ФІЛОСОФІЯ ПРИРОДИ, СВІТУ І КОСМОСУ

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THE DIALECT OF HARD AND SOFT SKILLS: A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON 21ST CENTURY EDUCATIONAL PARADIGMS

Relevance of the study. *The article examines the dialectics of interaction between hard and soft skills as a fundamental issue of the modern educational paradigm. The research relevance is determined by global transformational processes in education and the necessity to rethink traditional approaches to professional competency formation in post-industrial society conditions. The need to bridge the gap between technocratic rationality and the humanistic dimension of education becomes particularly significant in the context of the fourth industrial revolution and artificial intelligence development.*

The purpose of the study *to provide a philosophical reflection on the dialectical interaction between hard and soft skills in the context of educational paradigm transformation in the 21st century, as well as to develop a conceptual model reflecting the dialectical unity of these skills within the framework of holistic personality development.*

Research methods. *The methodological foundation comprises a complex of complementary methods: dialectical, phenomenological, hermeneutical, as well as systemic and comparative approaches. The research is based on the principle of integrating theoretical and methodological approaches, which enabled the examination of professional competency formation in the unity of its ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects, as well as analyzing the transformation of educational paradigms in the context of modern information society challenges.*

Research results. *The study presents a theoretical model for integrating hard and soft skills, which encompasses cognitive, activity-based, and value-oriented levels, and proposes the concept of «competency convergence» as an integrative process of forming new-type professional competencies. The research reveals the principal philosophical paradigms for understanding skills integration and outlines promising directions for further research in the philosophy of education. The study confirms that in conditions of «liquid modernity», the effectiveness of professional development is directly connected with the degree of integration between technical and social skills in the educational process. The practical significance of the research is validated by the increasing effectiveness of integrated educational programs in the context of modern global labor market and digital economy requirements, as demonstrated by high employment rates among graduates and their successful professional adaptation across various fields of activity.*

Key words: *competency convergence, skills dialectics, educational paradigm, hard skills, soft skills, competency integration, philosophy of education.*

Introduction. The relationship between hard and soft skills has emerged as a critical focus in contemporary educational discourse, reflecting a fundamental shift from traditional knowledge accumulation to developing comprehensive competencies. This transformation reveals a more

profound philosophical tension: the challenge of reconciling technocratic rationality with humanistic development in professional education. The Frankfurt School's analysis of the conflict between instrumental and communicative reason provides a theoretical framework for understanding this dichotomy, which has gained new significance in the context of the fourth industrial revolution and artificial intelligence advancement.

The dialectical unity and contradictions between hard and soft skills manifest in fundamental ontological and epistemological issues within the educational process. These include the interplay between objective and subjective knowledge, the balance of rational and emotional components in cognition, and the distinction between technical and humanitarian thinking. This complexity presents a significant challenge in developing cohesive personal development systems that effectively integrate these diverse competencies.

Various theoretical perspectives have established the philosophical foundation for understanding this relationship. M. Heidegger's critique of technical rationality [1], J. Habermas's theory of communicative action [2], and P. Freire's work on critical pedagogy [3] have contributed significantly to this discourse. Contemporary researchers have further expanded these foundations through studies of educational transformations [4-7]. However, the philosophical underpinning of hard and soft skills interaction still demands deeper theoretical examination, particularly as education adapts to rapid technological change.

This theoretical challenge takes on practical urgency in the digital age, where we encounter a compelling paradox: as technical processes become increasingly automated, the importance of distinctly human qualities – creativity, emotional intelligence, empathy, and collaboration – grows proportionally. This situation necessitates a fundamental reevaluation of educational paradigms, particularly in how they approach lifelong learning and adaptability. Technical skills, while essential, can quickly become outdated, making the capacity for continuous learning and development a crucial meta-competency.

This study aims to provide a philosophical reflection on the interaction between hard and soft skills amidst the transformation of educational paradigms in the 21st century. Our objective is to develop a conceptual model that reflects the dialectical unity of these skills in the context of holistic personality development while establishing philosophical principles for their integration into modern education.

Various complementary approaches were employed to uncover multiple aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. The dialectical method served as a core research tool, revealing internal contradictions between hard and soft skills as opposing yet interconnected facets of professional development. This method enabled us to analyse how quantitative changes transition into qualitative ones during skill formation and explore the unity and conflict of opposites within the educational context.

The phenomenological method was utilised to examine the immediate experience of skill formation within the educational process. Through phenomenological reduction, we uncovered the essential characteristics of hard and soft skills as they manifest in the consciousness of the academic subject. Special emphasis was placed on analysing intentionality in forming different skills and how they are constituted within an individual's lifeworld.

