

# MODERN LEGAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE AS THE BASIS OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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**Abstract.** Legal education in Ukraine faces numerous challenges in modern conditions that require defining and understanding to improve the quality of training. The article examines in detail the relevance of legal education, considering the need to reform the judicial system, harmonize national legislation with the standards of the European Union, and protect national interests in the context of armed aggression. The authors pay particular attention to the issue of the adaptation of lawyers to innovations in the field of information technology, which requires not only the study of new digital tools but also an understanding of the legal nature of the latest technologies. The authors analyze the interrelation between the training of students of higher education institutions and their further access to the legal profession and consider the possibilities of implementing foreign experience in the Ukrainian legal environment. The article identifies the primary areas of reforming domestic legal education to meet modern challenges and ensure the sustainable development of the legal system of Ukraine.

**Keywords:** legal education, Ukraine, reform, European integration, information technologies, armed aggression, training of lawyers, foreign experience, public administration, rule of law, Constitution of Ukraine.

## INTRODUCTION

Given the contemporary global challenges, the imperative to cultivate proficient, ethically principled, and accountable professionals across diverse domains of public engagement has attained unprecedented prominence. This imperative is particularly pronounced for those who have elected to pursue a vocation in the field of law. The realms of legal practice encompass a multifaceted landscape, wherein legal practitioners undertake responsibilities extending beyond mere formulation of regulatory frameworks and norms that underpin societal functioning. They shoulder the equally pivotal task of orchestrating the effective implementation of these tenets through specific

mechanisms, thereby safeguarding the rights and liberties of legal subjects both within the nation-state and within the international milieu.

The legal profession is vested with considerable aspirations and responsibilities, as the nation-state has been consistently engaged in overhauling manifold institutions and seeking optimal organizational and juridical paradigms for societal coexistence over the past three decades. It is noteworthy that both practitioners and the scholarly community have exhibited considerable diligence in this domain. Notwithstanding substantial strides and scholarly inquiries, significant challenges persist concerning the legal profession and the pedagogical preparations of legal professionals. Addressing these challenges necessitates the formulation of a conceptual framework for the progressive evolution of legal education, which fundamentally underpins the professional praxis of legal practitioners.

The present authors observe a fervent discourse spanning the past eight years concerning the quest for an optimal model in the training of legal experts. This discourse has garnered considerable traction, especially following the introduction of the educational authorities' blueprint for the advancement of legal education, which has been subject to lively deliberation within forums such as conferences and roundtable discussions.

Scholars hailing from various institutions of higher learning henceforth referred to as HEIs, have proffered insightful perspectives on the reformation of higher legal education within the Ukrainian context. Although an array of scholarly contributions has emerged, a unified conceptual framework addressing the trajectory for the future development of legal education remains a work in progress.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Since national institutions and lawyers face unprecedented challenges due to their special role in society, the authors consider it necessary to address the stated issue. These challenges imply the need to complete the reform of the judicial system, develop a regulatory framework for the effective functioning of anti-corruption bodies, harmonize the legislation of Ukraine with the legislation of the European Union, protect the violated rights of the state, and defend the legitimate interests of legal entities and natural persons violated due to the armed aggression of a neighboring state, including in international tribunals.

Another challenge is the inevitable changes that are taking place in the field of information technology. The massive introduction of these new technologies (blockchain, artificial intelligence, information security, etc.) requires lawyers to restructure their work in terms of the use of digital tools. Furthermore, there is a need for a legal understanding of the new reality and the development of legislative norms and rules.

At the same time, it is important to study the issue of training students of HEIs within the realm of access to professional activities because they are interdependent. It is also necessary to find out what skills and knowledge are decisive for a modern lawyer and what experience of our colleagues from other countries can be implemented in domestic law schools.

