
TRANSFORMATION OF THE ACADEMIC LIFE IN THE 21st CENTURY



Vasyl Kremen, Dr. Sc., Prof.

President,

National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine

Kyiv, Ukraine

president@naps.gov.ua

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5459-1318>

Sergiy Kurbatov, Dr. Sc., Senior Researcher

Chief Scientific Officer,

Institute of Higher Education,

National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine

Kyiv, Ukraine

sergiy.kurbatov@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8929-7562>

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Abstract. *The article is devoted to the analyses of transformation of academic life in the 21st century. Dramatic changes of everyday life during last decades, expanding informational and communicational technologies, devaluation of the role of humanities and social sciences, arising new, “digital” young generation, i.e. these and numerous factors and challenges enforced such transformation. However, the continuation of academic tradition with the relevant role of humanities and social sciences continue to be essential for human culture and the processes of socialization of person. In this regards the role of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine as the key national institution, which provides theoretical and methodological support of teaching and learning at all levels of education is crucial, but demand a high level of flexibility in responding these challenges.*

Key words: *academic life; crisis; informational and communicative technologies; humanities and social sciences; human-centrism; National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine; transformation.*

INTRODUCTION. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The feeling of decline is something essential for historical development of human being. We could read about this dramatic decline in numerous works — from one of the first poets of European civilization Hesiod (8-7 century BC) with his idea of Iron Age and open nostalgia about Golden Age, which disappear in the past, up to the numerous philosophical commemorations of traditional culture and values from the 20th century. During last decades we could also observe many attempts “to burry” higher education and academic life. The book of Bill Readings (1960-1994) “The University in Ruins” with his peremptory formulation: “In short, the University is becoming a different kind of institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of national culture” perhaps, was the most

provocative one among such attempts (Readings, 1996: p. 3). So, are we in reality poor witnesses of the end of traditional academic life, or it is just additional one from the cycle of challenging crises, which fostering further progressive development? What transformation could we expect from the academic life in the 21st century? What institutional and other changes are mandatory for academic institutions in order to be relevant to the main challenges of contemporary challenges and demands?

LIRERATURE REVIEW

The idea of deep crisis of contemporary European civilization became extremely popular in the 20th century (Spengler, 1991; Guardini, 2001) with the special stress on specific challenges for university and academic life in general (Readings, 1996). In this situation the role of humanities and social sciences become crucial for further surviving of culture and academic life as its essential component (Nussbaum, 2002; D’Haen, 2018). Humanities are also substantial for supporting democratic development of society (Nussbaum, 2009). This approach is also reflected in contemporary Ukrainian philosophy, particularly in the concept of human-centrism (Kremen, 2009; Kurbatov, 2010).

At the same time, it is important to implement new informational and communicative technologies in teaching and learning processes (Dziuban, 2018; Vale, 2018), to transform the traditional forms of academic life according to the demands of new, “digital” generations (Prensky, 2001). The global indexes and rankings (The Global Innovation Index, 2019; The Global Competitiveness Report, 2018) could be a good resource for comparison of situation in the educational and academic spheres in different countries.

METHODOLOGY

Our methodological approach is connected with the analyses of the situation with the crisis of European civilization with the specific stress on situation in academic area in classical and contemporary literature in the area of humanities and social sciences with further attempts to apply the main ideas to contemporary Ukrainian situation (including comparative perspective). The case study of current situation and desirable transformation of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine is also provided.

MAIN RESULTS

The global civilization changed dramatically during the end of 20th and the beginning of 21st centuries. Contemporary informational and communicational technologies transformed the life of ordinary people as far as the global leaders. Access to information — one of the most mysterious things in the previous historical periods — became in this situation very available. Moreover, younger generations often perform in these areas much more successfully than the older ones. That is why Marc Prensky called young generations “digital natives” — in opposition of “digital immigrants” from the senior generations (Prensky, 2001: p. 1-6).

Without any doubts, the education and academic life in general need to be transformed in order to be more relevant to interests, needs and demands of these new digital generations. And it is important to make essential transformation not only in the content of curriculum (which is, sometimes, relevant to the situation of the second half of the 20th century or even earlier times), but in everyday practices of learning and teaching with implementation of different forms of blended education and active introducing of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). As one of the key contemporary expert in the area of higher education, Craig Calhoun mentioned in

his last year interview: “we are just beginning to feel the beginnings of a transformation driven by technology. It is however, clear that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are not the format in which that particular transformation is going to come. But the debate around MOOCs certainly signals that technology will be transformative to higher education in some form” (Vale, 2018: p. 3). Current researches prove the effectiveness of such innovative practices. According to conclusions of Charles Dzuiban et al.: “The results reported here indicate that blending maintains or increases access for most student cohorts and produces improved success rates for minority and non-minority students alike. In addition, when students express their beliefs about the effectiveness of their learning environments, blended learning enjoys the number one rank” (Dzuiban et al, 2018: p. 11).

