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**INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR FORMING "SOFT SKILLS" OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION****ІННОВАЦІЙНІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ ФОРМУВАННЯ «SOFT SKILLS» СТУДЕНТІВ У ВИЩІЙ ОСВІТІ****Fedorenko N.I. / Федоренко Н.І.**

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the process of developing students soft skills as an important component of preparing future professionals in the field of sociology. The author conducts a theoretical analysis of modern educational models of soft skills in the context of scientific research and describes the structural components of these skills. The article proposes a structure of necessary soft skills for sociology students and discusses innovative approaches to their formation in university education. The author also examines the experience of using innovative methods of soft skills development by the faculty of the Department of Sociology at Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, such as simulation and training methods, workshops, meetings with experts, and master classes.*

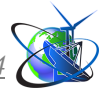
**Keywords:** *higher education, student youth, innovative approaches for soft skills development, simulation teaching methods, training teaching methods, workshops, expert master classes.*

**Introduction.**

In our time, we observe the process of institutional transformation of higher education, which is characterized by the peculiarities of new labor markets. Higher education and higher educational institutions, as its main actors, are forced to adapt to new trends in labor markets, which require constant updating of highly specialized professional knowledge, new forms of their transmission, and utilization in education. Permanent changes in the labor market influence the development of educational technologies and innovative teaching strategies in higher education. The main task of modern higher education is to create a professional personality capable of quickly adapting to a new social environment and capable of self-realization and career development.

**Main Text.**

In the era of rapid informatization of society, the main competitive advantage is the presence of "soft" skills among employees. Regardless of professional qualifications, modern professionals must be distinguished by a high coefficient of "soft skills," which ensure 85% of today's career success. The concept of "soft skills" has become an integral part of the global labor market in various sectors of the economy and society over the past 20 years. In many contexts, "soft skills" are equated with terms such as "employability skills," "people skills," "non-professional skills," "key skills," "skills for social progress," and "life skills." European Union member states have adopted a series of documents allowing for the introduction of a unified classification of "soft skills" for the European Economic Area. European



initiatives for skills development have included "Rethinking Education" - consulting EU member states on investing in skills development for optimal socio-economic results.

In the study of the formation of "soft skills" in young students, the works of the following foreign experts are important: B.A. Ritter, E.E. Small, J.W. Mortimer, who relate teamwork, communication, and leadership skills to "soft skills." K.J. Perez-Maya, E.R. Purcell, J.V. Reyes Bernardo consider "soft skills" on one hand as general (non-academic) skills, and on the other hand, as the most important skills in the modern world labor market, especially in the context of rapid technological development. Scholars propose the following types of "soft skills": communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, lifelong learning skills and information management, entrepreneurial skills, ethics and professionalism, leadership skills. Some scholars consider "soft skills" as a sociological term related to the emotional intelligence quotient of a person; a set of personality traits, social skills, communication abilities, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism. On the other hand, some authors define "soft skills," emphasizing their role in building a professional career. "Soft skills" are personal qualities, characteristics, talents, or the level of enthusiasm for professional activities that distinguish a person from others with similar skills and competence [1, pp. 32-33].

Analysis of the Ukrainian scientific discourse has revealed that recently there has been a noticeable increase in interest among practitioners and theorists of education in the potential of disciplines in higher education for the formation of soft skills, as evidenced by studies by A. Bezzus, I. Hevlycha, L. Hevlych, K. Koval, Yu. Fedorova, I. Fedulova, Vargati O., Komar T., Afanasyenko V., Kuleshova O., Mikheyev L., and others.

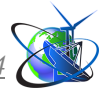
It is important to note that there is no single scientific approach to the classification of "soft skills" among Ukrainian scholars. Instead, there is an interpretation that includes: developed leadership skills; developed teamwork skills; developed critical thinking skills; developed creative thinking skills; developed communication skills; developed self-presentation skills; developed organizational skills; developed time management skills; developed stress resilience skills; developed conflict resolution skills. Some authors suggest that "soft skills" are special socio-psychological skills such as: adaptability and mobility; social awareness and tolerance; ethics and honesty; purposefulness and responsibility; optimism and positive attitude; harmonious relationship with the inner world. The proposed socio-psychological characteristics constitute a complex of socio-psychological competence of specialists in socio-economic professions. Domestic researchers consider the concept of "soft skills" more broadly, including such specific professional competencies as: creative competence; psychological competence; communicative competence; managerial competence.