The authors believe the solution to these problems implies identifying the strengths and weaknesses of domestic legal education and arguments and

approaches of state management bodies in education and representatives of Ukrainian law schools regarding education reforms. Furthermore, it is necessary to figure out whether legal education is the only factor preventing the formation of a significant layer of experts in the legal sphere who would contribute to the development of a truly legal and social state, as proclaimed in the Constitution of Ukraine.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In considering the facets of legal education necessitating enhancement, it is incumbent upon us to turn our attention to the draft “Concept of Legal Education” as proffered by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine in 2018, a document prominently available on the official website. This document delineates that the caliber of theoretical and practical instruction provided to students is, on occasion, suboptimal, consequently rendering graduates of law schools deficient in the requisite practical acumen essential for the adept execution of their professional duties amidst the contemporary challenges and exigencies confronting modern legal practitioners. The outcomes of a precedent study on the state of legal education reveal that more than 60% of employers adjudged the proficiency of graduates to be wanting, and a staggering 80% of employers found themselves compelled to undertake the responsibility of training nascent professionals *de novo* (Legal Bulletin of Ukraine, 2020).

Within the contours of the Concept, a trajectory for the advancement of legal education emerges, delineating an idealized future state. Broadly, the envisaged reforms operate within several dimensions – augmented oversight and requisites about the quality of educational provision (educational quality), coupled with the deployment of mechanisms of external scrutiny to gauge the extent of students’ knowledge, facilitated through the examination framework. However, it is noteworthy that the authors underscore the reality that the aforementioned draft Concept has undergone revisions akin to a negotiated settlement, considering that its initial iteration elicited critical feedback from representatives of domestic law institutions. The initial version was deemed incongruent with the tenets of the Bologna process and endorsed restrictive stipulations about access to education and the legal profession at large (Kovalskyi, 2020).

Preceding iterations of the conceptual framework for the advancement of legal education predominantly drew upon foreign models that had demonstrated efficacy in the training of legal practitioners in their respective epochs. However, none of these models could be wholesale adopted due to the presence of multifarious objective constraints. At present, it is safe to say that there is no clear strategy for legal education development and further access to the profession, while the following problematic aspects remain the same: 1) a large number of law schools cannot provide high-quality educational services, and state authorities are unable to clearly define a single approach to the development and functioning in this area, which results in a constant change in the conditions of activity of law schools and access to education for students; 2) there are cases of violations of academic integrity by students and teachers; 3) “the actual dominant state-centric worldview of legal education does not comply with the dominant human-centric paradigm

of the development of domestic society”; 4) legal education is highly theorized and isolated from the needs of practice; 5) students and teachers have a weak motivation to obtain the final result of proper quality (Kryvytskyi, 2020); 6) the number of domestic developments of teaching and learning materials for distance (online) learning is insufficient (including for those lawyers who have a diploma but would like to deepen their knowledge in particular professional areas) (Manhora, 2022); 7) cooperation between the best law schools on the exchange of innovative positive experiences in the organization of the educational process is low, which could allow, subject to limited resources, disseminating the most successful methods and raising the overall level of knowledge and skills of both teachers and students.

Since the causes of these problems in legal education were laid down in the process of formation of the education system itself after Ukraine's independence, the authors briefly outlined them. First, the number of educational institutions that began to train lawyers increased dramatically (from 6 to more than 200) after 1991, as the demand for legal personnel, especially in the private sector, was driven up in the context of large-scale political, social, and economic changes.

Law faculties of different directions were opened in HEIs, so the training of lawyers is still carried out by four types of institutions: HEIs of the legal orientation; HEIs of the law enforcement orientation; Classical universities with law faculties; HEIs of the professional orientation, different from the legal one (Stoliarchuk, 2019). On the one hand, this made it possible to solve certain tasks and saturate the labor market with specialists; on the other hand, they had to acquire practical skills directly while working in their degree field.

Legal education has been the most desirable and popular among graduates for many years, although not everyone was able to find a job with their degree after getting a diploma. Significant education reforms, including the legal one, began in the second half of the 2000s. The focus shifted toward the quality of training since it was difficult to find those who could adequately solve the state tasks among many citizens with a law degree. These tasks varied from extremely complex (writing laws, reforming the judicial system) to everyday ones (legal support for business entities, representation of the interests of citizens in court). The introduction of the extra-university exam (Unified Vocational Entrance Exam) was a significant event in legal education; it became a prerequisite for admission to the Master's level, and many bachelors of law could not continue their further education due to the failure to pass it. The next important step of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine was the approval of standards for the training of bachelor and master of law, which detailed the content of curricula and requirements for the knowledge and skills of future lawyers. Some laws on the regulation of particular types of legal professionals, such as judges, prosecutors, notaries, and defense attorneys, prescribe provisions for access to these professions that are as follows: higher legal education (Master's degree), work experience in a legal field, passing a special exam, which is held for each type of activity separately, and (or) competition for a position. Competitive examination is also provided for lawyers intending to work as civil servants. Private companies determine their personnel policies independently and hire a bachelor or master of law to provide legal support for their activities.