At the same time, continuation of historical, cultural and social tradition continue to be the crucial issue for socialization of new generations, for increasing competitiveness of our Ukrainian society at European and global markets. How to combine these two dimensions in everyday educational practice harmonically, without harm to any of it, how to find “a golden mean” between them these are the tasks, which are need to be solved nowadays. This task is really difficult in our Ukrainian situation, when we need to combine global trend of optimal combination of educational traditions and innovations with our specific task to overcome the negative features of authoritarian and highly centralized system of education, which we inherited from the soviet times and to establish more open and democratic system according to the best European and world standards.

During these transformations the roles of humanities are especially valuable. Prominent American philosopher of education, Martha Nussbaum has nice and aphoristic argument for this statement: “If we want only one reason why the humanities are essential to public life in this era of rapid globalization, a sufficient such reason is that the humanities keep our eyes on the human meaning of public policy and on a rich human and ethical set of ends of human action, while economic science too easily narrows its vision, lending itself as a tool to the forces that already are committed to the all-out pursuit of profit” (Nussbaum, 2002: p. 39-40). “It is not difficult to see that the humanities provide essential ingredients for citizenship: clarity of mind, knowledge of the world, an expansive and subtle imagination” — stresses Martha Nussbaum in her conclusions (Nussbaum, 2002: p. 47). As we see, these “ingredients” are extremely important for democratic transformation of Ukrainian life.

Martha Nussbaum also identifies the axiological background of such democratic transformation: “Three values are particularly crucial to decent global citizenship. The first is the capacity of Socratic self-criticism and critical thought about one’s own tradition... The second key ability of the modern democratic citizen is the ability to see oneself as a member of a heterogeneous nation — and world — and to understand something of the history and character of the diverse groups that inhabit it. Knowledge is no guarantee of good behaviour, but ignorance is a virtual guarantee of bad behaviour... The third ability of the citizen, closely related to the first two, is what I call “narrative imagination”. This is the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (Nussbaum, 2009: p. 10-12).

The role and place of humanities in contemporary higher education is the topic of research by Theo D’Haen in the paper with a provocative title “Why Universities Better Invest in the Humanities” (D’Haen, 2018: p. 395-405). In the conclusions he formulates the following arguments: “To begin with, the humanities are necessary to determine the ethical boundaries of what technological innovation may or may not bring about. Second, only the humanities provide the scope for fashioning, both retrospectively and prospectively, individual and collective ‘scripts’, making sense of, or giving sense to, the past and the future. Third, the ever-rising costs

of scientific research and the ever-increasing demand for a speedy return on investment therein may well lead to the more profitable parts of the sciences moving out of the university and into specialized laboratories, probably increasingly so in private industry” (D’Haen, 2018: p. 404).

We are entirely sure, that a human being is both the initial source and final goal of any educational practices. This conviction is reflected in the human-centric approach and the philosophy of human-centrism. It is actively researched in Ukraine during last decades (Kremen, 2009; Kurbatov, 2010) as “not only a kind of regular philosophical and anthropological doctrine, but as a transformation of philosophizing and humanistic thinking as such into new type of meta-philosophy and worldview, which are related to the highest senses of being” (Kremen, 2009: p. 15). This new type of meta-philosophy is expected to be an innovative one and open one, as much as possible, to the new ideas, approaches and technologies from other areas of knowledge and cultures, to be interdisciplinary and internationalized. It is important, because, as Martha Nussbaum observed: “Philosophers are just as ignorant and parochial as anyone else in the humanities, when it comes to world affairs. Perhaps, they are even more so than other humanists, because of their combination of arrogance and abstraction” (Nussbaum, 2002: p. 46).

At the same time, philosophy of human-centrism is based on the idea of the essential continuation of human culture and history, on the ability to contribute specific Ukrainian approaches to global development of the human beings. Ukrainian philosopher Serhii Krymsky mentioned that globalization does not deny the national aspects of historical development, but prompt them to be relevant at global level at different compositions – and we agree with this statement (Krymsky, 2008: p. 283-284). However, we need to identify our strengths and find the optimal realistic ways for their support and development — at the national and regional levels with contributions from the state and civil society. In other words, we need to find the areas, where Ukraine is the most successful at global level. In addition, global rankings and indexes could be the valuable resource for receiving such information.

According to the Global Competitiveness Report, which is produced by the World Economic Forum, Ukraine in 2018 had the 83th position among 140 countries. Among the 12 pillars, which constitute this index — institutions; infrastructure; ICT adoption; macroeconomic stability; health; skills; product market; labour market; financial system; market size; business dynamism and innovation capability — the best performance of Ukraine (was with pillar 6 (skills), which evaluate the system of education in each particular country (Global Competitiveness Report, 2018: p. 576-577). Within the Global Innovation Index, which is produced by World Intellectual Property Organization, Ukraine was ranked the 47th among 130 countries in 2019. Ukraine demonstrated the best performance in the group knowledge & technology outputs with the 28th position in the world among seven groups of indicators — institutions; human capital & research; infrastructure; market sophistication; business sophistication; knowledge & technology outputs and creative outputs (The Global Innovation Index: Ukraine, 2019). This group of indicators also reflects the situation with education in our country.

