Methodical system for formation of professional competences of a future foreign language teacher in conditions of distance learning

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This study's significance lies in its recognition of the evolving educational landscape and the need for a new type of specialist who can adapt to modern innovations and effectively implement digital tools and platforms in distance learning. In the context of the ongoing education reform in Kazakhstan, the study focuses on improving the quality of higher professional education to meet international standards. Specifically, it emphasizes the importance of training future teachers who are prepared to teach foreign languages through distance learning using digital resources. The main aim of the study is to describe a structured approach to teacher training by proposing a methodical system for the formation of professional competences of a future foreign language teacher in the conditions of distance learning at a university. The components of this system, such as aim, content, methods, forms, tools, and outcome, provide a comprehensive framework for developing the following competences: digital, psychological-pedagogical, linguistic, foreign language communicative, and methodical competences. Additionally, the study introduces an elective course, "Organization and methods of distance learning of a foreign language," which serves as a practical implementation of the proposed methodical system. This course, when integrated into the curriculum of a pedagogical university, aims to equip future teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by distance learning.

KEYWORDS

methodical system, formation, professional competence, future foreign language teacher, distance learning, pedagogical university

1. Introduction

The issue of formation of the professional competences of a future foreign language teacher in the conditions of distance learning (Shakiyeva et al., 2022) has gained significant prominence during times of social transformation and educational reforms. In this context, the assessment of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of individuals' performance becomes of paramount importance. The effective engagement of individuals in their professional roles relies upon their personal characteristics, professional preparedness, experience, and the possession of essential

qualities necessary for successfully addressing professional tasks, conducting productive work, and continuously renewing their personal resources.

In the current educational landscape, the training of future teachers who possess the necessary skills to effectively communicate with colleagues, students, and parents in an online environment has become of utmost importance. These teachers should be equipped with the proficiency to conduct classes, provide feedback, and utilize digital tools, applications, and platforms. Furthermore, they should possess the abilities to search for digital information on the internet and effectively transmit it to their students during classroom sessions. It is equally crucial for universities to foster the development of these skills and readiness among their future teachers, enabling them to plan, develop, and deliver instruction not only in traditional offline settings but also in online formats.

The pandemic has shown the real opportunities and shortcomings of the organization of distance learning at universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Many teachers showed an insufficient level of digital and methodical competences in the aspect of distance learning, conducted classes not at the proper interactive level, due to the lack of competences in using a variety of online teaching methods (synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods), digital tools and technologies, online platforms, resources and applications.

Meanwhile, global experience has demonstrated that distance learning offers the potential to construct a customized educational pathway for each student, tailored to their individual needs and preferences. It enables students to navigate through this pathway by utilizing the created information environment, thus fulfilling their personal educational requirements in the most convenient and comfortable manner possible (Nasibullov, 2013).

Distance education is considered a modern educational phenomenon because of the rapid development of information technologies, including computers and communications (Fedorenko et al., 2019).

Along with distance learning, there is a growing public demand for competent, versatile educators. The society expects "teachers to be passionate, compassionate and thoughtful; to encourage students' engagement and responsibility; to respond to students from different backgrounds with different needs, and promote tolerance and social cohesion; to provide continual assessments of students and feedback" (Schleicher, 2018).

Distance learning is "an integral part of the education system. However, it is important to pay attention to both the content and form of distance learning, and the differentiation and individualization of learning approaches. Both teachers and pupils and their parents have to be able to adapt to the application of different electronic media as teaching aids. In its turn, the educator's task is to develop efficient strategies and approaches for the distance learning process in compliance with the pupils' abilities and possibilities" (Jurs and Kulberga, 2021).

The effective organization of distance learning, first of all, depends on the professional skills of the teacher, digital competence and the availability of information technologies (Caena and Redecker, 2019).

In this regard, the university faces new challenges, the purpose of which is not only to acquire professional knowledge, but also to train highly qualified specialists who are able to think critically and creatively, know culture, foreign languages, are ready for intercultural communication, solve the problem on their own, apply ICT

technologies (Zhorabekova et al., 2013; Sagdullaev et al., 2018; Yesnazar et al., 2021), digital tools and online platforms, organize the learning process offline and online.

