Humanitarian Disciplines in the Conditions of Distance Learning at the Stage of Higher Education Transformation in Ukraine

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Abstract: Humanities play a vital role in shaping intellectual, social, and emotional aspects in children. The COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of distance learning have transformed humanities education in Ukrainian universities. It is essential to examine the specific changes brought about by distance learning and their impact on humanities education in the country. The main research methods used were analysis, abstraction, and forecasting. The study reviewed the challenges faced by teachers and students in Ukraine regarding the introduction of digital technologies in education, particularly in the humanities. Furthermore, the role and possibilities of using technology in distance learning were described, as well as the importance of live communication for learning the humanities. The study also assesses the practice of distance learning in different countries. It was noted that countries with supranational organisations involved in the development of distance learning platforms have a more developed infrastructure and a wider range of available resources. Interactive teaching methods and digital educational materials are widely used in foreign institutions, promoting independent learning and improving access to knowledge. The study showed different approaches to distance teaching and describes how feasible their implementation was in the Ukrainian context.

Keywords: digital technologies; teaching; humanities; foreign approaches; technological progress

1. Introduction

The humanities as such remain an important part of higher education, even for students who are generally oriented towards technical specialities. There are several reasons for this: they allow students to develop critical thinking and analytical skills to be critical observers of the world around them (Brom, 2019). In addition, they enable students to understand moral issues and ethical values, which allows them to become conscious citizens and make informed decisions in society. They enable them to consider the ethical dimensions of problems and to consider different perspectives of their actions in real life, thus making better choices throughout their lives. They also allow for an understanding of history and culture, and thus, a better understanding of contemporary world realities (Edwards & Ritchie, 2022). Finally, they are an important part of soft skills development; they contribute to the development of the ability to communicate effectively, both in written and visual form, which will be necessary in the workplace in the future and everyday life situations in general.

In the current context shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, the transformation of the learning process, especially in higher education, has brought about significant challenges, particularly in the field of distance learning (Nestulya & Shara, 2023). This abrupt shift to virtual learning has had profound implications across various disciplines, including the humanities. The humanities traditionally rely on multi-contact communication, active discussion, and direct interaction between educators and students (Zinchenko et al., 2023). These elements are vital for fostering critical thinking, empathy, cultural understanding, and effective communication skills. However, the advent of distance learning has necessitated substantial adjustments in how these subjects are taught and learned. Educators have been required to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate video conferencing and online platforms, which can sometimes hinder the depth of interaction achieved in traditional classroom settings. Similarly, students have had to adjust to a more independent learning style and remote communication with both their peers and instructors. These changes can impact the depth of engagement and understanding of humanities subjects (Shymchenko & Levchenko, 2023).

Moreover, the shift to distance learning has raised concerns about the overall quality of education. The lack of face-to-face interaction and the reliance on technology can sometimes lead to a diminished educational experience. Additionally, it has created opportunities for academic dishonesty and plagiarism, affecting the integrity of the educational process. The humanities play a crucial role in education and society as a whole. They provide students with the skills to think critically, analyze complex issues, and engage in meaningful dialogues about culture, ethics, history, literature, and more (Mospan et al., 2022). These skills are essential for fostering well-rounded individuals who can contribute to their communities and navigate the complexities of the modern world. In light of these challenges, paramount is to assess and implement best practices from other countries to enhance the quality of humanities education in the context of distance learning. Finding innovative ways to foster meaningful discussions, promote critical thinking, and maintain the integrity of the educational process in the humanities is essential for ensuring
that students continue to receive a well-rounded education, even in these challenging times.

Many scholars studied the peculiarities of distance learning in Ukraine. The problems of training humanitarian sciences professionals in the medical field were studied by Kulchytsky and Nevinska (2020). Scholars believed that the experience gained by students in the humanities should be applied in practice, although they were not a core component for physicians. In turn, Gevko and Makogonchuk (2022) studied the existing opportunities for innovative teaching of history in higher education institutions in Ukraine in the framework of distance learning. They pointed out the need to create innovative approaches to teaching in modern conditions, for constant creative search, and introduction of new teaching methods. More emphasis was placed on foreign (namely European) achievements and research in this area by Melnyk and Rogalska-Yablonska (2021). For their part, Mospan et al. (2022) studied the digital transformation in education in Ukraine as a whole, which was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some features of teaching humanities in Ukraine were also described by Koehn et al. (2020).

