

REVIEW
on the thematic analysis
‘Distance Learning in Kazakhstan: Challenges and Prospects’
(Astana, 2025)

This thematic analysis focuses on one of the most pressing areas of development in the modern higher education system — distance learning and its role in the context of the digital transformation of the educational environment. The paper provides a comprehensive overview of international approaches to organising distance learning, the regulatory framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan, current trends in the digitalisation of higher education, as well as the practical experience of domestic and foreign universities.

A key strength of the analysis is its treatment of distance learning as an integral element of the digital transformation of higher education. The paper reflects international approaches to defining distance learning, analyses the current legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and examines statistical indicators of the population’s digital literacy and the level of citizens’ engagement in online learning. Particular attention should be paid to the systematisation of best practices at Kazakhstani higher education institutions regarding the use of LMS platforms, massive open online courses (MOOCs), digital educational resources and tools for managing the educational process.

A positive aspect of the study is the use of statistical data from international organisations, in particular UNESCO UIS, which contributes to a broader understanding of Kazakhstan’s position within the global education landscape. The analysis of the population’s digital literacy and the trends in youth and adult participation in online learning is particularly noteworthy, as it enables an assessment of society’s readiness for the further development of distance learning.

Particular mention should be made of the sections devoted to the advantages and risks of distance learning. The authors convincingly demonstrate that distance learning technologies significantly expand access to higher education, creating additional opportunities for students from regional areas, people with disabilities and young people in employment. At the same time, the book objectively highlights existing challenges relating to the quality of the educational process, ensuring academic integrity, digital inequality, insufficient methodological training for lecturers, and limitations in the delivery of practice-oriented subjects.

Of considerable interest is the analysis of the prospects for the development of distance learning, including the introduction of artificial intelligence technologies, educational analytics, virtual and augmented reality, the development of national platforms for massive open online courses, and the development of teachers’ digital competences. The areas discussed are in line with current global trends and enable the identification of possible directions for the further modernisation of the domestic higher education system.

With a view to improving the quality of distance learning provision in higher and postgraduate education institutions, the authors recommend that particular attention be paid to the development of a unified digital learning environment that ensures the integration of learning management systems, electronic document management, educational analytics and student support services. Provision must be made for the introduction of mechanisms to monitor students' 'digital footprints', enabling the timely identification of academic risks and the implementation of preventive measures to support students.

The authors note that it is important to continue work on developing the digital competences of academic staff, including training in digital pedagogy, the development of online courses, and the application of artificial intelligence, educational analytics and adaptive learning. Particular attention should be paid to establishing a methodological framework for the implementation of hybrid educational programmes, ensuring an optimal combination of face-to-face and distance learning formats.

Taking into account the identified infrastructural and organisational constraints, universities are advised to conduct regular audits of the readiness of their digital infrastructure, ensure the resilience of information systems, enhance cybersecurity and guarantee the accessibility of educational resources for various categories of learners, including students from remote regions and those with special educational needs.

The development of a national ecosystem for massive open online courses (MOOCs) and the expansion of the recognition of learning outcomes achieved on domestic and international educational platforms deserve particular attention. This will enhance students' academic mobility, broaden access to high-quality educational resources, and strengthen the integration of Kazakhstan's higher education system into the international educational landscape.

Overall, the thematic analysis demonstrates a high level of detail in the material and leads to the conclusion that the further development of distance and blended learning should be based on a systematic approach combining the improvement of the regulatory framework, the development of digital infrastructure, the professional development of teaching staff, and the introduction of modern educational technologies. The implementation of these measures will improve the quality of the educational process, broaden access to higher education, ensure the resilience of universities to external challenges and strengthen the competitiveness of the national higher education system.

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