Another challenge and unresolved problem in education reform is how to deal with lawyers who received a degree in law before these innovations and did not pass a thorough selection through the examination system. Do they need additional confirmation of their professional qualifications? However, law graduates who studied according to new standards and passed the test of their knowledge through the system of external examinations would constitute a minority among all lawyers for a considerable time. This, in the medium term, will not affect the improvement of the level of professional knowledge and skills of experts in general. Various options for resolving this issue were discussed, but no generally acceptable solution has been reached yet.

Thus, Ukraine is following the path of closer supervision over educational institutions that train lawyers and independent tests of the knowledge of those graduates who will be admitted to the profession. However, as the scientific literature correctly emphasizes, it is necessary to carefully verify these actions and implement only the successful experience of other countries that can work in Ukraine, given the specifics of its legal system. It is essential to introduce innovations after conducting a scientifically based forecast of the volume of training of experts, taking into account regional aspects (Tatsii & Komarov, 2019). Thus, it would make it impossible to destroy the achieved positive developments. In addition, many developed countries with successful experience in training lawyers also discuss directions for reforming their legal education in light of the global changes and challenges (Dunn et al., 2022).

The authors emphasize that it is possible to develop a further vision of the development of legal education if the characteristics decisive for an expert lawyer are defined. Can they be achieved while studying at a higher education institution? The above draft concept of legal education reform defines the purpose of legal education and the legal profession, which are formulated quite broadly.

It is noteworthy that foreign scholars pay considerable attention to the interaction between lawyers and consumers of legal services in their studies of legal education and the profession (Stychin & Mulcahy, 2010); this aspect is always left behind because people are accustomed to ignoring this aspect of the lawyer's activities for historical reasons. Other issues highlighted in foreign scientific works are the access of various segments of the population to education and the profession and integrity in all its manifestations. Domestic lawyers also mention the issue of integrity, especially academic, in their works and during competitions and exams passed by graduates when applying for such positions as judges, notaries, civil servants, or advocates. There will be no qualitative changes unless students have a transparent and honest admission to jobs, no matter how well the education process is organized or practical skills are mastered. It will not be possible to work in one direction to reform vocational training successfully. The hope to train experts who reform, for example, the judicial system, will not work until real access to jobs in this system is provided to them.

Given the above, the authors of this article focus on the following areas in which the reform of legal education is carried out and characterize each of them: 1) the introduction of extra-university supervision over the level of students' knowledge through the system of examinations; 2) the establishment of specified requirements for the qualifications and professional performance

indicators of law teachers (both individually and as a group which provides training of experts during the relevant period of study); 3) the definition of the content of the theoretical and practical components in student training and control over their compliance.

As for the supervision of students' knowledge through the extra-university examination, this practice is available in many countries. Although the number of exams, forms, and content can be a subject of discussion, the extra-university examination is a fully justified decision. The authors consider that the exam for studying at the Master's degree program (Unified Vocational Entrance Exam) has justified itself and makes it possible to select students who are able to continue their studies. However, the need for this exam to obtain a Master's degree is doubtful because its practical significance is unclear. Access to such positions as judges, prosecutors, notaries, and advocates is determined through a system of competitions/examinations. In this context, it would be advisable to introduce a unified independent exam for access to work in the specified positions, provided that graduates have several years of experience in the legal field.

Regarding the teaching staff of law schools, the authors should note first those constructive moments that have been achieved in this area over the past 30 years. Those who are now at the forefront of legal science and university education passed their professional becoming during the time of independence, changed, and grew together with the state. The learning process has been completely rebuilt over the past 30 years, the requirements of the Bologna process were implemented, and numerous textbooks and monographs were written. Dozens of monographs on topical issues are published even now in the conditions of war. The quality of some scholarly works can be debatable, but its significant part is of high scientific value. Entire branches of legislation have been developed from scratch since the beginning of the 1990s, and scientists have been involved and are involved in developing many codes and laws. Many representatives of the leading law schools in Ukraine, candidates and doctors of sciences who have many years of teaching experience and significant scientific achievements, work in the Supreme and Constitutional Courts of Ukraine.