The research aims to analyse the situation in terms of learning and teaching humanities in Ukraine in the context of distance learning, as well as to compare them with those that are common abroad. This will make it possible to apply these practices in Ukraine, which can significantly improve the quality of education.

2. Materials and Methods

To understand the current state of distance learning in Ukraine, an analysis of existing literature, reports and survey results was conducted. Information was collected from a variety of sources, including government reports, educational institutions, international organisations, and research articles. The data provided insights into the challenges faced by teachers and students in implementing digital technologies, as well as the impact of distance learning on student motivation, performance, and engagement. The analysis also included a comparison of approaches to distance learning in different countries including Bangladesh, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States. To conclude, the study used a synthesis of data from surveys of teachers, students, and parents regarding the conditions of distance learning after the COVID-19 crisis. The main findings and trends were identified, highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of distance learning based on the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents. The analysis considered different perspectives on motivation, engagement, software availability, teacher experience, and overall satisfaction with distance learning. All graphs and calculations were carried out in Microsoft Excel.

The main approach used was a systematic one. It was used to analyse the factors influencing distance learning in Ukraine by forming and classifying them as a single system. As such, many methods were used in the study. For example, the analysis was carried out by reviewing many sources that provided important conclusions about the approach in foreign countries to teaching various subjects remotely in the context of COVID-19. The historical method was also used that
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allowed for a comparison over time of how these subjects were taught in the past and how they affect the present. In addition, abstraction was used to avoid (ignore) the influence of certain factors on the distance teaching of humanities subjects. Prediction allowed to conclude how it could be taught in the future.

Qualitative analysis was also used to analyse the characteristics of distance learning systems in countries without considering quantitative indicators. Qualitative analysis allowed for an in-depth exploration of how technology was integrated into the distance learning systems, including the user-friendliness of platforms and the impact on the overall learning experience. Qualitative data were collected to gain insights into the experiences and perceptions of students regarding the quality of education, support systems, and the overall effectiveness of distance learning. Qualitative analysis was utilized to explore the level of student engagement and participation in distance learning environments, considering factors such as communication, interaction, and motivation (Vovchenko, 2023). Moreover, modelling was used to build a diagram of the distance learning functioning and to describe it afterwards; the method was used to visually represent concepts, present statistical data, compare approaches, and put forward new ideas. These models and visual representations helped to improve the understanding and analysis of distance learning in Ukraine and other countries. The comparative analysis was used to assess the approaches and strategies adopted by different countries including Bangladesh, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States to highlight the differences between the approaches used by these countries and Ukraine. A quantitative method was also used to evaluate and analyse the data, which was presented in the form of numerical values and analysed using various statistical methods. Quantitative analysis was used to compare the academic performance of students in distance learning environments with those in traditional classroom settings. This included assessing factors such as exam scores, graduation rates, and course completion rates. Quantitative analysis was utilized to gauge the rate of technology adoption among both educators and students. This included tracking the usage of specific tools, platforms, and devices for learning and teaching.

3. Results

The use of digital technologies in Ukraine has indeed become a significant problem for both teachers and students, especially in the humanities. There are several reasons for this. As such, teachers of humanities disciplines are not technological specialists, which has made the process of switching to digital technologies more difficult, especially for older people. Higher education institutions themselves often did not facilitate this transition in any way, did not provide professional development courses, and teachers had to find approaches to conducting classes on their own. In addition, subjects related to the humanities (religious studies, history, archaeology, philosophy, cultural studies, philology) often require direct communication between the teacher and the student for more effective learning. However, the current distance learning technologies do not allow for this, and the quality of teaching suffers as a result. The general model of distance learning can be depicted as follows, as shown in Figure 1.
As can be seen from Figure 1, the interaction between a student and a teacher in distance learning is not direct, but rather through the relevant learning materials and tasks that the student has to complete. Although all of this is created by the teacher and the process of interaction between the teacher and the student does take place, it is much less vivid than in face-to-face learning.

In general, studying any science in a distance format abroad has some common features. First, there are more available tools and a more developed infrastructure. In other words, countries that have supranational organisations involved in the development of distance learning platforms and tools may have a more developed and accessible infrastructure for students and teachers. Many foreign universities actively use interactive teaching methods in a distance format. This includes not only the use of videoconferencing tools for real-time classes but also other platforms that help to engage students’ attention during classes. Third, some foreign universities pay great attention to the development and use of digital learning materials. These can include interactive e-textbooks, video lectures, webinars, online courses, and other digital resources. Their use facilitates access to knowledge and promotes independent learning for students.