The hermeneutic approach provided insights into educational practices and the semantic contexts surrounding skill formation. A hermeneutic analysis of contemporary educational paradigms revealed their implicit meanings and foundational values. The hermeneutic circle method illuminated the connection between understanding individual competencies and developing a holistic view of the educational process.

Systems analysis investigated hard and soft skills as components of a unified competency system. This technique identified structural relationships among different skill types, explored their functional interactions, and determined the emergent properties of the competency system as a whole. Particular attention was given to analysing the systemic effects of technical and social skills interaction.

The comparative method enabled analysis of different approaches to understanding the relationship between hard and soft skills within modern educational philosophy. This analysis revealed commonalities and distinctive features in how various philosophical schools interpret this relationship.

Results and discussion. The current education system faces a fundamental crisis due to a disconnect between established educational models and the rapidly changing demands of post-industrial society. New educational models must align with the social conditions of «liquid modernity». According to Z. Bauman, education is not only confronted with epochal challenges but also represents a response to these challenges. As traditional paradigms evolve in an uncertain world of «liquid modernity», education must equip individuals for life in this new reality.

The commodification of education in consumer society presents a fundamental challenge to traditional academic institutions and their foundational values. This transformation threatens the ideals of scholarship and reveals a more profound «crisis of institutions and philosophies». The solution cannot be found in mere technical adjustments; instead, it demands a comprehensive philosophical reconceptualisation of education suitable for the era of «liquid modernity» [8].

Bauman's analysis provides crucial insight into this educational crisis. In liquid modernity, he argues that the traditional notion of a fixed professional skill set has become obsolete. The primary competency is the capacity for continuous learning and adaptation to ever-changing conditions [9]. This perspective fundamentally reshapes our understanding of the relationship between hard and soft skills, positioning their dialectical interaction as a central challenge in modern educational philosophy.

Bourdieu's concept of educational capital enriches this theoretical framework, developed in «The Forms of Capital» and «Homo Academicus» [10, 11]. His theory demonstrates that professional competency formation occurs through the complex interplay of cultural, social, and economic capital. Crucially, Bourdieu emphasises that educational capital transcends mere technical knowledge and skills, necessarily incorporating a social dimension that determines its practical value in professional contexts.

Contemporary research, particularly within Ukrainian scholarly discourse, has built upon these theoretical foundations to examine the integration of technical and social competencies in higher education. These studies highlight the essential interdependence of different skill types in forming professional identity [12, 13], providing empirical support for the theoretical frameworks established by Bauman and Bourdieu.

The theoretical significance of integrating technical and social competencies finds strong empirical support in current labour market trends. The World Economic Forum's «Future of Jobs Report 2024» [14] reveals that 87% of employers plan to invest in integrated learning programs combining technical and social skills by 2026 – a 12% increase from 2023. This marked shift demonstrates the growing recognition of the need for balanced competency development in professional settings.

Our theoretical framework builds upon M. Castells' concept of the «information-communicative society» [15]. His analysis of the 21st century as an «informational and network society illuminates how rapid technological advancement drives simultaneous transformations in both technological and social dimensions. This dual transformation creates a new form of social organisation where technical and social competencies become increasingly interdependent within networked structures.

Habermas's «Theory of Communicative Action» [16] provides a philosophical foundation for understanding this integration of competencies. His distinction between instrumental rationality (aligned with hard skills and technical thinking) and communicative rationality (corresponding to soft skills and dialogic understanding) offers crucial insights into the nature of professional development. Habermas's emphasis on balancing technical systems with the communicative lifeworld supports our argument for harmonising technical and social skills in modern education, particularly his concept of communicative competence in professional contexts.

Goleman's development of «competency transit» in «Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships» [17] further strengthens this theoretical framework. His analysis of how social skills transfer across contexts demonstrates the fundamental interconnection between hard and soft skills, revealing that technical competency effectiveness is inherently linked to social skill development.

Drawing from philosophical foundations and contemporary labour market demands – as evidenced in the LinkedIn Learning Report 2024 – our research proposes an educational model of «competency

convergence». This model represents a new stage in the evolution of professional competencies for the 21st century, characterised by the systematic integration of hard and soft skills into hybrid competencies.

Competency convergence can be understood through a synergetic approach, wherein the interaction between different skill types generates emergent properties of professional competence. This process manifests as technical skills acquiring socially adaptive characteristics while social skills become increasingly systematised and algorithmic. The dialectical nature of this convergence reveals itself through the interdependence of hard and soft skills in professional activities, the transformation of their apparent antagonism into complementarity, and the emergence of integral meta-competencies that transcend traditional skill categorisations.

Empirical evidence for this convergence appears in contemporary professional roles. Modern project managers, for example, must seamlessly integrate technical expertise with communication skills and emotional intelligence, demonstrating how formerly distinct competencies now function as an integrated whole.

