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A Humane Paradigm as the Conceptual Core of Education in the Age of Information Society

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Abstract

The article, based on a systematic analysis of the problems of national education in the age of information society and digitalised education, reveals the significance of the human paradigm, which is the conceptual core and the major platform for the educational process under the regime of aggravation. The convergence of education and information technology produces not only new areas of knowledge, pedagogical tools and teaching methods but also large-scale transformations in social practice. Like any social change, the digitalisation of education has a variety of consequences – from positive to negative ones. It is shown that the digitalisation of education, which meets great hopes not only in Ukraine and Poland, can be productive only if an anthropocentric algorithm is dealt with. Along with the huge and not much-studied possibilities of digitalisation of education, it is proved that many problems and risks are associated with the total introduction of the “digital” in the educational system. These are social, psychological, health, organisational and methodological risks, and some problems with the reduced quality of education. However, the ethics-related risks are perhaps the most dangerous among them. As regards this, it is proved that the humane paradigm, as a paradigm of the integrity of knowledge that provides values and goals of education, is a guarantor of the harmonisation in many processes related to translating information and knowledge into a digital form. The humane paradigm is the basis of the genetic connection of

knowledge, skills, digital literacy, moral imperatives, and life values, which in a synergetic algorithm contribute to students' effective development, systematic thinking, and socialisation. The three most important blocks of educational problems in the discourse on modern cyber-socialisation (transformation of the worldview component of education, reconstruction of the content of education, imbalance of educational and didactic processes) are outlined, and the ways and mechanisms of solving them are suggested. Implementing integrated strategies within the humane paradigm (which is the nourishing source of each of these blocks) might result in the idea of the so-called "new humanism" in education.

Keywords: *humane paradigm, digitalisation of education, risks of digitalisation, standardised personality, new humanism*

Introduction. The Problem Formulation

In an array of pedagogical and philosophical literature, one is sometimes surprised today by the unappealable self-confidence of some „heralds of modernisation" who know exactly what one wants to achieve on the path to restructuring education. It is especially true for the architecture of the educational future, built by techno-utopians who see nothing apart from digitalisation. They unequivocally argue that the transition to „the digital" should become our daily life, „our DNA, our key agenda", which will lead to „the prosperity of our lives and will become the basis of Ukraine's or Poland's prosperity" (Digital Agenda of Ukraine, 2020; Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) Poland, 2021). As a result, the pedagogical environment is intoxicated by the digital transformation of education. It cannot be denied that digitalisation is truly one of the most important megatrends that will change our lives over the next decade. It invades people's daily lives, opens new perspectives, and expands their visions in various fields, including education. However, one also has to calculate its possible consequences, impose certain restrictions, and provide ethical control. Therefore, the situation with digital technologies is much more complicated than it seems at first glance. Nowadays and in the future, the digital pedagogical process must be as human-centred as possible, i.e., humanly adequate and moving towards the multidimensional nature of the subjective human world without compromising on its schematic order. What is situated outside education are such important personality traits as spirituality, morality, and responsibility.

The digitalisation of education in educational institutions of different levels, the development of conceptual bases comprising digital content of training, the definition of effective technologies in the management of processes of forming and rendering digital educational services, and the maintenance of their quality have become research objects of many home and foreign scientists. Most of them are filled with optimism about the digital prospects of the educational process, which is described by simple binding verbs – „to know”, „to be able”, and „to own”. At the same time, the problems, challenges and risks of digitalisation in the educational process related to the spiritual and social pandemic are ignored.

That is why the article was aimed at studying the potential opportunities to minimise the risks of digitalisation of education in the discourse of the humane paradigm, the main slogan of which is the shaping of humanity in a human being, i.e., the formation of a system of attitudes to oneself and the world values, needs and abilities that are human-centred.

