UDC: 37.091.3:316.7(477)(4)

EUROPEANIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF UKRAINIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract. This article observes the transformation of the Ukrainian educational system within the context of European integration, with a particular focus on the challenges and opportunities that have arisen as a result of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. It highlights the growing openness of the European Education Area to cooperation with Ukraine and the establishment of favorable conditions for Ukrainian students, teachers, and researchers to continue their educational and professional development in European institutions. The study emphasizes that the war has not only disrupted traditional educational processes but also accelerated reform efforts aimed at aligning Ukraine's education with European standards and values. The analysis explores how various European initiatives—such as the eTwinning community and the "Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Schools" program—have played a crucial role in providing Ukrainian educators and learners with academic, psychological, and emotional support. These initiatives promote inclusive education, intercultural dialogue, and social adaptation for displaced Ukrainian students across Europe. The article also underlines the importance of a human-centered approach in education policy, shared by both Ukraine and the European Union, which considers education a fundamental human value and a means of personal and societal development. By analyzing examples of institutional collaboration, teacher training programs, and innovative learning platforms, the paper demonstrates that educational integration contributes not only to the continuity of learning in crisis conditions but also to the long-term modernization and Europeanization of Ukrainian education. The author concludes that educational cooperation between Ukraine and the EU represents a strategic investment in building a resilient, democratic, and intellectually unified Europe based on shared principles of inclusivity, quality, and human dignity.

Keywords: European Education Area, Ukrainian education, integration, inclusivity, educational reform, eTwinning, international cooperation, war in Ukraine, teacher support, educational policy, Europeanization, quality education, human-centered approach, innovation in education, educational resilience.

Introduction

In the context of European educational integration, it is important to understand the meaning of the term "educational space" for the effective organization of the learning process. This concept does not have a fixed legal definition and is often used alongside the term "educational environment," although they are not identical. The educational space encompasses a system of interrelated institutions, values, norms, and practices that provide conditions for educational interaction at various levels—from local to global. In contrast, the educational environment is created directly under the influence of participants in the educational process and aims to ensure quality learning

within a specific institution. In Ukrainian legislation, particularly in the Law of Ukraine "On Complete General Secondary Education," the term "safe educational environment" is defined as conditions that prevent physical, moral, or material harm to participants in the educational process. In international practice, the concept of "educational space" is interpreted more broadly—as a set of conditions and processes that unite educational systems of different countries into a common space of cooperation, exchange of experience, and standardization of educational approaches. Thus, one can speak of global, European, or Ukrainian educational spaces that interact with one another, forming a network of shared educational values and goals. According to S. Tsiura and A. Terzalova, the educational environment includes both objective and subjective characteristics that determine the pedagogical and social dimensions of education. It encompasses material and technical conditions, organizational structures, interpersonal relations, levels of motivation, and participants' value orientations.

Main text

The educational space, in turn, can be viewed as a broader framework within which individual educational environments operate, interact, and contribute to the formation of a common educational culture.

The internationalization of the educational space is one of the key trends in the development of modern education and an essential factor in Ukraine's European integration.

As Z. Cherniakova notes, the internationalization of education is the process of adapting national educational systems to global development trends, implying integration into the European and global educational spaces. This includes the modernization of organizational, methodological, and substantive components of education in accordance with international standards.

The process of internationalization can be analyzed from several perspectives. The activity-based approach involves transforming the content of education, developing new teaching methods and technologies aimed at fostering intercultural competence. The prognostic approach focuses on identifying strategic directions and future goals of integration to ensure the gradual inclusion of the educational system in

the unified European space. The competence-based approach emphasizes the development of international competencies necessary for effective participation in the globalized world, such as intercultural communication, critical thinking, and the ability to work in multicultural environments. The process-oriented approach highlights the implementation of international quality standards, as well as the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring, certification, and assessment of learning outcomes.

In the context of secondary education in Ukraine, the internationalization of the educational space manifests itself through the introduction of European educational practices, the expansion of partnerships between schools, and the development of academic mobility and international exchange programs. Participation of Ukrainian schools in initiatives such as Erasmus+, eTwinning, and other European programs contributes not only to improving educational and methodological approaches but also to fostering openness, tolerance, responsibility, and a sense of European identity among students. Thus, internationalization promotes the modernization of Ukraine's secondary education, integrating it into the broader European educational space, which in turn becomes a crucial factor in improving the quality of education and developing individuals capable of active participation in the global knowledge society.