Our research has yielded a comprehensive theoretical model for skill integration that operates across three interconnected levels. The model addresses the synthesis of analytical and emotional thinking at the cognitive level, fostering metacognitive strategies and systemic thinking while enhancing creative potential by integrating technical and social competencies.

The activity level builds upon this cognitive foundation by implementing integrated skills within professional contexts. This implementation manifests through enhanced adaptability in competency application, sophisticated project management approaches that balance technical and social considerations and the development of leadership qualities grounded in technical expertise.

The value-oriented level completes the model by establishing a holistic professional worldview. This highest level of integration focuses on developing ethical competence in technical activities, harmonising professional and personal values, and cultivating social responsibility within professional practice. Each level builds upon and reinforces the others, creating a dynamic and adaptive framework for professional development in the modern era.

We conducted empirical research examining the philosophical and methodological foundations of hard and soft skills integration to validate our theoretical model. The study focused on understanding this integration's ontological and epistemological aspects through the lens of educational practitioners' experiences in developing socially flexible competencies. Our research sample comprised 26 higher education teachers from Bessarabia (Ukraine), selected for their expertise in competency development.

The expert interviews were structured to investigate three fundamental philosophical dimensions of skill integration. The ontological dimension explored teachers' understanding of the essential nature of hard and soft skills, their perception of the dialectical relationship between these competencies, and how these skills transform in response to demands in the digital era.

The epistemological dimension analysed methodological approaches to acquiring and developing integrated competencies. This investigation examined the role of reflection in skill formation and explored the complex relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical application in competency development.

The axiological dimension addressed the value-based aspects of skill integration, examining the ethical dimensions of professional development and the humanistic principles that guide the educational process. This component was crucial for understanding how values shape the integration of technical and social competencies in academic practice.

Our interviews revealed significant insights into the competency «convergence phenomenon», with 76% of respondents observing a natural convergence and interpenetration of hard and soft skills in contemporary educational practice. This convergence manifested across three distinct yet interconnected dimensions in the educational process.

The epistemological dimension revealed the emergence of a new form of integrative knowledge where technical and social competencies coalesce into a unified cognitive complex. Most respond-

ents (82%) emphasised that separating hard and soft skills within the learning process has become increasingly challenging, suggesting a fundamental shift in how these competencies are developed and understood.

In the ontological dimension, respondents identified the formation of «hybrid» competencies that defy traditional classification as either hard or soft skills. These new forms of professional mastery demonstrate a seamless integration of technical expertise and social capabilities, indicating an evolution in the nature of professional competence itself.

The praxeological dimension highlighted the growing prevalence of professional scenarios demanding simultaneous application of both skill types. Nearly 70% of experts noted an increase in pedagogical practices that foster competency synergy, reflecting a practical shift in educational approaches to skill development.

Analysis of philosophical perspectives among respondents revealed three dominant paradigms in understanding skill integration. The holistic paradigm, endorsed by 48% of respondents, conceptualises skills as an inseparable unity. The dialectical approach, supported by 32% of participants, emphasises the unity and struggle of opposites in skill development. The phenomenological perspective, represented by 20% of respondents, focuses on the experiential aspects of skill integration.

The research also uncovered fundamental philosophical tensions within the integration process. These manifest as contradictions between technocratic and humanistic approaches, standardisation and individualisation imperatives, and traditional versus innovative educational paradigms. These tensions reflect broader challenges in contemporary education as it adapts to evolving professional demands.

Conclusions. Our research findings call for deeper theoretical exploration within modern philosophical and sociological frameworks, with recent labour market trends validating the «competency convergence» model. The LinkedIn Talent Solutions study «Global Talent Trends 2024», analysing over 2 million job vacancies, reveals a significant shift toward hybrid specialist profiles. This trend is particularly evident in technical professions, where 82% of employers now seek candidates who combine deep technical expertise with strong communication skills and emotional intelligence.

The practical efficacy of our skill integration model is demonstrated through preliminary implementation results across university clusters of varying orientations. Graduates from integrated educational programs show markedly higher employment rates, achieving 90% employment within six months of graduation compared to 60-70% for traditional academic program graduates. These results suggest the model's potential for enhancing professional preparation and career outcomes.

However, broader empirical validation of the proposed model requires attention to several critical dimensions. The model's effectiveness needs evaluation across diverse cultural contexts, as current testing has been primarily limited to the European educational landscape. Additionally, verification across various professional sectors, from engineering to creative industries, is essential to establish the model's versatility and adaptability.

Longitudinal studies will be crucial for assessing the stability and durability of integrated competencies over time, moving beyond immediate post-graduation outcomes to examine long-term career development. Furthermore, the development and validation of quantitative metrics for assessing skill integration levels represents a key methodological challenge that must be addressed to ensure robust evaluation of the model's effectiveness.

