



The Concept Sphere of Ukrainian Higher School Pedagogy: Trends of the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries



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Abstract

Socio-economic changes and transformations taking place in Ukraine today require higher educational institutions to provide high-quality training of qualified personnel. A modern graduate must not only have knowledge of the profession but also be able to navigate situations, take responsibility for decisions made, set goals, as well as calculate, predict, and achieve results. The focus on training a qualified specialist is not limited to achieving a high level of professional competence. Professional training of a specialist in modern conditions involves mandatory social training. With this in mind, we attempted to comprehensively analyze the preconditions of today's landscape of Ukrainian higher education paradigmatic and conceptual environment, based on tracing the retrospective of its development in the first decade after Ukraine's gaining independence and in the first two decades of the new millennium. Based on applying methods of integrative review and grounded theory, we formulated several findings describing Ukrainian HE's achievements, specifics, and challenges in shaping the national concept sphere of high school pedagogy.

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1 Introduction

The conceptual sphere of Ukrainian higher education pedagogy encompasses a system of concepts that reflect the scientific and professional training of specialists, the patterns of student learning and education, as well as the general processes of development of the higher education system. The key categories are development, formation, socialization, upbringing, education, training, self-education, self-education, the pedagogical process, and specifically the scientific and professional training of future specialists (Vosniadou et al., 2001).

Prioritizing lifelong learning, critical competencies, and outcomes, the conceptual framework for higher education instruction in Ukraine today is built on a competency-based approach that is integrated with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Bologna Process. Important components include implementing a modern system for quality assurance through the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA), giving institutions more autonomy, adhering to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance, and implementing a ten-level National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

In general, the Bologna Process and globalization caused Ukrainian Higher Education (HE) pedagogy to shift from a teacher-centered, state-dominated paradigm to one that is student-centered and competence-based. International standards integration, modular system development, digital technology emphasis, teacher training in contemporary assessment and ICT, and adapting to social developments like digitalization and inclusivity are some of the major changes (Boichenko et al., 2022). The emphasis has shifted to developing critical thinking abilities, giving students real-world experience, and getting them ready for a dynamic, globally integrated workforce. However, while in the countries of the Global North these transformations were ongoing during a long period of time and actually repeated the evolution of economic formations and social order, in Ukraine, the appropriate changes in the HE system and, accordingly, HE instruction were extremely rapid, which led to some misalignments, in particular, in the conceptual framework (concept sphere). Nevertheless, investigation of this extremely rapid evolution, similar to a revolutionary paradigm shift, represents a highly relevant scientific task, since it would allow better comprehension of HE processes both in Ukraine and other countries in a transitional or crisis state.

2 Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the study was the systems approach, the personal-activity approach, and the contextual approach. In the course of the study, we encountered the problem of the inconsistency (sometimes actually polar) of publications of Ukrainian scientists and experts devoted to the issues under consideration. In a number of works, obvious author' biases were observed. In this regard, we considered it most appropriate to use the grounded theory method and integrative review. We searched for literary sources directly on the Google search platform, as well as on the website of the Vernadsky National Scientific Library of Ukraine. The search was carried out using the search words "philosophy of the new Ukrainian higher education", "paradigms of higher education in Ukraine during the independence period", "conceptual sphere of Ukrainian higher education during the independence period", and "development of higher education in Ukraine during the independence period". A preliminary search allowed us to identify 54 publications. After a detailed analysis of this pool of publications, we selected the most relevant studies to our topic, revealing the issues of interest to us. Also, to enable a kind of triangulation of provisions contained in publications by Ukrainian authors, we searched for Western scholars' publications on the topic (search was carried out in Wiley and ERIC libraries databases) and found two monographic works and one systematic review, which we included in the final sample of sources. The final sample of publications was analyzed using grounded theory, which determined the structure and sequence of the study, as well as the formulated conclusions.

