

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: PARADIGM SHIFTS AND MODERN CHALLENGES

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Abstract. The article explores the transformative journey of Ukraine's education system, focusing on the paradigm shifts necessitated by socio-economic transformations and global challenges. The main goal of the article is to analyze the necessity and implications of educational paradigm shifts in Ukraine amidst socio-economic transformations and global challenges, while outlining strategies to modernize the educational system to meet future demands. The article emphasizes the critical role of educators in aligning educational processes with contemporary demands. A review of pedagogical paradigms highlights the evolution from traditional authoritarian approaches to learner-centered methodologies. The study analyzes the implications of these shifts, underscoring the influence of Ukraine's transition to a market economy and its integration into global frameworks such as the Bologna Process. The methodology combines a qualitative review of legislative frameworks, policy documents, and expert analyses to assess the impact of these changes on the education sector. Key results reveal the need for personalized learning trajectories, dual education models, and modernization initiatives to address systemic inefficiencies and equip learners with the skills necessary for the 21st century. The challenges posed by resistance to change and the ongoing war with Russia further emphasize the urgency of aligning reforms with national recovery and development goals. The article also includes by advocating for an adaptive, inclusive, and innovative education system as a cornerstone of Ukraine's future prosperity. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of implemented reforms and exploring innovative strategies for integrating digital technologies and fostering global competencies among learners.

Keywords: educational paradigm; Ukraine education reform; learner-centered education; bologna process; socio-economic transformation; globalization and education; dual education models; post-war recovery.

JEL Classification: A 23, I 23, I 24, I28

Formulas: 0; **fig.:** 3; **tabl.:** 0; **bibl.:** 7

Introduction. Every individual tasked with educating others—be it a school teacher, university lecturer, or coach—must understand that within a defined timeframe, they are expected to focus attention on a specific problem, convey a structured body of information to the audience, develop the listeners' knowledge or skills regarding the issue, and stimulate their interest in further exploration of the discussed topics. Achieving this goal requires the educator to recognize that success is only possible when their interaction with the audience aligns with contemporary trends; when they comprehend the current state of education, its future aims, and the outcomes it strives to achieve. Without such understanding, the educational process risks becoming a mere waste of time for both parties, leading to a notable decline in the learners' interest and potential stress for novice educators. Therefore, an effective educational process cannot be delivered by an unprepared individual. It is the result of the educator's specialized training and their effective interaction with the learners.

Literature Review. The concept of "education" is multifaceted, its interpretation varying depending on the perspective—whether viewed as a process, the result of a process, a socio-economic factor influencing societal development, or a sector providing educational services, among others. This phenomenon can be analyzed from multiple angles.

Most educational scholars define education as a process through which society transmits accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another. Thus, in a broad sense, education refers to an activity or experience that shapes an individual's way of thinking, character, and physical abilities. Education can also be seen as a complex phenomenon comprising learning, teaching, upbringing, self-education, and socialization—essentially, all processes that develop, adapt, and shape an individual's personality.

In a narrower sense, education can be regarded as the outcome of an individual's acquisition of a specific system of knowledge, skills, and competencies, thereby achieving a particular level of intellectual, creative, and moral-ethical development, which forms their social identity.

Furthermore, education constitutes a sector of a country's economy that provides educational services to society's members and contributes to the formation of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Education, together with science, serves as the cornerstone for the development of any society. These domains collectively shape its intellectual, spiritual, and productive potential. Without modernizing and restructuring educational and scientific systems on progressive foundations, it is impossible to establish an innovative, highly spiritual, prosperous, or competitive society that fosters the comprehensive development of its members.

This question is aptly addressed by Dr. S. M. Nikolaienko (2006), Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences and Academician, who asserts: *“As an interaction between teacher and student, education in a democratic society should empower free citizens—not merely as bearers of the accumulated knowledge of previous generations, but as active, self-sufficient participants in societal progress”*.

For positive changes to occur in society, transformations are required across all sectors. Importantly, these transformations should align with global trends and the best national practices. It is essential to acknowledge that education, as a field, is inherently conservative (which may not always be a drawback). Researchers (Mudryk, V. I., Shkola, O. M., Fen Zhu, 2019) posit that *“the development of the educational system involves a change of states while preserving its foundational elements, i.e., a certain initial state that generates a new one”*.

