

UKRAINE'S EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROGRAM IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNIZATION AND ADAPTATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE

*O PROGRAMA DE INTEGRAÇÃO EUROPEIA DA UCRÂNIA NO
CONTEXTO DA MODERNIZAÇÃO E ADAPTAÇÃO DA POLÍTICA
EDUCATIVA: ANÁLISE DO ESTADO ATUAL*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to highlight the strategies for the development of Ukrainian education in the short and long term of the integration process into the European community. The task of scientific research is focused on the correlation of the processes of integration of Ukrainian education into the European paradigm. The research methodology is based on a combination of classical and innovative approaches of scientific and pedagogical discourse. The results of the study indicate the problematic aspects of the transition of Ukrainian education to the standards of the European educational system, namely, the oversaturation of quantitative indicators with a low level of quality of education, leveling the principle of the rule of the human dimension in education. Ukrainian education is facing the socio-cultural need to integrate into the European space. This path is realized through adaptation to new conditions and modernization of the educational environment using innovative strategies.

Keywords: Ukrainian Education. Educational Innovation. Modernization of the Educational System. European Educational Space. Educational Strategies.

RESUMO

O objetivo do artigo é destacar as estratégias para o desenvolvimento da educação ucraniana a curto e longo prazo do processo de integração na comunidade europeia. A tarefa da investigação científica centra-se na correlação dos processos de integração da educação ucraniana no paradigma europeu. A metodologia de investigação baseia-se numa combinação de abordagens clássicas e inovadoras do discurso científico e pedagógico. Os resultados do estudo indicam os aspectos problemáticos da transição da educação ucraniana para os padrões do sistema educativo europeu, nomeadamente, a saturação excessiva de indicadores quantitativos com um baixo nível de qualidade da educação, nivelando o princípio da regra da dimensão humana na educação. A educação ucraniana está a enfrentar a necessidade sociocultural de se integrar no espaço europeu. Esta via é concretizada através da adaptação a novas condições e da modernização do ambiente educativo, utilizando estratégias de desenvolvimento inovadoras.

Palavras-chave: Educação Ucraniana. Inovação Educativa. Modernização do Sistema Educativo. Espaço Educativo Europeu. Estratégias Educativas.

Introduction

The state educational system reflects the socio-cultural mood in society, forming paradigmatic principles of worldview and moral beliefs in addition to traditional knowledge and competencies. Ukrainian society has clearly defined the vector of integration activity, which is aimed at the values of the European community. Thus, all spheres of social activity are oriented towards new development paradigms. Education is no exception to this transformation process, having joined the integration into the European educational space. For some time, Ukrainian education has been familiarizing itself with the new European

educational environment, declaring its intention to join it. However, it is time to move on to the implementation of institutional components and organizational transformations in Ukrainian education. The purpose of the research is to highlight the strategies for the development of Ukrainian education in the short and long term, which is expressed in the theoretical, methodological, and practice-oriented harmonization of the elements of the educational space of Ukraine and the EU. The purpose of the article is to identify two components of the integration activity of the educational system: adaptation and modernization of education. The research problem of the study highlights the thesis that the speed of implementation of adaptation and modernization of educational transformations depends on the efficiency and scale of changes. The transformation of education involves both theoretical and methodological awareness (adaptation) to new conditions and practical steps (modernization) that will ensure the transformation with the proper tools. The focus of the study is on highlighting the problems of synchronization of the educational space of Ukraine and the EU and the prospects for the formation of a common educational paradigm that harmoniously combines European values and the unique Ukrainian identity of education.

Literature review

The problem of integrating Ukrainian education into the European educational space is not new to the scientific and pedagogical discourse. For a long time, scientific research has focused on the theoretical and methodological dimensions of the correlation of educational, organizational, and research elements of education in Ukraine and the EU. Programmatic elements, educational strategies, intentions, and proposals for the format of integration - all this was an important part of the general scientific understanding of the path of integration activity.

However, recent years have become a new dimension for scientific research on this issue, as declarative intentions have been replaced by a real and practically oriented integration process. The transformation of Ukrainian education is carried

out through the vectors of adaptation to new formats of educational space and by modernizing the educational sphere in accordance with the requirements of European standards.