The **New Ukrainian School** reform envisions the creation of a **modern educational environment** that provides the necessary conditions, resources, and technologies for the learning and development of students, teachers, and parents alike. In building this new educational space, Ukraine has studied the experiences of countries such as Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Poland, and Sweden. The main principles of the new model are **accessibility** and **inclusivity**, which ensure that children with special educational needs can study together with their peers in a supportive and equitable environment.

With Ukraine's **acquisition of EU candidate status in June 2022**, the education sector has gained special significance as part of the broader European integration process. This process involves the gradual alignment of political, economic, social, and other spheres with European standards. Scholars from the **National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine** emphasize that for the effective European

integration of Ukraine's educational system, it is necessary to **transform the general secondary education sector**, adapting its goals, structures, and methodologies to the principles of the European Education Area.

Transformational processes in education cannot occur without **well-developed strategic frameworks**, which serve as the foundation for sustainable reform and integration. The following strategies are proposed to guide Ukraine's educational transformation within the European context:

The first strategy, **Updating the Scientific and Pedagogical Workforce**, involves maximizing the participation of Ukrainian scholars and educators in collaboration with the European Union in the field of education, ensuring that domestic expertise is actively integrated into the international academic space.

The second strategy, **Developing a Vector for Integration of Ukraine's Educational System into the European Educational Space**, calls for the creation of a comprehensive development and reform program based on sound managerial decisions. This program should aim to enhance the quality of education while preserving national cultural identity and aligning educational priorities with European values.

The third strategy focuses on **Reforming the Financing System of Education in Ukraine** by ensuring transparency in the financial management of educational institutions, diversifying funding sources through increased involvement of patrons, sponsors, and local communities, and linking financial allocations to student enrollment and institutional performance.

Another key strategy is the **Introduction of Modern Educational Technologies**, which entails implementing a competence-based approach, incorporating both European and domestically developed educational technologies, and promoting the advancement of applied scientific research.

The strategy of **Expanding the Autonomy of Educational Institutions** aims to delegate greater authority to schools and involve local communities in decision-making processes and problem-solving, thereby fostering a sense of shared responsibility for educational outcomes [1].

Improving Teacher Training Quality is another cornerstone of the reform. It includes developing higher and postgraduate teacher education, enabling educators to implement new curricula oriented toward European integration, adopt innovative teaching methods, and participate in internships and professional exchanges in EU countries [3].

International Cooperation among Educational Institutions represents a further strategic direction, emphasizing the active use of information and communication technologies to strengthen collaboration between Ukrainian and European educational establishments, facilitating joint projects and academic partnerships [2].

Finally, the strategy of **Educational Mobility** seeks to create favorable conditions and institutional support for students aspiring to study abroad, encouraging competition and the exchange of international experience. This strategy not only enhances the competitiveness of Ukrainian education but also promotes cross-cultural understanding and the circulation of innovative ideas within the broader European educational landscape [7].

Together, these strategies form a coherent roadmap for Ukraine's integration into the **European Educational Space**, ensuring the modernization of its education system in line with democratic values, inclusivity, and global competitiveness.

The **quality of education** is a key component in the transformation of the educational system, as it ensures the effectiveness of educational services that help students develop and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in accordance with educational standards. Education plays a crucial role in the development, competitiveness, stability, and security of the state. Its significance can be viewed from two perspectives: **relative** and **absolute**. The relative aspect of educational quality refers to its compliance with state standards, while the absolute aspect reflects its correspondence to the needs and expectations of society. The principle of **standardization** lies at the core of defining educational quality.

In higher education across European countries, educational standards are typically based on the **Bologna Process**, which provides a common framework for quality

assurance, degree comparability, and academic mobility. In general secondary education, such unified criteria are less formalized; however, common norms, requirements, and principles typical of European education can be applied. These standards and approaches should be studied and adapted by Ukrainian educators and researchers to serve as benchmarks on Ukraine's path toward integration into the **European educational system**, particularly at the level of general secondary education.

In the course of analytical and scientific work, it is important to examine how **EU member states promote educational quality improvement**. This includes setting target indicators, developing comparative country rankings, and fostering cooperation and dialogue on shared educational challenges. A significant factor in ensuring quality education is the availability of **high-quality educational materials**. Textbooks and teaching aids must comply with national educational standards and meet the practical and developmental needs of both students and teachers.

The **European educational process** is characterized by innovation, and for Ukraine to successfully integrate into this space, it is vital to adopt new approaches and evolve in line with European practices. A crucial role in this process is played by the **professionalism and competence of educators**, as well as their continuous training and retraining. A modern teacher must act innovatively, apply new teaching methodologies, and use contemporary technical tools. This highlights the need for a **transformation of teacher preparation** and professional development systems. The **New Ukrainian School (NUS)** reform is designed to prepare specialists capable of working effectively in a renewed and modern educational environment [3].