Academician S. M. Nikolaienko (2006) aptly notes: *“In the 21st century, the significance of education as a socio-economic factor, societal stabilizer, and driver of convergence among social classes and groups has grown exponentially. On one hand, education is expected to play a pivotal role in creating a more humane global order characterized by a fair distribution of economic wealth and human-centered governance. On the other hand, European experience convincingly demonstrates that higher levels of education correlate with better living standards and more advanced democratic institutions”*.

Thus, the development of education is not an end in itself. It arises as a response to societal demand for quality human and technological resources. This is where innovative educational concepts emerge – new perspectives and visions that shape a scientific understanding of education’s development over the long term, spanning decades or even centuries. These are reflected in novel paradigms.

According to P. I. Vyshnevskaya (2009), *“A pedagogical paradigm consists of fundamental ideas and principles that are later substantiated and experimentally validated by scholars and practitioners”*. Subsequently, legislative and executive authorities institutionalize these paradigms in laws and regulations.

Moreover, pedagogical scholars have proposed numerous classifications of educational paradigms. Ukrainian researcher A. Krysovaty (2015) identifies four major paradigms in the history of human education (Figure 1).

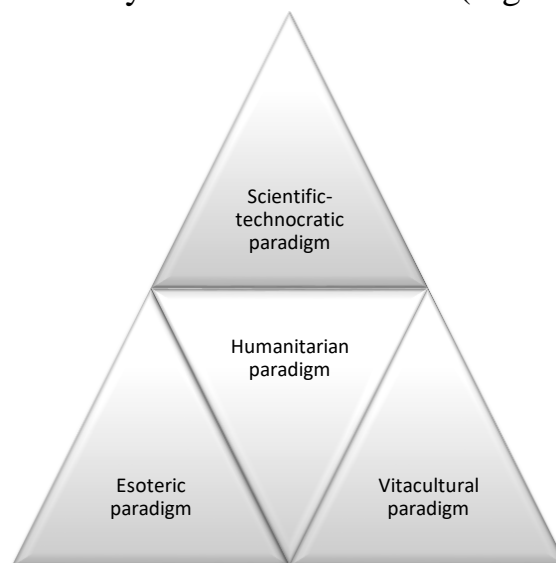


Figure 1. The four major paradigms in the history of human education by A. Krysovaty (2015)

Sources: developed by author

The **scientific-technocratic paradigm**, which prevailed for centuries, viewed students as objects of pedagogical influence and functionaries assigned specific tasks. Their role was to acquire and replicate knowledge.

In the **esoteric paradigm**, students, under the guidance of teachers, were introduced to eternal, immutable truths, undergoing transformations in their human qualities.

The **humanitarian paradigm** posits the student as a subject of knowledge. Through social interaction with the teacher, the student develops into a humane individual and responsible citizen.

The **vitacultural paradigm** (or, as some authors call it, the personality-oriented paradigm) emphasizes collaboration between students, teachers, and peers. This interaction fosters the student's self-development as a subject, personality, and individual. Furthermore, it nurtures their professional competence to address complex problems with a forward-looking perspective.

These educational paradigms, while complementing one another, gradually evolve as conceptual frameworks or internal dynamics change.

By considering and integrating these paradigms, the educational process can better respond to societal needs while adhering to progressive global and national trends.

Aim. The main goal of the article is to analyze the necessity and implications of educational paradigm shifts in Ukraine amidst socio-economic transformations and global challenges, while outlining strategies to modernize the educational system to meet future demands.

Methodology. The study employs a qualitative analysis of educational paradigms, legislative frameworks, and strategic initiatives, drawing on historical and contemporary perspectives. It incorporates a literature review of pedagogical theories and examines the influence of socio-economic changes, global trends, and national reforms on the education system in Ukraine. Policy documents, expert opinions, and statistical data form the basis for evaluating the progress and challenges of Ukraine's education sector.

Results. A critical question arises: why does the shift in paradigms become necessary, and what does it lead to?

A paradigm shift signifies a transition to a new system of rules—a new framework for action. Why does such a transition become necessary? Because certain problems can no longer be resolved within the boundaries of traditional paradigms. The situation reaches an impasse.

It is worth noting that by the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Ukraine experienced profound societal transformations. The country moved away from a command-administrative economy, adopting a course toward a market economy and the establishment of new socio-economic relationships.

As is well known, these two economic systems are antithetical in nature: they differ in terms of ownership of production means (state-owned vs. private), the method of allocating production resources (centralized distribution vs. market-based purchase), and the method of distributing end results (distribution by labor contribution vs.

property ownership). Consequently, management processes within these systems had to be fundamentally different, requiring managers with entirely distinct training and education.