These future research directions will be essential for refining and validating the model's applicability across different educational and professional contexts, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of competency development in contemporary education.

Our philosophical reflection on the interplay between hard and soft skills in 21st-century educational paradigms reveals fundamental shifts in understanding professional competency development. The research demonstrates that the traditional dichotomy between technical and social skills has given way to a more nuanced understanding of their dialectical unity within modern education. This transformation, supported by theoretical advances in educational philosophy and empirical labour market data, signals a profound change in how we conceptualise professional development.

The evolution of educational paradigms marks a decisive shift from monological to dialogical learning models. Building upon M. Castells' concept of the «information-communicative society» and J. Habermas' theory of communicative action, our research establishes that technical and social skills function as complementary aspects of holistic professional development, necessitating the integration of instrumental and communicative rationality in educational processes.

Our proposed theoretical model, encompassing cognitive, activity, and value levels, introduces the concept of «competency convergence» as a framework for understanding the formation of professional competencies. This model's practical significance is validated by analysing contemporary educational practices at leading universities worldwide, where integrated educational programs demonstrate markedly higher effectiveness in graduate employability and professional success.

Within the context of «liquid modernity», as conceptualised by Z. Bauman, our research confirms that integrating diverse skill types and commitment to continuous learning have become essential prerequisites for professional success. This finding necessitates a fundamental reconsideration of educational goals and methodologies. Moreover, our research supports the hypothesis that the effectiveness of professional competency development is directly linked to the degree of integration between technical and social skills in the educational process.

The implications of these findings extend beyond theoretical understanding to practical applications in academic program design and pedagogical methodology. Our research opens new avenues for investigation, particularly in examining the cultural specificity of skill integration across different educational systems and understanding the mechanisms of skill transfer between professional environments.

This study ultimately contributes to educational philosophy's theoretical advancement and pedagogical approaches' practical development, establishing a foundation for future research into the evolving nature of professional competencies in contemporary education. The findings underscore the need for continued investigation into how educational systems can best prepare individuals for the complex demands of modern professional life while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to future changes in the professional landscape.

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ДІАЛЕКТИКА HARD І SOFT SKILLS: ФІЛОСОФСЬКА РЕФЛЕКСІЯ ОСВІТНІХ ПАРАДИГМ XXI СТОЛІТТЯ

Актуальність проблеми: У статті досліджується діалектика взаємодії hard і soft skills як фундаментальна проблема сучасної освітньої парадигми. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена глобальними трансформаційними процесами в освіті та необхідністю переосмислення традиційних підходів до формування професійних компетентностей в умовах постіндустріального суспільства. Особливої значущості набуває потреба подолання розриву між технократичною раціональністю та гуманістичним виміром освіти в контексті четвертої промислової революції та розвитку штучного інтелекту.

Мета дослідження: здійснення філософської рефлексії діалектичної взаємодії hard і soft skills у контексті трансформації освітніх парадигм XXI століття, а також розробка концептуальної моделі, що відображає діалектичну єдність цих навичок у контексті цілісного розвитку особистості.

Методи дослідження. Методологічну основу дослідження складають комплекс взаємодоповнюючих методів: діалектичний, феноменологічний, герменевтичний, а також системний та компаративний підходи. В основу дослідження покладено принцип інтеграції теоретико-методологічних підходів, що дозволило розглянути проблему формування професійних компетентностей у єдності її онтологічних, епістемологічних та аксіологічних аспектів, а також проаналізувати трансформацію освітніх парадигм у контексті викликів сучасного інформаційного суспільства.

Результати дослідження. У результаті дослідження представлено теоретичну модель інтеграції hard і soft skills, що включає когнітивний, діяльнісний та ціннісний рівні, та запропоновано концепцію «компетентнісної конвергенції» як інтегративного процесу формування професійних компетентностей нового типу. Виявлено основні філософські парадигми розуміння інтеграції навичок та окреслено перспективні напрямки подальших досліджень у сфері філософії освіти. Дослідження підтверджує, що в умовах «плинної сучасності» ефективність професійного розвитку безпосередньо пов'язана зі ступенем інтеграції технічних і соціальних навичок в освітньому процесі. Практична значущість дослідження підтверджується зростаючою ефективністю інтегрованих освітніх програм у контексті сучасних вимог глобального ринку праці та цифрової економіки, що демонструється високими показниками працевлаштування випускників та їх успішною професійною адаптацією в різних сферах діяльності.

Ключові слова: компетентнісна конвергенція, діалектика навичок, освітня парадигма, hard skills, soft skills, інтеграція компетентностей, філософія освіти.