Based on the analysis conducted, the author has formulated a structure of "soft skills" for students of sociological specialties in the educational-professional program "Social and Media Communications" of the Department of Sociology of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman (Table 1).



**Table 1 – Structure of "soft skills" for OPP students  
"Social and media communications"**

<b>Social skills</b>	<p>Ability to communicate with representatives of other professional groups of different levels (with experts from other fields of knowledge/types of economic activity);</p> <p>The ability to act socially responsibly and consciously;</p> <p>The ability to realize one's rights and responsibilities as a member of society, to be aware of the values of civil (free democratic) society and the need for its sustainable development, the rule of law, the rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen in Ukraine;</p> <p>The ability to preserve and multiply moral, cultural, scientific values and achievements of society based on understanding the history and patterns of development of the subject area, its place in the general system of knowledge about nature and society and in the development of society, technology and technologies, to use various types and forms of motor activity for active recreation and leading a healthy lifestyle.</p>
<b>Communicative skills</b>	<p>Interpersonal skills;</p> <p>Productive communicative activity;</p> <p>Public speaking skills;</p> <p>Active listening;</p> <p>Ability to reasoned presentation of one's own opinion, competent and tolerant discussion with opponents;</p> <p>Ability to self-present and create a professional image;</p> <p>Ability to productive criticism and self-criticism.</p> <p>The ability to resolve conflict situations and adapt to "difficult" people in communication;</p> <p>The ability to resist manipulation and prevent obstacles in professional activities.</p>
<b>Skills personal effectiveness</b>	<p>Goal setting skills;</p> <p>Skills of effective organization and planning of one's activities;</p> <p>Skills of effective self-organization and setting priorities;</p> <p>Self-motivation skills;</p> <p>Positive thinking and optimism, emotional stability, stress resistance.</p>
<b>Organizational-management skills</b>	<p>Ability to work in a team;</p> <p>The ability to organize a system of communications between their participants;</p> <p>Ability to motivate team members;</p> <p>The ability to see a single goal and find ways to achieve it;</p> <p>Skills of organizing business communication: conversations, negotiations, meetings</p>



<p><b>Leadership skills</b></p>	<p>The ability to unite people around a socially significant goal;                  Ability to take responsibility for the team;                  The ability to unite people and clearly define responsibilities according to everyone's capabilities;                  The ability to convince and find a compromise;                  Initiative and demandingness towards oneself and others;                  Ability to make independent decisions and solve problems.</p>
<p><b>Analytical skills</b></p>	<p>Critical thinking,                  The ability to find non-standard, new solutions                  The ability to generate and implement new ideas (creativity)                  The ability to navigate in the wide information and communication field of the modern world.</p>

*Author's development [3, p.238]*

To successfully develop soft skills in today's students, to create a professional personality ready to perceive social changes, embrace new values, and capable of self-development and self-realization, higher education institutions need to employ various innovative forms and teaching technologies: problem-based lectures, case studies, brainstorming sessions, discussions with elements of analysis, workshops, work in small creative groups, business games, meetings and conversations with invited experts, expert master classes, multimedia information technologies, modeling technologies, training technologies, and gaming methods.

The readiness of teachers to implement innovative teaching technologies requires a high level of development of their informative and pedagogical competencies. The Department of Sociology of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman constantly works on creating new educational and training workshops, training courses, and modern disciplines using problem-solving innovative teaching technologies. For example, within the accredited educational-professional program "Social and Media Communications," the department's teachers have developed disciplines aimed at forming soft skills in students. Disciplines such as "Professional and Communicative Culture of the Sociologist," "Social Psychology," "Fundamentals of Theory and Practice of Social Communications," "Communications in Business Communication," "Intercultural Communication," "Information Technologies in Sociology," "Social Technologies," "Assessment Research in the Social Sphere," "Methodology of Sociological Research," "Sociology of Management," "Sociology of Innovation," "Sociology of Career and Leadership," "Sociology of Conflict," "Theory and Practices of Modern Media Research," "Social Dialogue," "Ethics of Business Communication," and others. These disciplines help students develop the necessary soft skills: ability to collaborate in a group and team, mobility, adaptability, ability to set personal goals and perform various roles and functions in a team, ability to determine and implement the communication goal depending on the circumstances; analyze the main patterns of interaction, revealing the connection between interpersonal and social relationships; ability to analyze the social psychology of groups and identify communication features in real social groups; ability to demonstrate communication competencies; model situations of



group dynamics and their development; ability to possess self-analysis skills, be critical and self-critical based on appreciation and respect for diversity and multiculturalism.