Results

Today, teaching to learn means teaching to live in new conditions. It means that learning to live is not just to have broad access to modern databases, information and communication technologies, to be a digitally competent person, but also to acquire deep fundamental knowledge to transform it into the wisdom to build life. It is believed that this can be done only on the life-giving platform of the humane paradigm. This paradigm is the basis of the genetic connection of knowledge, skills, competencies, moral imperatives and life values, which contribute to individual development and socialisation. Its centre is the subject relationship, which in practice means the value-semantic equality of the one who teaches and the one who learns in defining the pedagogical process's goals, content, and forms. The starting point is a person's movement in time and space, the dynamics and mechanisms of self-fulfilment, self-development, self-regulation, self-education, self-defence, and others. Today, the humane paradigm has become the conceptual core of the new pedagogical thinking, which involves reassessing all education components through the discourse of the human function. Education in a broad sense goes beyond the profession's service and involves the development of all spiritual forces of a human being. In contrast to professional training, it serves as a means of entering the pedagogical culture and is aimed at forming one's own, humanly-oriented professional image of the world, which is archivally important for human life and self-determination. These problems have become particularly

sensitive in the context of the pandemic, which has caused many complex (both personal and educational) changes in the world that could not have been foreseen, despite the „digital armament” (Todd et al., 2021, pp. 243–248; Bond, 2020, pp. 191–247).

In the context of implementing the conceptual foundations of the humane paradigm, modern education must solve at least three important blocks of problems (P. Saukh & I. Saukh, 2015, p. 485).

The first is related to the expansion and enrichment of the worldview component of education. The modern world has entered the era of exponential technologies, which are a tool and a new environment for humanity. The digital educational environment provides fundamentally new chances: to move from learning in the classroom to learning anywhere and anytime; to design an individual educational route; to transform learners not only into active consumers of electronic resources but also into their creators, etc. There is a radical transformation in the content of many professions, a demise of some and the birth of completely new ones. These processes have influenced the content of modern education. The number of special items that meet market demands has increased sharply. The attempts to squeeze them into the curriculum have necessitated the redistribution of hours among subjects, which is often done by reducing humanistic subjects and consequently – reducing the educational potential of education.

Attempts to modernise education content through highly specialised knowledge led to the lag of this content in the development of life and strategic vision of science, as such knowledge is outdated before a learner graduates from school or university. Thus, the lack of focus on a holistic vision of science, its internal architecture and ideological potential causes the production of, in the apt words of the modern French philosopher Edgar Allan, a “»well-equipped head« but a head filled with numerous knowledge problems »and not able to operate with« the principles of organisation and synthesis of knowledge” (1999, p. 23).

It is clear that this process, which impoverishes the ideological component of education, should not but affects in some way the pedagogical component of the educational process. Paradoxically, such a reckless focus on the specialisation of education content is very far from scientific advancement. Technocratic approaches, characterised by the lack of a holistic vision of science and its internal architecture, do not allow not only a generalised understanding of a human, of the world and oneself in it but also the ability to organise and consciously harmonise one’s relationships with nature and other people. In science, no specialisation is possible without universalisation and vice versa. It means that the content of education should reflect the various subject areas of modern science, including

the natural sciences and the sciences of humanity and society. Yet, this should be fulfilled not through extensive development of the content of education but based on interdisciplinary forms of knowledge systematisation. No specialised training can be effective if it is not consistent with general education. Absolutization of the role of specialisation inevitably leads to the transformation of a human only into a function, a simple means, a tool for its implementation. Conversely, the absolutisation of universalisation leads to the development of human superstition and dilettantism, including de-professionalisation. The organic combination of specialisation and universalisation of education requires the separation within its content of the elements or forms that are universal, mandatory (i.e., necessary in all activities and under any conditions) from those that have only a narrow functional meaning, i.e., are necessary only in some particular activity. If the first type constitutes the „core” of education, its basic component, the second one can change the constantly updated depending on the future profession, regional characteristics or profile of further education.

Nowadays, it is important to teach a young person not only to have the general ability to identify and solve problems and operate with the principles of organisation that allow „linking” knowledge and give it meaning, but also to have the ability to turn it into life wisdom. After all, wisdom is the knowledge of life, fuelled by kindness, justice, sensitivity to the beauty of life, multiplied by a creative attitude to life situations and respect for traditions. In this discourse, as stated in the 2020 Rome Communiqué of Ministers responsible for higher education in the European space, „the social, humanistic, and creative sciences and the arts must play an important role in deepening our lives and understanding how to act in a world that is changing” (pp. 1–6).

The second block of problems is related to the most important foundation in reconstructing the educational content – the transition from the school of knowledge to the school of understanding. Johann W. Goethe kept repeating: “What I do not understand, I do not own”. Understanding, indeed, is one of the most fundamental needs and, at the same time, human abilities. It is the ability to think at the level of the mind, the ability not so much to perceive and transform information as to find the meaning of this information, to connect it with the meaning of past, present and future events, to make it an individual and collective experience. Einstein’s words that we know a lot but understand little seem to confirm this. The basis of understanding is the dialogue of the student and teacher, the dialogue of theory and practice, the dialogue of languages and cultures, and finally – the dialogue of inquisitive human thought with the world. Dialogue involves a mutual exchange of meanings and certain cooperation in the common field of searching

for the truth. Dialogue cannot end with what it begins with – a statement of differences in understanding of something. A dialogue means certain shifts in discovering new meanings and recognising an interlocutor, discovering something new that becomes important to us. It promotes the development of the critical thinking of the student.