The solution of these problems is connected with the need to study the best practices in the education of foreign countries in the aspect of training a specialist who is ready to implement distance learning, and introducing them into the learning process of pedagogical universities in Kazakhstan.

To contextualize the findings of this study, it is valuable to compare them with more recent research that addresses related aspects of online foreign language teaching and learning. The study by Pikhart and Al-Obaydi (2023) examines the potential pitfalls of online foreign language teaching from the perspective of university teachers. This study complements the present research by shedding light on the challenges and issues that teachers may encounter when delivering language instruction in an online environment.

Another relevant study by Tawafak et al. (2023) explores the competency categorization and roles of online teachers from the perspective of university students. This study provides insights into students' perceptions of online teachers' competences and the roles they play in facilitating effective online language learning.

The study by Al-Obaydi et al. (2023) investigates the activation of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement of EFL college students through structured feedback in an online environment. This study offers insights into strategies for enhancing student engagement, a critical aspect of effective online language learning.

Lastly, the study by Pikhart et al. (2022) explores the subjective satisfaction with digital media in second language acquisition among younger adults in different regions. This study adds a cross-cultural perspective by examining the satisfaction levels with digital media in language learning across Europe, Asia, and Latin America. A comparison with the present research could help identify potential variations in satisfaction levels, preferences for digital tools, and cultural factors that may influence the implementation of the proposed methodical system in different regions.

Overall, comparing the findings of the present study with these more recent and relevant studies provides a broader perspective on the challenges, competences, student engagement, and cross-cultural aspects of online foreign language teaching and learning. By considering these studies alongside the original research, researchers and educators can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the field, identify areas for improvement, and further refine the proposed methodical system to enhance the quality of distance language education in diverse contexts.

2. Components of the professional competences

Therefore, in order to successfully implement distance learning models and technologies in secondary schools of the Republic of Kazakhstan, it is imperative to provide training to teachers who possess the necessary skills and competences. Particularly in the context of foreign language education, the formation of professional competences among future foreign language teachers holds significant importance.

In line with existing approaches to classifying professional competences, and guided by the logic of our study, we have identified

a comprehensive structure of competences for future foreign language teachers. These competences are cultivated among students through the pedagogical process at the university, aligning with the goals and objectives of distance learning. To elucidate the nature of these competences within the framework of distance education, we categorize them into the following groups: linguistic competences, foreign language communicative competences, psychological-pedagogical competences, methodical competences, and digital competences (Savignon, 1997; Makhmuryan, 2006; Evstigneev, 2012; Pérez and Torelló, 2012; Bentri et al., 2022; Sharata et al., 2022; Zhorabekova and Shakiyeva, 2022).

3. Possibilities for the formation of professional competences

Through an analysis of the content of academic disciplines within the educational program "Foreign language: two foreign languages" (6B01718), we have identified several possibilities for the formation of professional competences of a future foreign language teacher in the conditions of distance learning:

The first possibility entails the mastery and effective utilization of digital platforms, web technologies, and electronic learning resources. This includes familiarizing oneself with platforms such as Moodle, Canvas, web forums, Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams. Additionally, incorporating the "flipped classroom" approach (Jiao, 2021; Han, 2022) allows students to watch video lessons at home before delving into the topic during class time, thereby optimizing learning efficiency;

The second possibility involves planning, organizing, and implementing the learning process in accordance with the requirements of professional activities within a general education school. This requires a thorough understanding of distance learning models and technologies, as well as proficiency in methodological approaches and theoretical foundations of education and foreign language teaching.

The third possibility centers on the study of lexical and grammatical units, the mastery of various types of speech activities, phonology, language system manipulation, meaning determination, contextual language usage, and the application of specific techniques to foster effective interaction and develop communication skills.

The fourth possibility focuses on the development of communication abilities across different levels, including specialized, general professional, academic, and business contexts. This encompasses the formation and cultivation of speech activities within distance learning, the nurturing of critical thinking skills, information analysis and retrieval capabilities, and the acquisition of sociocultural and intercultural communication skills.