At that time, Ukraine lagged significantly behind leading global nations in terms of living standards, scientific development, and education levels. This necessitated radical changes in both the industrial and educational spheres. Therefore, the concept of educational development and the educational paradigm had to be fundamentally restructured, built on entirely new principles (Khudoliy, 2005).

Thus, along with changes in economic paradigms, the educational paradigm (including its legislative and regulatory framework) also needed significant reform. The aim was to prepare a qualitatively different specialist for a market economy.

However, despite how evident this necessity may seem today, it took Ukraine nearly a decade to approach changes in education seriously. This delay cost the country valuable time, resulting in its lagging behind other nations in both the economy and education.

This raises a logical question: why are people so reluctant to embrace paradigm shifts? New paradigms expose proponents of the old paradigm to significant risks (such as the loss of authority, positions, etc.). As a result, the emergence of new ideas faces strong resistance across all domains, including education.

Simultaneously, another danger emerges – the tendency for perpetual change in the educational sector without adequate adaptation to the country's specific conditions. Nonetheless, revolutionary innovations are essential for progress (Khudoliy, 2005).

The paradigm shift in education and the modernization of its various components occurred not only due to changes in Ukraine's socio-economic structure but also under the influence of numerous global historical challenges that education had to address.

By the late 20th and early 21st centuries, most countries' education systems faced tasks requiring decisive solutions. Some of these challenges are depicted in Figure 2.

To achieve these objectives, authoritarian pedagogy had to be replaced with pedagogy of tolerance, and subject-object teacher-student relationships needed to evolve into subject-subject interactions.

To Ukraine's credit, and that of its educational leadership at the time, the nation entered the new millennium with a novel educational development concept. According to this vision, 21st-century education was to become education for the individual.

The core of such an education was to be the formation of a well-rounded, cultured, and responsible individual capable of lifelong self-education and self-development. Such individuals would be able to apply their acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities to creatively solve complex societal problems, thereby improving their own lives and contributing to the betterment of the country.

The new educational paradigm was designed to align with the novel conceptual approach. Following the example of Europe, Ukraine adopted the paradigm of learner-centered education, confirming this choice by joining the Bologna Process.

