

EXPERIENCIAS EDUCATIVAS

**KAZAKHSTAN EXPERIENCE IN DISTANCE LEARNING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF
CHOREOGRAPHY**

EXPERIENCIA DE KAZAJSTÁN EN EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA EN EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR
EN EL CAMPO DE LA COREOGRAFÍA

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the features of the distance learning system of the university in the field of choreography training. The purpose of the study is to analyze the Kazakhstan experience of organizing distance learning in higher education in the field of choreography training. As an example, the experience of the [BLINDED] in the distance learning process has been analyzed and practical recommendations on teaching professional disciplines in this field of training have been given. To analyze distance learning, surveys among teachers and students have been conducted. In addition, based on international scientific literature, dance lessons have been analyzed in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions. The disadvantages and advantages of the online learning system for students have been identified based on a questionnaire. The survey involved teachers and students of ballet pedagogy, choreography pedagogy, choreography directing, ballroom dance pedagogy, as well as undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students. A total of 20 teachers and 75 students have been interviewed, and the effectiveness of the platforms used in distance learning has been determined. On the basis of available research, the opinion that in the field of choreography pedagogical skills of rising professionals and performers cannot be formed exclusively through distance learning has been substantiated.

KEY WORDS

Distance learning, Art of choreography, Information and communication technologies, Educational platforms

RESUMEN

El estudio examina las características del sistema de educación a distancia de la universidad en el campo de la formación coreográfica. El propósito del estudio es analizar la experiencia de Kazajstán en la organización de la educación a distancia en la educación superior en el campo de la formación en coreografía. Como ejemplo, se ha analizado la experiencia de la [BLINDED] en el proceso de aprendizaje a distancia y se han dado recomendaciones prácticas sobre la enseñanza de disciplinas profesionales en este campo de formación. Para analizar la educación a distancia se han realizado encuestas entre profesores y alumnos. Además, con base en la literatura científica internacional, las lecciones de baile se han analizado de acuerdo con las restricciones de COVID-19. Las desventajas y ventajas del sistema de aprendizaje en línea para los estudiantes se han identificado a partir de un cuestionario. La encuesta involucró a profesores y estudiantes de pedagogía de ballet, pedagogía de coreografía, dirección de coreografía, pedagogía de baile de salón, así como estudiantes de pregrado, posgrado y doctorado. Se ha entrevistado a un total de 20 profesores y 75 alumnos, y se ha determinado la efectividad de las plataformas utilizadas en la educación a distancia. Sobre la base de la investigación disponible, se ha corroborado la opinión de que en el campo de la coreografía, las habilidades pedagógicas de los profesionales e intérpretes en ascenso no pueden formarse exclusivamente a través de la educación a distancia.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Educación a distancia, Arte de la coreografía, Tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, Plataformas educativas

INTRODUCTION

Distance learning via the Internet has been part of traditional education in many developed countries.

The situation created by the novel coronavirus disease has affected education worldwide resulting in the urgent need for programs that promote physical activity at home and the responsible use of internet-connected devices (Lara-Aparicio et al., 2021).

The context of the global pandemic requires teachers and choreographers to identify new forms of distance learning and analyze effective methods.

The peculiarity of teaching choreography is that it requires a dance hall equipped with a barre and a large mirror. There is also a need for a qualified specialist who explains, demonstrates how to perform movements, and manages the learning process, as well as accompanists who play an important role in accompanying choreography lessons with music. Although classes in dance halls are group lessons, the teacher tries to pay attention to each student individually. Unfortunately, distance education does not meet these requirements. However, given the unavailability of autonomous learning, one of the most pressing issues today is the consideration of ways to deliver quality education and compare the experience.

In the context of epidemic prevention and control and with the continuous development of electronic information technology, the practical application of Internet information technology, such as digital media and image dissemination, in dance education should become the key topic of the dance art research so that relevant professionals can discuss and analyze it (Chi, 2019).

The integration of online and offline education not only has a certain theoretical value in teaching but is also of great importance for the development of personalized and diversified dance skills (Mao, 2021).

The spread of the coronavirus throughout the world resulted in the gradual introduction of quarantine measures in many countries to prevent the disease; various preventive measures were taken by governments and the borders between states were closed. All higher educational institutions around the world switched to remote work and learning. Universities training

professionals in the field of choreography were also involved in the process of distance learning.