The fifth possibility entails equipping future teachers with the skills to create their own methodical systems, employ appropriate methods and models, and develop didactic and educational materials specifically designed for distance learning.

Lastly, the sixth possibility involves incorporating advanced training courses, specialized modules, and scientific and methodological seminars into educational programs or additional training initiatives for teachers. These initiatives would focus on fostering the professional competences required for future foreign language teachers engaged in distance learning.

4. Framework for designing a methodical system

To effectively implement the aforementioned possibilities, the development of a methodical system for fostering professional competences among future foreign language teachers in the context of distance learning is imperative. This methodical system should be designed to facilitate the successful acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities by students, while simultaneously fostering their motivation and personal qualities for teaching and educational work at the university level.

The development of the methodical system relies on the potential offered by academic disciplines and pedagogical practice. It is crucial to harness the capabilities of these disciplines to fully equip future teachers with the knowledge and skills required to address pedagogical challenges and develop professional competences in the context of distance learning.

The effectiveness of student training in the realm of optimal, goal-oriented pedagogical activity within the sphere of distance education hinges upon the extent to which the possibilities of academic disciplines are utilized. This utilization should involve their contribution to the future teacher's mastery of knowledge, as well as their capacity to influence the object of professional activity, while facilitating the formation and development of professional skills and abilities.

The concept of a methodical system of education and a methodical theory of education has been explored by numerous scholars. According to Stefanova (1996), a methodical system is a model that encompasses various components of the learning process, including its aims, content, methods and forms, tools, and intended learning outcomes.

At its core, the methodical system aims to effectively manage the process of fostering professional competences among future foreign language teachers, with a specific focus on the aims and objectives of distance education. It provides a structured framework for guiding the formation of these competences in alignment with the goals and requirements of distance learning.

In essence, the methodical system for the formation of professional competences of a future foreign language teacher in the conditions of distance learning can be conceived as a model comprising distinct components: the aim, content, methods and tools of teaching, forms of the learning process, and the expected outcomes (Figure 1).

4.1. Aim and objectives of the methodical system

Let us consider the components of the proposed model in more detail.

The methodical system we are designing is focused on the aim—the formation of professional competences of the future foreign language teacher in the implementation of distance learning in the learning process of the school.

This aim gives rise to several specific objectives that guide the design and implementation of the methodical system:

