# Conceptual Principles of Research of the Process of Institutionalization of Distance Education in Ukrainian Reality

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**ABSTRACT**

The article is based on the study of the current state of institutionalization of distance education in Ukraine using the methods of sociological research and its analysis through the prism of R. Scott's theory and its regulatory and cultural-cognitive systems. Theoretical analysis showed certain problems in the way of active introduction of distance education in the specific conditions of pandemic and quarantine. At the level of the regulatory system, the legislative basis is not sufficiently formed to ensure the online educational process and protect its participants from interference in private space. There are problems of access to distance learning technologies and technical means of its implementation, both for applicants and teachers. At the level of cultural and cognitive system of institutionalization recorded a gradual awareness of the value and social opportunities of distance education.

*Keywords*: *distance education, subject of educational process, institutionalization, virtual reality, virtual socialization*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The modern world is changing rapidly. Powerful institutional transformations are taking place. New institutional forms and connections appear, old ones disappear, as they can no longer satisfy certain social needs of individuals in society. The essential characteristic of social reality is the situationality and multiplicity of social practices of individuals. Thus, education, as the main social institution of society, is undergoing powerful transformations that have led to: the rapid development of information and communication, digital technologies; the powerful scale of social reality virtualization associated with the development of the Internet. Instead, the objective reality has narrowed considerably. The spread of the coronavirus pandemic and quarantine restrictions have reinforced the trends outlined. Consequently, the educational process has become remote. Everyday life of all participants in the educational process becomes mostly virtual and visual in nature.

Distance education with the help of digital technologies is in demand especially in the higher education system. This is due to the saving of resources, time, the ability to regulate the learning process, get additional education, changes the motivation to learn. The problem to be solved by the study is the rapid, forced, due to the coronary virus pandemic, distance education and lack of conceptualization of the process of institutionalization of this phenomenon in society.

## 2. PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGY

Theoretical and methodological principles of scientific intelligence are a set of indisputable theoretical provisions of the institutional approach (R. Parsons, A. Schutz, P. Berger, T. Lukman, P. Shtompka, R. Scott). Aspects of distance learning are analyzed in the works of foreign scientists Dichanz H., Bodendorf F., Hoppe G., Lobin N., Kettunen J. developments in relation to technologies, socio-psychological consequences and problems of institutionalization of distance education in Ukrainian society. Scientific investigations of certain aspects of distance education were considered by domestic scientists: Malinko O., Kukleva V, Stryuka A., Andreeva A. Thus, recently in socio-humanitarian knowledge there are attempts to reflect the challenges of modernity, including distance education, using new conceptual schemes and methodological innovations of today.

In the framework of this scientific research to determine the theoretical provisions of the process of institutionalization of distance education are of heuristic interest to the idea of R. Scott. The institutional concept of the scientist is presented in the form of three systems that form the basis of a social institution. The first system is regulatory, the second is normative, and the third is cultural-cognitive. Each system has specific processes of forming institutional relationships and rules. The systems are formed in parallel and do not involve hierarchies. Sanctions that control an individual's behavior are formed

within a regulatory system. Sanctions can be approving and punitive. Individuals and social groups in the process of interaction create sanctions, which are gradually normalized through public policy. Therefore, the analysis of the process of institutionalization of a certain social formation involves consideration of state policy, legislative and legal support. Stabilizing social relations is a normative system - it's values, social norms. The ordering of social ties is due to public awareness of certain values, values. The latter, the cultural-cognitive system is associated with the creation of social values, their unification. The individual reacts in a certain way to the events of social reality, interprets them and gets used to them. Thus, certain scenarios of playing social roles are formed [1].

Thus, we note that the ideas of R. Scott structurally and clearly allow us to describe the institutionalization of distance education, which unfolds in objective reality. However, the innovation and paradox are that distance education takes place through virtual reality, which has its own characteristics of social interaction and provides other specific rules and regulations. The key issue is that the educational process moves to another social reality that exists by other mechanisms.

## 3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Conditions for Organization of Distance Education in Ukraine

On the example of regulatory and cultural-cognitive systems, according to the theory of R. Scott, consider the effects of institutionalization of distance education in Ukrainian society. A significant feature of distance education is the binary space in which it is institutionalized, which provides the opportunity to learn online and offline forms; use of digital technologies and technical devices for training and communication; spatial location of educational subjects; application of interactive teaching methods. Virtual reality is a specific reality that organizes communication and influences users with rather specific mechanisms. New cultural and educational products, means of self-presentation, self-realization of students are formed in the virtual space. These may not be familiar to offline communication games, memes, programs, applications, platforms, forms of learning tasks.

It should be noted that distance learning has been introduced in Ukraine for over twenty years. Certain normative provisions have been formed, which at the legal level regulate educational activities remotely. In 2000, the "Concept of distance education development in Ukraine" was adopted [2]; In 2020, the Regulation on distance learning of general secondary education came into force [3]. It should be noted that this provision has existed since 2013 and was updated only under quarantine conditions.