3 Results and Discussions

The end of the Soviet era and the first years of independence

In the 1980s, when trends of rapid decline of the Soviet social system and planned economy were observed, entropic processes also influenced the higher education system in a certain way. Many negative trends intensified. In particular, the educational process in universities was carried out based on practically unchanged curricula and programs, where theoretical disciplines occupied the dominant place, the volume of which increased due to a decrease in the number of hours spent on practice. Extensive teaching methods were mainly used, and the organization of students' independent work gradually acquired a formal character. This required updating approaches to the organization and content of professional training. Therefore, the formation of a professional-technological pedagogical paradigm in the late 1980s was objectively determined, especially since a sharp change in the socio-economic situation in the country during this period projected the need to train specialists capable of increasing the effectiveness of professional activity with the need for rapid changes in its content ([Hovakimyan et al., 2021](#)). Characteristic of this time was the need to expand the sphere of activity of an ideologically free personality. Personality-oriented technologies began to be used for training personnel. Gradually, a special "technological" approach to building the educational process as a whole emerged, and new concepts appeared: "teaching technology", "pedagogical technology", "educational technology". The purpose of introducing pedagogical technologies was to increase the efficiency of the educational process, achieve the planned results in learning. Technologies of active socio-pedagogical learning became widespread in the content and organization of specialist training: discussion methods, business games, solving educational and production tasks, etc. ([Demyanenko, 2006](#)).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a transition to a humanitarian pedagogical paradigm, which was accompanied by an increase in the trend of university education, the introduction of a multi-stage model of specialist training, the definition of universities as the main centers for the formation of highly qualified personnel based on the integration of a high level of fundamental, special and psychological and pedagogical training, humanization and humanization of the content of education. In contrast to the stage of the professional and technological pedagogical paradigm, the newest stage in the training of specialists in the social and educational sphere is defined as the time of humanitarian technologies. In the first years of independence, starting in 1991, Ukrainian higher education was experiencing a crisis caused by the severance of ties with the Soviet system, lack of funding, and the need to adapt to European standards. This led to an outflow of personnel, a decrease in the quality of education, and the search for new ways of reform, including integration into the world educational space and the transition to new educational standards ([Tadesse et al., 2020](#)).

At the same time, it should be noted that at the time of the proclamation of Ukraine's independence on August 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada had already adopted the Law "On Education" (23.05.91), which created the legal basis for the development of the national education system. According to the law, the educational sphere of Ukraine was oriented towards the comprehensive development of the human personality, which was recognized as the greatest value of society. In accordance with the law, in June 1991, the Ministry of Education of Ukraine (as the ministry was called at that time) prepared and approved the "Program for the Development of Public Education of Ukraine for the Transitional Period (1991-1995)". This document, in particular, provided for the development of more than 150 subordinate regulatory legal acts, as well as the preparation of a long-term state program for the development of higher education in Ukraine until 2005.

In November 1993, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the program "Education" ("Ukraine of the 21st Century"), according to which the decentralization of education management, individualization of the educational process, continuity of education and variability of curricula and plans, reorientation of the education sphere to priority development of the personality, etc., were envisaged. The process of reforming all links of education took place under the slogans of de-ideologization and democratization of the educational process, an appeal to national and cultural origins and traditions.

In the 90s of the 20th - early 21st centuries. more than four dozen new areas of humanitarian research were created at the NAS of Ukraine. Institutes of Oriental Studies, Ukrainian Language, East European Studies, Ukrainian Archeography, and Source Studies appeared. In the Institute of History of Ukraine during the specified period, active work was carried out on writing fundamental works on the history of the Ukrainian

people. In the field of humanities, cooperation with scientists of the Western diaspora is fruitfully developing. A significant contribution to the development of science was made by B. Hawrylyshyn, T. Hunchak, B. Kravchenko, and O. Pritsak (Bryuo, 2002).

One of the most important tasks was declared to be the orientation of education towards meeting the educational needs of each person, taking into account the national and cultural rights and requests of all citizens of the country, regardless of their ethnicity. This was carried out by updating the content of higher education, its mutual coordination at all educational levels, the introduction of advanced pedagogical concepts and technologies, taking into account the best domestic and international experience, and the formation of a new generation of pedagogical personnel. Important requirements for reform were overcoming the state monopoly in the field of education and diversifying educational programs, diversifying sources of financing and democratizing forms of management, and creating educational institutions of various types (Tkachenko, 2019).

At that time, post-Soviet society entered an era of reforms - both economic and educational. Transformation of values and priorities of social development, insufficient mobility of the education system, its inconsistency with rapid changes in social consciousness, inertia of professional consciousness of teachers oriented towards traditional values, lack of possibility of studying various examples of world pedagogical experience, isolation of the pedagogical community from communication with foreign colleagues, high inertia of the traditional system of pedagogical education - this is an incomplete list of changes that have taken place in society and education as a whole. As Luchaninova (2013) notes, they are either of a purely external nature or are aimed at changing the content of education according to the principle of updating educational information. A change in the socio-philosophical and scientific paradigm a priori determines the need to change the educational paradigm; in fact, there is no change in the educational paradigm. The traditional "knowledge" (or "cognitively oriented") paradigm of education, according to which a person is the object of the process of "arming" with a given system of knowledge, skills, and abilities, is a dead end, while the personally oriented paradigm of education, in which a person is the subject of cognition, life, and personal development, is promising (Akbash et al., 2021).