FIGURE 1
Methodical system of the formation of professional competencies of a future foreign language teacher in the conditions of distance learning.
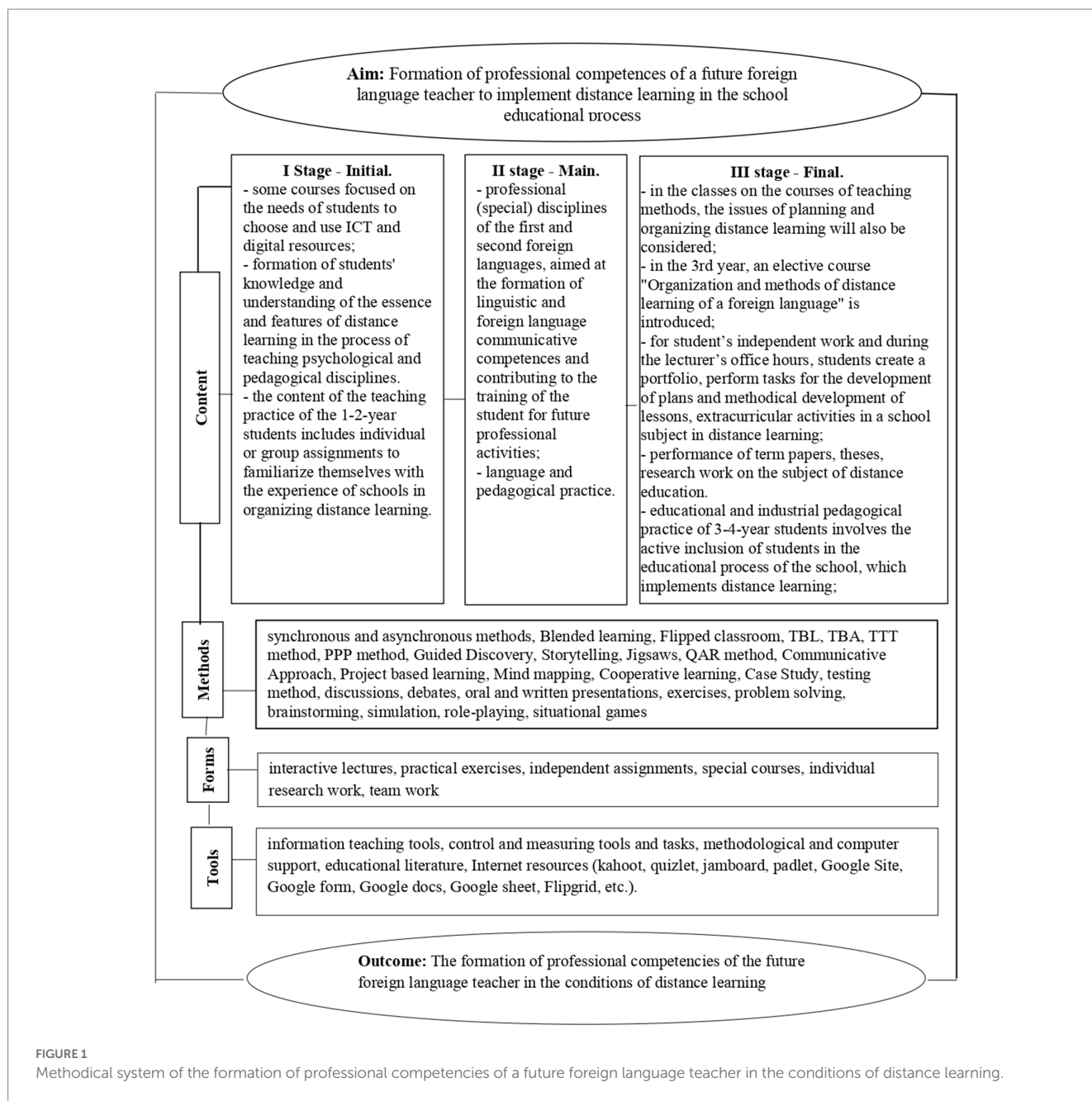
(1) Formation of a comprehensive body of general professional and specialized knowledge, equipping students with a deep understanding of the nature, planning, and organization of distance learning in the foreign language domain;

(2) Development of analytical, systematization, and practical application skills related to modern methods and technologies of distance learning. Students should become proficient in evaluating and utilizing these tools effectively;

(3) Cultivation of pedagogical abilities that enable future teachers to successfully implement distance learning within classroom settings and extracurricular activities;

(4) Enhancement of professional and personal qualities and character traits that contribute to effective engagement with students in the distance learning environment.

4.2. Stages of the process of formation of the professional competences

We recognize that the process of formation of professional competences among future foreign language teachers in the conditions of distance learning is a gradual and multi-faceted endeavor. Hence, we present its organization and implementation as a sequential progression consisting of three distinct stages: the initial stage, the main stage, and the final stage.

During the initial stage, the emphasis is placed on achieving the objectives of developing digital and psychological-pedagogical competences among future foreign language teachers and fostering student motivation for distance education.

For instance, courses such as "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)" and "Information Technology in Teaching

English" serve as focal points for establishing a robust foundation of knowledge, skills, and abilities in the effective use of contemporary information and communication technologies within the professional practices of future foreign language teachers, thereby facilitating the formation of digital competences.

Simultaneously, the psychological and pedagogical training of future foreign language teachers (e.g., through courses like "Pedagogy," "Theory and Methods of Educational Work," "Technologies of Criteria Assessment," and "Physiological and Psychological Development of Students") centers on developing students' knowledge and comprehension of the essence and characteristics of distance education. Students should acquire a profound understanding of various models and methods employed in distance education. Subsequently, this knowledge and understanding are partially applied during synchronous practical sessions, independent asynchronous learning activities, and individual work conducted during office hours.

