

Chapter 8

Sustainable educational platform for regional recovery and social development: a case study of integrating educational initiatives and community projects

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Introduction

In today's world, where constant changes fundamentally transform approaches to education, there is a need for educational institutions capable of responding flexibly to challenges and ensuring societal development. This issue is particularly relevant for Ukraine, which faces a series of complex challenges brought about by the war. On one hand, infrastructure destruction, population displacement, and the loss of skilled professionals demand adaptability and resilience from educational institutions. On the other hand, the war also presents opportunities for rethinking the educational model, reorienting it toward sustainable development and aligning it with the current needs of society. In these circumstances, educational institutions are not only responsible for preparing qualified specialists for rebuilding the country but also for playing a role as social institutions that support cohesion and foster civic engagement. Thus, the social impact of educational institutions implies their ability not only to provide knowledge and skills but also to promote social integration, economic stability, and civic engagement within society. In the context of Ukraine's post-war recovery, these institutions become key players in rebuilding and modernizing processes. Their mission expands: they not only perform an educational function but also actively influence social processes, shaping a new generation of citizens who are adaptable, responsible, and conscientious. This is especially important when society needs professionals capable of responding to new challenges, supporting community development, and participating in the nation's recovery processes. From this perspective, educational institutions that can quickly adapt to market needs and implement the latest innovative practices are of particular importance.

Education as a Driver of Sustainable Development in Ukraine's Recovery. In Chernihiv, institutions such as the "University of Future Transformation," the "Institute of Professional Transformations," and the "University of Future Transformation College" create a unique educational system that provides not only the training of qualified professionals but also promotes the sustainable development of the region. This comprehensive approach to education, encompassing programs for young people, postgraduate education, and innovative projects, is increasingly significant given the challenges Ukraine faces due to the war.

Researchers often link the development of educational institutions with the sustainable development of regions. This connection is explored through various dimensions, such as economic growth, social stability, and environmental sustainability (Pedro et al., 2022). The effectiveness of teaching, learning, and social responsibility within educational institutions also positively correlates with regional economic growth and innovation intensity (Fuchs et al., 2023).

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Adopting sustainable development goals in higher education institutions fosters the progress of social relations and synergy, reinforcing sustainable development strategies (Krukmal & Kryklii, 2022). Institutional partnerships among education providers enhance the resilience of regional socio-economic development by promoting educational practices aligned with sustainable development. Such partnerships help to transform everyday practices and integrate educational content that strengthens regional resilience (Zinevich & Melekhina, 2023). Universities contribute to sustainable development by implementing strategies that address both global goals and local practices, thereby supporting the development of educational environments. Despite contemporary challenges, educational institutions play a transformative role, engaging diverse stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and students, in sustainability initiatives (Hinduja et al., 2023).

At the same time, the war in Ukraine has posed serious challenges to society, especially for the education system. Many educational institutions have been destroyed, a significant number of students and teachers have been forced to leave their homes, and there is an acute need for specialists capable of participating in the country's recovery processes. In these conditions, there is a demand for innovative and flexible educational models that could not only restore lost resources but also contribute to transforming the region into a promising development zone. In this context, the educational complex in Chernihiv can play an essential role by providing basic youth training, professional retraining, and fostering social initiatives and projects aimed at strengthening communities and promoting gender equality.

Modern educational institutions play a key role in shaping a sustainable society, especially in the context of the social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by Ukraine. Integrating sustainable development principles into the activities of educational institutions not only prepares students for professional careers but also fosters socially responsible citizens. This is particularly relevant in the post-war period, when there is a need not only to restore the economy but also to enhance social integration and community cohesion.

The Social Significance of Educational Institutions in the Context of Sustainable Development and Post-War Recovery in the Chernihiv Region. This chapter focuses on studying the social significance of higher education institutions in the context of the sustainable development of the city of Chernihiv and the region as a whole. The educational activities of institutions such as the "University of Future Transformation," the "Institute of Professional Transformations," and the "University of Future Transformation College," which together form a logical system of educational institutions, create not only a new generation of highly qualified professionals but also play a key role in the social, economic, and cultural sustainability of the region.