There are currently no official state statistics that could help analyse the effectiveness of distance learning in Ukraine. This may be related to several reasons. This is a relatively new area of education, and measurement methods may not have been used by public services yet (except for some of its manifestations, as shown below). Ukraine is currently at war, which not only complicates the process of collecting any data but also slows down the development of all spheres of activity, including the work of government agencies. Nevertheless, finding some data characterising the quality of distance learning in Ukraine was possible; most often, this
information was found in separate surveys of certain organisations. The data can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Statistical Characteristics of Distance Learning in Ukraine*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>In distance learning, students’ motivation is low, according to 40% of heads of educational institutions and 44% of teachers</th>
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<td>According to 9% of respondents, the introduction of distance learning tools in 2020 had a positive impact on learning effectiveness</td>
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<td>The fact that students were reluctant to engage in distance learning was noted by 44% of teachers</td>
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<td>According to 46% of respondents, the introduction of the All-Ukrainian Online School format leads to a scattering of students’ attention</td>
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<td>Distance learning was favourably received by 13% of respondents, who explained that it made it easier to prepare for classes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31% of surveyed teachers systematically use materials posted on the All-Ukrainian School Online platform for distance and blended learning; 47.3% of teachers – periodically; 13.5% – never</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Most heads of educational institutions used group chats (69%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The majority of institutions (53%) regularly published materials and tasks for distance learning on their websites</td>
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<td>As of 2020, 0.6% of teachers stated that they had no problems with the organisation of distance learning; in 2021 – 48%.</td>
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<td>72% of teachers believed that not all students were in touch, did their homework or participate in class</td>
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<td>62% of teachers believed that not all students have sufficient software to be able to communicate</td>
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<td>34% of teachers complained about the lack of experience in using special programmes</td>
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<td>16% complained of a lack of experience in using computer equipment</td>
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<td>More than 62% of students positively evaluated the distance education format, and another 37% partially agreed with it</td>
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<td></td>
<td>43% of students liked studying at home; 22.4% believed that distance learning has a positive impact on their knowledge in general; 37% partially agree; 31% of students had no desire to return to regular classes at higher education</td>
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<td>82.2% of parents and 74% of teachers considered distance learning ineffective</td>
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A summary of the data in Table 1 suggests several main conclusions. Some students may have difficulty maintaining motivation and active participation in the learning process and may have difficulty maintaining activity and regularity in their academic work; on the other hand, for some students, this format of learning can be beneficial and help improve their academic
performance. Feedback on the quality of learning varies, with parents and teachers mostly giving negative feedback that it is not as effective and productive as face-to-face learning. At the same time, students speak very positively about it, which, may be primarily due to its comparative simplicity rather than the quality of education. However, worth noting that the effectiveness of distance learning is gradually increasing, which is primarily due to improved capabilities on the part of teachers in terms of organising the process and understanding technology and its use.

The ongoing war conditions and crisis resulting from the Russian invasion in Ukraine undoubtedly have a significant impact on various aspects of life in the country, including the educational system and survey responses related to distance learning. Here, factors such as stress, instability, and infrastructure issues may be influencing the survey responses. The stress and anxiety associated with living in a conflict zone can affect students, teachers, and educational administrators. This emotional burden may lead to decreased motivation and concentration in the learning process. Teachers and students may struggle with heightened stress levels, potentially impacting their ability to adapt to distance learning or engage effectively in the educational process. Frequent disruptions, including power outages, internet connectivity issues, and displacement due to the conflict can disrupt the continuity of education. These disruptions can lead to irregular attendance, missed classes, and difficulties in accessing online resources. Teachers and students may face challenges in maintaining a stable learning environment, hindering the effectiveness of distance learning efforts. Infrastructure damage caused by the conflict, including damage to schools, universities, and technology infrastructure, can severely limit the availability of resources necessary for distance learning. Limited access to electricity, internet connectivity, and technology devices may make it difficult for students and educators to fully engage in online learning (Rui, 2023).