However, under what conditions is understanding possible as the education's core and its direct result? It turns out that in order to genuinely perceive and understand some thoughts and knowledge, one must love them – accept them with the heart, not only with the mind, as a „number”. How to achieve this? Firstly, by overcoming the fighting attitude to the world and oneself. Evil cannot be overcome by fighting it. According to Cesar Frank, evil is overcome while it is replaced by good, as emptiness is replaced by fullness. Therefore, the most productive way to fight evil is to do good. Understanding enriches life with meaning and makes a person more confident and internally free. Still, in order to understand, one needs to have a real right to misunderstand. That is, misunderstanding should not become the grounds for punishment (negative assessment). The thought must become liberated and really questioning to develop the ability to understand. Paternalistic pedagogy in this situation should be inferior to the pedagogy of cooperation, the constructiveness of which is determined by a joint search for the truth. The guarantee of cooperation between teacher and student realises that the teacher should be taught as a „stranger”. The authoritarian-mentoring tone and the role of an „oracle” in the modern information society are not attractive and constructive in pedagogy. Today, the teacher should not act like someone who knows everything and has no right to make mistakes. On the contrary, the teacher seeks the truth with their students and, as a talented actor, plays the role of a „stranger”. Together with the students, the teacher experiences „punctures” in the search for truth and rejoices with them when the search succeeds.

The third group of problems is related to the imbalance of educational processes at all levels of education. The previously parallel vectors of education and cultural development today diverge, and learning (in its current forms) does not always lead to education and intelligence. Despite the reassuring declarations of individual educators, the philosophical foundations of education are gradually collapsing. Until recently, the process was dominated by the principles of human priority as a person, freedom of choice of values, and fulfilling the opportunities for self-development.

As it is known in Ukrainian and Polish ethno-pedagogy, „to educate” means to protect a child from evil, and „education” is interpreted as a process of defence against evil throughout life. Training and education, the acquired knowledge, are

the means of education and self-education, i.e., education is their inner essence (Nikitorowicz, 2018). „Learning – as Vasyl Sukhomlinsky explains – is just one of the petals of the flower, which is called education in the broadest sense of the term...” (1977, p. 13). The relationship between education and training should become a central problem of systemic pedagogical activity. After all, this is the development of two main platforms of the whole spiritual world of humans – their ability to know the world by mastering the accumulated knowledge in the history of science and the ability to evaluate everything (including themselves) and build in their minds a hierarchical system of values. Thus, education is a complex process of the synergy of education and training, which is inextricably linked with at least three areas of culture: the cognitive, axiological, and artistic. However, when first approaching the content of the current education, it is easy to see that it is built mainly based on only one of these areas – the cognitive one, and more precisely – based on its highly specialised component that is enriched with the „digital”.

Implementing such a strategy within the educational process under the conditions of the regime with aggravation and socio-economic transformations of society is not easy. Today, there is a clear lack of a serious philosophy of education and qualitatively new pedagogical methodologies that can overcome the existing demarcation of teaching and education. What seems to be needed is a large-scale breakthrough into qualitatively new general pedagogical positions, the emergence of teaching and education at the level of deep systemic projects such as amerological pedagogy (Greek *amer* – ancestral atom), which should develop principles, rules, techniques of education and training its “syzygic rationality” or the conscious „humanity↔world” harmonisation (Kyzyma, 2004, p. 132). Amerological pedagogy, based on the whole set of ideological disciplines, could become the general methodological basis for all existing and potentially possible methods of adequate human creativity – not only concerning its adaptation to any new, close to extreme or force majeure situations but also related to the ability to behave optimally in borderline situations. Only on this basis can a new model of a truly creative person emerge – an individual able to adapt quickly to any changes, flexible, able to work in more than one professional position, maintaining self-control in conditions of uncertainty until complete chaos and absolute ambiguity are faced, able to extrapolate ideas from one area to another, and most importantly – able to be responsible for their actions (Suleimenova & Ivanova, 2018, pp. 44–63).