### 3.2 Analysis of Sociological Research and Discussion

Today, the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine deals with regulatory issues of distance learning, there is no single coordination center. The MES website has recommendations with a list of platforms for online learning and criteria for their selection. Along with such important criteria as platform versatility, intelligibility of the interface for teachers and children of different ages, accessibility for children with special educational needs, the possibility of use on devices with different operating systems, there is a security criterion to minimize access to platforms that collect personal data. The results of a study by Cedos show that the state of institutionalization of the regulatory system of distance education is not satisfactory enough.

A careful analysis of the government's quarantine training process in relation to distance learning has shown a disappointing picture. At that time, and now, all actions, decrees of the Ministry of Education and Science are catching up, not preventive. In the first decade of quarantine, this was normal, as society was dealing with a phenomenon it had never experienced in modern times. At the beginning of the pandemic, 90% of schools around the world were closed. In the spring of 2020, all educational institutions in Ukraine switched to distance learning [4]. The Ministry of Education and Science provided pedagogical councils with the opportunity to make autonomous decisions on forms of distance learning, but did not offer methodological advice to the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry also sent advice to higher education institutions on recommendations for organizing a distance learning session. Before the beginning of the last school year, the Ministry of Education and Science again sent letters to educational institutions with recommendations, but they concerned the observance of sanitary and hygienic norms and the conditions established by these norms. But what really worried and is relevant today for the educational community, these are the guidelines for the implementation of educational activities, the use of digital tools, the Ministry of Education and Science has not offered. Almost half of the schools were forced to solve problems on their own in the new conditions. Thus, according to researchers, 15.63% of surveyed school principals did not receive assistance from local education authorities and methodological services for distance learning, 31.5% said that such assistance was incomplete [4].

Moreover, at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, participants in the training process were not provided with personal protective equipment properly. It was the local authorities that had to purchase and distribute sanitary facilities to educational institutions, but these goods were not included in the list of goods for purchase. Only on November 4, 2020, by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, the list was supplemented with sanitary and hygienic goods [4].

The next school year began under adaptive quarantine. And the educators had a problem with vaccination. It is that Ukraine has a rather low level of trust in vaccination. And here the ministry acted ex post facto. The MES clarified the vaccine a month after the start of the vaccination campaign. Before the start of the school year, 35% of educators were vaccinated, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, without specifying how much they have in one dose [4]. Currently, the situation is under control by the ministry.

Analyzing the results, it can be noted that despite the second year of study in a pandemic, Ukrainian education still shows signs of unpreparedness for a sharp transition to distance learning: lack of material and technical base, low digital literacy, lack of skills in such pedagogical conditions staff, students and pupils. There is still a low level of provision of participants in the educational process with gadgets and access to quality Internet [4]. These problems are especially present in rural areas. 53% of parents reported a lack of equipment to participate in online lessons. In large cities, 30% of respondents mentioned such a problem. Parents from rural areas complained about the poor quality of the Internet 60%, problems with the use of various online platforms reported 51% of parents [5]. It is the factor of the possibility of connecting to the network and the presence of technical support is one of the elements of sanctions, according to R. Scott's theory.

The cultural-cognitive system of the process of institutionalization of distance education is connected first of all with the formation of a certain consciousness of the individual during the total immersion in the Internet space. The network is a certain system, the elements of which are knowledge, evaluations, emotional and evaluative reactions, motivation to act both online and offline. The organization and implementation of the educational process on the Internet is a significant part of the process of socialization of the individual. Virtual socialization, assimilation of social experience occurs under the total influence of information and communication technologies. The subject has the opportunity to construct a certain virtual image of his own "I", anonymity plays a significant role here, as it helps to eliminate unwanted elements of the construct that can present the personality in an undesirable perspective: defects of appearance, communication complexes (stiffness, indisputability) invalidity. However, successful online representation does not guarantee such an offline effect. On the contrary, escapism in the network only deepens the problems of communication, internal development and the formation of a self-sufficient personality. At the same time, online learning expands the range of communication, opportunities to search for information, access to international scientific databases, opportunities for personal and professional self-realization. The value of education, thanks to the possibilities of distance education acquires a new definition. Training for diploma councils loses its relevance, but specific skills, knowledge and competencies become dominant. The network provides an opportunity for an individual to learn throughout life, regardless of age. The paradigm of continuing education is gaining value and borders are opening up for the internationalization of the educational process. And this is another important aspect of the institutionalization of distance education in the context of the ability to meet the educational needs of the individual in today's digital society.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The article conceptualizes the process of institutionalization of distance education in Ukrainian society using the theoretical construction of the process of institutionalization of R. Scott. Note that the theory proposed by scientists was used to characterize the objective social reality, and since the phenomenon of distance education unfolds in a binary space online and offline, an attempt was made to consider the specifics of the process of institutionalization of distance education in two dimensions. Theoretical analysis showed certain problems in the way of active introduction of distance education in the specific conditions of pandemic and quarantine. At the level of the regulatory system, the legislative basis is not sufficiently formed to ensure the online educational process and protect its participants from interference in private space. There are problems of access to distance learning technologies and technical means of its implementation, both for applicants and teachers. At the level of cultural and cognitive system of institutionalization recorded a gradual awareness of the value and social opportunities of distance education. Thus, further scientific research on distance education is possible in the direction of analysis of the normative system of the theoretical construction of R. Scott, the effects of social inequality of access to distance education and social opportunities.

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