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Mykhailo Zuiev
postgraduate student of the Department of Pedagogy,
V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University,
Svobody Square 4, Kharkiv, Ukraine, 61022
mykhailo.zuiev@karazin.ua https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2227-4067

BLENDED LEARNING IN THE HUMANITIES: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TRENDS IN UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITIES

This article explores the transformation of humanities education in Ukrainian universities through the integration of blended learning models. Blended learning, combining traditional face-to-face instruction with digital technologies, has become a pedagogical necessity under the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing geopolitical instability in Ukraine. The study is based on a mixed-methods approach, incorporating survey data from 40 educators and 200 students, as well as qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups. Findings reveal that while both groups recognize significant benefits such as flexibility, increased engagement, and improved digital literacy substantial challenges remain. These include insufficient training in digital pedagogy, increased workload for educators, unequal access to digital infrastructure, and reduced interpersonal interaction. The study highlights the ways in which educators have adapted their instructional strategies, embracing flipped classrooms, interactive assessments, and multimedia resources. Students report greater comfort in asynchronous formats and higher motivation when interactivity and gamification are present. The findings underscore the importance of strategic planning, institutional support, and national policy development for sustainable digital transformation. The article concludes with consultative considerations for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to enhance the quality and equity of blended learning in the humanities.

Keywords: *blended learning, humanities education, digital transformation, higher education in Ukraine, pedagogical innovation.*

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Introduction. The integration of digital technologies into higher education has significantly transformed pedagogical approaches worldwide. Blended learning, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online components, has emerged as a prominent model, offering flexibility and enhanced engagement for students [3]. This approach is particularly pertinent in the humanities, where critical thinking and interpretative skills are central to the curriculum.

In Ukraine, the adoption of blended learning has been accelerated by various factors, including the global COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing geopolitical challenges [16; 17]. These circumstances have necessitated rapid digitalization within higher education institutions, prompting a reevaluation of traditional teaching methodologies and the exploration of innovative instructional strategies [3]. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has actively pursued the development of a digital education ecosystem, focusing on enhancing e-learning environments, strengthening digital infrastructure, and improving digital literacy among educators and students [7].

Despite these advancements, the implementation of blended learning in Ukrainian universities, particularly within humanities disciplines, presents unique challenges. These include ensuring equitable access to technology, maintaining academic integrity in virtual settings, and adapting curricula to effectively

integrate digital tools without compromising the depth of humanistic inquiry. Furthermore, the lack of explicit legislative guidelines for blended learning in Ukraine has been identified as a barrier to its widespread adoption [3].

This study aims to examine the current trends and practices of blended learning in the humanities across Ukrainian higher education institutions. By analyzing the experiences of educators and students, as well as institutional strategies, the research seeks to identify effective models and methodologies that enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, the study will explore the impact of digital transformation on pedagogical approaches within the humanities, considering both the opportunities and challenges presented by this shift.

Through this investigation, the article contributes to the broader discourse on educational innovation and provides insights that may inform policy development and pedagogical practices in Ukraine and similar contexts.

Literature Review. Blended learning, characterized by the integration of traditional face-to-face instruction with online educational technologies, has gained prominence as a pedagogical approach in higher education. This model offers flexibility and accessibility, which are particularly beneficial in the context of the humanities, where critical thinking and interpretative skills are central.

