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Natalia SALYHA,
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management named after Bohdan Stuparyk,
Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)

Наталія САЛИГА,
кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри педагогіки та освітнього менеджменту імені Богдана Ступарика,
Карпатський національний університет імені Василя Стефаника (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)
nataliia.salyha@cnu.edu.ua
ORCID ID 0000-0003-0541-4424

Lyubov PROKOPIV,
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Head of the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management named after Bohdan Stuparyk,
Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)

Любов ПРОКОПІВ,
кандидат педагогічних наук, професор, завідувач кафедри педагогіки та освітнього менеджменту імені Богдана Ступарика,
Карпатський національний університет імені Василя Стефаника (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)
liubov.prokopiv@cnu.edu.ua
ORCID ID 0000-0001-8661-510X

Inha YEHOROVA,
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management named after Bohdan Stuparyk,
Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)

Інга ЄГОРОВА,
кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри педагогіки та освітнього менеджменту імені Богдана Ступарика,
Карпатський національний університет імені Василя Стефаника (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)
inha.yehorova@cnu.edu.ua
ORCID ID 0000-0001-8070-9455

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HISTORICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF REFORMING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: FROM TRADITIONS TO MODERN TRANSFORMATIONS

Abstract. The article presents a comprehensive historical and pedagogical analysis of the reform of vocational education in Ukraine in the context of socio-economic, political, and educational transformations. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to reinterpret the historical experience of vocational education development under the conditions of European

integration, digital transformation, post-war recovery, and the modernisation of the national education system. Understanding the historical patterns of vocational education reform provides a scientific basis for ensuring continuity in educational policy, identifying sustainable development trends, and substantiating strategic directions for further modernisation.

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive historical and pedagogical analysis of vocational education reform in Ukraine, identify the main stages of its development, determine the historical and pedagogical foundations of the transformation of the vocational education system, and substantiate the current trends in its modernisation. The research methodology is based on a combination of historical-genetic, historical-comparative, structural-logical, analytical, synthetic, systematisation, generalisation, and periodisation methods, which enabled the authors to examine the evolution of vocational education and reveal the continuity of educational reforms.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the comprehensive substantiation of the historical and pedagogical periodisation of vocational education reform in Ukraine, taking into account modern transformational processes, European integration priorities, and recent legislative changes. Four major stages in the development of vocational education are identified and characterised. The study reveals the relationship between historically established traditions of vocational training and the contemporary competency-based model of education. Particular attention is devoted to the influence of digitalisation, dual education, employer partnerships, European quality assurance mechanisms, and the implementation of the new Law of Ukraine "On Vocational Education" (2025), which establishes updated legal foundations for further development of the sector.

The practical significance of the research consists in the possibility of applying its findings to the improvement of educational policy, legislative and methodological support for vocational education, the development of educational programmes and teaching materials, and the training of future education managers and vocational education teachers. The obtained results may also be used in the activities of vocational education institutions, institutions of postgraduate education, public authorities responsible for education, and in further historical and pedagogical research on the development of vocational education within the European educational area.

Keywords: vocational education; vocational education reform; history of vocational education; vocational pedagogy; European integration; competency-based approach; digitalisation of education; dual education.

ІСТОРИКО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ ЗАСАДИ РЕФОРМУВАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ В УКРАЇНІ: ВІД ТРАДИЦІЙ ДО СУЧАСНИХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЙ

Анотація. У статті здійснено комплексний історико-педагогічний аналіз реформування професійної освіти в Україні в контексті суспільно-політичних, соціально-економічних та освітніх трансформацій. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю наукового осмислення історичного досвіду розвитку професійної освіти в умовах сучасних реформ, європейської інтеграції, цифровізації освітнього процесу та післявоєнного відновлення України. Вивчення історичних закономірностей реформування професійної освіти дає можливість визначити основні тенденції її еволюції, забезпечити наступність освітніх змін та окреслити перспективні напрями модернізації відповідно до сучасних викликів.