Economic instability and the displacement of families can result in financial hardships, making it challenging for students to access necessary resources for distance learning such as devices, internet connectivity, and study materials. Teachers may also face financial challenges, affecting their ability to adapt to new teaching methods and technology. Despite the adversities, some individuals may exhibit resilience and adaptability, finding ways to continue their education and support their students or children. Resilience and innovative approaches to learning may also be reflected in the survey responses, with some respondents highlighting their efforts to overcome challenge. Overall, the survey responses related to distance learning in Ukraine should be interpreted within the context of the ongoing crisis and its associated stress, instability, and infrastructure issues. Important is to consider the resilience and determination of students, educators, and institutions in the face of adversity while recognizing the unique challenges they face. Additionally, efforts to provide support, resources, and mental health services are crucial to help mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis on education (Shynkar et al., 2023).

In general, distance learning methods used in different countries are quite similar to each other. This is determined by the form of teaching allowing only a limited number of options for implementing and using technology. For example, in Bangladesh, distance learning was introduced through the English in Action programme, which was aimed at improving English language skills and using various platforms. The program included a school-based component that used mobile learning to support teachers’ professional development and an adult learning component called BBC Janala that used mobile devices, websites, television, and print materials to teach English. The program successfully reached many teachers, students, and adults, resulting
in improved English language competence. The program’s success factors were its duration, funding, and flexible design. The government has also built on it during the COVID-19 crisis, prioritising TV broadcasting for distance learning: technical working groups have been set up, and a digital platform called Education Hub is being developed to host educational resources, and TV broadcasts of lessons in primary and secondary schools have begun (Ndaruhutse et al., 2020). Worth noting that Ukraine also had a similar TV program for schoolchildren at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, but it did not have much success.

As for Singapore, the country was one of the first to introduce technology into the educational process. The country’s authorities adopted an experimental approach, allowing universities to test technological innovations before implementing them across the country. It was expected that students would primarily study independently, with distance learning playing a significant role. As local practice has shown, this approach has led to positive changes, as students have been able to apply scientific concepts in real-life situations through independent distance learning. Students were also encouraged to self-assess their learning progress. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of this approach became even more widespread; it became the basis for distance learning, which the country has fully adopted. In general, although this approach has led to positive results in Singapore, it should be understood that it is unlikely that a similar result will be achieved in Ukraine if it is introduced. A significant increase in student autonomy is likely to lead to a decrease in learning efficiency. While this certainly has its advantages for both students and the country, more disadvantages than advantages in Ukraine are likely to appear (Fewella, 2023).

South Korea has also made extensive use of distance learning technologies. The Korea Education Research and Information Service (KERIS) plays a crucial role in this regard. It manages the national e-learning system called EDUNET, which provides learning materials for teachers and students at all levels, promotes the use of such technologies in higher education and other educational institutions, and ensures the implementation of relevant policies. In addition, the country has established a home learning system (CHLS) that also aims to promote independent learning and overcome challenges in education. It offers online learning content, question-and-answer support, remote tutoring, tests, and career counselling. The country also has a widespread concept of SMART learning, which is based on individualised education, creativity, and the integration of technology. It includes so-called SMART classrooms equipped with technology for differentiated learning and online education models for selected subjects, as well as additional qualification programmes for teachers (Kozhasheva et al., 2022). Evaluation studies have shown improvements in skills such as problem-solving, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and use of information. However, problems have been identified, such as physical health issues among students after a significant increase in technology use, as well as an overall decline in their well-being (Ndaruhutse et al., 2020). In general, South Korea’s approach to digital technologies in distance learning can be considered successful in improving the learning experience and preparing students. However, this also raises the question of how universal these approaches are and whether they can be used in Ukraine.

In the United States, digital technologies are also used in a variety of ways to support distance learning (Berdykulova et al., 2020). One example is Sesame Workshop, which uses television programs, online games, and resources on dedicated websites to provide non-formal education and teacher training. They also focus on supporting disadvantaged and marginalised groups,
including people with disabilities, military families, and children with parents in prison. Sesame Workshop has partnered with International Business Machines (IBM) and other organisations to develop innovative learning platforms and resources. In addition, the country has established virtual charter schools that offer online learning to students, although their real benefits are questionable. The country has also developed quality standards for online learning that emphasise the importance of teacher-student interaction and personalised learning. The authorities are taking steps to facilitate access to digital technologies for distance learning for a large number of people (Kranzberg, 1971).

