CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO HARD AND SOFT SKILLS AS THE FOUNDATION OF PROFESSIONAL-ETHICAL CULTURE OF SPECIALISTS IN HEALTHCARE SERVICES

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Summary

Modern medical education requires specialists who combine high technical competence (Hard Skills) with developed ethical and communication skills (Soft Skills). The relevance of the research is due to growing demands for ethical behaviour among medical personnel in conditions of digitalisation, personalised medicine, and increased patient awareness. A gap is often observed between technical knowledge and insufficiently developed Soft Skills, complicating effective interaction with patients and colleagues. The novelty lies in substantiating an integrated author's model for forming Hard and Soft Skills based on principles of interdisciplinarity, ethical orientation, technological adaptability, and comprehensive assessment, considering international experience (Harvard Medical School, Karolinska Institute, NUS). The article analyses four conceptual approaches (integrative, competency-oriented, ethics-oriented, technological), identifies key components of Hard and Soft Skills, and challenges of their implementation. Research methods included theoretical analysis of scientific literature, systematisation and classification, comparative study of international experience, synthesis, and generalisation of the obtained data. Practical recommendations are proposed for Ukrainian medical universities regarding curriculum updates, faculty training, implementation of digital platforms, and collaboration with clinical bases. The research results will improve the quality of medical education and strengthen trust in the medical profession.

Key words: Hard Skills, Soft Skills, professional-ethical culture, medical education, integrative approach, competency-oriented approach.

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1. Introduction

"A doctor may wield a scalpel masterfully, but if his heart is closed to compassion, his hand loses its true healing power." This old medical wisdom emphasises that professionalism in medicine encompasses not only technical skills but also a deeply humane attitude toward the patient. Without empathy, understanding, and compassion, even the best medical manipulations may lose their effectiveness, as treatment is not merely a physical process but also support for the soul.

In conditions of rapid scientific and technological progress, where artificial intelligence technologies, telemedicine, and robotic surgery are becoming commonplace, the significance of the human factor (empathy, ethical consciousness, and the physician's communicative capacity) is growing. Research confirms that for patients, a physician's ability to communicate effectively

and demonstrate empathy are criteria of medical care quality no less important than technical skills *(Arshad et al., 2024; Mag. David Riedl, 2017; Mainul Haque, 2019)*. A physician's empathy directly affects patients' trust, treatment satisfaction, therapy adherence, and objective clinical outcomes.

Medical education today faces serious challenges. The rapid development of medical technologies requires future doctors to learn and adapt to new diagnostic and treatment methods continuously. Simultaneously, society's growing expectations regarding the quality and accessibility of medical care and increased patient awareness necessitate the formation of medical education graduates of not only deep professional knowledge but also developed communication skills, capacity for collaboration, and ethical responsibility.

Therefore, the need to rethink approaches to professional training of medical specialists comes to the forefront. Integrating Hard Skills (professional knowledge and clinical abilities) and Soft Skills (communicative, ethical, and socio-emotional competencies) should be considered a key condition for forming a professional-ethical culture. This culture serves as the foundation of trust, effective team interaction, and ensuring high standards of medical practice.

Purpose – to substantiate conceptual approaches to the formation of Hard and Soft Skills as the foundation of the professional-ethical culture of future specialists in healthcare services, considering the international experience and contemporary challenges in medical education.

Research objectives:

– Analyse the theoretical foundations for forming Hard and Soft Skills in professional training for healthcare service specialists.

– Identify key components of Hard Skills that determine medical practice's quality, safety, and effectiveness.

– Conduct a comparative analysis of hard and soft skills in the context of their significance in the ethical behaviour of medical professionals.

– Evaluate Soft Skills' impact on forming a professional-ethical culture of future medical specialists.

– Outline current challenges in implementing Soft Skills in the educational process of physician training.

– Examine conceptual approaches to improving the professional training of medical personnel and identify their key differences.

– Analyse international experience in Hard and Soft Skills formation in medical education and, based on it, propose an author's model for their integration.

– To develop practical recommendations for medical universities in Ukraine regarding effectively implementing an integrated approach to forming a professional-ethical culture through developing Hard and Soft Skills.