Promoting the idea of competency-based education is a priority for Ukraine's European integration (SAVCHENKO, LOKSHYNA, 2020, p. 237-253). It is noted that the vast majority of scientific research on this issue has been devoted to the format of educational activity. However, the purpose of education is no less important in the context of synchronizing the European and Ukrainian educational space. One of the important aspects of the program of integration of Ukrainian education into the European space, which is highlighted in the study, is the harmonization of legislative, legal, moral, and ethical norms and rules of the educational system. Education should have a clear official legal basis. This will make the activities of participants in the educational process regulated, understandable, and relevant. First of all, the integration process should bring the educational and legal framework to unified norms (REZVOROVYCH, 2023, p. 28-35). Only under such conditions will further integration at the practical, everyday and theoretical, and methodological levels be coordinated and effective.

It is worth noting that in the modern world, integration processes practically permeate all communities, countries, or unions. Therefore, Ukrainian integration is not a new phenomenon in the international education system. In general, a kind of post-classical educational paradigm is currently being formed (SANETRA, MAŁODOBRY, 2022, p. 13-19). It involves large-scale and constant integration processes, interaction, and interconnections in the educational sphere. For Ukrainian education, these processes are relevant, as the necessary experience is being gained, which should be used to avoid mistakes and optimize the planned transformations. RAK-MŁYNARSKA (2022, p. 4-13), defining the trends of future education, emphasizes the need to modernize education in the context of civilizational progress. Education is designed to define and provide a model of social progress.

Ukraine's educational integration into the European space is inevitable in the context of modern cultural and historical realities (TSEKHMISTER, 2022, p. 42-52). Ukraine's postwar recovery will be determined by the active support of the international civilized community. Under such conditions, integration will have military-political, socio-economic, and cultural dimensions. It is clear that education cannot stay away from large-scale and comprehensive integration processes. Attempts to interact between the educational environments of Europe and Ukraine, which have been actualized in recent years, should be logically completed - full unification and synchronization of the educational space.

Methodology

General background. The research methodology is focused on general scientific methods and methodology of scientific and pedagogical direction. The analysis (structural, comparative) allows us to navigate the theoretical, methodological, and practice-oriented aspects of integration activity in the educational space. Of course, most of the analysis is aimed at studying or interpreting the Ukrainian educational cluster, since the European educational space has already been formed and has received a clear analytical characterization. The use of modeling allows us to consider several options for integration policy and choose more effective components. Thanks to the modeling, the article attempts to choose the best option for institutional and organizational transformations of Ukrainian education and to identify the effective behavior of participants in the educational process in the context of integration.

It is worth noting that virtually no modern scientific research is carried out without the use of the principles of interdisciplinarity and scientific and ideological pluralism. Current scientific research also actively uses multidisciplinary. The integration of the Ukrainian education system into the European space is accompanied by social, economic, cultural, information, and technological transformations. It is almost impossible to combine these disparate elements

without the use of interdisciplinarity. Therefore, the synergistic principles of interaction are a factor in the unification of all components involved in the integration processes of education.

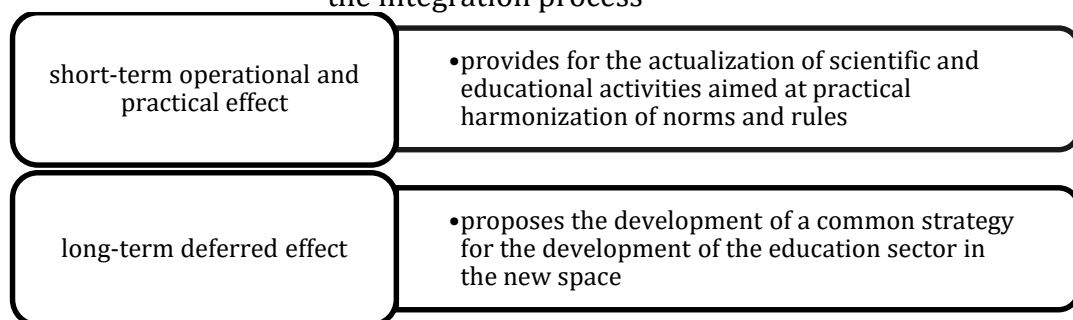
It is important to add innovative methodological approaches to the classical general scientific methods that actualize the synergy of scientific and pedagogical and information technology factors. The current study uses the methodological principle of content analysis, which characterizes the development of education at two levels: external-organizational and internal-content (PAVLYK, PUSTOVIT, 2019, p. 82). Content analysis provides an interpretation of educational elements through the prism of the use of information and communication and digital technologies. The integration process involves large-scale information support of scientific and pedagogical, organizational and institutional, and other elements of educational activities. The involvement of ICT in processing, analyzing, and broadcasting these information aspects allows to optimize these processes and increase the effectiveness of shaping public perception of integration processes.