At the same time, the current situation related to the full-scale Russian invasion has affected the educational sphere, the legal one in particular, and will lead to significant changes. Firstly, consolidation of HEIs and reducing their number (including law schools) are inevitable since some educational institutions cannot resume their work, especially those whose material base was destroyed. Such a situation, in turn, will increase competition among teachers, and only the most dedicated and professional ones can stay in the position. The number of students is also predicted to decrease; law schools have to raise the standards of educational activities because students will choose only those institutions that provide high-quality modern knowledge and help to acquire practical skills. Secondly, many teachers went abroad. To support colleagues, the scientific community and universities in many countries of Europe and North America introduced various programs for the internship of Ukrainian scientists and the continuation of their teaching and research activities. Ukrainian teachers have the opportunity to learn from colleagues from the best universities in the world, establish long-term professional relationships, work with scientific sources in university libraries, and improve

their knowledge of academic and professional foreign languages. This will also help Ukraine to integrate even more into the educational space of the developed countries; practice shows that the positive changes that have occurred in the educational sphere in recent years have been inspired by those who trained or underwent internships in the best educational institutions abroad.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity to join the work of research centers operating at universities in various fields. For instance, such organizations as the Centre for Innovation and Legal Education at the University of Leeds (2023) or Learning in Law Organization (2023) seek to identify, develop, and promote best practices in learning and development. Another example of foreign colleagues that should be followed is the creation of individual professional groups by teachers who deal with similar scientific problems but work in different universities to discuss the results of activities and exchange experiences, especially given the modern technical capabilities.

The creation of research centers or groups for the study and reform of legal education based on the most authoritative law schools is a good solution. They could become an effective platform for developing practical recommendations for reforming legal education.

The third large block of questions on the area under study is the content of education and the formation of practical skills for future lawyers. As for the organization of theoretical training of students, this aspect is the least problematic since it was given considerable attention, and a teaching staff of educational institutions did colossal work on the elaboration of learning and teaching material. Solving legal problems is a common practice during seminar classes, which allows students to develop basic skills and shape ideas about approaches to their solutions (Maidanyk, 2019). However, some teachers still pursue an approach of forcing students to memorize definitions, classifications, and specific norms of legislation but pay less attention to the formation of analytical skills or the ability to interpret legal texts. In general, law schools in Ukraine pay insufficient attention to the language of law and the formation of legal writing skills. As one of the solutions to this problem and as an experiment, it would be possible to introduce separate examinations in the form of essays, especially in such disciplines as Theory of Law, Constitutional Law, and Administrative Law. This form of reposting allows students to demonstrate memory skills, analyze and compare facts and information, and learn to write in clearly defined criteria (number of characters, structure, etc.); all these skills are essential for a lawyer. The formation of a lawyer's skills to communicate with clients (consumers of legal services) is often beyond the attention due to the Soviet-established understanding of the legal profession as that oriented at protecting and representing state interests. Teachers, trying to impart purely professional knowledge, forget about the formation of soft skills in lawyers that affect social and managerial abilities (speed of adaptation, ability to work in a team, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, creativity, etc.) (Popadych, 2022).

At the same time, there is no proper methodological support for introducing innovative methods in the educational process. Thus, the article by Davydova (2017) delves into the results of the introduction of an experimental version of the educational process that relies upon a practical component and is focused on the formation of leading competencies of future lawyers (160 people); the experiment was carried out for two years. The teaching staff

of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv published a textbook 'Methods of solving legal problems (cases): theoretical and practical aspects,' which was the result of a several-year experiment (Lukach & Poiedynok, 2020). The introduction of binary classes conducted jointly by a lecturer and a part-time practitioner is also effective (The Voice of Ukraine, 2020). This positive experience needs to be scaled up. In general, there should be more methodological seminars and pieces of training where colleagues could share the most successful experience.