Метою дослідження є комплексний історико-педагогічний аналіз реформування професійної освіти в Україні, визначення основних етапів її розвитку, виявлення історико-педагогічних засад трансформації системи професійної освіти та обґрунтування сучасних тенденцій її модернізації. Методологічну основу дослідження становлять історико-генетичний, історико-порівняльний, структурно-логічний методи, а також методи аналізу, синтезу, систематизації, узагальнення та періодизації, що дали змогу простежити еволюцію професійної освіти та визначити закономірності її реформування.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у комплексному обґрунтуванні історико-педагогічної періодизації реформування професійної освіти України з урахуванням сучасних трансформаційних процесів, європейських інтеграційних орієнтирів і нових законодавчих змін. Виокремлено чотири основні етапи розвитку професійної освіти, розкрито їх характерні особливості, визначено взаємозв'язок між історично сформованими традиціями професійної підготовки та сучасною компетентнісною моделлю освіти. Особливу увагу приділено впливу цифровізації, розвитку дуальної освіти, партнерства з роботодавцями, європейських механізмів забезпечення якості професійної освіти та впровадженню нового Закону України «Про професійну освіту» як нормативної основи подальшої модернізації галузі.

Практичне значення одержаних результатів полягає у можливості використання узагальнених положень і висновків під час розроблення освітньої політики, удосконалення нормативно-правового забезпечення професійної освіти, підготовки навчально-методичних матеріалів, викладання дисциплін історико-педагогічного циклу, професійної педагогіки, освітнього менеджменту та порівняльної педагогіки. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані в діяльності закладів професійної освіти, установ післядипломної освіти, органів управління освітою та під час подальших наукових досліджень проблем розвитку професійної освіти України в європейському освітньому просторі.

Ключові слова: професійна освіта; реформування професійної освіти; історія професійної освіти; професійна педагогіка; європейська інтеграція; компетентнісний підхід; цифровізація освіти; дуальна освіта.

INTRODUCTION

The problem formulation. Vocational education is one of the key drivers of a country's socio-economic development, as it ensures the training of a skilled workforce in accordance with labour market demands, technological progress, and societal needs. In the context of Ukraine's European integration, the digital transformation of the economy, the country's post-war recovery, and the modernisation of the education system, rethinking the historical experience of vocational education reform has become particularly relevant. Analysing the evolution of vocational education makes it possible to identify the patterns of educational change, trace the continuity of pedagogical ideas, assess the effectiveness of previous reforms, and determine the conceptual foundations for the further improvement of educational policy.

The history of vocational education in Ukraine demonstrates that its reform has been shaped by socio-economic, political, and cultural transformations. Each historical stage was characterised by its own approaches to the organisation of vocational training, curriculum content, cooperation between education and industry, and the role of the state in developing human

resources. At the same time, contemporary reforms of vocational education are based not only on national traditions but also on European principles of competency-based education, human capital development, lifelong learning, the digitalisation of the educational process, and the expansion of partnerships between educational institutions and employers. From this perspective, historical and pedagogical analysis acquires not only retrospective but also prognostic significance, as it makes it possible to identify promising directions for the further development of vocational education in Ukraine.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in a comprehensive historical and pedagogical analysis of vocational education reform in Ukraine through the prism of historical continuity, contemporary transformational processes, and European integration trends. The practical significance of the research consists in generalising the historical experience of vocational education development, identifying the principal stages of its reform, and outlining current directions for its further modernisation.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issues of the establishment and development of vocational education in Ukraine have been addressed in the works of numerous Ukrainian scholars. The historical features and stages of vocational education development have been investigated by Anisimov, 2011; Bidenko, 2010; Hren, 2018; Ivchenko, 2016; and Seletskyi, 2011. The history of Ukrainian education and pedagogy has been comprehensively examined by Bondarchuk, 2008; Liubar et al., 2003; Siropolko, 2001, as well as in the textbooks by Luzan and Vasiuk, 2010; Zadorozhna-Kniahnytska, 2020; Dedovych, 2025, and others.

Significant contributions to the theoretical foundations and contemporary trends in vocational education development have been made by Holovko, 2015; Likarchuk, 1999; Nychkalo, 2008, 2015; and Radkevych, 2017, 2022, 2025. The collective monograph by Radkevych et al., 2021 examines the development of vocational education in the context of European integration. Their studies address the modernisation of vocational education, its scientific and methodological support, European integration, and reforms implemented in response to contemporary societal challenges. Comparative analyses of vocational education development in Ukraine and European countries have been presented by Fedoryshyn et al., 2026 and Lukashevych, 2024, whereas current development prospects have been summarised by Nikolaienko, 2026.