At this stage, students embark on continuous pedagogical practice during their first and second academic years. This practice encompasses individual or group assignments that involve acquainting themselves with the experiences of educational institutions (secondary schools, gymnasiums, and lyceums) in organizing distance learning. Students engage in studying and analyzing the practices of foreign language teachers who employ distance learning methods and technologies.

During the main stage, the focus shifts towards the instruction of professional (specialized) disciplines. Students delve into the fundamentals of the language system, encompassing key linguistic and linguodidactic categories. Moreover, they explore the culture, history, and contemporary development issues of the target language's country. Simultaneously, students hone their sociocultural and intercultural communication skills within the context of distance learning. The primary objective during this stage revolves around the development of linguistic competences and foreign language communicative abilities among students.

At this stage, future teachers attain a certain level of practical and professional knowledge essential for navigating the intricacies of the language system. They also acquire the skills necessary to foster the development of various forms of speech activities and facilitate effective interaction within the distance learning environment. Through comprehensive instruction and practical application of these skills, students lay the groundwork for becoming competent and proficient foreign language educators.

The third and final stage, typically occurring during the third year of the program, assumes a prominent role in the special-methodical training of future teachers and in the formation of their professional competences within the realm of distance learning. Lectures and practical classes in specialized methodological disciplines become vital platforms for addressing the nuances of planning and organizing distance learning. Throughout this stage, students are required to create portfolios and undertake tasks focused on developing lesson plans and methodological materials tailored to the requirements of distance learning. These developments are subjected to collective discussions during practical classes and office hours, with necessary adjustments being made as needed. The most exemplary projects are submitted for review by experienced methodologists or teachers from schools where distance education is actively practiced.

Moreover, during this stage, the educational and industrial pedagogical practice of third- and fourth-year students is organized.

This practice entails active participation of future foreign language teachers in the learning process of schools operating under distance learning conditions. Rather than merely observing, students collaborate with head teachers (methodologists) from both the university and practicing schools to plan, prepare materials, and independently conduct distance (online) learning sessions. They utilize portfolios and methodological resources, engage in extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing the language and communicative knowledge of schoolchildren, and create digital learning environments for foreign language education. Additionally, students, in conjunction with schoolteachers and university methodologists, develop various options for the structure of distance learning lessons, compose reference notes, prepare didactic materials, and design electronic presentations. Throughout their practicum, trainees also learn how to effectively interact with language teachers.

Of significant importance is the development of students' skills in diagnosing and evaluating the effectiveness of distance education. It is crucial for students to have a clear understanding of the distinctive characteristics of teacher evaluation activities within the distance learning system. Furthermore, the formation and cultivation of reflective abilities, considered essential elements of a future teacher's professional competences, are emphasized by both school and university practice head teachers. Culminating conferences on pedagogical practice take the form of exhibitions and presentations showcasing innovative experiences in organizing distance learning at schools. It is worth noting that the implementation of term papers and theses addressing the topic of distance education plays a pivotal role in fostering the creative and research competences of future teachers. This is particularly effective when students conduct experimental work in schools that adopt a blended learning format or practice distance education.

4.2.1. The elective course content

During this third stage, it is imperative to introduce elective courses, such as the author's course titled "Organization and Methods of Distance Learning of a Foreign Language." The primary objective of this course is to cultivate students' professional knowledge and methodological skills pertaining to the organization of the learning process. The table below provides an outline of the thematic sections that can be covered in this elective course (Table 1).

This elective course should serve as a logical progression in the development of students' motivational and attitudinal orientation towards psychological and pedagogical activities as creative processes. It builds upon the foundational knowledge and competences acquired through the study of fundamental pedagogical and specialized disciplines, encompassing psychological, pedagogical, linguistic, and foreign language communicative aspects.

The course aims to encourage students to engage in more active and independent exploration of distance learning methods and the application of pedagogical knowledge during their teaching practice at schools. Many aspects of the course's curriculum are designed to foster independent learning among students, enabling them to actively assimilate the experiences of teaching within distance learning contexts and prepare them for the practical implementation of distance learning tools and methods in their future work at schools.

TABLE 1 Thematic plan of the elective course "Organization and methods of distance learning of a foreign language."