With the transition to distance learning, both teachers and students faced a number of different problems, which, at first, caused a feeling of confusion and misunderstanding of the current situation. There were questions related to teaching choreography disciplines in the distance learning environment, the performance of tasks assigned to students not only in theoretical but also in practical disciplines, as well as the assessment of student results. The situation required a completely new comprehensive approach to the organization and conduct of the entire educational process, the development, implementation and application of innovative teaching methods and criteria for assessing students in the online learning environment. In every country, each university made decisions to overcome the difficulties and solve the problems associated with the transition to distance learning.

Scientific studies and the practical experience of researchers confirm that a distance learning system was used as an additional tool in teaching choreography even before the global pandemic. In 2016, researchers D. Gratsiouni, M. Koutsouba, F. Venetsanou, and V. Tyrovola from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, considered teaching Karagouna (a Greek national dance) with the help of YOUTUBE channels. The researchers used the technology of dance recording by Rudolf-von Laban and uploaded the Greek dance of Karagouna on the YouTube platform. As a result, it was concluded that regardless of the professional level of dancers trained based on YouTube videos, there is a need for a correctional dance course (Gratsiouni et al., 2016).

Having analyzed the educational process in the system of choreography education in Singapore in the context of the pandemic, scientists noted the effectiveness of blended learning. To prevent infection, students study in an online and offline format while observing sanitary standards. Teachers can either broadcast their classes live (synchronous learning) or send the videotaped combinations to students in the context of HBL (asynchronous learning) (Tariao and Yang, 2021).

At the Choreography Department of the St. Petersburg Humanitarian University of Trade Unions (Russia), distance learning has been

effectively implemented with the help of the Moodle and Mirapolis platforms. Despite the fact that electronic learning platforms ensure an individual learning trajectory of the student, lack of experience, psychological unwillingness and resistance to change, inaccessibility of personal communication between the student and the teacher, as well as between students, the need for a personal computer and Internet access, lack of self-control and self-discipline, lack of practical knowledge, skills and abilities cause certain difficulties (Ėrmakova, 2021).

In Kazakhstan, the distance learning system, introduced on March 16, 2020, is still being used at the [BLINDED] (Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kazakh National Academy of Arts, 2020). Due to the professionalism of the academic staff and effective solutions, the students (school and college; bachelor's, master's, doctoral degree studies) quickly switched to the format of distance learning. Various training sessions and seminars devoted to distance learning were held for students and teachers. In order to improve the quality of distance learning and address technical problems, call centers (hotlines) have been created; these provide comprehensive support to parents and students. The use of information and communication technologies has increased and teachers have adapted to the delivery of lessons through Zoom, Skype, Whats App, e-mail, and electronic platforms. All events (online lectures, workshops, scientific conferences) and online lessons are uploaded on YouTube.

For example, the online lecture "The creative development of folk dance ensembles of Kazakhstan" by T. Izim and joint online projects by A.A. Sadykova and D.D. Urazymbetov (Kazakh National Academy of Arts) contained novelty about the history and development of choreography in Kazakhstan. In addition, various competitions and scientific conferences were held for students and undergraduates, and the winners were invited to different scientific events of the national level (Author and Valukin, 2020).

The availability of the Academy library in the online format allows students to independently improve their knowledge by creating a favorable learning environment.

The use of innovative learning methods and information technologies is the only way to improve the educational process based on the

content and form of pedagogical activity (Baidildaeva et al., 2014).

Nikitin examines the process of distance learning in the field of choreography. The researcher believes that only applicants with secondary choreography education and performing experience can enroll in distance learning (Nikitin, 2019). Currently, due to the termination of distance learning in the country, this practice has been introduced at the Department of Choreography of Auezov South Kazakhstan State University and the Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University. In this regard, the purpose of the study is to analyze the Kazakhstani experience of organizing distance learning in higher education in the field of choreography training.

The research objectives are as follows:

- to analyze the system of choreography education in the context of the current pandemic;
- to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the online learning system by questioning students and teachers;
- to characterize the platforms used in the learning process.
- to create guidelines for the study of professional disciplines in the field of choreography.

METHODS

A survey in the form of a questionnaire on the website docs.google.com was conducted in order to analyze the views of teachers and students on the distance learning system and the problems they encountered. In addition, the studies by foreign researchers who studied distance learning in the field of choreography were considered.

