

Dmytro LYCHOV,

Ph.D. in Technical Sciences, Associate Professor,
*Higher Education Institution 'Open International UNIVERSITY of Human
Development 'UKRAINE'*

Ramis RASULOV,

Ph.D. in Technical Sciences, Associate Professor,
*Higher Education Institution 'Open International UNIVERSITY of Human
Development 'UKRAINE'*

Olena LIUBENOK,

*Higher Education Institution 'Open International UNIVERSITY of Human
Development 'UKRAINE'*

DEVELOPMENT OF AN INNOVATIVE CULTURE AMONG STUDENTS AND STAFF

The study examines the transformation of the higher education model from a closed system to the "University 4.0" open ecosystem, using the Open International University of Human Development "Ukraine" (UU) as a case study. The research identifies that the institution's foundational principle of "total inclusion" acts as a primary driver for innovation and a strategic survival mechanism. The paper analyzes how the necessity of educating students with diverse nosologies resulted in "forced innovation," accelerating digitalization and the adoption of remote management tools (Moodle, cloud services) prior to global trends.

Modern higher education is moving away from the model of a closed "ivory tower" to the concept of "University 4.0" – an open ecosystem that combines education, science and entrepreneurship. For the University "Ukraine" (UU), this transition has become not a tribute to fashion, but a survival strategy. Established in 1998 as an institution of total inclusion, the university found itself in a unique situation: the need to educate people with different nosologies forced it to innovate long before digital transformation became a global trend. The foundation of the innovative culture of the university is the principle of the absence of barriers. This applies to both physical accessibility and mental flexibility. If the traditional system weeds out a student who does not fit into the standard, the university ecosystem looks for an alternative path (assistive technologies, individual schedules). This approach forms the skill of problem-solving in the staff at the everyday level.

The structure of the university, as an institution with an extensive network of branches, creates a specific environment. Geographical dispersion forced the institution to master remote control tools and cloud services even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Branches have autonomy that turns them into a kind of "laboratories". Successful solutions found in the regions are scaled across the entire network, and field managers act as internal entrepreneurs. Despite the complexity of control, decentralization acts as an accelerator of innovations:

1. Resistance.
2. Competition of ideas.

For the University "Ukraine", digitalization is the only condition for inclusion. This phenomenon can be described as "forced innovation".

The implementation of Moodle LMS and Google/Microsoft services has created a transparent educational space. The main achievement was the change in the role of educational materials, namely, the digitization of all materials deprived the teacher of the monopoly on knowledge, freeing up time for practical interaction.

The presence of Centers for Inclusive Technologies affects the engineering culture of the institution. Technical students are involved in the creation of real products for people with disabilities. This forms an understanding of the principles of universal design and empathy. Programming ceases to be abstract – it solves social problems. People are the bearers of culture, and this is where the most difficult transformations take place. The transition from the model of "lecturer-monopolist" to the model of "mentor" requires a change in professional identity. The university stimulates this process through:

1. Change of motivation (implementation of KPIs that take into account not only "reading hours", but also the creation of distance courses, mentoring, and grant activity).
2. Overcoming resistance ("soft power" tactics are used – support through tutoring and broadcasting success stories of colleagues instead of administrative pressure on technophobes).
3. Horizontal training (trainers are often own employees, which contributes to the exchange of experience and trust).

In the innovative model of the university, the student is considered as a partner. Student self-government is integrated into real management processes, including the allocation of the budget for social events. A special role is played by the volunteer movement "Gaudeamus". Accompanying students with

disabilities becomes a school of emotional intelligence (EQ) and soft skills development. This is the practical implementation of design thinking: understanding the user's needs through direct interaction. At the same time, the culture of social entrepreneurship is developing – students are increasingly choosing topics for projects that have a social impact. In the context of limited funding from the private sector, grant activities (Erasmus+, Horizon Europe) have become vital. This changed the paradigm of scientists' thinking: from abstract theorizing to a project approach ("if there is a problem, I propose a solution, I look for funding").

The marketing strategy is based on honest success stories of graduates. The university positions itself as a socially responsible partner for communities, converting expertise in inclusion into social capital and support for local authorities.

Complex issues were solved thanks to the fruitful cooperation of scientists and the holding of such conferences as Inclusion-2025 "Inclusive Educational Environment: Problems, Prospects, and Best Practices", as well as IMPACT-Campus Innovation, Sustainability, and Inclusion in Higher Education (Turkey).

The University "Ukraine" demonstrates the viability of the "grassroots innovation" model. Inclusion in this context is not a burden, but a catalyst for development. A culture of openness and empathy creates a psychological foundation for adaptability, which is critical in a turbulent world. The future success of the institution depends on the ability to institutionalize these processes, turning spontaneous enthusiasm into systemic policy.

References

1. UVCA (Ukrainian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association). Dealbook of Ukraine 2021. Київ: UVCA, 2022. URL: <https://uvca.eu/en/publications/dealbook-2021> (дата звернення: 09.12.2025).
2. UVCA. Ukrainian Venture Capital Market Overview 2023. Київ: UVCA, 2023.
3. u.ventures / Western NIS Enterprise Fund. Ukrainian Startup Ecosystem Report 2024. Київ: WNISEF, 2024.