No.	Topics	Number of hours			
		Lecture	Practical classes	Lecturer's office hours	SIW
1	The essence and significance of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
2	Different models of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
3	Blended learning models	2	1	3	4
4	Goals and objectives of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
5	Content of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
6	Methods of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
7	Forms of organization of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
8	Tools of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
9	Distance learning technologies in teaching a foreign language	2	1	3	4
10	Evaluation of the results of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
11	Lesson planning based on distance learning	2	1	3	4
12	Organization and conduct of a foreign language lesson based on distance learning	2	1	3	4
13	Organization of extracurricular and out-of-class work in conditions of distance learning	2	1	3	4
14	Feedback and boundaries in the process of distance learning of foreign language	2	1	3	4
15	The role of a foreign language teacher in distance learning	2	1	3	4
Total:		30	15	45	60

4.3. Methods, tools and forms of teaching

The methodical system we propose encompasses various methods, tools, and forms of teaching that have been derived from educational practice and are significant in didactic theory. Among these, we highlight the following language teaching methods, which contribute to the development of students' professional linguistic and foreign language communicative competences: synchronous and asynchronous methods, blended learning, flipped classroom, task-based learning (TBL), text-based approach (TBA), test-teach-test (TTT) method, presentation-practice-production (PPP) method, guided discovery, storytelling, jigsaws, question-answer relationship (QAR) method, communicative approach, project-based learning, mind mapping, cooperative learning, case study, testing method, discussions, debates, oral and written presentations, exercises, problem-solving, brainstorming, simulation, role-playing, and situational games.

In terms of teaching forms, the following can be identified: interactive lectures, practical exercises, independent tasks, special courses, individual research work, and teamwork. Additionally, the tools of teaching include information tools, assessment and measurement tools, assignments, methodological and computer support, educational literature, and internet resources such as Kahoot, Quizlet, Jamboard, Padlet, Google Site, Google Form, Google Docs, Google Sheets, Flipgrid, and others.

The outcome of this methodical system is the formation of professional competences of the future foreign language teacher in the conditions of distance learning.

5. Conclusion

The proposed methodical system for the formation of professional competences in future foreign language teachers follows a phased implementation of distance learning. Hence, we present its organization and implementation as a sequential process consisting of three stages: initial, main, and final. Throughout different levels of education at the university, the formation of professional competences in future foreign language teachers within the context of distance learning encompasses the development of digital, psychological-pedagogical, methodical, as well as linguistic and foreign language communicative competences. These competences are directly relevant to professional pedagogical activities in general education schools.

The attainment of the desired outcome, which is the formation of professional competences in future foreign language teachers within the context of distance learning, is facilitated by the study of various courses such as "ICT" and "Information Technologies in Teaching English," foundational psychological and pedagogical disciplines, basic and specialized courses in foreign languages, both in theory and practice. Moreover, the inclusion of the elective course "Organization and Methods of Distance Learning of a Foreign Language," along with practical experience gained through pedagogical practice in real-distance learning conditions, further supports the achievement of this outcome.

To extend and follow up on the research, the following steps could be considered and recommended for further utilization of these findings and future lines of research:

- Pilot Testing (to assess the feasibility, effectiveness, and practicality of the proposed system).
- Longitudinal Study (to evaluate the long-term impact of the proposed methodical system on the professional development of future teachers).
- Comparative Study (to assess the effectiveness of the proposed methodical system in comparison to traditional teacher training methods).
- Implementation and Evaluation of the proposed elective course, "Organization and methods of distance learning of a foreign language," in pedagogical universities on a larger scale through feedback from both students and instructors to identify areas of improvement, effectiveness of the course content.

- Research Dissemination (through academic publications, conferences, workshops, and seminars).
- Continuous Improvement (Regularly review and revise the content, methods, and tools used in the training to ensure they remain relevant with the evolving demands of digital education).

By following these steps, the research can be extended and built upon, contributing to the ongoing improvement of teacher training programs for distance learning and enhancing the quality of higher professional education in the field of foreign language teaching.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

Conflict of interest

Publisher's note

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