Namely during this period the task of the new higher school of Ukraine was proclaimed - to create a new young person; to educate such qualities as high professionalism, activity, efficiency, mobility, a sense of responsibility, the ability to work, quickly navigate the situation, make independent decisions, respect work; to form the need for constant updating of knowledge and self-improvement; to develop a culture of interpersonal communication, etc. All these tasks are associated with a change in the educational paradigm in higher education.

Millennium and the first decade

The new millennium was marked by a stream of endless reforms and transformations, which made it possible to integrate the domestic education system into the international space. In particular, the development of the humanistic paradigm of education was strengthened by the inclusion of higher education institutions in the Bologna Process (2005), a competency-based interdisciplinary approach and democratic principles. Thus, formally, the Ukrainian domestic education system gradually approached generally accepted European standards.

As for the formation of a new paradigm of domestic higher education, a significant step on this path was the appearance in 2002 of a strategic document - the "National Doctrine of Educational Development", which laid the foundations of a new paradigm of education - orientation towards a new type of humanistic and innovative education, its competitiveness in the European and global spaces, education of a generation of young people who will be protected and mobile in the labor market, able to make personal spiritual and worldview choices, will have the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies for lifelong learning. According to the National Strategy for the Development of Education in Ukraine for the period until 2021, its main tasks are the following (Lysenko & Volkova, 2014):

- bringing the network of higher education institutions and the higher education management system into line with the needs of the national economy and labor market demands;
- creating research universities, expanding the autonomy of higher education institutions;
- revising and approving a new list of professions of pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical workers;

- developing higher education standards oriented on a competency-based approach, consistent with the new structure of higher education levels and the National Qualifications Framework;
- expanding the interaction of higher education institutions with institutions of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine regarding the development of scientific research in the field of higher education;
- involving employers in cooperation with higher education institutions, in particular, in participating in the development of higher education standards, organizing internships for students, and resolving issues of providing graduates with their first jobs;
- further improvement of procedures and technologies for external independent assessment of academic achievements of graduates of educational institutions of the general secondary education system who have expressed a desire to enter higher educational institutions, as a prerequisite for ensuring equal access to higher education;
- re-equipment of the educational, scientific, methodological, and material and technical base of higher educational institutions.

The generally accepted concept of national pedagogy, according to European standards, has become a competency-based approach. [Bulakh et al. \(2003\)](#), considering the quality of higher education from the standpoint of a competency-based approach, define it as a set of properties and characteristics of the educational process that give it the ability to form a level of professional competence that satisfies the needs that are or will be of citizens, enterprises and organizations, society and the state ([Bulakh et al., 2003](#)). L. Tarkhan writes that the competency-based approach focuses on building the educational process according to the results of education: the educational program or course initially includes explicit and comparable parameters of description (descriptors) of what a higher education applicant will know and be able to do at the “output”. The competency model of a specialist focused on the field of professional activity is a description of what set of competencies a graduate of a higher education institution should possess, what functions he should be prepared to perform, and what should be the degree of his readiness to perform specific duties ([Tarkhan, 2010](#)).

The content of education, which became the subject of organized interaction according to the type of activity of the professional community (creative workshop, co-consultation, mutually directed learning, etc.), allowed for stimulating self-educational work in this direction and accelerating the process of becoming a professional. A similar type of relationship is characterized in modern pedagogy as “subject-subject” relations of cooperation and co-creation ([Batechko, 2018](#)) and involves replacing the “teacher-student” model with the “colleague-colleague” model. The humanitarian pedagogical paradigm, in addition to including academic and professional-technological, involves the participation of the teacher only in the role of organizer of the educational process ([Polyanska & Tymoshenko, 2019](#)). Its tasks include creating conditions for the actualization of intellectual, communicative, regulatory-behavioral resources and overall personal potential in the matter of mastering the profession in another subject of learning. The main means of relations is dialogue. It is in dialogue that certain situations are revealed that meet the needs of another person in search of new knowledge and ways of behavior. The result of this type of relationship is a new experience of self-education and self-cultivation.