The interest of legal practitioners in updating their knowledge is also noticeable. This niche is rapidly occupied by companies that provide their services through various online courses on the following modern and promising areas of legal activity: representation of citizens' interests in the ECtHR, international business law, intellectual property law, legal regulation in IT, military law, medical law, advocacy, legal English. Features of such courses are speed of appearance on the market, coverage of topical issues, involvement of practitioners in the development and reading of lectures, flexible schedule, and interactivity. However, teaching methods are not always tried and true in such courses, although they allow students to navigate and get knowledge in an orderly way in a highly specialized field. This direction is promising, and domestic law schools can pick up and develop it, given the considerable experience they gained in online training and the availability of necessary material and technical resources.

Most researchers in law note that the list of subjects offered for the study for a Bachelor's degree in law is overbroad in Ukraine, especially in comparison with other countries. The authors are convinced that the necessary steps are the optimization of curricula, the reduction and integration of subjects, and the direction to train more highly specialized experts. This will definitely allow lawyers to be more competent in their field. Just as a teacher cannot lecture on many different subjects since the quality of work is lost, a practicing lawyer will be more effective when mastering a particular field. Although it can hardly be achieved in our realities and complicates finding a job, it will improve the quality of knowledge and skills. It is necessary to highlight a particular trend that is common even in domestic law schools; students are offered to acquire in-depth knowledge in other specialties or branches of law, such as business, human rights, medical law, intellectual property law, etc.

The authors support the opinion of colleagues who believe it is urgent to change the format of extramural legal education through its transformation into blended learning for the first (bachelor's) level and dual education for the second (master's) level of higher education (Bondar, 2021). Moreover, modern distance learning technologies allow working students to receive education on a more flexible schedule and build individual educational trajectories.

Another relevant aspect is foreign language learning, especially a professional one, by both teachers and law students. This is evidenced by the draft law introduced by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, to the Verkhovna Rada in June 2023 that officially consolidates the status of English as one of the languages of international communication in Ukraine (UkrinForm, 2023). Moreover, this skill is not just a development path but also to the direct survival of Ukraine in the complex conditions of a full-scale war when the country seeks to hold a dialogue and cooperate with the whole world.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has been dealing with this issue for a long time; it introduced a foreign language proficiency test when applying for a Master's degree and requirements for teaching academic subjects in a foreign language. Such a policy gives its results, but the following objective reasons prevent it from being successful: there are not enough teachers who can teach the foreign professional language at the proper level (not only for lawyers); the methodological support for the study of professional English is not sufficient, especially using modern technologies. Here it would be possible to introduce dual degree programs - linguistic and legal. It would solve the stated problem quite quickly, especially in classical universities where there are law and language schools. In the context of limited resources and a shortage of teachers, it also makes sense to resort to the best practices of successful online language schools operating in Ukraine. Law schools, in partnership with language schools, using the tremendous experience of the latter in online language teaching, methods, and platforms, could quickly teach many legal experts. There is an urgent need for this because traditional approaches to learning professional English may not be as efficient; it is of particular value that training can be conducted with minimal participation of teachers. The translation of the textbook "English of Law International Instruments on Human Rights" into the Ukrainian language following the described format can be the first step in this experiment. Each section of this textbook is supplemented with a dictionary and lexical-semantic and grammatical exercises (Borysenko, 2022). Even though the information and material presented in this textbook are important and relevant, its traditional book format is quite complicated to learn from, and it is almost impossible to master in the case of self-education. It would be advisable to present this textbook in an electronic format used for foreign language learning by modern language schools that includes explanations, audio recordings, and exercises. The experience of foreign colleges would be consolidated in such a way, and many students of different law schools could improve their knowledge in this very relevant field.

Another possible form of foreign language learning is a lecture on legal English and other languages of the European Union held by experts from foreign universities. Thus, several Ukrainian universities were involved in a series of thematic online seminars called the "Global Legal Skills Virtual Workshop Series" in 2022, and students of these universities could attend courses in legal English (The George Washington University, 2023).

The language barrier makes a Ukrainian scholar school quite closed, limits the possibility of establishing working relations, and prevents acquiring and sharing experiences with colleagues from other countries. The increase in student exchange programs and internships for teachers in foreign universities should contribute to the change in this trend. There are a few translations of foreign legal bestsellers in Ukraine, such as R. Posner or R. Dworkin, the most cited scholars in the jurisprudence of the twentieth century (Shapiro, 2000). It is also necessary to work on this to create conditions for the further development of legal science in Ukraine.