The analysis of the available scholarly literature indicates the need for a more comprehensive examination of the historical and pedagogical prerequisites for the development of vocational education in Ukraine, particularly the patterns of its evolution across different historical periods and the influence of European integration processes on the transformation of the national vocational education system.

AIM AND TASKS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive historical and pedagogical analysis of vocational education reform in Ukraine, identify the major stages of its development, determine the historical and pedagogical foundations of the transformation of the vocational education system, and substantiate the current trends in its modernisation within the context of European integration, digitalisation, and contemporary societal challenges.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. to analyse the historical and pedagogical prerequisites for the establishment and development of vocational education in Ukraine;
2. to identify the principal stages of vocational education reform and characterise their distinctive features;
3. to determine the influence of socio-economic, political, and pedagogical factors on the transformation of the vocational education system;
4. to reveal the role of European integration processes in the modernisation of vocational education in Ukraine;
5. to identify current trends in vocational education reform and outline promising directions for its further development.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodological framework of the study is based on a combination of general scientific and specialised historical-pedagogical methods. The historical-genetic method was employed to examine the evolution of vocational education and identify the patterns of its establishment and development throughout different historical periods. The historical-comparative method was used to compare the content, objectives, and mechanisms of vocational education reform at different stages of its development and to determine their continuity. Methods of analysis, synthesis, generalisation, and systematisation made it possible to identify the historical and pedagogical approaches to vocational education reform. The periodisation method was applied to distinguish and substantiate the major stages in the development of vocational education in Ukraine. In addition, the structural-logical method was used to establish the interrelationships between historical traditions, contemporary reforms, and prospective directions for the further development of vocational education.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Vocational education in Ukraine has evolved through a long historical process during which socio-economic conditions, forms of labour organisation, and approaches to workforce training have continuously changed. An analysis of the historical and pedagogical prerequisites makes it possible to trace the patterns of vocational education development, identify the factors that determined the content of reforms during different historical periods, and assess the degree of continuity between traditional models of vocational training and contemporary transformational processes. Previous studies (Anisimov, 2011; Bidenko, 2010; Bondarchuk, 2008; Holovko, 2015; Hren, 2018; Dedovych, 2025; Zadorozhna-Kniahnytska, 2020; Ivchenko, 2016; Likarchuk, 1999; Nychkalo, 2015; Nychkalo, 2008; Seletskyi, 2011; Siropolko, 2001; Fedoryshyn et al., 2026; Chyrva, 2019; Lukashevych, 2024) demonstrate that the

reform of vocational education in Ukraine has not been an isolated phenomenon but has reflected broader European trends in the modernisation of vocational education and training (VET).

The first organised forms of vocational training in the Ukrainian lands emerged during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period (the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries), when crafts and urban self-government were developing intensively. Training was provided directly in craftsmen's workshops, where apprentices gradually mastered their trade through long-term practical experience. This system was based on the principles of individual mentorship, the continuous transfer of professional expertise, and the integration of learning with productive work (Anisimov, 2011; Bondarchuk, 2008; Holovko, 2015; Luzan & Vasiuk, 2010; Liubar et al., 2003; Siropolko, 2001; Chyrva, 2019). Despite the absence of specialised educational institutions, this model laid the pedagogical foundation for integrating theoretical knowledge with practical activity, which remains one of the fundamental principles of vocational education today.

The further development of vocational training was closely associated with the activities of craft guilds, which performed not only economic but also educational functions. Guild organisation regulated apprentices' training, the duration of instruction, professional competency requirements, and the procedures for attaining the status of master craftsman. Importantly, vocational training encompassed not only the acquisition of occupational skills but also the formation of professional ethics, responsibility, corporate culture, and adherence to quality standards (Anisimov, 2011; Bondarchuk, 2008; Holovko, 2015; Luzan & Vasiuk, 2010; Liubar et al., 2003; Siropolko, 2001; Chyrva, 2019). From a pedagogical perspective, the guild system can be regarded as one of the earliest examples of the institutionalisation of vocational education, as it combined educational, developmental, and socialisation functions.