The humanitarian pedagogical paradigm defines a qualitatively new level of development of directions of educational theory and practice. Its main characteristic is going beyond the boundaries of considering education in the categories of “cognition” and “practical assimilation”. It is not knowledge and professional skills that are formed, but a person as a subject of self-knowledge and their own experience ([Cantos et al., 2021](#)). A specialist of humanitarian orientation is personally connected with his profession. This means that relations with another person act as his way of life, and not a set of professional techniques. The formed attitude of a specialist to another person becomes a guarantee that he himself will now be able to successfully cope with both production problems and self-improvement, that is, with determining the prospects and pace of his own development, especially since in the conditions of global democratization of all social processes a person has ceased to be considered as a “cell of society”. An individual is interpreted as a “bio – psycho – socio – natural – cosmic being” ([Demyanenko, 2006](#)).

In this regard, the importance of all branches of knowledge involved in the science of man is being actualized: pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, sociology, age physiology, genetics, molecular biology, as well

as religion, art, etc. Pedagogy as a comprehensive science occupies a priority place among them. It should integrate human sciences, significantly expand the spheres of its influence, not limited to preschool and schooling, and focus more attention on youth and adults, because a person is educated throughout their life. Pedagogy, absorbing all the modern achievements of the humanities and other sciences, arms a person with knowledge of certain patterns and principles of their formation as a person. In this regard, pedagogy is considered a specially organized, subject-subject interaction of people, aimed at the upbringing and self-education of certain qualities of the personality, at self-changes in its motivational, intellectual, and behavioral spheres (Hazeldine et al., 2018).

One of the main tasks of the new Ukrainian pedagogy of the 21st century is to scientifically substantiate the cultural-pedagogical educational space, its content, organization, and means that will ensure broad subject-subject interaction, self-development of the individual, its free self-determination, and the fullest possible self-realization (Safonov et al., 2021). The emphasis in pedagogical interaction is shifted from external influence to the internal self-creation of a person, from mass phenomena and processes to the self-worth of the individual.

In general, in the Ukrainian HE concept sphere 'nuclei', it is also believed that higher education performs the following functions: 1) current, prognostic; 2) educational, educational, general cultural, research, and international. The main content of the activities of a higher educational institution is the formation of an innovative educational environment, which involves: changing the organization and content of education in order to integrate into the global educational space; optimizing personnel; and comprehensive improvement of teachers' professional skills through mastering innovative and experimental activities.

Practical challenges

During the years of Ukraine's independence, higher education has been humanized, structural changes have been made, and higher education institutions have been given greater independence. At the same time, there have also been negative phenomena that continue to hinder the process of full integration of Ukrainian higher education into the European educational space.

Ukrainian researcher Nezhyva (2017), criticizing the paradigm of higher education in Ukraine, writes that if we analyze the educational policy of Ukraine as a whole, covering its twenty-year period of independent development, one can say that according to the classification proposed by Dutch researchers Gorniyatska and Maasen, based on Olsen's typology (four models of state management of higher education), state educational policy in Ukraine almost completely coincides with the criteria of the "rational state - sovereign" model, which is associated, as the authors note, with an "interventionist state", with strict "state control", with a system of education management in which "higher education is considered as a tool for achieving economic and social goals". Nezhyva (2017), lists many shortcomings that, in her opinion, are grounds for attributing Ukrainian higher education to the "rational state-sovereign" model:

- The function of higher education is to implement a certain course determined by the leadership, regardless of its content;
- The assessment of higher educational institutions is carried out based on determining their political effectiveness;
- The rules of interaction are built on the hierarchical principle of subordination and subordination. The participation of society in the organization of education is limited;
- Decision-making is strictly centralized (a single center of control) from top to bottom (top down);
- Hierarchical management system;
- The all-encompassing nature of state influence;
- The autonomy of any organization is limited to the sphere of solving "technical issues";
- Changes in higher education are the result of changes in political leadership.

Nezhyva (2017), believes that the analysis of the features of the development of educational policy in Ukraine indicates the declarative nature of the pro-European development of education. In our opinion, the development of education in Ukraine from the very beginning of the founding of the state could not be progressive, because the country's leadership, although it declared a course for the establishment of a society with a pro-European orientation, in fact continued to adhere to an authoritarian form of government and build a hierarchical society with a rigid vertical of management. The researcher writes that this contradictory

was reflected in the state educational policy and is well-read in the strategic documents of the development of education, the Law "On Education" and its revisions. If, at the level of statements and claims, the leaders advocated for Ukraine's course towards rapprochement with European education systems, with the Bologna system (the relevance of which increased at the beginning of the 21st century), etc., then in fact, at the level of the law on education, programs, doctrines, concepts, etc., they adhered to the views on preserving the Soviet model of education, diluting it with the formal provisions of the Bologna system only for appearance (entourage).

