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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical, practical, and methodological foundations of the formation and development of distance education in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The author examines the hierarchy of regulatory legal acts, starting from the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan to specialized Presidential and Cabinet of Ministers documents that define the legal status of distance learning. The study categorizes the development of distance education into three distinct stages and highlights the importance of digital transformation within the higher education system. Particular attention is paid to the recent legal shifts, including the transition from correspondence education to more modern digital alternatives and the legal guarantees provided for all participants in the educational process.

Key words: Distance education, Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Republic of Uzbekistan, higher education, distance learning, regulatory legal acts, Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Resolution of the President, Decree of the President, Order of the President, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, digital transformation, ICT infrastructure.

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Introduction

The formation and development of distance education is a continuous process and is considered a very important and relevant issue for higher education. This is because the legal status of this form of education is closely linked with the hierarchy of fundamental regulatory legal acts.

Therefore, it is expedient to systematize the types of basic regulatory legal acts regarding the formation and development of distance education according to the legislative system of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as established by Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 20, 2021, No. LRU-682 «On Normative Legal Acts» [2] according to the legislative system of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In particular, the following key regulatory legal acts within the legislative system regarding the distance form of education can be cited: the new edition of the Constitution of the Republic of

Uzbekistan [1], the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated September 23, 2020, No. LRU-637 «On Education» [3], the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 8, 2019, No. DP-5847 «On Approval of the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030» [5], the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 5, 2020, No. DP-6079 «On Approval of the «Digital Uzbekistan — 2030» Strategy and Measures for its Effective Implementation» [6], the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 28, 2022, No. DP-60 «On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026» [7], and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 3, 2022, No. 559 «On Measures to Introduce the Distance Form of Education in Higher Education Organizations» [11].

As is known, the World Wide Web (Internet) is crucial for the participants of the distance learning

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process. This issue is enshrined in Article 33, Part 3 of the **Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan**: «The state shall create conditions for ensuring the use of the World Wide Web Internet [1]», – this constitutional legal rule is established. This rule serves as a solid legal basis for the information and communication infrastructure of the distance education form.

Therefore, the formation and development of distance education are inextricably linked with the legislative system of the Republic of Uzbekistan. For this reason, it is appropriate to analyze the main regulatory legal acts related to the formation and development of distance education by dividing them into three stages according to theoretical, practical, and methodological bases.

The First Stage: Theoretical Foundations

The first stage serves as the theoretical foundation for the formation and development of distance education. Zero, these theoretical bases create a supporting legal ground for this form of education.

In particular, the «Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030», approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. DP-5847 dated October 8, 2019, established the following important measures for the introduction of digital technologies and modern methods into the educational process:

- To individualize educational processes based on digital technologies, develop distance education services, and widely implement webinars, online, “blended learning” and “flipped classroom” technologies in practice;
- To organize distance education programs based on modern information and communication technologies [5].

The Second Stage: Practical Foundations

The second stage serves as the practical basis for the formation and development of distance education. Zero, this stage directly defines the practical-legal status of the distance form of education.

Especially, in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 2, 2020, No. DP-5953 «On the State Program for the Implementation of the Action Strategy for the Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021 in the «Year of Science, Enlightenment, and Digital Economy Development»»: «Starting from the 2020/2021 academic year, the distance form of education shall be gradually introduced as an experiment at the Tashkent University of Information Technologies named after Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Tashkent State University of Law, and Tashkent State Pedagogical University [4]», – it is recorded.

Furthermore, according to this decree: «The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall submit proposals by January 1, 2021, for the introduction of the distance form of education into the higher education system, taking into account the results of the experiment, together with a schedule for the implementation of this form of education by higher education institutions and educational fields [4]», – it is recorded.

Additionally, Order No. 233 of the Minister of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 27, 2020, «On the Introduction of Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions» [12] was adopted. By this order, from April 1, 2020, distance learning was organized for the first time for students in the undergraduate education fields and graduate specialties of higher education institutions.