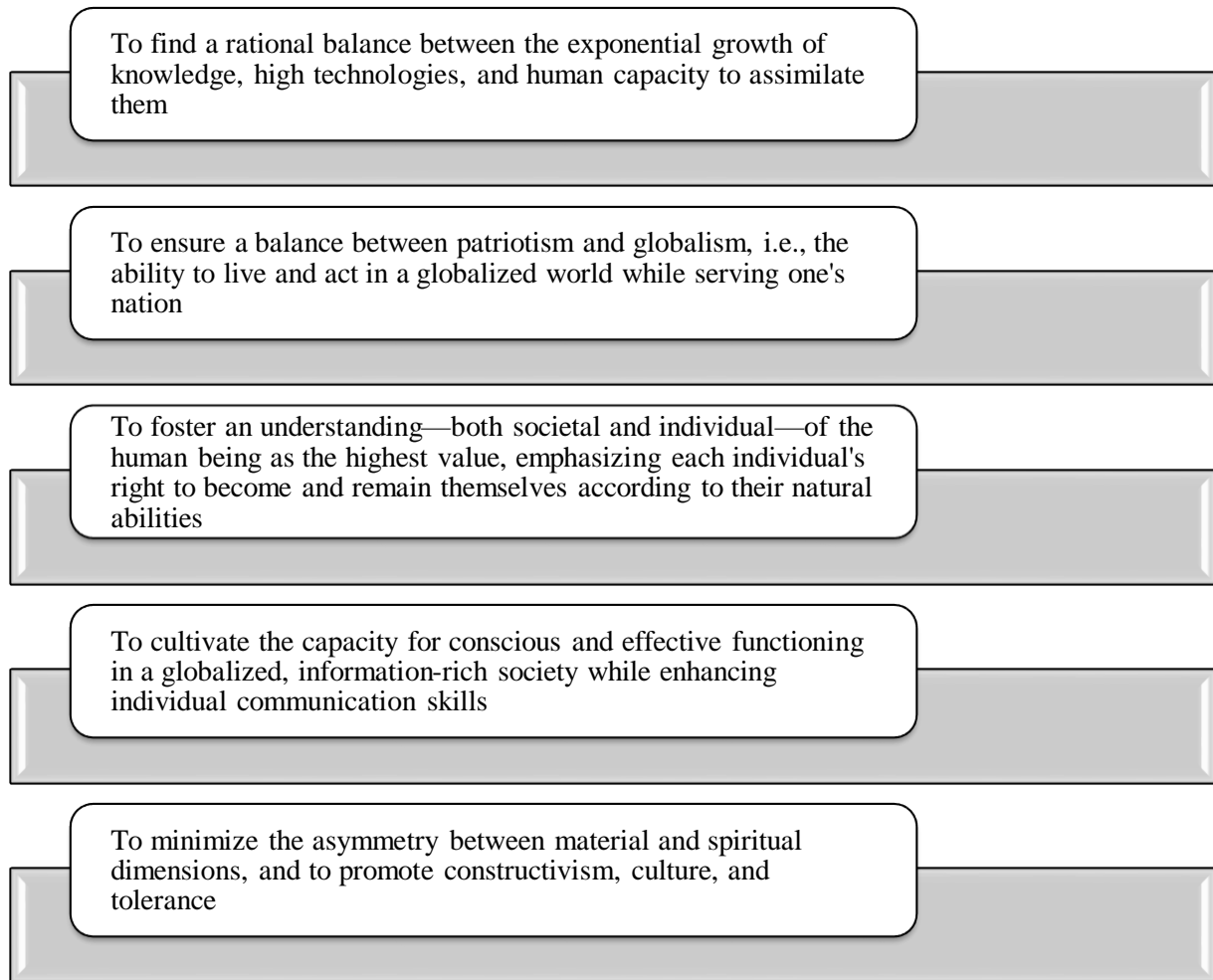


Figure 2. Key challenges facing education systems in most countries at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries

Sources: developed by author

An important clarification is provided by P.I. Vyshnevskaya (2009), who states that "personal orientation does not equate to recognizing the student as an individual or subject as the axis of the educational process. The axis is their personality, with a projection into the future".

The educational process within this paradigm is characterized by the following key elements (Figure 3).

The war with Russia has introduced additional challenges to Ukraine's educational sector, primarily the need to ensure the safe return of schoolchildren and students to offline learning. The updated concept of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MoES), entitled "Education for a Successful Country" (2024), envisions that "the result of fundamental changes in the educational sector should be the preservation and development of human capital, the creation of a modernized and safe educational environment, competitiveness of Ukrainians in the labor market, and the successful recovery and development of the country in the post-war period. We aim to prepare a new generation of Ukrainians who will excel in the modern world and contribute to transforming our country".