2. Main part

Analysis of current research. In the context of medical education transformation, researchers are increasingly focusing on integrating professional (Hard Skills) and socio-communicative (Soft Skills) competencies to train future physicians. A growing number of scientific studies indicates the relevance of developing comprehensive educational models that harmoniously combine technical knowledge with the ethical component of professional culture. Analysis of scientific literature demonstrates a tendency to rethink the relationship between technical and social competencies in professional training. Researchers unanimously recognise that a physician's professional-ethical culture forms at the intersection of Hard and Soft

Skills. Ivanenko and Gordiychuk emphasise the synergy of professional knowledge (such as clinical diagnostics) and emotional stability, responsibility, and reflection *(Ivanenko & Hardiichuk, 2021)*. Ryadnova and co-authors clarify that Soft Skills, such as empathy and communication, transform technical competence into ethically balanced practice *(Riadnova et al., 2021)*. An international study by Paechter et al. confirms that without social competencies, technical skills lose effectiveness in clinical situations where patient interaction is key *(Paechter et al., 2023)*. These sources emphasise that Hard Skills ensure procedural accuracy, while Soft Skills create a bridge to ethical behaviour, forming a holistic professional identity. However, the lack of clear criteria for evaluating integrated competencies remains challenging for educators.

Kolyada and Kravchenko suggest practising technical skills in the context of ethical dilemmas, for example, through role-playing games that develop communication *(Koliada & Kravchenko, 2020)*. Chukhno emphasises gaming technologies where simulations combine diagnostics (Hard Skills) with ethical decision-making (Soft Skills) *(Chukhno, 2021)*. Borovyk and co-authors emphasise the need to integrate Soft Skills into clinical disciplines so that communication and critical thinking develop in parallel with technical abilities *(Borovyk et al., 2021)*. These approaches demonstrate the advantages of active learning that engages students in solving complex tasks. However, methodologies often remain localised, without standardisation for broader implementation.

The latest studies propose new conceptual models for skills integration. Lukash, Gryshyna, and Buryak developed the concept of a "Physician's Self-Brand" that combines technical excellence with ethical self-positioning, forming a unique professional identity *(Lukash et al., 2024)*. Kushnir, Kaminska, and Starchenko consider linguistic competence as a tool for precise expression (Hard Skills) and ethical communication (Soft Skills) *(Kushnir et al., 2023)*. Myroshnychenko and co-authors emphasise the role of emotional intelligence in transforming technical skills into ethical practice *(Myroshnichenko et al., 2023)*. These concepts reflect a transition from a dichotomous perception of Hard and Soft Skills to their organic unity. They also indicate the need for interdisciplinary approaches that engage educators, psychologists, and practitioners in curriculum development.

Literature analysis shows that Ukrainian and international research is gradually shifting toward understanding Hard and Soft Skills as interpenetrating components. However, gaps remain:

– competency assessment (standardised tools for evaluating integrated skills, especially Soft Skills, are lacking);

– methodological framework (methodologies that ensure simultaneous development of technical and ethical competencies are insufficiently developed);

– cultural adaptation (studies rarely consider regional specificities, limiting their applicability).

Despite significant theoretical research and practical developments, the problem of balanced formation of hard and soft skills as the foundation of the professional-ethical culture of medical specialists remains unresolved. Clear criteria for evaluating integrated competencies are absent, and methodologies ensuring the simultaneous development of technical and ethical skills are insufficiently developed, necessitating further scientific inquiry and experimental research.

Results and discussion. We must examine the theoretical foundations of this process to gain a profound understanding of shaping professional-ethical culture in future healthcare specialists through the lens of hard and soft skills development.

The evolution of medical education reflects changing perceptions of a physician's key competencies. Traditionally, the primary focus was mastering fundamental medical knowledge and clinical skills that constitute the core of Hard Skills. The training of future doctors predominantly followed a "teacher-student" model, where practical experience was transmitted through direct observation and participation in the treatment process *(Santanu Bhattacharya, 2023)*.