University of Future Transformation (UFT). The university's activities, focused on innovative approaches and European integration, meet the current needs of the information society, preparing bachelor's and master's students in the fields of "Management," "Marketing," "Public Administration," and "Psychology." The university's educational mission emphasizes the development of innovative and strategic thinking, essential for social development and public administration in contemporary conditions. This focus is especially relevant in the Chernihiv region, where there is a demand for specialists capable of implementing new management approaches and adapting to dynamic changes. The university is oriented toward future labor market needs and integration into the international arena. Importantly, the UFT is committed to training specialists in public administration, a critical area for the recovery and modernization of the country in the post-

war period. Additionally, its programs in management, integrated technologies, and robotics pave the way for advanced technological solutions in infrastructure and economic rebuilding (Khudiakov & Sukhonos, 2021; He & Ding, 2022).

Institute of Professional Transformations (IPT). Founded to provide conditions necessary for personal and professional growth, the IPT enables individuals to deepen, expand, and update their professional knowledge, skills, and other competencies based on prior education and practical experience. The institute offers a wide range of advanced training and retraining programs, as well as various courses, including preparatory courses for the National Multidisciplinary Test in Ukrainian language, mathematics, and English, conducted online. The institute collaborates actively with community organizations and government institutions, organizing training and projects aimed at developing soft skills in youth and creating positive changes in the community. This role is vital for professional development and contributes to social integration and economic stability in the region. The official website of the IPT (<https://www.ipt.cn.ua/>) provides extensive resources for professional growth.

The IPT offers certification programs, including:

1. Professional training for civil servants.
2. Short-term program on "Public Information Access Law Implementation."
3. Short-term program on "Information Security and Data Protection."
4. Short-term program on "Communication and Interaction in Public Administration."
5. Short-term program on "Anti-Corruption and Integrity."
6. Short-term program on "Change Management."
7. Short-term program on "Ensuring Rights and Interests of People with Disabilities."

These certification programs play an essential role in sustainable development in Ukraine, especially in the context of post-war recovery and strengthening government institutions. Programs focused on public information access and public administration communication enhance transparency and accountability, strengthening public trust in government. Courses related to disability rights support inclusivity and equality, while change management and anti-corruption training align with principles of economic sustainability and efficient resource management. Thus, the IPT's certification programs not only enhance professional skills but also lay the foundation for a sustainable society where social justice, inclusivity, and transparency are valued.

University of Future Transformation College. The UFT College prepares students for future challenges, offering programs for junior specialists in "Management," "Marketing," and "Integrated Technologies and Robotics" (UFT College, n.d.):

- Program "Integrated Technologies and Robotics" prepares specialists to design, develop, implement, and maintain automated systems and robotic complexes. Covering diverse fields from industrial automation to artificial intelligence, graduates bring technological solutions that optimize production processes and enhance organizational efficiency.
- Program "Management" equips students with skills for effective organizational and resource management. Graduates are prepared for roles in human resources, financial management, and strategic decision-making, making them valuable contributors to the region's growing entrepreneurial activity.
- Program "Marketing" develops expertise in managing product and service promotion, meeting consumer needs, and analyzing market trends. Graduates drive competitive marketing campaigns, supporting regional businesses' interactions with consumers.

The college plays a crucial role in raising the professional competence of young people prepared for the modern knowledge economy and fostering the region's innovative potential. The UFT College employs advanced technologies and interactive methods, adapting students to rapid professional changes and workplace realities. The college's practical training, aligned with the dual education model, bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. Dual education fosters sustainable social development by equipping students with workplace skills, enhancing their integration into the job market, and supporting economic stability through a qualified workforce.

Educational and Cultural Development Initiatives in Chernihiv. As is known, NGOs play a vital role in the cultural and educational development of regions by improving public policies, offering alternative education, and organizing cultural activities. Despite facing challenges like resource constraints and economic inadequacies, their contributions significantly enhance the social and cultural fabric of communities (Abiddin et al., 2022). For furthering cultural and educational development, the Educational Compass NGO was established, aimed at:

1. Supporting and developing informal education through seminars, training, and lectures in science, art, culture, and financial literacy.
2. Expanding educational opportunities for youth through preparatory programs for national exams, university entrance, and specialized programs to boost employability.
3. Promoting cultural exchange by organizing events such as exhibitions, film screenings, and literary meetings.
4. Enhancing digital literacy with IT and cybersecurity courses, enabling citizens to navigate the digital environment.
5. Engaging the community in volunteer activities, creating a network of volunteers for social and cultural projects that positively impact local communities.