Participants

The survey involved teachers and students of ballet pedagogy, choreography pedagogy, choreography directing, ballroom dance pedagogy, as well as undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students. A total of 20 teachers and 75 students were interviewed. As for the composition of the teaching staff, 26.3% are men and 73.7% are women. Of these, 20% are art history candidates, 15% are art history doctors,

and 65% are masters. The percentage in accordance with the profile is shown in Figure 1.

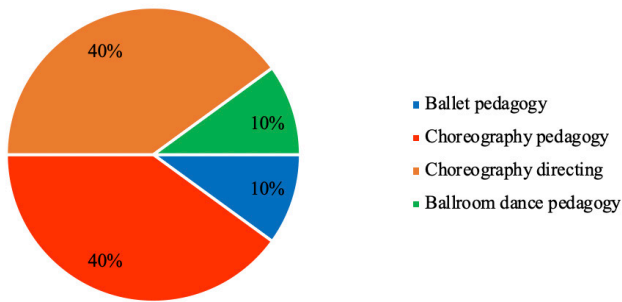


Figure 1. Percentage of teachers taking part in the survey by speciality.

In the course of the analysis of distance learning, the opinion of both teachers and students plays an important role. Students' questionnaires demonstrate the achievements and shortcomings in the educational process and contribute to the development of recommendations for improving the education system. Of the 75 students who took part in the survey, 74.3% were women and 25.7% were men. The percentage of students by the year of study is described in Figure 2.

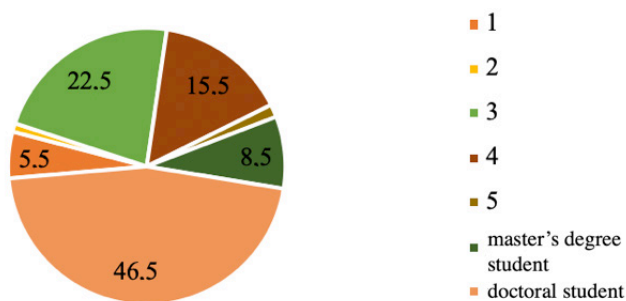


Figure 2. Percentage of students taking part in the survey by the year of study.

Checking and analyzing the results of the questionnaire

Student questions: "How did you adapt to the distance learning process?", "Are changes in the distance learning process reported in a timely manner?", "Are you satisfied with distance learning?", "What distance learning tools are used during training?", "What is the workload of students during the quarantine?", "How do you assess the work of the teaching staff in the distance learning context?", "What did you like

about distance learning? (low risk of infection, independent work, the volume of additional material on the subject, the pace of individual learning, the use of modern learning technologies, improved quality of teaching, the ability to view lectures, the ability to download educational materials)", "What difficulties did you face in distance learning?", "Write your suggestions on how to improve the quality of the material provided by the teacher in the online learning environment".

Teacher questions: "How did you adapt to the distance learning process?", "Is it convenient for you to teach students remotely?", "Are you satisfied with the distance learning process?", "What distance learning tools do you use in the teaching process?", "What is the workload of students during the quarantine?", "What is the workload of teachers during the quarantine?", "What difficulties did you face in distance learning?", "Write your suggestions on how to improve the quality of the distance learning material provided to students in the online learning environment".

RESULTS

The results of the answers of teachers and students to the first question "How did you adapt to the distance learning process?" described in Table 1 show that half of the students are perfectly adapted to distance learning, 1/4 is well-adapted, and 1/4 is satisfactorily adapted. As for the teachers, it was found that half of them are well adapted, 1/4 is perfectly adapted, and 1/4 is satisfactorily adapted. It can be concluded that the difference in the indicators is due to the age characteristics of the survey participants and the increased workload of teachers. According to the overall results, the level of use and adoption of ICT by students and teachers is high.

Table 1. Students' and teachers' responses to the question: How did you adapt to the distance learning process?

| No. | Answers | Students (% indicator) | Teachers (% indicator) |
|-----|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Perfectly | 50.7 | 25 |
| 2 | Well | 26.7 | 50 |
| 3 | Satisfactorily | 22.7 | 25 |
| 4 | Badly | - | - |

“Is distance learning convenient for you?” The comparison of the results shows that 66.7% of students consider the distance learning format to be convenient, 12% find it convenient but difficult, 17.3% - very difficult, 1.3% - very easy, and 2.7% cannot answer the question. We established the reason by asking the question: “What did you like about distance learning?”:

- low risk of infection;
- self-education;
- the volume of additional material on the topic;
- individual pace of learning;
- use of modern learning technologies;
- improved quality of education;
- the ability to view lectures;
- the ability to download educational materials.

