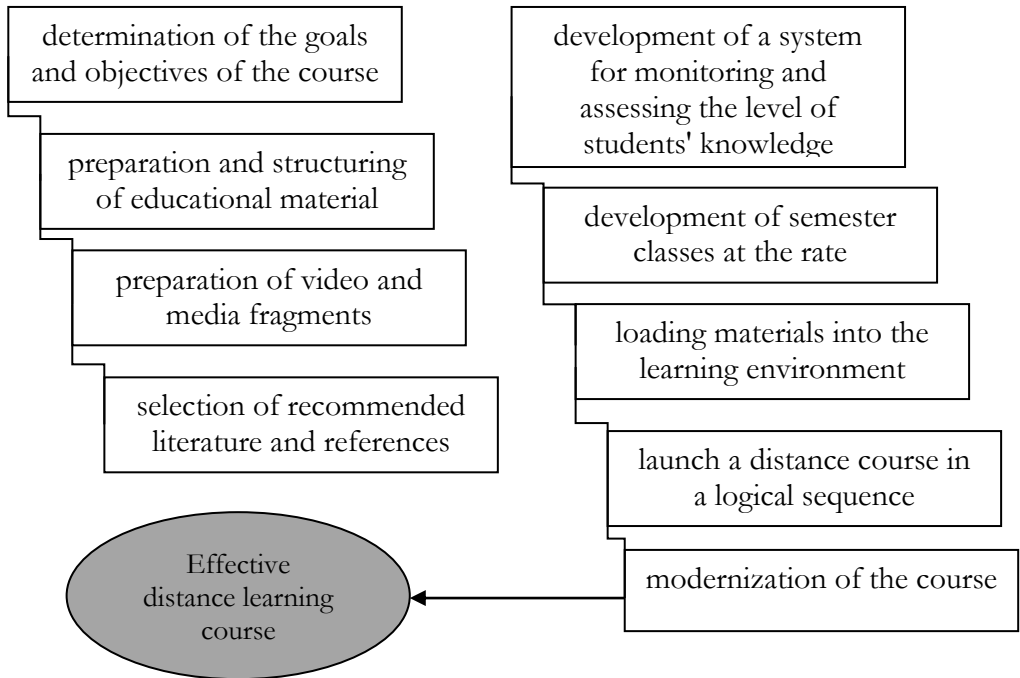


Fig.1. Model of an effective distance learning course

Using our proposed model of an effective distance learning course at the university selected for our study, it was found that student performance has not changed (Fig. 2).

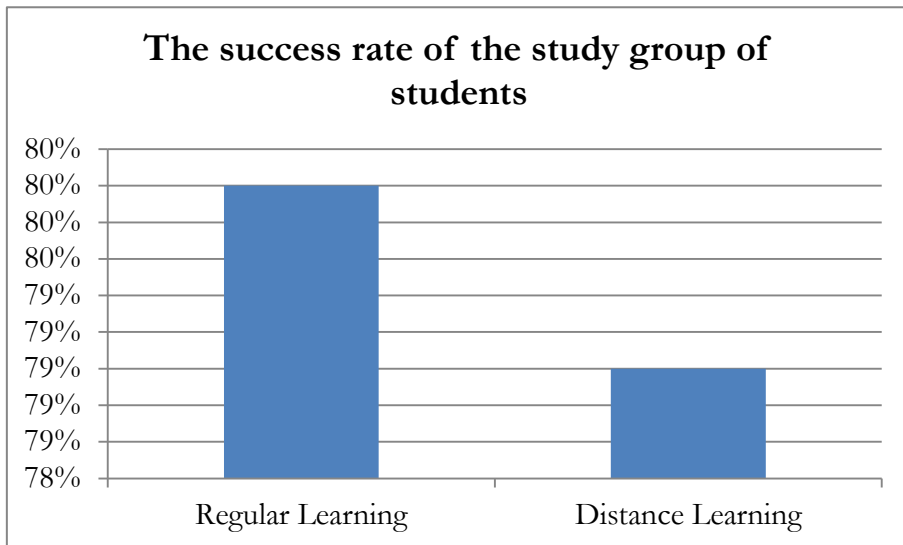


Fig.2. Model of an effective distance learning course, %

The proposed distance learning course for scientific disciplines includes:

- block organization of a distance course;
- an organizational unit containing information about the purpose of the course and the organizational aspects of its study, including: the schedule of the educational process, operational information, etc.
- an information block in the form of structured educational information;
- a communicative unit, which should be responsible for resolving issues of communication between the teacher and students through text exchange, in the form of electronic seminars, consultations, teleconferences, and the like;
- the control unit provides for checking the progress and results of theoretical and practical assimilation of educational material by students, its substantive part consists of test tasks for final or intermediate control.

To confirm the validity of the proposed distance learning course in legal disciplines, the results of training students of the experimental and control groups were successively compared. It was found that in the experimental group the number of students with high and sufficient levels significantly increased and the number of students from the initial level of distance learning was significantly reduced. This suggests that the proposed

distance learning course for students to study legal disciplines is statistically reasonable and effective.

The recommended distance learning course is crucial since it allows students, with a significant reduction in costs, to receive the highest quality set of training, information and consulting services. In developing this course, the goal was to make the distance learning process easier, more interesting, faster, more efficient and cheaper.

The results of the study can be used in the process of professional training of future specialists, for further scientific research in the field of professional training of specialists using distance learning technologies, in the educational process, which train specialists in the continuing education system for teachers of these educational institutions.

It can be used in the choice of forms of teaching students in all educational institutions, introduce distance learning or its elements for teaching scientific disciplines into the educational process.

Promising areas for further scientific research are studies of the problems of modernizing the content of education in accordance with modern requirements of distance learning, further developing innovative practice-oriented distance learning technologies for future specialists, studying the issues of improving the normative and methodological support of this process, finding effective ways to strengthen intersubjective communications and optimization self-study results diagnostic systems in the work of students in the course of their of professional training.

5. Conclusions

The problems and prospects of improving distance learning from scientific disciplines are investigated and the essence of the problems in the teaching of disciplines and ways to solve them are revealed. It has been proved that the use of the latest information technologies of distance learning in the educational process is determined, on the one hand, by the need to prepare them for future professional activities, and, on the other, by the need to more effectively acquire knowledge aimed at improving the quality level of competence and competence of employees.

It is proved that the development of distance learning for students requires modification of certain aspects of its implementation, which no longer satisfy all the needs of the educational process, in particular teaching and its assimilation by students.

The appropriate and necessary theoretical and methodological basis for ensuring distance learning and the prerequisites for its functioning are described, which consist in the formation of each student as a subject of

learning, the need to recognize their needs, goals and objectives of educational and cognitive activity, plan its content, the ability to self-organize in the distribution of educational activities in time and self-control in the process of their implementation, the ability to select materials and use them, to determine the methods and techniques of professional training, to be aware of the results of their activities, and also to have their own individual style of thinking.

The role in advanced training as an important condition for the proper implementation of distance technologies in the educational process is substantiated. Analyzing the accumulated experience of teachers in various disciplines, summarizing the results of methodological, pedagogical and methodological studies on the problems of their preparation for using distance learning, we found such contradictions in the theory and practice of teaching that arise due to the insufficient level of their readiness to organize training using this system.

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