During the nineteenth century, under the influence of the Industrial Revolution, vocational education acquired a fundamentally new character. Industrial production created a growing demand for skilled workers capable of operating new technologies, which stimulated the establishment of craft, technical, industrial, commercial, and agricultural educational institutions. During this period, vocational training gradually evolved from individual apprenticeship to a systematic educational process based on structured curricula, the integration of general and specialised education, and state regulation of workforce preparation (Anisimov, 2011; Bondarchuk, 2008; Holovko, 2015; Hren, 2018; Likarchuk, 1999; Liubar et al., 2003; Nychkalo, 2015; Seletskyi, 2011; Fedoryshyn et al., 2026; Chyrva, 2019). This transition effectively marked the emergence of the modern understanding of vocational education as an independent component of the national education system.

The subsequent stage in the development of vocational education was associated with the industrialisation of the first half of the twentieth century. Large-scale industrial production led to the establishment of factory apprenticeship schools, factory training schools, technical colleges, and vocational schools. The primary objective was to prepare skilled workers in accordance with the needs of the economy, which resulted in strengthening the practical component of education, expanding workplace training, and promoting close cooperation between educational institutions and industrial enterprises (Hren, 2018; Likarchuk, 1999; Seletskyi, 2011; Siropolko, 2001; Chyrva, 2019). It was during this period that the organisational foundations of vocational education were established, many of which were subsequently transformed and adapted to the contemporary vocational education system of Ukraine.

The development of vocational education was also significantly influenced by pedagogical concepts of labour education, according to which productive work was regarded as an essential factor in personal development, the formation of professional culture, and civic responsibility. The ideas of integrating learning with productive activity, fostering independence, developing a creative attitude towards work, and ensuring the practical orientation of education became the methodological basis for the subsequent reform of vocational education (Anisimov, 2011; Holovko, 2015; Hren, 2018; Ivchenko, 2016; Luzan & Vasiuk, 2010; Nychkalo, 2015; Seletskyi, 2011; Siropolko, 2001). Contemporary scholars emphasise that the historically established principle of integrating education with production has now evolved into models of dual education, employer partnerships, and competency-based learning, which correspond to European approaches to the development of national vocational education systems.

The reform of vocational education in Ukraine has been a continuous process reflecting the country's socio-economic and political transformations. Changes in social relations, technological advances in production, labour market modernisation, and integration into the European educational area have necessitated revisions to the content of vocational training, governance models of educational institutions, funding mechanisms, and cooperation with employers. An analysis of historical development makes it possible to distinguish four interrelated stages of reform, each characterised by its own priorities, regulatory framework, and pedagogical approaches.

The first stage, the emergence and institutionalisation of vocational education (until 1914), was characterised by the establishment of an organised vocational education system, the creation of specialised educational institutions, and the formation of the corresponding theoretical and pedagogical foundations. Whereas vocational training had initially been provided mainly through apprenticeship under master craftsmen and the guild system, the nineteenth century witnessed the development of a network of specialised craft, technical, commercial, and agricultural educational institutions. The industrial modernisation of the Ukrainian lands within different state entities contributed to the establishment of real schools, lower technical schools, industrial schools, and vocational courses aimed at preparing skilled workers for industry, transport, and agriculture. During this period, the principle of combining theoretical instruction with practical training was established, later becoming one of the fundamental principles of vocational education (Anisimov, 2011; Holovko, 2015; Nychkalo, 2008).

The second stage was associated with the Soviet period (1917–1991), when vocational education became an integral component of the centralised state system for workforce training. Its primary objective was to provide the labour resources required for industrialisation and the planned economy. The most characteristic organisational forms

of vocational education during this period included factory apprenticeship schools, craft schools, vocational schools, and technical colleges, whose activities were coordinated in accordance with state economic development plans (Holovko, 2015; Hren, 2018; Ivchenko, 2016; Seletskyi, 2011).

A distinctive feature of the Soviet model was the close integration of vocational education with industrial production. Enterprises actively participated in developing the material resources of educational institutions, organising workplace training, and employing graduates. At the same time, the centralised governance system limited the autonomy of educational institutions, while the content of vocational training was determined primarily by the requirements of the planned economy, with insufficient consideration given to learners' individual educational needs and regional specificities.