Concerning the methodology of distance learning in Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science is actively working to ensure it, even in times of war. To this end, an international cooperation partnership has been established with international partners, Ukrainian organisations, and the business sector to support digital education in the country. Efforts have been made to develop and update digital content such as courses for grades 5-11 on the All-Ukrainian School Online platform. The project was created in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and started as a television project but has grown into a long-term government initiative. The materials on the platform include instructional videos, notes for self-study, interactive tasks, and self-assessment tests. The platform focuses on accessibility and inclusiveness in the development of materials and webinars for teachers on inclusive education. Audio descriptions are also provided to improve accessibility for students with visual impairments. All-Ukrainian School Online has received recognition and awards for its contribution to education (Mozolev et al., 2021). During the period of martial law, the platform experienced a significant increase in lesson attendance and video views. The Ministry partnered with UNICEF, War Child, Klett Publishers, Save the Children, and Mozaik publishing house to create this project, which contributed to the development of digital content, including gamified learning materials, interactive textbooks, and computer science resources. Ukrainian students have free access to educational platforms such as Coursera, Udemy, and edX, and teachers have been trained in the use of new tools. The Ministry of Education and Science, together with the International Renaissance Foundation, supported universities in implementing digital learning and developing educational services. Efforts were made to create a web portal to collect information on online platforms and successful examples of content adaptation by Ukrainian universities. Several information platforms and initiatives have been launched to support education during martial law, including the EducationUABot chatbot, the Learning under Martial Law website, the Learning at War information platform, and the All-Ukrainian Online Timetable for Students. As part of the Education Without Borders project, video lessons for grades 5-11 were broadcast on TV channels and online platforms (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022).

Cyber security issues have also received special attention. The Ministry of Digital Transformation has implemented measures to strengthen the continuity, integrity, and security of databases in departmental information systems, including backup systems, replication in secure storage, SSL certificates and security checks that ensures the stability of national information and education systems in wartime. Furthermore, digital skill improvement among teachers is also carried out to increase the effectiveness of online classes, as well as to provide software and hardware infrastructure to meet the educational needs of participants in the educational process (Fernandez et al., 2023). For example, the project “A Laptop for Every Teacher” has been extended to provide teachers with the necessary equipment. The country’s future goals in this area are to further improve distance learning technologies, electronic accounting of educational
institutions, and the introduction of a state electronic classroom journal. Cooperation with the Ministry of Digital Transformation will be carried out to develop the Internet infrastructure of educational institutions and temporary locations for students and teachers. In addition, a digital educational passport is planned to be introduced, which collects and processes analytical information on students’ educational trajectories and educational statistics; it will increase transparency and efficiency in educational institutions and management processes.

As can be seen from the information analysed above on how distance learning was implemented in Ukraine and other countries, each country generally has its approach, strategies, and initiatives to adapt distance learning to its educational system. In particular, the approach is characterized by accessibility, inclusiveness, and partnerships with international organisations. To make a more detailed comparison, South Korea, for example, also used programs to support teacher professionalism or create public online learning platforms but has paid much less attention to ensuring access to the actual education process for both teachers and students. In Singapore, much attention is paid to ensuring students’ autonomy in learning, while in Ukraine, distance learning is not as focused on student work. Thus, it can be concluded that although the general approaches to creating a distance learning system are similar, their implementation within each country and the realities of functioning within it can lead to completely different results in terms of their effectiveness.

Based on the above-mentioned features of distance learning in different countries, several new approaches for Ukraine can be proposed. The development of digital resources and platforms for distance learning could be effective. It is currently being developed, but primarily on a commercial basis by entrepreneurs, whereas if the state are to do so, much better results could be achieved. Their use could greatly facilitate this process of learning various disciplines. The introduction of components of the Asian approach to distance learning, which emphasises independent learning by students, is controversial. Quite possible that this approach will not be effective in Ukraine, given the difference in mentality (as mentioned above). SMART classes from South Korea are worth a special mention, as they greatly simplify access to digital technologies and learning for the country’s residents. However, again, the effectiveness of such a construction in Ukraine is questionable both in terms of the rationality of the funds spent and the subsequent use of them by students (Bazaluk et al., 2017). Probably a better practice would be to provide free access to the Internet for the relevant parts of the population, as well as to improve their living standards (which are quite low in Ukraine) to enable them to purchase the appropriate technologies for learning (mobile phones, laptops) on their own. Although building individual analogues of SMART classrooms can be effective, their massive implementation does not seem to be the case (Sorokina et al., 2020).