Further, the authors of this article discussed the most complicated issue for legal education, namely, the practical training of students. Since this aspect of training lawyers causes most complaints, it is advisable to turn to the experience of foreign colleagues to find an answer to this question and

determine what allows them to solve it more effectively. Thus, the experience of training lawyers in Germany is thoroughly described in the book “White Paper on the Reform of Ukrainian Legal Education” (Melnyk et al., 2015). According to this book, future lawyers have to go through a four-year course of study and pass exams. This is followed by a two-year practical training course, which also ends with an examination after which a person can work in the specialty. The schematic model of training lawyers in England and Wales is available at the following link (Paths to Becoming a Lawyer, 2023). In summary, a person has several options to become a solicitor. The first option implies getting a Bachelor’s degree in law or any other specialty, undergoing a two-year internship in a law firm and a one-year practical training course, and passing the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (hereinafter - SQE). This exam is divided into two parts; SQE1 checks functional legal knowledge, and SQE2 focuses on basic legal skills (The Solicitors Qualifying Examination, 2023).

The second option is an apprenticeship; a person gets full access to work in the legal specialty after six years of practical activity in the legal field and parallel theoretical training (respectively stretched in time) and passing the SQE. It is a kind of analog of extramural education, provided that students work simultaneously in the legal field.

As for domestic realities, Ukrainian law schools make many hours for practical training in the curricula, but the problem of legal education is rooted in different approaches to organizing practical training. Bilichak (2019) rightly notes that the practical training of law students is rather formal, and supervising teachers help only those students to acquire the proper quality of practical skills who have the possibility of further employment in the organization where they undergo practical training.

The above experience of foreign countries in training experts and allowing them to work in their specialty clarifies the main mistake in Ukrainian legal education, which is an effort to turn higher legal education into a kind of mix, combining university education with a school of professional training of legal practitioners (Sushchenko, 2019). The successful realization of this plan causes many doubts since students can form basic practical skills within the walls of educational institutions that need further development outside the law school.

The experience of attracting law students during their studies at the legal clinics at law schools is quite advantageous. However, the question is whether it is possible to provide such an experience to all students of each law school since this practical Toll gives the desired effect only if it is long (at least six months) and under the guidance of an experienced mentor.

The best option for the development of students’ practical skills is their several-year practical training in law firms (that have long been working in this market and have an impeccable reputation and well-developed approaches to the organization of work) or state bodies after completing a theoretical course of training in law schools. Even though the number of students is expected to decrease, there are still not enough practice bases for students in the form of law firms with a high reputation and well-established staff training; this also applies to government agencies that do not have enough employees and resources to ensure proper training of law school graduates. Thus, it turns out that the issue of acquiring practical skills is shouldered upon the students themselves and their employers (both in the public and private sectors).

In this situation, law schools should do everything possible to help future lawyers feel more confident and be prepared for work, including the following: to create conditions for participation in model court hearings, where they will work with the histories of cases; to form legal writing skills; to develop the ability to use technical and technological products used by modern lawyers (Kravchenko, 2021).

Digitalization and automation are the last but not the least directions of transformation of legal education and profession (electronic documents, digital signature, mobile applications for lawyers, online contract designers, analytical online platforms, smart offices of law firms, search databases, electronic registries, electronic dispute resolution platforms, legal bots, etc.) (Manko, 2020; Svitlak, 2018).

It should be noted that this question is also not as unambiguous as it may seem at first glance. Legal activities will undoubtedly rely on these tools, but the issues of the extent to which lawyers should master their skills to work with such tools, necessary to involve experts from the IT sphere to help with this, and the legal regulation of these processes remains debatable (Denvir, 2020).

Although the introduction of these tools into everyday activities in the legal field allows systematizing legal information and increasing the transparency of the judicial system, it also leads to a reduction in the number of jobs for lawyers whose functions are already successfully performed by relevant programs (Kryvytskyi, 2021). This should be considered when teaching students since they must possess the skills to use these tools in their activities and knowledge of the specialty after receiving a Bachelor's diploma.