The third stage began after Ukraine gained independence in 1991 and was characterised by the transition to a market economy. Fundamental economic changes required the comprehensive modernisation of the vocational education system. A significant milestone was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Vocational (Vocational-Technical) Education" (1998), which established new legal foundations for the sector, introducing the principles of institutional diversity, programme flexibility, institutional autonomy, and cooperation with employers (Bidenko, 2010; Holovko, 2015; Likarchuk, 1999; Nychkalo, 2015; Nychkalo, 2008).

During this period, vocational education gradually shifted from fulfilling the state workforce order to addressing the needs of regional labour markets. Considerable attention was devoted to the implementation of state vocational education standards, the competency-based approach, modular learning technologies, and the expansion of international educational projects and cooperation with European organisations. At the same time, the system faced substantial challenges associated with reduced funding, declining student enrolment, and the mismatch between vocational training and the contemporary needs of the economy (Nychkalo, 2015; Radkevych, 2022; Radkevych, 2017).

The most dynamic phase has been the contemporary stage of reform (2014–2026), which began after the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union and has been characterised by the comprehensive modernisation of vocational education in accordance with European standards. The principal reform priorities have included the decentralisation of governance, the establishment of Centres of Vocational Excellence, the revision of state standards based on the competency-based approach, the development of public-private partnerships, the digitalisation of the educational process, and the implementation of elements of dual education (Lukashevych, 2024; Nikolaienko, 2026; Radkevych, 2022; Radkevych, 2017; Radkevych et al., 2021; Radkevych, 2025).

Particular emphasis has been placed on integrating vocational education into regional development strategies, strengthening employers' participation in the design of educational programmes, modernising the material and technical infrastructure of educational institutions, and developing professional competencies in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework. Additional impetus for reform has been provided by the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the full-scale war, and the need for Ukraine's post-war recovery, all of which have accelerated the development of digital learning technologies, short-term reskilling programmes, and flexible models of vocational training (Lukashevych, 2024; Nikolaienko, 2026; Radkevych, 2022; Radkevych, 2017; Radkevych et al., 2021; Radkevych, 2025).

This historical retrospective makes it possible to distinguish four principal stages in the development of vocational education in Ukraine (Table 1).

Table 1

Stages of the Reform of Vocational Education in Ukraine

Historical Period	Main Characteristics	Major Reforms	Features of Vocational Training
Emergence and Institutionalisation (before 1914)	Formation of the vocational education system; development of craft, technical, and industrial schools	Establishment of specialised vocational educational institutions; expansion of technical education	Integration of theoretical instruction with practical training; preparation for crafts, industry, and agriculture
Soviet Period (1917–1991)	Centralised workforce training system serving the planned economy	Establishment of a network of Factory Apprenticeship Schools (FZU), vocational schools, and vocational-technical schools (PTUs); state planning of workforce training	Large-scale preparation of skilled workers; close integration with industrial production; guaranteed employment
Period of Independence (1991–2013)	Reorientation towards a market economy; modernisation of the legislative framework	Adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Vocational (Vocational-Technical) Education" (1998); introduction of state educational standards; implementation of the competency-based approach	Diversification of educational programmes; cooperation with employers; modernisation of curricula
Contemporary Stage (2014–2026)	European integration, digitalisation, decentralisation, and development of partnerships	Revision of educational standards; expansion of dual education; establishment of Centres of Vocational Excellence; digital transformation	Competency-based training model; integration of digital technologies; lifelong learning; adaptation to labour market needs

The proposed periodisation demonstrates that the reform of vocational education has followed an evolutionary trajectory. Whereas the primary objective during the early stages was to prepare craftsmen and workers for individual sectors of the economy, the Soviet system was designed to meet the workforce requirements of a centrally planned economy. Following Ukraine's independence, the principal priority became the adaptation of vocational education to market conditions, while the contemporary stage has been characterised by the transition to a competency-based model founded on partnership among the state, employers, and educational institutions.