However, with the advancement of medical science, increasing technological complexity, and the growing role of patient-centred approaches, awareness of the importance of so-called "soft" skills gradually increased. References to the necessity of compassion, attention to patients, and practical communication abilities can be found in the works of prominent physicians of the past *(Litvak, 2019)*. Nevertheless, systematic study and implementation of Soft Skills in medical education became more active in the second half of the 20th century, driven by a growing understanding of psychosocial aspects of health and illness and the need for more effective interaction between healthcare professionals and patients.

Today, we observe a further evolution of approaches where Hard and Soft Skills are viewed not as separate components but as interconnected elements of a physician's professional competence, necessary for providing quality and ethical medical care in contemporary challenges.

In the following analysis, let's clarify the understanding of key terms in the medical context to ensure clarity and unambiguity.

Hard Skills in the healthcare field are defined as specific technical knowledge, abilities, and practical skills necessary for performing professional duties *(Malanchuk et al., 2023 : 52)*. They include knowledge of fundamental medical disciplines (anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, etc.), ability to conduct diagnostic procedures, interpret examination results, perform therapeutic manipulations, master surgical techniques, and more. These skills are objectively measurable and formalised: they can be taught and verified through examinations, certifications, and practical assessments. Hard Skills are typically acquired through educational programs, training, and practical experience and form the foundation for a physician's professional activity.

Soft Skills in the medical context encompass a complex of personal qualities social, communicative, and emotional competencies that affect the effectiveness of healthcare worker interactions with patients, colleagues, and other medical personnel *(Malanchuk et al., 2023 : 53)*. Key Soft Skills in medicine include: effective communication (verbal and non-verbal), empathy, listening skills and active information perception, interpersonal interaction skills, teamwork abilities, leadership qualities, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, stress resistance, conflict resolution capacity, and others. These skills are more subjective in assessment but are crucial for ensuring a quality and human-centred approach in medicine.

The professional-ethical culture of medical specialists represents an integrated system of values, norms, behavioural rules, and professional standards that define the moral and ethical foundations of their activities, attitudes toward patients, colleagues, society, and their profession. It results from acquiring professional knowledge, developing relevant skills, and forming personal qualities.

The main components of the professional and ethical culture of a healthcare professional are:

– ethical knowledge (principles of autonomy, beneficence, harmlessness, justice, knowledge of medical legislation and codes of ethics);

– moral qualities (honesty, responsibility, humanity, compassion, respect for the dignity and rights of the patient);

– communication competence (effective interaction with patients, emotional support);

– professional responsibility (awareness of the consequences of professional actions, striving for self-development);

– team interaction (respect for colleagues, participation in joint decision-making);

– emotional intelligence (ability to understand own emotions and emotions of others, manage them and use this information for effective interaction).

The harmonious combination of Hard and Soft Skills is essential for a physician's successful professional practice. Technical knowledge without ethical grounding may lead to improper application of knowledge. Communication skills (such as active listening and clear diagnosis explanations) provide diagnostic accuracy, psychological support, and patient trust. Empathy, a cornerstone of effective communication, fosters emotional connection and treatment adherence. Without it, even highly skilled professionals may fail to achieve therapeutic outcomes. However, humanistic values alone cannot replace clinical competence. Mastering Hard Skills remains a critical component of medical training, directly impacting patient safety, precision, and intervention efficacy. These skills enable the practical application of knowledge and ensure seamless interaction with modern healthcare technologies.

Key components of Hard Skills in medical practice include:

– diagnostic skills (gathering medical history, conducting physical examinations, interpreting the results of laboratory and instrumental tests (X-ray, ultrasound, CT, MRI, ECG), making a clinical diagnosis);

– skills in using medical technologies (proficiency in modern medical equipment and digital tools for maintaining electronic records, monitoring patients' conditions, and making clinical decisions);

– clinical procedural skills (performing basic and specialised manipulations (injections, catheterisations, punctures, surgical interventions)).

These skills are formed throughout the entire period of study and professional development through theoretical courses, practical classes, simulation, and clinical training under the guidance of mentors.