On October 5, 2024, a youth space called "ROOF" was opened. This modern center for active and creative youth was designed for development, inspiration, and self-realization. Here, young people come together to find like-minded individuals, learn, share ideas, and implement new projects. The main areas of work at ROOF include training sessions and workshops (for personal and professional growth), a co-working zone (a comfortable space for work, study, and team meetings), thematic discussions and workshops (exploring current topics with experts to develop new skills), creative studios (a space for artistic ideas and inspiration), and more. The activities of this space are focused on implementing projects that encompass youth development and social activity enhancement. Notably, the organization has implemented the "Informal Education Lecture Hall" project, which aims to equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in social life and professional activities. Programs supporting youth initiatives and community development are also given significant attention, with active cooperation established with local communities. Thus, this space plays an important role in the development of youth initiatives and promotes social engagement among young people in the Chernihiv region by implementing projects aimed at increasing awareness, skill development, and support for community initiatives (Cheline, 2023).

Collectively, the presented system of organizations forms a resilient platform for community development, enabling an effective response to social, economic, and educational challenges, fostering integration and inclusion among diverse population groups, and ensuring sustainable regional development. For instance, with support from the "Educational Compass" NGO and the Institute of Professional Transformations, a project was implemented in the ROOF youth space for

young people ready to take responsibility for their future and build successful careers. Under the project "Start Up: Career and Entrepreneurship," organized by the Youth Platform NGO with support from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Ukraine and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), training sessions were conducted for interested individuals (primarily youth) from the Chernihiv region and Chernihiv city (Molodizhnyi prostir "ROOF", n.d.).

Thus, the network of educational institutions established in Chernihiv creates a unique environment for youth and adult development, supporting the sustainable social development of the region, and its active involvement in socially significant initiatives serves as a tool for sustainable development. Specifically, the University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations actively contribute to regional sustainability by participating in numerous initiatives focused on youth development, community support, and the implementation of gender and youth programs. These efforts not only meet regional needs but also promote sustainable social practices that support integration, engagement, and equality in the communities of Chernihiv. For example:

1. Collaboration with the "Go Beyond" NGO and the "Informal Education Lecture Hall" project. The project "Skills for Young People's Public and Social Life via Informal Education" aims to help young people develop soft skills essential for active participation in public life. This initiative focuses on cultivating skills that not only foster individual student development but also contribute positively to the community. Young people acquiring new competencies, particularly in communication, leadership, and critical thinking, become active participants in social processes, increasing social cohesion within the region. These educational programs lay the foundation for sustainable development by nurturing conscious citizens capable of creating and sustaining positive changes.

2. Training sessions for territorial communities in the Chernihiv region. In partnership with the Regional Military Administration, the Institute of Professional Transformations and the University of Future Transformation conducted a series of training sessions titled "Restoring the Region's Future through Public Management Tools for Youth and Gender Initiatives." The primary goal of these training sessions was to develop and implement effective public management mechanisms to support youth and gender initiatives, ensuring these initiatives are integrated into regional recovery and development strategies. This approach allows communities to consider various aspects of social equality and inclusiveness, which are foundational to sustainable social development. Enhancing local leaders' competencies in gender equality and youth work strengthens civil society and ensures a long-term impact on social processes in the region.

3. Youth Space "PRIKOLEJ" as a platform for youth development. The university established the "PRIKOLEJ" youth space, a platform for youth initiatives and comprehensive support. Collaborating with the National Youth Center and planning educational programs like "Youth Worker" enables young people to acquire professional knowledge and develop skills for active participation in public life. This youth space not only provides a venue for meetings and idea exchange but also serves as an essential tool for regional sustainability by creating conditions for developing social initiatives oriented toward community needs.

Each of these initiatives demonstrates the integration of sustainable development goals into the work of educational institutions. Through these projects, the presented educational institutions not only educate students but also contribute to the region's overall social development, supporting youth integration into social life, enhancing community workers'

professional competencies, and fostering positive community changes. Such activities are a powerful tool ensuring long-term positive regional impact and creating a foundation for sustainable development in the future.

In light of the growing need to foster a gender-equal society, universities and educational institutions play a crucial role in implementing initiatives aimed at promoting gender education and women's leadership. The University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations are active participants in such programs in collaboration with local and international partners (Rosa & Clavero, 2021; Condrón et al., 2022):

1. Project "Gender Education for Youth." This project aims to raise youth awareness on issues of gender equality, sexual education, and health. Educational programs and training sessions under this project equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary for participation in social life and interpersonal interactions. This initiative, supported by partners like the Chernihiv Regional Administration's Department of Family, Youth, and Sports and international partners, is vital for achieving sustainable development goals. Educational activities prepare youth for social life and foster the formation of conscious citizens who will support gender equality and contribute to creating an inclusive society.