Data analysis. Data for the study are obtained primarily from statistical and information platforms of Ukrainian educational institutions and agencies. The study uses both declarative materials about the attempts and aspirations of the Ukrainian education system to integrate into the European space and official data on the implementation of educational transformations or a description of their practical implementation in the new conditions. Statistical data indicate quantitative indicators of the adaptation process in the education sector. Educational development strategies define the content and format of educational modernization and determine the timing and indicators of expected and already implemented transformations.

Results

Integrative educational activities are fully consistent with the theoretical and ideological guidelines of the modern scientific worldview. Interdisciplinarity, pluralism, multiculturalism - all these principles can be realized only in close cooperation with advanced scientific and educational centers of international partners. Modernization of education is a complex process, as it involves multi-level transformations of the educational space. The processes of educational transformation cannot locally change only the format of educational activity, transforming the worldview and value paradigm of all participants in the educational process. The result of education modernization has two dimensions (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1 – Results of the transformation of the educational sector in the context of the integration process



Source: Prepared by the authors

The experience of integrating the educational environment into European standards is unique to the Ukrainian case. Over the past decades, several countries in Central and Eastern Europe have gone through a similar path of educational system transformation. The strategy of the Central European countries of the Visegrad Group is an example of the integration of the educational system into the European space (ROSTETSKA, NAUMKINA, 2019, p. 184). Some of these countries are quite similar to Ukraine in the context of cultural, socioeconomic, or mental, and ideological starting points from which they began their integration movement.

KHARAZISHVILI *et al.* (2021, p. 7-8) conducted a comparative analysis of the conditions under which the educational transformation was implemented in Poland and Ukraine.

The comparison with Poland is significant for Ukraine, as the two countries are geographically, historically, and culturally close. Considering the problems that accompanied this process in the Polish educational system is important for understanding the potential threats to the Ukrainian educational community.

However, the integration experience of other countries (even those with similar characteristics to Ukraine) cannot provide a roadmap that would clearly regulate all the conditions for synchronizing educational activities. The reason for this is that modern educational activity is a dynamic process characterized by many variables in the educational, pedagogical, research, or organizational dimensions. Therefore, attention should be paid not to compliance with quantitative indicators of educational activity, but to synchronization with the European general principles of educational development.

A relevant model in the context of the correlation of educational principles of Ukraine and the EU is the convergence model and harmonization format (POGREBNIYAK, DASHKOVSKA, MELNYK, 2023, p. 38). The integration of education covers the entire sphere, but the paths of individual levels or elements of education are being adapted and modernized in different ways. In particular, STEM education is synchronizing with European characteristics much faster than the socio-humanitarian cluster of education and science. The reason for this is the unification of ICT resources, which are the basis of this educational and scientific segment.

Transformation processes in the education sector should be organized and structured. For this purpose, it is advisable to use certain indicators that will signal an excessive burden on the participants of the educational process (BORONOS *et al.*, 2020, p. 308). By joining the European space, the Ukrainian education system is integrating into the paradigm of sustainable development education (HUDIMA, MALOLITNEVA, 2020, p. 42).

An obvious problem is the loss of consistency in educational development. The education system has been built for a long time and is characterized by conservatism both structurally and in the context of its perception by participants in the educational process.

Therefore, modern Ukrainian education needs to be adapted to new requirements. Obviously, this process is also complicated by socio-political problems, especially military invasion, which also require adaptation to socio-cultural conditions. At the same time, the dynamism of social development implies a constant movement towards improvement, while adaptation is regressive in its characteristics.