Indeed, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated September 23, 2020, No. LRU-637 «On Education» defined the legal status of the distance form of education. According to Article 15 of this law, the forms of education consist of the following:

- Education with separation from production (full-time);
- Education without separation from production (part-time, evening, **distance**);
- Dual education;
- Education in the family and self-study;
- Inclusive education;
- Education in the order of externship;
- Personnel training in the field of defense, security, and law enforcement [3].

It should be noted that the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated May 25, 2025, No. PD-76 «On Additional Measures to Ensure the Quality of Education and Improve the System of Educational Services» stipulated: «Starting from the 2025/2026 academic year, admission to the correspondence (sirtqi) form of education will be terminated, and admission quotas for other alternative forms of education other than full-time education will be gradually increased [10]», – it is recorded. This further strengthens the legal status of distance education as the most modern and effective form of education without separation from production.

Article 16 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On Education» No. LRU-637 dated September 23, 2020, clearly defines the legal definition of distance education: «Distance education is aimed at students obtaining necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities in accordance with curricula and educational programs using information and communication technologies and the World Wide Web Internet from a distance [3]».

This legal definition creates a solid ground for the adoption of new regulatory legal acts.

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Furthermore, according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. DP-6079 dated October 5, 2020, «On Approval of the «Digital Uzbekistan — 2030» Strategy and Measures for its Effective Implementation», the task of *«creating and implementing a unified distance education platform with the aim of its future application in all areas of education [6]»* was established as an important measure to increase digital skills in the educational field.

The Third Stage: Methodological Foundations

The third stage defines the methodological bases for organizing the educational process of the distance form of education. This stage covers the essence of the main regulatory legal acts for the formation and development of distance education.

In this regard, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 28, 2022, No. DP-60 «On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026» was adopted. According to Clause 212 of the State Program for the implementation of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 in the «Year of Exalting Human Dignity and Active Neighborhood», the task of *«forming admission quotas for education forms, including the distance form, taking into account the capabilities of higher education institutions [7]»*, also according to Clause 213, *«further expanding opportunities for obtaining higher education without leaving production, thereby gradually launching personnel training in the distance form of education [7]»* was established as primary goals and objectives.

This served as a vital factor for the adoption of new regulatory legal acts.

As stated in Article 16 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On Education» No. LRU-637 dated September 23, 2020: *«The procedure for organizing distance education is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan [3]»*, – it is clearly indicated.

Consequently, to ensure the implementation of the tasks set in the State Program for the implementation of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 in the «Year of Exalting Human Dignity and Active Neighborhood», approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan **No. DP-60** dated January 28, 2022, and to effectively use the capabilities of information and communication technologies, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan

No. 559 dated October 3, 2022, «On Measures to Introduce the Distance Form of Education in Higher Education Organizations» was adopted.

The «On the Procedure for Organizing Distance Education in Higher Education Organizations» Regulation, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 3, 2022, No. 559, serves as the primary manual for the distance learning process.

This regulation defines the procedure for organizing personnel training activities in Bachelor's and Master's degrees through the distance form of education in higher education organizations [11].

Training personnel through distance education is organized only in higher education institutions that possess a full-time (kunduzgi) form for the respective Bachelor's field and Master's specialty. Specifically, the list of fields where distance education is not permitted is determined by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation and announced by April 1 each year. State higher education institutions with financial independence were allowed to start from the 2022/2023 academic year, and non-state higher education organizations from the 2023/2024 academic year.

It should be noted that, prior to the adoption of the resolution, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-279 dated June 15, 2022, «On Organizing Admission Processes to State Higher Education Institutions» established: *«Starting from the 2022/2023 academic year, the distance form of education shall be introduced in state higher education institutions based on their capabilities for undergraduate education fields [8]»*. Specifically, according to Appendix 1-v of the Order of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. P-60 dated June 15, 2022, the *«Parameters for admission to state higher education institutions on the basis of the state order for the distance form of undergraduate education in the 2022/2023 academic year [9]»* were approved.

Indeed, these regulatory legal acts serve as a robust legal foundation for training personnel through distance education. This not only creates the necessary organizational-technical and educational-methodical conditions for the distance learning process, but also guarantees full legal grounds ensuring equal educational opportunities for citizens of Uzbekistan, as well as foreign citizens and stateless persons, through the effective use of information and communication technologies.

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