Several stable patterns of vocational education reform can also be identified. First, every major socio-economic transformation has been accompanied by the renewal of the vocational education system. Second, governance has gradually become more decentralised, accompanied by an expansion of the institutional autonomy of vocational education providers. Third, the relationship between education and the labour market has been strengthened, resulting in the increasing involvement of employers in shaping the content of vocational training. Finally, the current stage is characterised by the transition from a qualification-based to a competency-based model of vocational education, the extensive use of digital technologies, and integration into the European educational area, all of which define the strategic directions for the further development of the system.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the reform of vocational education in Ukraine has increasingly been implemented in accordance with European approaches to education and vocational training. Whereas previous stages of modernisation were primarily aimed at adapting the system to domestic socio-economic changes, the contemporary stage has been driven by the need to integrate into the European Education Area, ensure learner mobility, promote the mutual recognition of qualifications, and enhance the competitiveness of human capital.

One of the defining trends in the modernisation of vocational education has been the implementation of the competency-based approach. Unlike the traditional model, which primarily focused on the transmission of knowledge and the development of specific occupational skills, the contemporary system aims to develop integrated competencies combining professional knowledge, practical experience, communication skills, digital literacy, teamwork, decision-making, and the ability to adapt to rapid technological change. Today, the competency-based approach constitutes the methodological foundation for the development of state vocational education standards and educational programmes (Nikolaienko, 2026; Nychkalo, 2015; Radkevych, 2022; Radkevych, 2017; Radkevych et al., 2021; Radkevych, 2025).

Digitalisation has also exerted a significant influence on the modernisation of vocational education. The use of digital educational platforms, distance learning systems, virtual laboratories, simulators, augmented and virtual reality technologies, electronic educational resources, and artificial intelligence tools has substantially expanded the possibilities for vocational training. These technologies facilitate personalised learning, improve access to education, enable the rapid updating of educational content in line with technological advances, and contribute to the development of the digital competencies required of the contemporary workforce. At the same time, the effectiveness of digital transformation in vocational education depends substantially on teachers' digital competence and their capacity to integrate technological tools into professional practice (Cattaneo et al., 2022).

A landmark in the modernisation of Ukraine's vocational education system was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Vocational Education" on 21 August 2025, which replaced the Law of Ukraine "On Vocational (Vocational-Technical) Education" (1998) and established a new legal framework for the sector. The new legislation is aimed at creating a flexible and modern vocational education system responsive to labour market demands, promoting competency-based education, expanding the autonomy of educational institutions, strengthening the role of employers in workforce training, introducing new funding mechanisms, and ensuring opportunities for lifelong learning. The Law also provides for the development of vocational colleges and Centres of Vocational Excellence, supports the implementation of dual education, facilitates integration into the European educational area, and creates the regulatory conditions necessary for the further digital transformation of vocational education in Ukraine.

The comprehensive implementation of European approaches has fundamentally transformed the philosophy of vocational education. Whereas the traditional system was primarily intended to fulfil the state's workforce demand, the contemporary model is based on partnership among the state, educational institutions, employers, and learners, thereby ensuring flexibility, openness, and responsiveness to the needs of an innovation-driven economy (Table 2).

The data presented in Table 2 demonstrate that contemporary vocational education is undergoing not only technological but also conceptual transformation. The defining features of the new model include the competency-based approach, the integration of education and industry, the digitalisation of the educational process, academic mobility, and an orientation towards lifelong professional development. These trends determine the strategic directions for the further reform of vocational education in Ukraine in accordance with European standards.

Vocational education in Ukraine is currently undergoing profound transformation driven simultaneously by the digital revolution, integration into the European Union, structural changes in the labour market, and the necessity of the country's post-war recovery. Unlike previous stages of reform, contemporary changes are comprehensive in nature and affect not only the content of workforce training but also governance models, funding mechanisms, the organisation of the educational process, and cooperation with social partners. The principal objective of vocational education has become the preparation of competitive professionals capable of rapidly adapting to technological change, mastering new occupations, and engaging in lifelong learning.

A new phase of digital transformation has been marked by the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. Generative AI models are being widely employed in the development of educational materials, the automation of assessment, the design of personalised learning pathways, the simulation of workplace situations, and the provision of academic support for learners. At the same time, the rapid integration of AI has intensified concerns

regarding academic integrity, the development of critical thinking, digital literacy, and the cultivation of responsible AI use. Consequently, contemporary vocational education must not only exploit the opportunities provided by artificial intelligence but also prepare future professionals to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs.