An integral result of the implementation of the humane paradigm, which should become a source of nourishment for each of these three blocks of problems, is, in our opinion, the implementation of the ideas of the so-called new humanism in education. It pertains to the art of introducing a young person to the world of

values and socially important standards of moral behaviour, a significant scale of which has undergone significant transformations today, also due to the exaggerated role of ICT technologies. It is known that modern education (as, incidentally, the society as a whole) is faced with two diametrically opposite values. On the one hand, such universal life values are dealt with as good, truth, and beauty, associated with the existential „to be”; and on the other – material, utilitarian values that appear in the cult of domination and are characterised by the existential „to have”. What also takes place is that everything that is not related to the principle of domination (gratitude, friendship, compassion, honour, love, etc.) recedes into the background and loses its social and cultural prestige (Pain, 2021, pp. 22–43; Bystrytskyi, 2020, pp. 42–61; Ogrodzka-Mazur, Saukh, 2019, pp. 63–74).

A reassessment of values and some “tectonic” shifts in their hierarchical system give rise to a new pedagogical way of thinking and require a construction of the educational process that would meet the demands of society and self-fulfilment of the individual. Regardless of one’s likes or dislikes, one has to perceive a person both in the plane of „to be” and „to have” to consider the realities of life, especially when they become dominant and irreversible. Opposing these objective processes would roughly mean such logic of action according to which one does not build a lightning rod but creates a society to combat lightning.

Thus, a modern educator must take into account radical changes in the lives of young people in the promoted values, ways, and styles of their lives. Of course, considering does not mean approving (especially when it comes to negative phenomena) but involves developing a strategy of effective action to overcome and prevent evil or reduce its consequences. New humanism neither idealises humanity nor denies the presence of destructive anti-humanity. It is based on recognising the connection of all people to both good and evil. After all, one recognises human openness to good and evil by recognising human freedom. The main factors result from this recognition on which the effectiveness of education depends: (1) a rational assessment of reality, taking into account the importance of consumerist and utilitarian values in meeting various human needs; (2) equipping learners with skills and abilities to ensure decent living conditions („to have” for „to be”, in the context of professional and human dignity); (3) education of a holistic personality, which is achieved when the congruence between the „I am real” and the „I am ideal” reaches unity (equilibrium).

In other words, the new paradigm concerns a more flexible educational process, the inclusion of neglected, often narrowly pragmatic and consumerist values, equipping young people with the ability to make decisions independently, think nonlinearly, and convincingly present their own strengths. An educated person, as

noted by a famous Polish educationalist Janusz Gajda (2000), must demonstrate a humanistic standpoint and, at the same time, must be competitive in the market of individuals. To make this happen, it is necessary to overcome the well-known principle of individualisation, which in the „digital” educational process is brought to absurdity – it is characterised not only by isolating students from each other but also from the teacher (Verbytskyi, 2019; Sepúlveda, 2020). Today, it is important to find a psycho-pedagogical and methodologically sound balance between the use of computers and live dialogue between the subjects of the educational process – the teacher and the student.

Conclusions and Research Prospects

The analysis of some peculiarities of the modern information society testifies to the rapid attack of digital reality, which tests the ontological rootedness of morality and ethics in society. Treating the irreversibility of digitalisation as a global and national phenomenon, educational reform should take place not only following the needs of the digital economy, information and creative entrepreneurship, and research opportunities but also with the needs of the individual. The functionality of a human in the modern world results not only from the level of their digital competence but also from the ability to deeply process information, the ability to maintain the string of their own thoughts, the ability to construct complex models of reality, to overcome stereotypes and to improve social skills. Free swimming in the digital world does not make a person successful or less happy. The development of digital education in Ukraine and Poland should be based on the imperatives of the humane paradigm, should be organically embedded in culture, traditions and should take into account the peculiarities of the national mentality, should be based on fundamental knowledge and the inexhaustible potential of a human as a subject of general and professional development. It will help minimise social and existential risks (alienation, depression, cyberbullying, cyber-trolling, virtualisation of life, digital addiction, cyber fraud, etc.) that pose a real threat and lead to disastrous consequences for societies.

The prospects for further research are seen in the urgent need to assess the impact of digitalisation of the educational and social space on humanity, in building a mental map of risks and destructive consequences of digitalisation of education and in developing a viable system of safe communication and educational space, which requires modernisation of humane technologies.

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