To support teachers in implementing this reform, the **Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine** is carrying out a project focused on assisting teachers in basic secondary schools according to the NUS concept.

Within this initiative, materials are being developed for implementing the new **State Standard of Basic Secondary Education**, including organizational and methodological tools, a model program for teacher professional development, online training courses, and a system for assessing students' academic achievements and the

educational process's moral and civic components. All of these elements are currently undergoing **experimental testing** to ensure their practical effectiveness [2].

Another cornerstone of European education policy is the **development of inclusive educational systems** across EU member states, which led to the creation of the **European Education Area** platform. The foundation of this initiative is the **principle of equal access** for all citizens to quality and inclusive education, enshrined in the **European Social Charter**.

At the **Social Summit held in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 2017**, EU leaders endorsed the idea of establishing a European Education Area, aimed at fostering cooperation, mobility, and excellence in education across Europe. Since then, significant progress has been achieved through joint efforts in the educational sector.

For instance, almost **95% of children** in Europe have access to early childhood education from the age of four; over **40% of young people** obtain a higher education qualification; nearly **90% of young people** complete upper secondary education or hold a certificate confirming it; about **80% of recent Erasmus+ graduates** find employment within three months after completing their studies [4].

These achievements demonstrate the tangible outcomes of European cooperation in education and serve as an inspiring benchmark for Ukraine as it continues its path toward integration into the **European Education Area**, ensuring quality, inclusivity, and innovation in its national education system.

In response to the war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the **European Education Area** has become increasingly open to the **integration of the Ukrainian educational system**, creating favorable conditions for Ukrainian students, teachers, and researchers to continue their learning and professional activities within the broader European educational framework. This openness reflects not only solidarity with Ukraine but also a shared commitment to the values of human dignity, access to education, and the preservation of intellectual potential in times of crisis. [1]

As a result of the full-scale war, numerous organizations, initiatives, and partnerships have been established to **support Ukrainian educators and learners** at all levels, including general secondary education [6]. These efforts encompass financial

assistance, psychological and pedagogical support, academic mobility programs, and the adaptation of Ukrainian educational content to European standards. The **European Education Area platform** has become one of the key sources of information on projects and initiatives designed to assist the Ukrainian education system during the Russian invasion. It provides access to a wide range of educational resources, professional development opportunities, and exchange programs, facilitating the inclusion of Ukrainian education in the European academic community [3].

A vivid example of such initiatives is the **eTwinning community**, which established a special group titled *"Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Schools."* This group offers educational resources, online events, and methodological support for Ukrainian students and their teachers who have found refuge in European countries. It provides guidelines for inclusive classroom practices, adaptation strategies for displaced children, and materials aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Furthermore, eTwinning has also launched **solidarity initiatives** that include webinars, emotional support sessions for teachers, and online forums for sharing experiences among educators across Europe who work with Ukrainian students [5].

These initiatives align with the broader principles of **human-centered educational policy**, which underpin both Ukraine's and the European Union's approaches to education. This policy recognizes education not merely as an institutional or formal process but as a **fundamental human value** and a means of personal fulfillment, social integration, and civic participation. Education in this context serves as both an individual right and a collective good that contributes to the resilience and reconstruction of societies affected by war and displacement.

Moreover, the cooperation between Ukraine and EU educational institutions has taken on a **strategic and humanitarian dimension**. Many European universities and schools have established special scholarship programs, language adaptation courses, and mentorship initiatives for Ukrainian students and researchers. Partnerships between ministries of education, NGOs, and international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF have further strengthened these efforts, ensuring continuity of

learning and professional development despite the challenges of wartime disruption.

Equally important is the **psychological and emotional support** provided to teachers who have faced trauma and professional uncertainty due to the war. European partners have developed online counseling services, peer support networks, and mental health training for educators, emphasizing the importance of emotional resilience and community solidarity in education during crises.

Conclusions

Thus, the integration of Ukrainian education into the European Educational Area amid war represents not only a response to urgent humanitarian needs but also a **step toward the long-term modernization and Europeanization** of Ukraine's educational system. It fosters mutual enrichment, enhances intercultural competence, and strengthens shared European values of democracy, inclusivity, and human rights. In this sense, the ongoing cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union in the educational sphere is more than an act of solidarity — it is a profound investment in the **future of a united, educated, and resilient Europe**.

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