2. Project "Women's Voices and Leadership – Ukraine." This initiative focuses on enhancing the role of women in public and political life, supporting gender equality and sustainable social development. Through educational programs, training sessions, and grant support, the project helps women acquire leadership skills, actively participate in decision-making processes, and implement their initiatives. Additionally, advocacy campaigns and support for network platforms create a favorable environment for experience sharing and strengthening women's community organizations. These activities promote equality and strengthen the social fabric, laying the foundations for inclusive development and social justice.

Expected project outcomes include increased women holding leadership positions, greater influence of women's organizations, increased public awareness, and decreased gender discrimination. Such projects significantly contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable society, providing women with opportunities for professional and social growth, supporting youth, and fostering a new generation that values gender equality and inclusion.

Integrative Educational and Social Initiatives for Regional Recovery and Sustainable Development. In conclusion, educational institutions in Ukraine today have become centers of support, promoting equal opportunities, inclusion, and the development of local communities. Programs that provide students with practical skills, along with projects on gender and civic education, help unite the population and meet labor market needs. Environmental initiatives foster responsible attitudes toward the environment among students, laying the groundwork for sustainable development.

Table 1 – Contribution of UFT, IPT, UFT College, "Educational Compass" NGO to sustainable development

Focus on Sustainable Development	Examples	Initiatives
Social Development	Integration and Inclusion – Support for youth, women, gender equality, and leadership development, fostering social integration and	- The projects "Gender Education for Youth" and "Women's Voices and Leadership" promote greater participation of youth and women in

	equal opportunities.	social life.
	Community Cohesion and Local Identity Support – Educational institutions support communities, helping to preserve cultural identity and enhance social cohesion.	- Educational training sessions to develop leadership and civic skills.
	Youth Health and Well-being – Gender education, sexual health education, and lifestyle health prevention programs.	- Implementation of educational programs focused on enhancing civic engagement and local culture.
Economic Development	Professional Training and Skill Development – Educational programs providing practical skills to engage graduates in the post-war economy.	- Partnership with local organizations (regional state administration, territorial communities of the Chernihiv region, NGOs, and businesses) to support socially significant initiatives.
	Labor Market Demand Fulfillment – Programs aimed at preparing specialists in high-demand fields, contributing to economic stability.	- Programs on gender education and sexual health.
Ecological Development	Environmental Education and Awareness – Integration of environmental knowledge into curricula to foster responsible attitudes toward nature.	- Information campaigns and training for youth aimed at increasing health awareness and promoting positive behavioral models.
	Sustainable Practices in Educational Institutions – Implementation of sustainable practices in daily activities (recycling, energy efficiency), serving as an example for students and society.	- Dual education programs that provide training and internships with local enterprises.

The presented table highlights the role of the educational system described by the authors as a driving force for sustainable development, combining social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This system of organizations collectively forms a resilient platform for social, economic, and educational development, serving as a foundation for regional recovery and prosperity. Through the interaction of educational institutions, community initiatives, and local partners, this system ensures a coordinated response to contemporary challenges, meeting society's needs. This approach promotes integration and inclusion, creating conditions for personal and professional growth, which is particularly important in the context of post-war recovery. Such joint activity not only strengthens local identity but also lays the groundwork for sustainable development, where each participant has equal opportunities and support for contributing to the region's rebuilding and future.

Conclusions

Establishing a sustainable educational platform is a crucial step for regional recovery and social development, as it has the capacity to unite educational initiatives and community projects into a cohesive support system for local communities. Such a platform not only raises the population's educational level but also stimulates civic engagement by involving residents in the region's development process. Integrating the educational programs of the University of Future

Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations with community initiatives enables more effective solutions to social and economic challenges, particularly through informal education, digital literacy training, cultural events, and volunteer projects. These initiatives foster new professional skills, stimulate entrepreneurship, and provide flexibility to the local economy. Consequently, the University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations not only fulfill their educational mission but also actively contribute to the creation of a sustainable, equitable, and socially inclusive society in the Chernihiv region. This work is an essential step toward building a society that ensures equal opportunities for all, supporting both individual and collective development at the regional level.

The social responsibility of these educational institutions is evident in programs focused on community support and increased civic engagement. Through projects like "Women's Voices and Leadership" and "Gender Education for Youth," the university actively contributes to forming a more integrated and inclusive society. Gender education initiatives, youth leadership development, and community organization support help these institutions not only fulfill their educational mission but also influence social processes. As a result, they instill qualities in young people that enable them to take responsibility for their future, develop teamwork and community engagement skills, and be ready to participate in the region's and country's recovery processes.

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