In addition, we believe that the main reason why students find the distance learning format convenient is that they have an opportunity to combine study and work.

As for teachers, 10% of them note its convenience, 55% are sure that it is convenient but difficult, 15% think that it is inconvenient, and 20% are not sure. Based on the answers to the question: “What difficulties did you face in distance learning?”, it was found that choreography classes conducted in an online learning environment are associated with the following difficulties:

- classes are not held in dance halls;
- students cannot fully demonstrate their performing abilities;
- there is a risk of injury when attending classes at home;
- poor internet connection;
- lack of creative communication between the teacher and the student.

However, despite these difficulties, the teachers tried to provide their students with psychological support and quality education. In addition,

the administrative and organizational activities of the academy made it possible to inform students about the latest events in the educational process, as well as concerts and creative work. Online reports on concerts, holiday concerts, various scientific events, and competitions held at the Academy were uploaded to the Ballet Academy YouTube channel. The results of the question “Are changes in the distance learning process reported in a timely manner?” showed that 70% of students noted timely access to information.

To find out what information and communication technologies are effective in the field of choreography (Figures 3 and 4), the students and teachers were asked the following questions: “What distance learning tools are used during training?” and “What distance learning tools do you use in the teaching process?”, respectively. The figures show the frequent use of the Zoom platform by teachers and a small number of online lectures and webinars.

The advantages of the Zoom platform:

- convenient layout of conference participants on the screen;
- the availability of a virtual board;
- the possibility of demonstrating any material;
- the possibility of solving various tasks with the help of ICT;
- students can share their thoughts in the chat.

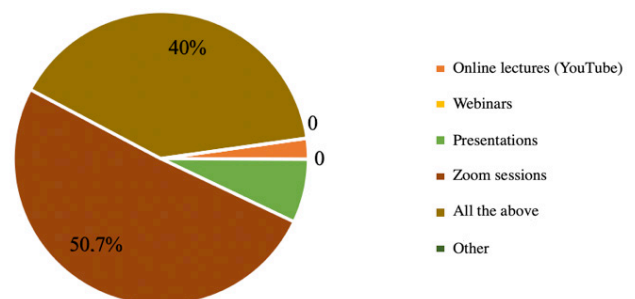


Figure 3. Percentage of the applications applied in distance learning (student answers).

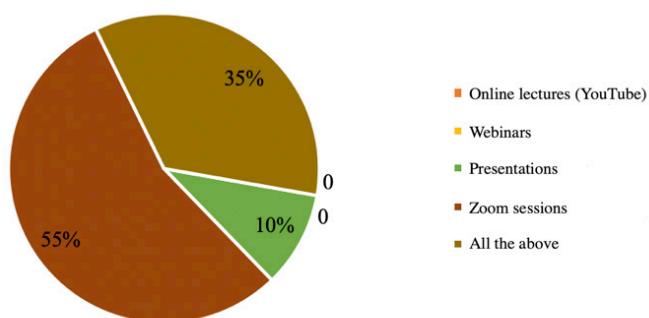


Figure 4. Percentage of the applications used by teachers in distance learning.

The workload of students and teachers in distance learning

Thus, 38.7% of students reported that their workload increased, 13.3% noted a workload decrease, and 34.7% said that their workload had not changed; in the context of teacher workload, 15% noted an increase, 30% reported a decrease, 15% said that it had not changed, and 40% found it difficult to answer the question. According to the results of the study, it was found that the physical load of students decreased and the technical load increased. This is because students spend most of their time filming videos and uploading them to the database.

As for the teachers, the survey showed that the workload of 60% of teachers increased; 30% were not sure, 0.5% noted that it had not changed, and 0.5% reported a workload decrease. Based on our experience, we believe that the increase in the workload of teachers is directly related to the level of teachers' proficiency in information and communication technologies.

Focusing on the main features of teaching professional disciplines in the field of choreography in an online learning environment, we pay attention to the following issues:

- lack of copyright pedagogical technologies, electronic textbooks to conduct choreography lessons in an online format;
- different level of students;
- lack of clear plans for the development of information and communication competencies of teachers and students;
- inability of students to communicate with the accompanist during the lesson (lack of access to the analysis of musical materials and selection work).

When addressing these issues, we follow the learning framework used by Gagne (1965).