New challenges in the professional training of future doctors require the expansion of the concept of Hard Skills:

– artificial intelligence (image analysis, risk prediction, decision support; the doctor must be able to interpret data obtained using AI critically);

– telemedicine (using digital platforms, protecting personal data, remote communication);

– robotic surgery and other high-tech treatment methods (mastering the control of complex technical systems and understanding the operating algorithms of equipment).

Modern Hard Skills combine traditional clinical competencies with digital literacy, flexibility of thinking, and technological adaptability, which allows for the effective integration of innovations into medical practice.

A doctor's success is determined not only by their technical proficiency but also by their ability to communicate effectively. Soft Skills are the foundation that ensures trust, collaboration, respect, and psychological safety in medical interactions.

In the context of the medical profession, the following soft skills are of particular importance:

– communication (verbal and non-verbal, active listening, clear explanation of diagnosis and treatment, emotional support);

– empathy (the ability to understand patients' experiences, showing care, reducing anxiety);

– leadership (responsibility for decisions made, coordination of teamwork, motivation of colleagues);

– conflict resolution (preventing escalation, finding compromises, and maintaining a positive work environment);

– adaptability (readiness for change, learning new things, flexibility in treatment methods).

Soft Skills are particularly important for building trust between a doctor and a patient. They ensure clear and accessible communication, demonstrate understanding and support, respect the patient's dignity, beliefs, and choices, and adhere to professional ethics and confidentiality.

Therefore, Soft Skills affect the quality of interaction and are also an essential component of a doctor's professional and ethical culture. They enable the realisation of the key ethical principles of modern medicine.

A doctor's professional and ethical culture is formed by implementing ethical principles in daily practice. For example, realising the principle of respect for patient autonomy requires knowledge of medical standards (Hard Skill) and the ability to convey complex information in an accessible, respectful, and emotionally sensitive manner (Soft Skill). Ethical behaviour also implies responsibility for one's actions and a willingness to admit mistakes, which is a manifestation of the professional and communicative maturity of the specialist.

The formation of a medical professional's professional and ethical culture is closely linked to the development of technical and interpersonal skills. Insufficient professional competence can lead to errors that contradict the principle of "no harm." At the same time, Soft Skills are necessary to implement ethical norms and standards in interactions with patients and colleagues.

For clarity, a comparative analysis of Hard and Soft Skills is presented in the context of their impact on the professional and ethical culture of a doctor (Tab. 1).

Table 1.

Comparison of Hard and Soft Skills in the context of medical practice

Type of skills	Examples	Impact on professional and ethical culture
Hard Skills	Knowledge of clinical treatment protocols.	Promotes informed and safe decisions for the patient ("no harm" principle).
	Knowledge of medical legislation and ethical codes.	Promotes patient rights, medical secrecy, and legal responsibility.
	Ability to conduct clinical diagnostics.	Ensures treatment accuracy and prevents errors that may have ethical consequences.
	Skills in using medical equipment.	Ensures safe procedures, respect for the physical integrity of the patient.
Soft Skills	Empathic communication with the patient.	It forms trust, provides psychological comfort, and enhances respect for the patient's dignity.
	Active listening.	It allows you to understand the patient's needs more accurately and helps avoid conflicts.
	Team interaction with colleagues.	Supports professional ethics and forms a favourable environment in the team.
	Stress resistance and emotional self-control	Guarantees the preservation of ethical behaviour in crisis conditions.
	Ability to reflect.	Promotes self-improvement, understanding of mistakes, and ethical growth.

Hard Skills provide the professional competence necessary for making ethically sound clinical decisions. At the same time, Soft Skills act as a mechanism for implementing ethical principles in daily practice, promoting a humane, fair, and responsible attitude towards patients and colleagues. Only the holistic development of both skills allows future doctors to develop a highly professional and ethical culture. Thus, combining Hard Skills and Soft Skills creates the foundation for a doctor's professional and moral maturity.

This integrated approach is becoming particularly relevant in the context of modern challenges. Traditionally, doctor training has emphasised fundamental scientific knowledge and clinical skills (Hard Skills). However, the contemporary paradigm is changing: increasing attention is paid to forming Soft Skills, ethical guidelines, and communicative competence. These changes are driven not only by internal processes in education development but also by some global challenges: pandemics, an ageing population, and the emotional burden on healthcare professionals.