Worth noting is that technologies used for distance learning can generally be used for both humanities and technical disciplines. There are not many specific technologies that could be used for studying the sciences. The first thing to suggest is virtual tours of museums and libraries if students are unable to visit them in person. This will allow them to use the knowledge gained to study both culture or literature and history. In addition, students can create group projects and present them online such as creating web quests (i.e., a kind of online game where students can use their knowledge to solve problems and get points or rewards) can be effective. One of the newest modern technologies that can be used for distance learning is the creation of the metaverse and the corresponding lessons in it (Khilya et al., 2023). This can allow students to
have a learning experience similar to the real world, and provide opportunities for real interaction with colleagues, although not the same as the real world. However, such use of this technology is still very far from being possible as its development is still at an early stage (Shelomovska et al., 2019).

The difficulty of using or introducing the latest technologies in the educational process is particularly relevant in Ukraine’s difficult situation due to the Russian invasion. Currently, most of the country’s resources are focused on maintaining the country’s economic well-being and strengthening its defence capabilities, while other areas (such as education or culture) receive much less attention from the authorities. Thus, any significant changes in this direction should be expected after the war is fully over and significant Western investment comes to the country.

4. Discussion

Studies of the effectiveness of distance learning were conducted by Kusmaryono et al. (2021). They concluded that distance education was an effective method for achieving learning outcomes, and its effectiveness depended on factors such as content quality, learning interaction, learning tools, communication strategies, and assessment. Although online learning requires self-discipline from learners, it can be as effective as traditional face-to-face learning. This area has considerable potential for further development through the use of the latest technologies or the creation of a special environment during the learning process. Worth noting that the aforementioned study provided examples of such technologies that could be used in distance learning, in particular in the context of humanities, and also evaluated approaches that could be used to improve learning efficiency. However, the possibilities of their use may vary considerably from country to country. Therefore, policymakers should consider this before implementing the programme (Olsen et al., 2013).

The process of transition from online to face-to-face learning after COVID-19 was studied by Stoian et al. (2022). The researchers noted that the distance learning process proved to be quite effective and convenient from the student’s point of view. In particular, they expressed a desire for teachers to incorporate e-learning resources into face-to-face classes as these resources were valuable during the pandemic and offered accessibility and flexibility. Students also expressed a preference for online assessments such as quizzes and project assignments, which offer speed, flexibility, and access to resources (Berdykulova et al., 2019). The process of interaction through online technologies also proved to be much easier. All of this suggests that a blended learning approach that combines elements of face-to-face and online learning can be an effective form of future learning. This can allow greater access to educational content and meet the individual needs of individual students. Worth noting that this approach can be effective, in particular, for the humanities disciplines; in this case, it should be noted that they still require closer interaction between the teacher and the student. In other words, to teach such subjects (especially if they are specialized), providing more time to holding the face-to-face component with less attention to the distance learning component is needed. A similar study was also conducted by Onikienko et al. (2022). The survey showed that the majority of students have a positive attitude towards distance learning, pointing to such benefits as time savings, access to learning materials, comfortable learning environment, increased confidence, reduced stress, mobility, convenience, and development of digital skills. There were also some dissatisfied students, but their number was very low, which generally indicated the overall effectiveness of this concept. Scientists note that
with the distance approach, students become active participants in the learning process, which helps to increase motivation for self-education and self-development (Kravchenko et al., 2023).

A study by Wang (2023), which investigated the impact of distance learning on students’ mental health, was worth mentioning. The study noted that factors such as clinical depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, apathy, exhaustion, and helplessness could be worsened by the transition to online learning. Non-university students are more susceptible to mental health problems compared to students in traditional academic programs (Tavrovetska & Veldbrekht, 2023). The study suggested that addressing mental well-being required more than individual therapy and highlighted the importance of developing an inclusive curriculum and assessment methods. Therefore, the researcher suggested introducing enhanced remote work skills, creating stress-free educational systems, and thus, shaping the learning environment to balance academic quality and students’ mental health. The author advocated a holistic approach to promoting mental well-being in distance learning, especially for first-year students who were more vulnerable to psychological problems due to their inexperience. This study is also relevant to Ukraine, where the psychological state of students may be even worse due to the hostilities; therefore, local policymakers need to provide favourable conditions for young people to study (Petrou et al., 2021).