Adapting Ukrainian education to European standards involves activating several clusters. One of the key components is the adaptation of legal norms and principles of the educational space (KIDALOV *et al.*, 2020, p. 422). At the same time, education reform in today's dynamic conditions of socio-cultural progress should be based on the principles of flexibility (SHEVCHENKO, 2019, p. 237). It is clear that integration into the European educational space will lead to a change in state influence on education in Ukraine. Reforming the educational space with a shift in emphasis towards increased self-governance is an inevitable process of transformational change. Kvit (2020, p. 141) emphasizes the relevance of reforming education through expanding the autonomy of educational institutions (first universities, and following their example, other educational institutions). At the same time, Stavytskyi *et al.* (2019, p. 274), using the method of quantitative analysis, note that with an increase in public spending on education of only 1%, a significant increase in the level of global innovation (by 0.75 points annually) is achieved. Of course, this indicator has the potential for growth and will increase with increased integration into the European education system. When considering the level of state influence on the education sector, it is important to realize that the balance between state standards and requirements for the industry and the level of autonomy of the education system should be maintained. It is incorrect to assert that the European educational space is moving toward full autonomy. On the contrary,

the system of control and support of education in the EU is regulated and governed by two institutions at once: state and pan-European. At the same time, the regulatory and controlling function of the educational sphere is not limited to restrictive activity, but to support.

There was a certain stagnation in Ukrainian education at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (LUGOVYI *et al.*, 2019, p. 60). While school or secondary education, focused on traditional principles of functioning, did not experience a critical level of the harmful impact of regressive development, higher education became hostage to the lack of progressive transformations. The result is the absence of Ukrainian universities in international rankings.

Only in the last decade, when the European vector became dominant in Ukrainian education, has the situation changed for the better. Institutions of higher education of Ukraine are regularly included in popular university rankings. This indicates several aspects: first, the organization of educational activities of Ukrainian universities is correlated with the global principles of scientific and pedagogical activity; second, the reorientation of the functioning of Institutions of higher education of Ukraine has not only formally brought them closer to the best international standards, but also demonstrates the first results (improvement of quantitative and qualitative indicators of educational activity).

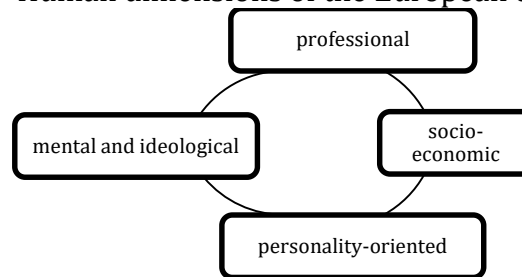
One of the aspects of the integration path of Ukrainian education is the achievement of unified standards of educational activities. Synchronization of education standards is a complex and time-consuming process. Nevertheless, the European education system itself promotes the fastest possible accession to a common educational paradigm. First of all, the activities of the European Research Area (ERA), a research and innovation space that operates in the intra-European environment and is open to other countries, are relevant (LIASHENKO, PIDORYCHEVA, ANTONIUK, 2020, p. 456). Thus, each country can join innovative models of educational development by adopting the necessary principles of work. Ukraine actively uses the opportunities of such structures both to modernize its own education and to prepare for entry into the European educational space.

Synchronization of educational systems involves multi-level and multi-factor activity. The instability in Ukraine has led to mass migration, which can also potentially become an important factor in the further development of education (MORRICE, 2022, p. 251). It is clear that a certain number of children and youth from Ukraine receive temporary education in European countries. Although this is a forced step, it brings Ukrainian students closer to gaining practical European educational experience. There is a synchronization of the educational experience for students of different educational levels, which is a key factor for changes in the pedagogical and ideological, and mental dimensions. Socio-cultural factors that are characteristic of modern Ukrainian history make the educational system relevant to the realization of new experiences. Force majeure circumstances in Ukraine have sometimes completely changed the format of educational activity. Under such conditions, unique opportunities for studying the peculiarities of the educational process are being created. In particular, if the remote (SHERMAN *et al.*, 2022, p. 13), mixed, dual (LECHACHENKO, 2019, p. 31), digital (ROSSIKHINA, ROSSIKHIN, KAGANOVSKA, 2019), and automated format of the educational process was tested during the pandemic, in Ukraine this format can be studied in the context of full implementation due to martial law and restrictions related to it. Thus, valuable indicators of innovative mechanisms with the possibility of correction and improvement are obtained.

Discussion

The integration activity of Ukrainian education into the European space causes many problematic situations that are the subject of heated debate in scientific discourse. Educational policy as understood by the European community is not limited to institutional or organizational and structural dimensions. Anthropocentric principles are included in the cluster of dominant components of educational progress (see Fig. 2).