As for the educational activity, its digital transformation has significantly accelerated by objective reasons, such as the Tondemic and the largescale Russian invasion in 2022. In the next year, undergraduate studies are completed by students who have mastered most of the curriculum online. Thus, law schools actively use the following components of digitalization: online educational process, electronic educational resources, electronic document management, training using simulators, and the formation of competencies necessary in the digital world. The involvement of the teaching staff in digitalization manifests in using corporate e-mail, cloud technologies, and electronic means of educational and scientific activities, creating accounts in leading social networks, holding web conferences, and conducting open online courses (Hromovenko & Tytska, 2020). The authors notice that although much has been done in this area by Ukrainian universities, they are still at the beginning of this path, especially when it comes to the organizational and legislative consolidation of these processes. It is also crucial to find the optimal formula for using AI tools (for example, ChatGPT) in the educational process so that this takes place in compliance with the requirements of academic integrity.

Given the above, the authors recognize that online education is not a temporary phenomenon associated with a pandemic or war "but a priority facet of a new reality." However, one should understand that it is impossible to organize the online educational process in the same way as in the classroom. This form of training requires a new methodology, especially when conducting seminars or practical classes and testing knowledge. At the same time, it helps to automate routine tasks, provides interactivity and flexibility, and makes it possible to attract the best teachers and practitioners to work with students (Chornyj, 2023).

Practical training could also be partially transformed with the help of digital tools and practical skills training through work on relevant training platforms. Similarly, online training is the best option for lawyers who want to improve their skills or deepen their knowledge in a highly specialized field. A problematic aspect here is the need to invest significant material resources for organizing such online training efficiently (especially at the initial stage), but it is necessary in modern conditions.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Summarizing the above, the authors would like to draw attention to the following points regarding the further development of legal education in Ukraine. Firstly, transformational processes in public life and technology necessitate the search for optimal models of educational activity in many countries, but an ideal model has not yet been invented. Therefore, it is impossible and inappropriate to fully copy the experience of a particular country, although many practices that have long been used by foreign colleagues successfully could be implemented in domestic law schools. Secondly, legal education reforms should rely on accurate data on the state of legal education and the forecasted need of relevant experts; the decision on further changes should be consensual between the educational authorities, representatives of law schools, and employers. All measures should be aimed at, on the one hand, preserving achievements of recent decades and, on the other hand, ensuring sustainable and predictable development of the industry, considering modern trends in the development of society. Thirdly, one should remember that training in an educational institution is an important but basic element in the evolvement of an expert. Teachers can help develop legal writing skills, teach the main approaches to solving practical problems, and master the ability to analyze court decisions and understand the norms of laws. However, it is possible to form more or less stable skills and determine a person's competency for the chosen professional activity only after a few years of practical experience in auxiliary specialties under the guidance of experienced legal practitioners. Furthermore, if there is no transparent and fair selection for judges, prosecutors, notaries, advocates, and state bodies at the state level, all efforts will be in vain, and students will not have an incentive for further professional development. With all the shortcomings of modern legal education, if this issue were resolved now, we would have qualitative changes in the professional legal environment. No reform in education will achieve its goal unless the judicial system is transformed to ensure transparency, impartial consideration of cases, and integrity of judges. Fourthly, it is necessary to monitor the quality of educational services in law schools to continue the work of only those schools that can carry out activities at the proper level. This implies transforming extramural education into more acceptable formats that allow students to work and simultaneously acquire appropriate knowledge, including through individual educational trajectories. Fifthly, it is required to deepen cooperation between representatives of law schools (and colleagues from foreign universities) to discuss the concept of legal education development and share experiences on successful experiments on the introduction of innovative methods in the educational process. It is also advisable to pool material resources for the implementation of joint projects

and the creation of scientific and educational online platforms, including for the study of foreign languages of professional orientation. In general, more attention should be paid to the development of EdTech and modernization and deepening of knowledge for legal practitioners, which can be an additional source of funding for educational institutions. Sixthly, it is time to reform the curricula by optimizing the list of academic subjects, paying more attention to legal writing skills, developing analytical and soft skills, and teaching to use digital tools in professional activities (Denver, C.,2020)).

In general, the determination of the concept of legal education development and access to the legal profession is multifaceted; it requires thorough study and definition of specific measures and methods to achieve the defined goals, development of a clear plan for their implementation, and organizational and legal registration.

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