It is difficult to disagree with this opinion. The situation described by Nezhyva in 2017, unfortunately, is still observed to a significant extent today. In addition, the politicization of higher education has noticeably increased, which can become a factor that hinders the development of critical thinking and ethical attitudes of impartiality.

Another vector of negative phenomena in higher education in Ukraine is that, as Yu. Kolomiyets (2021) aptly puts it, "having become carried away by European standards, we have almost completely lost our individuality".

Meanwhile, Kolomiyets (2021) calls the introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) into the Ukrainian education system unsuccessful. ECTS, which is used in the European Higher Education Area for the purpose of granting, recognizing, confirming qualifications and educational components, and promoting academic mobility of higher education applicants, has not brought the expected results in Ukraine. Of course, the curricula and guidelines were changed, but no one ever understood why all these changes were needed. This is a vivid example of how form prevails over content.

Ukrainian researchers and experts in the field of higher education include universal models (methods) of implementing positive interpersonal relationships that ensure the preservation and strengthening of a person's personal integrity (Eckel, 2023). While maintaining the general goal of education (acquiring new knowledge) and its main content (acquiring cultural experience of social behavior), the humanitarian direction differs significantly from the previous ones in that the leading method of interaction determines the attitude towards another person as a value. The subject of interaction in the continuing education of employees and managers of educational, legal, and social protection institutions is the participants in the learning process themselves: their relationships, personal capabilities, and development potentials. In joint activities, new knowledge is generated, possible under conditions of maximum activity of all participants, who bring subjective professional experience to the process of educational interaction.

However, while this concept sphere actually corresponds to the world trends in higher education pedagogy, the reality observed in Ukrainian HE is still far from the declared values. The challenges of the current war created new negative phenomena, which, while they were not included in the scope of our research, need thorough scientific investigation and comprehension. Pashkov (2021), in his thorough study, concludes that the current crisis of the Ukrainian higher education system is caused by an attempt to implement neoliberal approaches in the sector while preserving and even exacerbating unresolved post-Soviet problems. In addition, each new Ukrainian government since the beginning of the independence of the Ukrainian state has adjusted approaches to priorities in educational and scientific policy, which obviously did not contribute to the stabilization and launch of processes of sustained continuous development.

In this context, it is interesting to recall the opinion of Kremen (2012; 2024), who notes that the task of the new paradigm is to use not only the possibilities of the rational sphere, but also such equally important components of the "Self" as feelings, faith, spirituality. If the educational system wants to participate in the creation of a holistic, creative personality, such as are needed for the "knowledge society", then it should take into account the achievements of modern concepts of self-organization, primarily the concept of synergetics. Kremen (2012) argues that there is an attitude towards the formation of a synergistic personality, which actualizes not only the rational sphere of its "Self", but also other equally important properties related to the ability to feel, believe, should become a leader in education, which wants to overcome the contradictions and challenges of the modern world. Meanwhile, the concepts of feeling, faith, and spirituality can take on the role of a negative factor destabilizing society if these concepts develop "in the shell" of certain (and often changing) political narratives, which is what has been happening in Ukrainian higher education since the beginning of the 21st century. In turn, excessive politicization of the conceptual sphere of higher education, its direct dependence on the political landscape of the country, leads to its distortion and triggers dangerous entropic processes.

4 Conclusion

At a new level of its own development, pedagogy in its purpose and content is oriented towards the “man of culture”, the culturogenesis of the nation, the universal axisphere. Man is considered the goal of society, the cause and criterion of all socio-economic transformations, including the reform of the education system. This trend determines all progressive world civilizational processes. One of the main tasks of pedagogy is to scientifically substantiate the cultural-pedagogical educational space, its content, organization, and means that will ensure broad subject-subject interaction, self-development of the individual, its free self-determination, and the fullest possible self-realization. However, socio-political processes leave their mark on the implementation of formulated educational concepts, and this mark is often quite negative.

Today, Ukraine is experiencing an extremely difficult stage of its historical development in conditions of military aggression, environmental crises, and socio-economic problems. Such a situation certainly affects education. Therefore, education is faced with the problem of studying the humanistic paradigm of education, which focuses on the aspects of the basic principles of harmonious development of the individual with respect for humanitarian law, recognition of human dignity, and one's own uniqueness. Against the background of this landscape, systemic and multi-parameter research is necessary for a deep understanding of both achievements and failures in building not only the national paradigm of higher education, but also the successful, sustainable practice of its implementation.

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