In Ukraine, the adoption of blended learning has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing geopolitical challenges, necessitating rapid digitalization within higher education institutions (HEIs) [16; 17]. Studies have highlighted the potential of blended learning to enhance the educational process, emphasizing the need for a strategic approach to its implementation [10]. The effectiveness of blended learning in Ukrainian HEIs has been a subject of empirical research. Volodavchyk et al. [18] conducted a study assessing various blended learning models, including rotational and enriched virtual models, and found that a combination of these approaches yielded improved academic performance and student satisfaction. However, the study also noted challenges related to institutional readiness and the need for faculty training in digital competencies. The implementation of blended learning in the humanities presents unique challenges. Bohomaz et al. [3] observed that humanities educators often face difficulties in adapting to digital platforms, partly due to a lack of technological proficiency and the inherently interactive nature of humanities subjects, which traditionally rely on in-person discourse and analysis. The study emphasized the importance of developing digital resources tailored to the specific needs of humanities education. Furthermore, the absence of a unified legislative framework for blended learning in Ukraine has been identified as a barrier to its widespread adoption [11]. Hrytsak et al. [10] argue that the development of clear policies and guidelines is essential to support the integration of blended learning models across HEIs. They propose a multi-stage strategy that includes legal recognition, assessment of institutional readiness, and the development of methodological support for educators. Comparative studies have also provided insights into the implementation of blended learning in different contexts. For instance, research conducted by Husak and Havryliuk [12] on adaptive blended learning technologies in Ukrainian HEIs during wartime conditions demonstrated the effectiveness of flexible learning models in maintaining educational continuity. The study highlighted the importance of student-centered approaches and the integration of various digital tools to accommodate diverse learning needs.

In summary, the literature underscores the potential of blended learning to transform humanities education in Ukrainian universities. However, successful implementation requires addressing challenges related to faculty training, institutional support, and the development of appropriate legislative frameworks. Ongoing research and policy development are crucial to harness the benefits of blended learning in the humanities.

Methodology. This study employs a mixed-method research design to comprehensively explore the implementation and impact of blended learning in humanities programs at Ukrainian higher education institutions. A mixed-method approach was selected to allow for a holistic analysis combining quantitative data with rich, qualitative insights [6].

***The research addresses the following primary questions*:**

1. What digital technologies are currently utilized in blended learning environments within humanities faculties at Ukrainian universities?
2. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of adopting blended learning from the perspective of students and faculty?
3. How do blended learning practices influence teaching strategies and student engagement in humanities disciplines?

Participants in this study include educators and students from humanities departments at multiple Ukrainian universities. A purposive sampling

strategy was employed to select institutions that actively integrate blended learning into their educational practices. The participant group consists of: **Educators** (N ≈ 40): Faculty members teaching humanities courses using blended learning techniques; **Students** (N ≈ 200): Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in humanities programs experiencing blended learning.

Data Collection Methods. Data collection incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods, ensuring depth and breadth of information:

- *Online surveys.* Structured questionnaires distributed via institutional platforms to capture quantitative data about usage frequency, perceived effectiveness, and satisfaction with digital tools and platforms. Surveys utilized Likert-scale and open-ended questions.
- *Semi-structured interviews***.** Conducted with a subset of educators (approximately 10–15 participants) to gather qualitative insights on pedagogical experiences, instructional strategies, and perceived institutional support.
- *Focus groups***.** Approximately five sessions were conducted with students (6–8 participants each) to gain detailed perspectives on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions regarding blended learning.

Data Analysis Procedures. Quantitative survey data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS software (Version 27), focusing on frequencies, means, standard deviations, and correlation analyses to identify significant relationships.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis [5], allowing the identification of recurring themes and patterns related to experiences, challenges, and practices within blended learning environments.

Ethical Considerations. Participants provided informed consent and were assured confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical approval for conducting this research was obtained from the ethical committees of participating institutions, ensuring compliance with international research standards.

Findings. This section presents the empirical results of the study, derived from the integration of quantitative survey data and qualitative insights obtained through interviews and focus groups. The research aimed to explore the current practices, challenges, and pedagogical effects of blended learning in humanities disciplines within Ukrainian higher education institutions.

The findings are structured according to the three central research questions outlined in the methodology: (1) the extent and nature of digital technology usage in blended learning environments, (2) the perceived benefits and challenges from both educators' and students' perspectives, and (3) the influence of blended learning on teaching strategies and student engagement.

By combining statistical data with narrative interpretations and direct insights from participants, this section offers a comprehensive understanding of how blended learning is currently implemented and experienced in the Ukrainian humanities context.

Quantitative data collected from 40 educators and 200 students reveals widespread integration of various digital tools in blended learning environments. Learning Management Systems (LMS) and videoconferencing platforms were the most frequently used technologies.