With the aim of implementing problem-oriented teaching and learning through educational workshops, master classes, and practical training, faculty members of the Sociology Department constantly conduct various meetings with invited experts and master classes. The outcomes of these meetings are utilized by the department to update educational programs, enriching them with practical cases that enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for the formation of soft skills. For example, in November 2022, within the framework of the "Education and Business Collaboration: Uni-Biz Bridge" project, a meeting was organized and held with experts from the international company Deloitte on the topic of "Communications in an International Company." Additionally, on November 23, 2023, faculty members of the Sociology Department actively participated in organizing the 11th International Business Forum "Science-Business-Education: Strategic Partnership." Within the forum, meetings with experts and panel discussions on educational trends and business practices, the university's mission in preserving mental health in wartime conditions, and innovative educational process tools were organized.

In the process of developing soft skills competencies in students, faculty members of the Sociology Department constantly utilize workshops, training, and modeling teaching technologies during practical sessions. A workshop is an active group work technology based on intensive group interaction aimed at acquiring dynamic knowledge. Workshops aid in implementing new ideas in student projects, providing interactivity within sessions, and improving interaction within student groups. An interesting experience of the department is not only conducting workshops by faculty members and invited practitioner experts but also preparing, organizing, and conducting workshops by senior students themselves. For instance, in the academic years 2022-2023, within the discipline "Communications in Business Communication," 4th-year students of the "Social and Media Communications" program conducted a workshop with 3rd and 2nd-year students of the "Social and Media Communications" program on the topic: "Online Interview: Components of Effective Communication." It should be noted that training technologies are also an important component of interactive learning. Communication among participants during training encompasses two components: content and process. The content of the training refers to the topics covered during the session. The process of the training involves how participants interact during the learning process, the atmosphere they create, the roles they play, and how they influence each other. The effectiveness of the training process depends on the training methods used, such as lectures, discussions, group work, case studies, and others. There are also specific types of training aimed at developing effective communication skills, such as partner communication training, sensitivity training, creativity training, and others.

Among the modern learning technologies that contribute to the development of soft skills in students is simulation (modeling) technology. The specificity of simulation technology lies in simulating various real-life relationships and conditions



in the educational process. Orienting students in such "life-like" learning experiences across societal, scientific, cultural, and other life spheres allows them to envision their life paths and consciously plan and implement the development of their general and professional competencies.

Simulation and training technologies are actively used by sociology department instructors and are implemented through the analysis of various case studies and the simulation and resolution of practical situations and tasks. Students identify problems and choose different methods to solve them. These technologies stand out for their effective learning nature and the utilization of groups as a means of fostering individual development. Through such activities, students develop communication skills, critical thinking, understanding, reflection, and action. This type of educational work fosters students' ability to quickly adapt to collective activities, acquaints them with the mechanisms of team creation, and the principles of identifying leaders.

### **Conclusions.**

Therefore, today the educational process in higher education is filled with effective innovative educational technologies that help in the formation of "soft skills" competencies. In order to successfully develop a professional personality ready to perceive social changes, adopt new values and behavioral patterns, capable of self-development and self-realization, the Department of Sociology of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman is constantly working on creating new educational workshops, training courses, and modern disciplines using problem-solving innovative teaching technologies. As part of scientific research work, students have the opportunity to actively participate in departmental and university projects and demonstrate the results of their work at international scientific-practical conferences for students, graduate students, and young scientists organized and conducted by the Department of Sociology and Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman.

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**Анотація.** Стаття присвячена дослідженню формування «soft skills» у студентів як важливої умови підготовки фахівців соціологічних професій. У роботі здійснено теоретичне вивчення сучасних освітніх моделей «soft skills» у контексті наукових досліджень, описані структурні компоненти «soft skills» фахівців. Автором сформована та представлена структура необхідних «soft skills» для студентів соціологів та описані інноваційні підходи щодо їх формування у вищій освіті. В роботі розглядається досвід використання викладачами кафедри соціології Київського національного економічного університету імені Вадима Гетьмана таких інноваційних підходів формування «soft skills», як: імітаційні та тренінгові технології, воркшопи, зустрічі із запрошеними експертами, майстер-класи фахівців та інші.

**Ключові слова:** вища освіта, студентська молодь, інноваційні підходи формування «soft skills», імітаційні технології навчання, тренінгові технології навчання, воркшопи, майстер-класи фахівців