Figure 1 – Human dimensions of the European educational space



Source: Prepared by the authors

Ukrainian education is at the stage of establishing the principles of anthropocentrism in the educational sphere. The socio-economic characteristics of education development will always remain a fundamental component of this sphere (BONDARENKO, SEMENOVA, 2020, p. 13). However, in the European interpretation, socio-economic well-being in the educational sphere implies compliance with two key requirements: financing the organizational and institutional part of education and ensuring the well-being of participants in the educational process. The functional synchronization of education in Ukraine and the EU should be implemented in the context of correlation and regression analysis in the “personality-society-economy” algorithm (MARKINA *et al.*, 2019, p. 1291). It is worth noting that European integration activity is economically justified in Ukraine, as it provides investment attractiveness. The educational sector in Ukraine is traditionally a state-funded sector, but in the European sense, education and science have the potential to achieve a certain level of profitability. Of course, the current socio-economic situation does not allow us to immediately claim to enter a competitive economic environment. Nevertheless, the European education system provides for active investment to bring education into the cluster of economically competitive ones. Professional and competence characteristics are also important factor in the effectiveness of the integration process in Ukrainian education. The dynamism of the modern world requires compliance with the standards of mobility, information and communication support, and digitalization. These realities point to the insufficiency of the traditional competence set of a teacher, which is expressed in terms of hard skills. Soft-skills are a requirement of the times for modern scientific

and pedagogical activities (KOLESNIK *et al.*, 2023, p. 413). Having flexible skills allows you to adapt faster to new educational standards and use innovative elements more effectively in modernization.

Along with fundamental and flexible skills, creative skills have a special place in the European education paradigm. Given the European community's focus on human dimensionality, the possibility of realizing creative potential (or acquiring skills for its formation) is one of the key tasks (BOICHENKO *et al.*, 2022, p. 161). In Ukraine, the creative component has traditionally been concentrated in the cluster of artistic and creative educational specialties. Therefore, it is now important to reform education taking into account the impossibility of eliminating creativity in the educational process.

Universal values and multiculturalism are the key ideological guidelines of the European education system (TOPUZOV *et al.*, 2021, p. 696). These principles become especially relevant in the context of demographic factors in Europe and Ukraine (TSYMBALENKO, TARASENKO, BIELIALOV, 2019). In general, the Ukrainian educational paradigm also adheres to these principles, but pluralistic views have not become dominant. Social and humanistic concepts are designed to reveal the content of the positions of all actors in the educational space (HLEBOVA *et al.*, 2021, p. 439). Human resource is a fundamental concept of the Western world and plays a special role in the socio-cultural dimension (BANNIKOVA, 2019). The role of a person and his or her potential is also increasing in the context of information technology threats. Education is the area where a person is positioned as a worldview and existential element that makes it impossible to prevent negative manifestations of artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

The cluster of mental and ideological elements of the human dimension of education is particularly controversial. While the organizational and institutional parameters of education can be transformed relatively quickly in accordance with new requirements, ideological guidelines must be updated in the public consciousness, which is a much more difficult process. Such transformations usually take a long time, often leaving behind many prejudices. However, given the socio-

cultural realities of today (military threat), Ukrainians have a strong desire to break any ties with previous worldviews and embrace new ideas and mental beliefs.

Conclusion

A prerequisite for the educational process is its continuity, so any changes should be coordinated and verified so as not to block the process of educational activity. The cultural and historical realities of today, which are expressed in European integration aspirations and innovative processes in education, require compliance with quality standards of education and the human dimension of this sphere of social activity. Ukraine has now formed a clear political will for European integration and a dominant public opinion on the feasibility of this process - it remains to clearly follow the ways and mechanisms of adaptation and modernization of education for a rapid and effective transition to European educational standards. The main burden now falls on the participants of the educational process - teachers, researchers, students, and organizers of the educational process. Given the principles of anthropocentricity of education that dominate the modern European educational experience, it is noted that human resources are crucial in the implementation of educational transformations. This means that educational mechanisms and tools are only the means by which the intended purpose of educational activities is achieved.

The transition from the usual worldview and mentality of “education for education” to the progressive European principle of “education for human” is a key vector of transformation in modern Ukrainian education on its integration path.

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