Moodle emerged as the dominant platform among educators (75%) and was also widely used by students (70%). Similarly, Zoom was used by 82% of educators and 80% of students, highlighting its importance for synchronous learning components. Other platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and Kahoot! also featured prominently, though usage varied by institution.

Table 1

Frequency of Use of Digital Tools in Blended Learning

Digital Tool / Platform	Educators (%)	Students (%)
Moodle	75	70
Google Classroom	68	72
Microsoft Teams	45	50
Zoom	82	80
Google Meet	63	60
Padlet	40	38
Kahoot!	56	60
Canva	49	45
H5P	33	30

The predominance of Moodle and Zoom suggests that institutions prioritize platforms that support both asynchronous and synchronous components. The relatively high usage of tools like Kahoot! and Canva reflects a pedagogical trend toward gamification and visual content creation, particularly beneficial in humanities courses where engagement and creativity are valued.

Qualitative responses from interviews confirm that educators appreciate Moodle's structured course features, while students express positive feedback on Google Classroom's user-friendly interface. Notably, several students mentioned that using multiple platforms (e.g., Zoom for lectures, Google Classroom for tasks) sometimes leads to confusion or fragmentation of the learning experience.

The implementation of blended learning was associated with a range of benefits, as reported by both educators and students participating in the study. These perceived advantages align with core principles of flexible and student-centered pedagogy and reflect the evolving role of digital technologies in higher education.

From the educators' perspective, the integration of digital tools substantially improved the flexibility of instructional delivery, with 78% of respondents affirming that such tools enabled more adaptable and responsive teaching practices. Furthermore, 70% observed a noticeable increase in student engagement, which they attributed to the use of multimedia content and interactive learning activities. A majority (65%) also emphasized the pedagogical value of formative assessment methods—such as online quizzes, peer reviews, and collaborative assignments – which allowed for timely feedback and more dynamic student participation.

Students likewise identified several key benefits associated with the blended learning format. Notably, 82% reported that the ability to access course materials asynchronously significantly enhanced their ability to manage academic responsibilities alongside work or personal commitments. In addition, 74% indicated that their digital literacy skills had improved through the consistent use of digital tools for research, content creation, and communication. Importantly, 68% of student respondents stated that interactive and gamified elements within blended courses positively influenced their motivation and overall engagement with the subject matter.

These findings underscore the pedagogical potential of blended learning in the humanities, particularly in fostering flexibility, digital competence, and sustained learner motivation when thoughtfully implemented.

Table 2

Perceived Benefits of Blended Learning

Benefit	Educators (%)	Students (%)
Flexibility in instruction	78	82
Enhanced engagement via interactivity	70	68
Development of digital literacy	60	74
Improved assessment processes	65	56

The mutual acknowledgment of flexibility and interactivity as central benefits reinforces the suitability of blended learning for the humanities, where learning is often dialogic, exploratory, and interpretative. Both groups, however, emphasized the importance of well-structured and engaging content to avoid the risk of passive consumption.

Despite the reported benefits, both educators and students identified a range of challenges that hinder the effective implementation of blended learning in the humanities. These obstacles highlight the transitional difficulties faced by institutions and individuals as they adapt to digitally enhanced educational environments.

From the educators' perspective, a primary concern was the insufficient training in digital pedagogy, with 63% of respondents indicating that they lacked comprehensive preparation for the integration of technology into teaching practices. This gap in professional development limited their ability to fully exploit the pedagogical potential of digital tools. Additionally, 58% of educators reported a significant increase in workload due to the necessity of redesigning course content and materials to suit blended formats. The time-intensive nature of this adaptation process, combined with limited institutional support, often resulted in elevated levels of professional strain. Another key issue noted by 52% of educators was the difficulty in maintaining student engagement, particularly in asynchronous components of blended courses, where learner participation tended to decline over time.

Students also faced substantial challenges in the blended learning context. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) cited technical barriers, such as unstable internet connections or lack of access to

appropriate digital devices, which impeded consistent participation in online learning activities. Moreover, 62% of students emphasized the demanding nature of self-directed learning, noting that the format required a high degree of self-regulation, time management, and internal motivation–skills that not all learners had fully developed. Lastly, 55% expressed concerns about the reduction in real-time interaction with instructors, which they perceived as a barrier to forming meaningful academic relationships and receiving immediate feedback.