1. Attract the attention of students;
2. Inform the student about the goals;
3. Stimulate the recollection of previous information;
4. Present stimulating material;
5. Provide guidance to students;
6. Strive for productivity;
7. Provide feedback;
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the work;
9. Expand the opportunities for transfer.

Based on this structure, the following recommendations are given to study professional disciplines in the field of choreography in the context of distance learning (Table 2).

Table 2. Recommended guidelines for learning professional disciplines in the field of choreography in an online learning environment.

| No. | Methodical instructions for conducting lectures | Methodical instructions for conducting hands-on classes |
|-----|--|---|
| 1 | Explain the format of the lesson, the features of working with the chosen platform, and the main tasks of students. For example, the availability of dance costumes, hair styling, place preparation, and, if possible, the availability of a smartphone or computer, etc. | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 2 | To effectively organize seminars, lectures and student independent work, open a shared mailbox or chat on WhatsApp for all students and accompanists in the group. Through the chat or email, you can send students study materials that they should read, analyze and review. | |
| 3 | Preliminary presentation of lecture materials to students. | Preliminary description of hands-on classes or a new topic to students in the form of a video (no more than 15-20 minutes). |
| 4 | Group students according to their level and give them assignments related to the lecture materials presented. In this case, we promote student relationships and encourage teamwork. | Preliminary analysis of musical material with an accompanist, its further recording and sending to students. |
| 5 | Develop students' skills to independently interpret lectures and analyze additional information. | Analyze and provide feedback to the student who has already read the video. |
| 6 | Use information and communication technologies (Kahoot, Quizlet, Padlet, etc.) | Make sure that the video (movements or assignments related to a new topic) has been sent and also analyze the mistakes made by each student in the video. |
| 7 | Use online plagiarism checker to check the independent work of students. | Offer students to share the combinations they have created and dance performances on social networks. |

DISCUSSION

The analysis of domestic and foreign theory and practice of distance learning allows us to note the characteristics inherent in distance learning. These are as follows:

1. Flexibility. Students study at a convenient time, place, and pace (O'Lawrence, 2005). Everyone can study as much as they personally need to master the course and obtain knowledge in the chosen disciplines.
2. Modularity. Distance learning programs are based on a modular principle. Each training course (discipline) that a student has mastered is adequate in terms of the content of a specific subject area (de Oliveira et al., 2018). This makes it possible to form a curriculum from a set of independent training courses that meets individual or group needs.
3. Parallelism. Training can be implemented by combining the main professional activity with studies, that is, "on the job" (Eom et al., 2006).
4. Remote action. The distance from the student's location to the educational institution (provided that there is a high-quality communication) is not an obstacle to the effective educational process (Almazova et al., 2021).
5. Asynchrony. This implies the fact that in the learning process, the teacher and the learner work according to the convenient schedule for both of them (Davies et al., 2010).
6. Coverage. This feature is sometimes also called "large-scale involvement". The number of students is not a critical parameter (Kuo et al., 2013).
7. Profitability. This feature refers to the cost-effectiveness of distance learning (Malvik, 2020).
8. Teacher. This refers to the new role and functions of the teacher (Díaz and Entonado, 2009).
9. Learner. The requirements for a student significantly differ from the traditional ones (Endres et al., 2009).
10. Sociality. To a certain extent, distance learning relieves social tension by providing an equal opportunity to receive education regardless of place of residence and financial ability (Conrad, 2009).

Today international higher dance education is expected to be redefined and there is a need to reconsider the way of its further development (Heyang and Martin, 2020).

In order to develop international education and cooperation in the field of choreography, conferences and round-table discussions are organized. In accordance with COVID-19 restrictions, many activities have been implemented to address the issue of conducting dance classes.

In particular, based on the global experience of distance learning in the field of choreography, the Kazakh National Academy of Arts held the conference “Higher choreography education in a distance learning format” that involved professors from Kazakhstan, Italy, Hungary, Russia and Lithuania. Based on the conference, an analysis was performed. The results obtained are described in Table 3.