Table 2

Traditional and Contemporary Models of Vocational Education

Criterion	Traditional model	Contemporary model
Educational objective	Training individuals to perform specific occupational functions	Developing competitive, competent professionals
Foundation of training	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Development of professional competencies and learning outcomes
Organisation of learning	Predominantly classroom-based instruction	Combination of formal, dual, and distance learning
Role of employers	Occasional involvement	Full partners in workforce training
Assessment	Knowledge assessment	Assessment of learning outcomes and competencies
Curriculum content	Relatively stable	Flexible and labour market-oriented
Educational technologies	Traditional teaching methods	Digital technologies, simulators, online platforms, and artificial intelligence
Professional development	Education as a completed stage	Lifelong learning and continuous professional development

Another important trend in contemporary reform is the strengthening of partnerships between vocational education institutions and employers. Business representatives are increasingly involved in developing occupational standards, updating educational programmes, organising practical training, assessing learning outcomes, and modernising the material and technical infrastructure of educational institutions. Such cooperation ensures that vocational training corresponds to actual labour market needs, shortens graduates' transition into employment, and improves the overall efficiency of educational resources.

At the same time, the regionalisation of vocational education continues to expand. Under the conditions of decentralisation, regional authorities are assuming greater responsibility for shaping the network of vocational education institutions, determining regional workforce demand, and developing educational infrastructure. This approach makes it possible to take into account regional economic characteristics, labour market structures, and investment priorities. As a result, vocational education is increasingly becoming one of the principal instruments of regional development.

The post-war recovery of vocational education in Ukraine has become a matter of particular importance. Military actions have resulted in the destruction of educational infrastructure, the relocation of educational institutions, the loss of material and technical resources, and a considerable shortage of qualified personnel across many sectors of the economy. At the same time, post-war reconstruction provides new opportunities for the modernisation of vocational education. The growing demand for specialists in construction, transport infrastructure, energy, mechanical engineering, information technology, healthcare, and social services requires the prompt revision of educational programmes, the expansion of short-term reskilling programmes for adults, and the wider implementation of lifelong learning mechanisms (Nikolaienko, 2026; Radkevych, 2022; Radkevych, 2025).

The contemporary transformation of vocational education is inseparably linked to the expansion of academic mobility. Ukrainian educational institutions are increasingly participating in international educational programmes that promote exchanges of learners, teachers, and administrators, joint curriculum development, and the implementation of European quality assurance standards. Academic mobility facilitates the dissemination of innovative pedagogical practices, the development of intercultural competence, and the integration of Ukrainian vocational education into the European educational area (Nikolaienko, 2026; Radkevych, 2025).

International projects and technical assistance programmes remain important mechanisms for modernisation. Projects supported by the European Union, Erasmus+, the European Training Foundation (ETF), GIZ, UNESCO, and other international partners contribute to the renewal of educational infrastructure, the establishment of Centres of Vocational Excellence, the professional development of teachers, the implementation of dual education, and the introduction of digital technologies. Through international cooperation, Ukrainian vocational education gains access to best European practices and accelerates its own modernisation process.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The conducted study has demonstrated that the reform of vocational education in Ukraine is a long-term and consistent historical-pedagogical process closely associated with the country's socio-economic development, labour market transformation, and changing educational priorities. The analysis of historical development made it possible to identify the principal stages in the establishment and modernisation of vocational education, determine their distinctive characteristics, and reveal the continuity between traditional models of vocational training and the contemporary

competency-based education system. The findings indicate that the defining features of the current stage include European integration, the digitalisation of the educational process, the expansion of dual education, strengthened cooperation with employers, and the implementation of new approaches to quality assurance in vocational education.

The study substantiates that contemporary state policy in the field of vocational education is aimed at developing a flexible and open system of vocational training capable of responding promptly to technological change, labour market demands, and the challenges of Ukraine's post-war recovery. Particular importance is attached to the new Law of Ukraine "On Vocational Education", which establishes the legal foundations for the further modernisation of the sector, the development of Centres of Vocational Excellence, the improvement of public-private partnership mechanisms, and the integration of the Ukrainian vocational education system into the European educational area.

Prospects for further research include investigating the practical outcomes of implementing the new legislative framework governing vocational education, conducting comparative analyses of vocational education reforms in Ukraine and the Member States of the European Union, examining the development of dual education, digital technologies, and artificial intelligence in vocational training, and developing scientific and methodological foundations for preparing competitive professionals capable of con.

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