These challenges illustrate the complex realities of implementing blended learning at scale, underscoring the need for targeted institutional strategies that support educators' professional development, address infrastructure inequalities, and promote pedagogical models that sustain engagement and interpersonal connection within digital learning environments.

Table 3

Perceived Challenges of Blended Learning

Challenge	Educators (%)	Students (%)
Lack of digital pedagogy training	63	-
Increased workload for content development	58	-
Disengagement in asynchronous learning	52	-
Poor internet/device availability	-	49
High self-discipline requirements	-	62
Reduced direct instructor interaction	-	55

The challenges noted reflect the transitional nature of digital transformation in Ukrainian universities. While platforms are available, support systems – including infrastructure, training, and institutional policies – are still developing. A significant insight from focus groups was that students in rural areas or those with financial constraints struggled more than their urban counterparts.

The shift to blended learning has prompted a significant reconfiguration of instructional strategies among humanities educators. Quantitative data indicate that 67% of respondents adopted flipped classroom models, wherein students are required to engage with core learning materials such as readings, video lectures, or presentations prior to attending face-to-face or synchronous sessions. This approach enabled instructors to devote more classroom time to analytical discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and higher-order cognitive tasks. In addition, 74% of educators reported integrating interactive assessment methods, including peer evaluations, formative quizzes, and discussion-based tasks, which allowed for more dynamic and continuous monitoring of student progress. These tools not only enhanced student engagement but also supported the development of critical thinking and self-assessment skills-attributes particularly valuable in the humanities. Furthermore, 61% of participants noted an increased use of multimedia resources, such as podcasts, annotated primary texts, short video documentaries, and virtual exhibitions, to complement traditional reading lists. The incorporation of such materials aimed to diversify content delivery, appeal to varied learning preferences, and provide richer contextual understanding of complex topics.

Qualitative data from interviews corroborated these trends, revealing that many instructors viewed the blended format as an opportunity to rethink their pedagogical repertoire. They expressed appreciation for the capacity to personalize learning pathways, diversify instructional resources, and foster student autonomy. However, several educators also voiced concerns about the absence of consistent institutional frameworks and expressed a need for clearer guidelines and sustained support to maximize the pedagogical potential of blended learning environments.

The results of the student survey provided valuable insights into how learners experience engagement within blended learning environments, particularly in the context of the humanities. A significant portion of respondents (68%) reported feeling more comfortable participating in asynchronous discussion forums compared to traditional in-class settings. Students indicated that these forums provided them with additional time for reflection, allowed for more thoughtful articulation of their ideas, and reduced the social pressure often associated with speaking in front of peers during live sessions. Moreover, 64% of students expressed increased willingness to engage in collaborative projects when facilitated through digital platforms. Tools that enabled real-time co-authoring, virtual brainstorming, and structured peer feedback were identified as instrumental in promoting a sense of academic community, even in partially remote set-

tings. These findings suggest that technology, when used effectively, can serve not only as a logistical enabler but also as a catalyst for interpersonal interaction and collective learning.

An even higher percentage of respondents (71%) noted that visual and interactive elements – such as educational videos, multimedia timelines, and digital archives – greatly enhanced their ability to grasp abstract or theoretical material. Students frequently emphasized that such resources made complex content more relatable and cognitively accessible, especially when combined with traditional texts and instructor-led interpretation.

These quantitative results were reinforced by qualitative data from student focus groups. Participants consistently highlighted the importance of intentional and pedagogically grounded use of digital tools. When such technologies were integrated thoughtfully – embedded within the course structure to support specific learning objectives – students reported greater motivation, deeper engagement, and a stronger sense of connection to the course content. In contrast, when digital elements were perceived as superficial or disconnected from the core curriculum, their impact on learning and satisfaction diminished markedly.