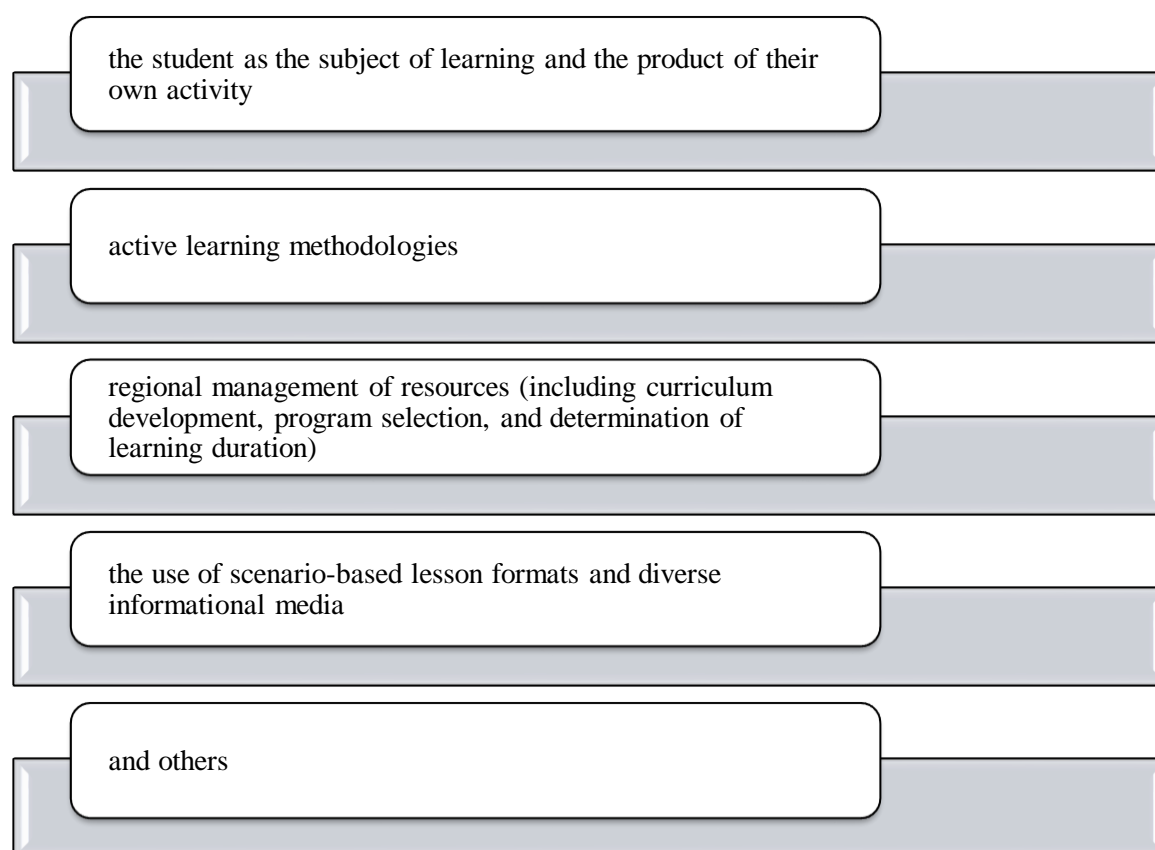


Figure 3. The key elements of the educational process within paradigm by Vyshnevskaya (2009)

Sources: developed by author

The modernization of Ukraine's educational system has the potential to inspire the younger generation to activate their potential and contribute to the recovery and further development of the national economy.

The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine through 2027 outlines priority areas that encompass the transformation of educational content, the roles of educators and researchers, governance systems, and educational spaces. At the core of all transformation directions lies the development of human potential, the realization of individual capabilities at different life stages, and the promotion of adaptability to change. Key initiatives of this plan include:

- the introduction of individualized educational trajectories that enable flexible learning paces, expanded selection of disciplines, and easier recognition of outcomes from non-formal and informal education as well as academic mobility;
- the revision of higher education standards, the development of dual education models, and improvements in the measurement of educational quality through program standardization;
- the modernization of higher education institutions (HEIs) through optimization, the advancement of educational and research equipment, dual education programs, innovation centers, and centers of excellence, among other initiatives.

Thus, the future prosperity and success of Ukraine will depend on how effectively the intellectual potential of the nation is harnessed and realized in production and societal activities.

Understanding the overarching goals set for the country's educators in the long term, we must align with these objectives during teaching sessions for any audience, in any format, and across all disciplines.

Discussion. The paradigm shift in Ukraine's education system reflects its response to transformative socio-economic conditions and global challenges. The transition from traditional authoritarian pedagogy to a learner-centered approach aligns with the Bologna Process, emphasizing individual potential and lifelong learning.

Historically, Ukraine's lag in addressing educational reforms stemmed from resistance to change and adherence to outdated frameworks, costing the nation valuable developmental time. However, recent initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, such as "Education for a Successful Country," signify a forward-thinking approach. These efforts aim to foster adaptability, innovation, and competitiveness among Ukrainians, with a focus on personalized learning trajectories, dual education models, and modernization of higher education institutions.

Globalization, technological advancements, and the need to balance national identity with global integration demand an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates critical thinking, cultural awareness, and resilience. Moreover, the ongoing war with Russia has underscored the importance of creating safe, resilient educational environments while preparing the younger generation for the nation's recovery and progress.

The challenges lie in harmonizing rapid changes with the specific needs of Ukraine's socio-economic landscape, ensuring inclusivity, and addressing disparities between material and spiritual dimensions. The effective implementation of these reforms will determine Ukraine's ability to harness its intellectual capital and achieve sustained growth and innovation in a post-war context.

Conclusion. The evolution of education reflects the dynamic interplay between societal needs, economic demands, and global trends. Ukraine's experience demonstrates the necessity of adapting educational paradigms to foster innovation, resilience, and human-centered growth. By transitioning toward learner-centered approaches and embracing global best practices, Ukraine has positioned its education system to develop individuals capable of addressing complex societal challenges.

The integration of personalized learning trajectories, dual education models, and modernization initiatives underscores the commitment to nurturing intellectual and creative potential. Furthermore, the education sector's strategic alignment with national recovery goals highlights its role in shaping a prosperous future.

As Ukraine continues to navigate its post-war recovery, the emphasis on fostering adaptability, cultural values, and professional competence among learners remains pivotal. By leveraging these advancements, the nation can empower its next generation to become active contributors to societal progress and global competitiveness.

Ultimately, the success of Ukraine's education system will hinge on its ability to remain forward-thinking, inclusive, and responsive to the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century.

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