Modern society expects not only professional mastery from a doctor but also humanity, accessibility in communication, and the ability to engage in partnership with the patient. Patients value effective treatment and attention to them as individuals, emotional support, and participation in making decisions about their health.

Despite the awareness of the importance of Soft Skills, their implementation in educational programs is accompanied by some difficulties:

– overloading of curricula (an excessive number of subjects and limited time make it impossible to pay sufficient attention to the development of interpersonal skills);

– lack of teacher training (often, educators do not have the relevant experience or methodologies for developing Soft Skills in students);

– complexity of assessment (formalised assessment of the level of Soft Skills development requires special approaches and criteria that have not yet become generally accepted);

– underestimation by educational institutions (in some cases, Soft Skills are considered secondary compared to Hard Skills, which reduces their priority in training programs).

Given these difficulties, the question arises about optimal mechanisms for overcoming them. In this context, modern pedagogical science offers some conceptual approaches to improving the professional training of medical professionals, among which four main ones deserve special attention: integrative, competency-based, ethics-oriented, and technological. Each has its advantages, limitations, and implementation logic, but they are all aimed at ensuring the holistic development of Hard and Soft Skills.

The integrative approach is characterised by a systematic combination of technical and social skills within a single learning activity. For example, during the analysis of a clinical case, students not only analyse medical data (Hard Skills) but also master communication skills, ethical dilemma resolution, and teamwork (Soft Skills). In contrast, the competency-based approach focuses not on the form of material presentation but on the result (specific competencies that should be formed in the graduate according to professional standards). Soft Skills are considered an integral part of the competency model, and their development is subject to evaluation on par with technical skills.

Unlike the previous two, the ethics-oriented approach emphasises forming the future doctor's moral foundation. The focus is on studying bioethics, medical law, ethical dilemmas, and developing Soft Skills such as empathy, reflection, and respect for patient dignity. Technical training in this approach plays a supporting role. In turn, the technological approach proposes the integration of Hard and Soft Skills through educational innovations: simulations, virtual

patients, online courses, and interactive platforms. This allows for a safe and flexible learning environment where future doctors can train in conditions close to reality.

For a clear comparison of the considered approaches, we offer the following table (Table 2).

Table 2.

Comparative analysis of conceptual approaches to the formation of Hard and Soft Skills

Criterion	Integrative approach	Competence-oriented approach	Ethical-oriented approach	Technological approach
Essence	Combination of Hard and Soft Skills within disciplines.	Formation of complex professional competencies.	Priority of moral and ethical values and Soft Skills.	Integration of skills through digital technologies.
Efficiency	High	High	High	High
Availability	Depends on the training of teachers.	Requires software and methodology updates.	Sufficiently high, provided qualified tutors are available	Limited due to infrastructure requirements.
Scalability	The difficulty is due to the need for changes in methodologies.	Possible with regulatory support.	Relatively easy to implement.	High after initial investment.

The key differences between the approaches lie in the following:

– learning objectives (skill integration during the process, achievement of results in the form of developed competencies, and the cultivation of value orientations);

– tools (scenarios, competency modules, case studies, digital solutions);

– resource needs (technical equipment, methodological framework, teacher training)

The value lies not in choosing one approach but in their combination. Integrativity, technological advancement, ethical focus, and effectiveness are complementary vectors of educational transformation that meet the requirements of modern medicine. This systemic interaction of approaches forms a new paradigm of medical education that meets the demands of a globalised world.

In the modern international educational space, medical professionals' professional training is increasingly focused not only on the development of technical skills but also on interpersonal, ethical, and cultural competencies. Leading medical schools worldwide are implementing innovative educational approaches that ensure the holistic development of hard and soft skills in future doctors based on patient-centred medicine requirements, digital technologies, and the intercultural context.

The most common educational strategies include simulation training, case methods, interdisciplinary modules, elements of reflective practice, and clinical situation modelling. These methods simultaneously promote the development of clinical thinking, emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility, and technical competence. In parallel, using digital technologies and evidence-based learning allows for improving the quality of the educational process and preparing a specialist capable of adapting to a rapidly changing medical environment.