Table 4

Influence on Pedagogy and Engagement

Area	**Observed Change / Rating**
Flipped classroom adoption	67% of educators
Integration of interactive assessments	74% of educators
Increased use of multimedia materials	61% of educators
Preference for online discussions	68% of students
Engagement in digital collaboration	64% of students
Helpfulness of visual/interactive tools	71% of students

These results highlight a pedagogical evolution wherein instructors leverage digital environments to expand engagement opportunities and promote deeper critical thinking. Humanities students, often thought to resist digital learning, showed high levels of adaptability and responsiveness when content was well-designed and inclusive.

Discussion. The findings of this study offer a nuanced understanding of the current state of blended learning in the humanities within Ukrainian higher education institutions. Overall, the data suggest that while digital transformation has opened up significant pedagogical opportunities, it also presents notable systemic, infrastructural, and methodological challenges. The discussion below synthesizes these results in relation to the existing body of research and the specific educational context of Ukraine.

The reported shift toward flipped classrooms, interactive assessments, and the incorporation of multimedia resources reflects a broader trend across global higher education landscapes, where blended learning is increasingly associated with student-centered pedagogical approaches [2; 8]. In line with these international patterns, Ukrainian humanities educators demonstrated considerable adaptability and creativity in the restructuring of course delivery. The observed emphasis on formative assessment and personalized feedback mechanisms also resonates with findings from European studies advocating for blended learning as a driver of deeper engagement and critical thinking [14; 15].

Importantly, the humanities – often considered more resistant to technological interventions due to their discursive and interpretive nature – have demonstrated strong potential for innovation through blended formats. The use of annotated texts, video lectures, and online exhibitions illustrates how digital content can enrich traditional text-based approaches and foster multimodal literacy.

The high level of student-reported engagement – especially in asynchronous discussion forums and collaborative projects – supports the argument that digital learning environments can facilitate deeper cognitive processing and more inclusive participation [9]. Students' preference for discussion boards over live interactions is particularly noteworthy, suggesting that asynchronous platforms allow for greater deliberation, reduce social anxiety, and accommodate diverse communication styles – benefits previously documented in blended learning literature [1].

Furthermore, the use of visual and interactive tools to support comprehension of abstract concepts aligns with multimedia learning theories [13], indicating that blended learning is well-suited to the complexity of humanities education when implemented with clear instructional intent.

Despite these advances, the findings also expose persistent structural and pedagogical

barriers. Educators' limited access to formal training in digital pedagogy and their increased workload mirror challenges reported in other post-Soviet and resource-constrained contexts [4]. The lack of centralized institutional support – highlighted in educator interviews – suggests that digital innovation is often driven by individual initiative rather than systemic reform.

On the student side, issues such as limited internet access and insufficient digital devices remain critical equity concerns, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged regions. These infrastructural limitations are exacerbated by the ongoing sociopolitical instability in Ukraine, underscoring the urgent need for national-level strategies to support digital inclusion.

The findings suggest several key implications for educational stakeholders. First, institutional investment in professional development programs focused on digital pedagogy is essential to sustain high-quality blended learning. Such initiatives should move beyond basic technical training to include instructional design, multimedia integration, and digital assessment strategies tailored to the humanities.

Second, there is a need for unified national guidelines on blended learning implementation, including quality standards, assessment criteria, and student support services. Given the lack of legislative clarity in Ukraine on this issue [10], such policy development would provide a more stable framework for innovation and ensure consistency across institutions.

Finally, addressing the digital divide remains critical. Universities should collaborate with government and international partners to improve access to infrastructure, particularly for vulnerable student populations. Without this foundational support, the benefits of blended learning will remain unevenly distributed.

Recent research emphasizes the growing role of AI-driven technologies, such as ChatGPT, in transforming educational practices, particularly in relation to writing, authorship, and learner engagement. Yurchenko and Nalyvaiko [19] demonstrate that AI-generated texts increasingly resemble human-authored content, blurring the boundaries of authorship and prompting critical discussions on authenticity, assessment, and ethical usage. Their findings underscore the necessity of developing AI literacy among students and educators, particularly in disciplines like the humanities, where interpretative nuance and individual voice are central to academic expression.