The establishing of the new Ukrainian system of education after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is closely connected with the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine. It was established in 1992 according to Decree of the first President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk. The Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine at the beginning comprised:

- 1) Institute of Pedagogy, which was established in 1926 as Ukrainian Research Institute of Pedagogy; since 1955 it had a title Research Institute of Pedagogy of USSR;
- 2) Institute of Psychology, which was established in 1945; up to 1992 it had a title Research Institute of Psychology; since 1995 it is Gryhory Kostyuk Institute of Psychology;
- 3) Pedagogical Museum of Ukraine, which was established in 1901; it is the oldest one among these institutions.

In 2010 according to the Decree of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko the

Academy received honourable status of National. Since that time, its official title is the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine.

Currently the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine has much more complicated structure than it was at the initial years of its existence. It includes:

a) Five departments:

- 1) Department of general pedagogy and philosophy of education;
- 2) Department of psychology, age physiology and defectology;
- 3) Department of general secondary education;
- 4) Department of professional education and education for adults;
- 5) Department of higher education;

b) Ten institutions:

- 1) Institute of Pedagogy;
- 2) Gryhory Kostyuk Institute of Psychology;
- 3) Ivan Ziaziun Institute of Pedagogical and Adult Education;
- 4) Institute of Problems on Education;
- 5) Institute of Special Pedagogy;
- 6) Institute of Social and Political Psychology;
- 7) Institute of Higher Education;
- 8) Institute of Informational Technologies and Learning Tools;
- 9) Institute of Vocational Education and Training;
- 10) Institute of Gifted Child;

c) State Higher Educational Institution “University of Educational Management”;

d) Ukrainian Scientific and Methodological Centre of Applied Psychology and Social Work and

e) Vasyl Sukhomlynskyi State Scientific and Pedagogical Library of Ukraine.

Etymologically the word “academy” reminds us the great Ancient Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 BC) and his famous school outside Athens. It is symbolical and natural for academic institution to be, to some extent, “outside” the system and to observe the situation at theoretical level. Last year 986 researchers and 53 representatives of pedagogical staff had such possibility at the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine. In 2018 the main activities of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine were concentrated on theoretic-methodological and scientific-methodical support of functioning and development of national system of education according to priorities of state educational policy. What concrete dimensions of such activities could we identify?

Let us start with close cooperation with the governing bodies (Verkhovna Rada Committee on Science and Education, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Ukrainian National Council on Development of Sciences and Technologies, etc.) at national level. For example, the researchers of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine in 2018 prepared for the Committee of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Science and Education 110 proposal regarding improvement of different laws and more than 100 analytical papers.

Numerous activities were also conducted in the framework of the Program of Joint Activities of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, especially in the area of crucial reform of the Ukrainian secondary education “New Ukrainian School”. Currently the new system of funding of academic researches is elaborated in Ukraine and we are ready to provide support in finding the optimal forms of such activities.

The results of research are traditionally reflected in academic publications. In 2018 the researchers of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine published 99 monographs, 109 textbooks and manuals, 93 methodological recommendations,

1999 academic papers. We try to increase the number of publications in Scopus, Web of Science and other academic databases and had 635 such publications in 2018. In the framework of digitalization, we continue to support development of Digital Library of NAES of Ukraine. In 2018 1824 documents we additionally downloaded there. External readers used these resources about 1 million times in 2018. We maintain close links with Ukrainian academic institutions at all levels and conducted 110 experiments in cooperation with 1325 educational institutions in 2018.

Under active internationalization of academic life, the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine was involved in different forms of international cooperation. In 2018 structural units of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine participated in 45 international educational and research projects supported by the European Union, American Councils for International Education, British Council, Council of Europe, World Bank and others. We signed 15 new agreements regarding cooperation with foreign partners. Among representatives of Academy, 85 persons were involved in different types of academic mobility abroad in 2018. There are 37 foreign members from 13 countries of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine.

CONCLUSIONS

Academic life in the 21st century faced numerous challenges, which are connected with dramatic transformation of everyday life, expanding of informational and communicative technologies, increasing competitiveness in struggle for funding from the state and donors organizations. The pressure on humanities and social sciences, including educational sciences as its essential part is especially high. However, we need to remember that the most important aspects of socialization processes are connected with this particular area of human knowledge. Moreover, further democratic development of society and culture is possible only with the strengthening of the role of humanities and social sciences based on fundamental principle of human-centrism.

The National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine as a key research institution in the Ukrainian system of education during last years tried to find the optimal forms of responses to these challenges. Among the main dimensions of such responses we have identified the following:

- 1) internationalization of the academic publications with special stress on internationally recognized academic database, first of all, Scopus and Web of Science;
- 2) increasing of fundraising activities, especially among foreign and international donors' organizations;
- 3) support of improving the system of national donors' organizations and active cooperation with them;
- 4) increasing the level of academic mobility among researchers and PhD students;
- 5) digitalization of the results of researches and open access to them through electronic library;
- 6) intensive analytical support of different governmental structures as a kind of national think-tank in the area of education;
- 7) more active cooperation with different educational institutions, orientation on their needs, demands and expectation from academic activities.

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