Table 3. Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning in the field of choreography.

| <i>Strengths</i> | <i>Weaknesses</i> | <i>Possible prospects</i> | <i>Potential risks</i> |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased responsibility of students to perform independent work; • encouraging students to independently search for information; • stimulating teachers to find and implement new methods and techniques to deliver information to students in the context of distance learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of the possibility of conducting choreography classes in a traditional format; • lack of direct creative contact between the teacher and students; • lack of an opportunity for students to complete assignments; • lack of an appropriate place and equipment needed for choreography classes (ballet hall, barre, mirrors, floor coating); • increased injury risk due to the lack of the space needed for classes; • increased teacher workload associated with the processes of creating and uploading documents to the distance learning platform, as well as checking students’ assignments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved communication between specialists in the field of choreography and education in the online format: participation of the teaching staff and learners (students, undergraduates, doctoral students) in round-table discussions, forums, scientific and practical conferences; • introduction of distance learning technologies into the educational process as an auxiliary and additional resource for obtaining information. • decreased level and quality of choreography education; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of interest in learning among students; • the outflow of professional teachers from the educational process; • getting various kinds of injuries when performing tasks. |

Choreography teaching methods involve a dialogue between the teacher and the student (Sööt and Viskus, 2013). In the distance learning system and in the traditional education system, the reinforcement of the relationship between the teacher and the student plays an important role in improving the quality of choreography lessons. The invention of new methods by teachers, high requirements for mastering information and communication technologies, various challenges, and psychological support developed confidence, perseverance, cooperation, honesty and responsibility in students during the pandemic.

The importance of video tutorials at any level of distance learning in the field of choreography has grown. Huang (2020) analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of multimedia programs in teaching Chinese folk dances and concludes that slowing down video lessons allows some students to work independently taking into account the fact that some students are characterized by a slow reaction and cannot correct mistakes.

There are weekly clubs based on the collections of dance performances, which can be viewed by foreign scientists, students, and their parents. This makes it possible to find out their views by asking questions such as "What did you like?". As a result, students' interest increased, and some of them got involved in further research (Gingrasso, 2020).

In addition, the use of multimedia technologies and the ideas of aesthetic education increase the interest and motivation of students to study and popularize choreography (Wang, 2021).

Despite the initial problems, the online exchange center has gradually become a popular platform allowing students to exchange ideas, inform each other about the latest dance news in the city, and much more.

In addition to technical skills, this requires patience and perseverance. However, they viewed their project as a permanent virtual library for both students and teachers to analyze, reflect and redefine an approach to teaching and learning from new perspectives. Generally, the results showed that technology has reduced the distance between learners and teachers and improved both teaching and learning (Li et al., 2017).

The study shows that online dance training is an upcoming trend but there is a need to improve its assessment system (You, 2020).

Despite numerous concerns, it was revealed that space and technology modification makes it possible to conduct online dance classes that can bring meaningful results (Li, 2020).

Spina (2020) offers the following online resources for dance researchers and choreographers:

- reference and research resources;
- scientific journals and conference proceedings;
- popular magazines;
- video content;
- historical resources and archival collections;
- professional associations.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic that began in 2019 has made its own adjustments to the education system. In this regard, difficulties arose in conducting hands-on classes for all specialties in the field of art. Research shows that in the field of choreography, the effectiveness of dance teaching with the help of video materials has not been systematically considered. Therefore, the question of how online education in the field of choreography in the context of the pandemic can be organized has become an important problem for every educational institution. The scientific significance of the research is determined by the coverage of the historical processes currently taking place in the world and the analysis of the distance learning system in the field of choreographic art. The experience of the [BLINDED] in the field of distance education has been discussed and the activities related to the quality provision of educational services have been studied. The methodological recommendations for conducting hands-on and traditional classes have been given and the characteristics of the platforms used for learning practical disciplines have been given. In order to determine the effectiveness / ineffectiveness of the distance education system, a survey of students and teachers was conducted on the website docs.google.com. As a result, problems related to the training format have

been identified. The distance learning system is characterized by inefficiency at the college and bachelor level; there are problems associated with the possibility of using the online learning system at the level of master's and doctoral studies. The survey showed that there are problems in distance learning. First, the lack of practice in the ballet hall weakens the professional relationship between the teacher and the student. The inability to work directly with the accompanist when analyzing musical material limits the development of musical literacy of the student. Secondly, the fact that the student's work took place at home and the impossibility to fully demonstrate the dance movements reduce the quality of learning. In the field of choreography, despite the problems in the educational process, comprehensive work is being carried out to ensure high-quality teaching of students while maintaining its originality. Taking into account that the performance and research skills of students are formed in the master's and doctoral studies, in the future it is proposed to introduce a blended (online and offline) learning format. The use of the research results in the organization of the educational process in the field of choreographic can contribute to the provision of quality education.

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