The integration of AI tools within blended learning environments offers both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, such tools can support learners through brainstorming, feedback, and language scaffolding. On the other, as the ability to distinguish between AI- and human-produced texts diminishes, new pedagogical strategies are required to foster critical awareness, uphold academic integrity, and maintain trust in human authorship [19]. These concerns resonate with the broader implications of blended learning in the humanities, reinforcing the need for ethical frameworks and reflective digital pedagogy.

While this study offers important insights, it is not without limitations. The sample, though diverse in terms of institutional representation, remains limited in size and may not capture the full heterogeneity of the Ukrainian higher education system. Future studies should aim to include a broader range of institutions, including technical and rural universities, and explore longitudinal outcomes of blended learning over time. Moreover, while this study focused on students and educators, administrative and policy-level perspectives also warrant investigation, especially in light of efforts to institutionalize blended learning practices more permanently.

Conclusion. This study has explored the evolving role of blended learning in the humanities within Ukrainian higher education, focusing on the application of digital technologies, the perspectives of educators and students, and the pedagogical transformations that have followed. The results demonstrate that blended learning holds considerable promise for enhancing flexibility, engagement, and inclusivity in humanities education when implemented with pedagogical intention and institutional support.

Educators have shown a readiness to adapt their instructional strategies by adopting flipped classrooms, multimedia tools, and interactive assessment methods. Students, in turn, have reported increased motivation, improved digital literacy, and a preference for thoughtfully integrated asynchronous learning opportunities. These developments indicate that blended learning, far from undermining the distinctiveness of the humanities, can enrich its practices when guided by a learner-centered and reflective approach.

Nevertheless, the study also reveals enduring challenges – particularly in relation to technological accessibility, instructor training, and the absence of clear legislative frameworks. The digital divide remains a structural barrier to equity, and without systemic investment in digital infrastructure and faculty development, the potential of blended learning may remain unrealized for many.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that universities and policymakers in Ukraine move toward a more strategic and sustainable integration of blended learning. This includes the development of national guidelines, enhanced institutional support structures, and continued research into discipline-specific best practices. Additionally, fostering international cooperation through blended formats may serve not only as a vehicle for innovation but also as a means of strengthening academic resilience in the face of ongoing geopolitical and societal disruptions.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on digital transformation in higher education by affirming the viability and value of blended learning in the humanities – when implemented with equity, intentionality, and a commitment to pedagogical quality.

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Михайло Зуєв
аспірант кафедри педагогіки Харківського національного університету
імені В. Н. Каразіна, майдан Свободи 4, Харків, Україна, 61022
mykhailo.zuiev@karazin.ua https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2227-4067

ЗМІШАНЕ НАВЧАННЯ В ГУМАНІТАРНИХ НАУКАХ: ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ЦИФРОВОЇ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ В УКРАЇНСЬКИХ УНІВЕРСИТЕТАХ

У статті досліджується трансформація гуманітарної освіти в українських університетах через впровадження моделей змішаного навчання. Змішане навчання, яке поєднує традиційне аудиторне викладання з цифровими технологіями, стало педагогічною необхідністю в умовах пандемії COVID-19 та геополітичної нестабільності в Україні. Дослідження базується на змішаному методологічному підході, що включає опитування 40 викладачів і 200 студентів, а також глибинні інтерв'ю та фокус-групи. Результати показують, що, хоча обидві групи визнають суттєві переваги гнучкість, зростання залученості та розвиток цифрової грамотності існують і серйозні виклики. Серед них: недостатня підготовка викладачів до цифрової педагогіки, збільшене навантаження, нерівний доступ до інфраструктури та зменшення міжособистісної взаємодії. У статті висвітлюється, як викладачі адаптували свої стратегії викладання, використовуючи перевернуті класи, інтерактивні оцінювання та мультимедійні ресурси. Студенти зазначають вищий рівень комфорту в асинхронному навчанні та зростання мотивації за умов наявності інтерактивних та ігрових елементів. Отримані результати підкреслюють необхідність стратегічного планування, інституційної підтримки та розробки національної політики для сталого розвитку цифрової трансформації в галузі гуманітарної освіти.

Ключові слова: *змішане навчання, гуманітарна освіта, цифрова трансформація, вища освіта в Україні, педагогічні інновації.*

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