The impact of the pandemic on learning, in general, was studied by Altawalbeh and Al-Ajlouni (2022). The authors noted that educational institutions around the world have done a lot of work to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on educational institutions. Based on empirical data from the University of Jordan, they concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic had an average impact on science education at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (i.e., it has had both positive and negative effects). Distance learning has revealed many problems in the teaching of various sciences: the use of new technologies has proved difficult for both students and teachers, who in turn, still prefer face-to-face teaching methods to distance learning (which is not the case for students) (Tleubekova et al., 2023). Worth noting that a similar situation concerning distance learning is observed in Ukraine. Most teachers want to hold classes in classrooms although prevented by various circumstances such as the COVID-19 crisis and the full-scale Russian invasion. Students are more inclined to distance learning, which can be explained by the convenience it provides to the student’s learning process (Muhaimin et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of the distance learning approach to analytical philosophy courses was studied by Gartner and Krašňa (2015). The study examined whether the humanities (philosophy as an example) could benefit from multimedia online learning. It showed that although students adapted to the use of digital technologies quite easily, they still preferred traditional classroom lectures. Nevertheless, a positive effect could still be achieved if implemented well. The researchers also offered some tips for conducting such distance learning classes and planning them to maximise their effectiveness among students. In particular, this approach has such teaching features that require special assessment and teaching methods. Thus, the state itself can help to ensure a more effective distance learning process in Ukraine (Costa, 2019).

Based on the aforementioned analysis information, providing some recommendations for policy in this area is possible. For example, it would be effective to conduct separate courses for teachers, in particular of humanities, on the transition to digital teaching technologies and
their adaptation to new curricula and resources. Also important is to ensure the development of infrastructure by investing in the development of various platforms and tools that will simplify the process of distance learning. These platforms can be either supranational (e.g., developed by government representatives to be used by all or a significant number of educational institutions), or smaller scale (e.g., created by entrepreneurs). Both can often cover certain components of the educational process more effectively and, on the other hand, may not be addressed by the state for some reason. All of this will become especially relevant in post-war development when the country will be able to spend less money on supporting the army and more on education and culture. However, even now the state can take minimal steps to improve the quality of education in the country.

5. Conclusions

In summary, the use of digital technologies in distance learning poses significant challenges for teachers and students in Ukraine, especially in the humanities. Lack of technological knowledge among humanities teachers and limited support and training from educational institutions have hindered the successful transition to digital platforms. In addition, the nature of humanities subjects often requires direct communication between teachers and students, which is difficult to achieve with existing distance learning technologies, which negatively affects the quality of education. Studying distance learning practices in other countries allows to identify common approaches and successful initiatives. Countries such as Singapore, South Korea, and the United States have implemented various strategies to improve distance learning. These include the development of interactive teaching methods, digital educational resources, and the integration of technology into classrooms. However, the applicability and effectiveness of these approaches in Ukraine may be affected by cultural differences and the country’s specific educational context. Several recommendations can be considered to improve distance learning in Ukraine. The development of digital resources and platforms for distance learning, supported by government initiatives, can lead to more effective and accessible educational opportunities. However, important is to ensure free access to the Internet and improve living standards so that students have access to the necessary technologies. A massive rollout of SMART classrooms may not be possible, but targeted implementation in specific areas may prove beneficial. In the humanities, technologies such as virtual museum tours, online group projects, web quests, and new technologies such as metaverse have the potential to enhance the distance learning experience. These technologies can facilitate interactive and engaging learning opportunities, allowing students to apply their knowledge in a practical context. Important for further research is to develop guidelines for teaching not only humanities but also technical subjects in distance learning settings in Ukraine.

A study that highlights the situation in the field of humanities education in Ukraine in the context of distance learning is of utmost importance for the quality of humanities education and policy-making in the education sector. Here are some key aspects of the importance of this study and its possible implications. The results of the study can help identify problems and shortcomings in the field of humanities education in the context of distance learning. This can influence the development and implementation of policies aimed at improving the learning process and ensuring high quality education in this field. Understanding how humanities education is adapting to modern conditions, including distance learning, can help find the best ways to prepare students and support teachers in the new environment. The study can reveal
possible inequalities in access to humanities education through distance learning. This is important for the development of policies aimed at ensuring that education is accessible to all groups of people, regardless of their status and location.

References