Let's consider examples of successful educational practices in leading universities worldwide that demonstrate models of Hard and Soft Skills integration (Table 3).

Table 3.

Cases of the world's leading universities

University	Country/Region	Hard/Soft Skills Integration Techniques
Harvard Medical School	USA	Pathways-tracks: teamwork, simulations, medical ethics, weekly interactive sessions with practitioners.
Karolinska Institute	Sweden	Bioethics, role-playing, reflective practice in the clinical environment.
National University of Singapore (NUS)	Singapore	Telemedicine, digital literacy, medical leadership, cultural sensitivity.
Imperial College London	United Kingdom	Clinical cases, communication skills, conflict resolution, technology innovation.
Kyoto University School of Medicine	Japan	Combining traditional ethics, teamwork and simulation technologies.

In analysing university case studies, it is essential to consider the regional specifics of implementing educational strategies. Educational models in the USA, Europe, and Asia differ in cultural emphasis, teaching and assessment approaches, the level of technological support, and the philosophy of interaction between doctor and patient (Table 4).

Table 4.

Comparison of regional approaches: USA, Europe, Asia

Criterion	USA	Europe	Asia
Orientation	Individualism, leadership development, physician autonomy.	Collectivism, emphasis on social responsibility, ethical cohesion.	Harmony, hierarchy, cultural sensitivity.
Methodology	Competence-Based Learning (CBME), simulations.	Bioethical approach and involvement in clinical cases from the first courses.	Focus on traditional values, discipline, and interprofessional integration.
Evaluation	Objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE), clinical scenarios, and reflective essays.	Portfolio, qualitative evaluation, self-observation	Observation in action, group assessment, feedback culture.
Technology	Focus on digital platforms and data analytics.	Balance between traditional methods and innovation.	High-tech training with adaptation to the local context.

Summarising the international experience, it is advisable to emphasise the advantages of a hybrid approach to the Ukrainian medical education system. Adapting combined models that include evidence-based medicine, simulation technologies, interdisciplinary training, and ethics-oriented preparation is optimal. This approach will contribute to the profession and the moral readiness of future doctors for the challenges of the modern medical environment.

Based on the analysis of international experience and a comparative study of conceptual approaches, an author's model for integrating Hard and Soft Skills in the professional training of future doctors is proposed. The model meets the modern challenges of medical education, combining clinical competence with emotional maturity, ethical thinking, teamwork skills, and digital literacy (Fig. 1):

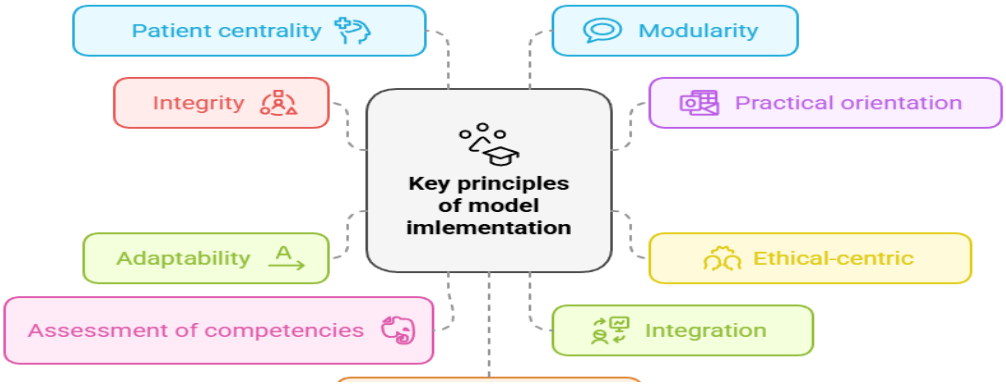

Figure 1. Visualise model components and their relationships.

This system posits that Hard and Soft Skills do not exist in isolation but instead form a holistic professional competence through integrative learning methods: simulation training, PBL (Problem-Based Learning), and clinical immersion. Each component plays a unique role, but their balance shapes a doctor's professional and ethical culture.

Key principles for the implementation of the model (Fig. 2).

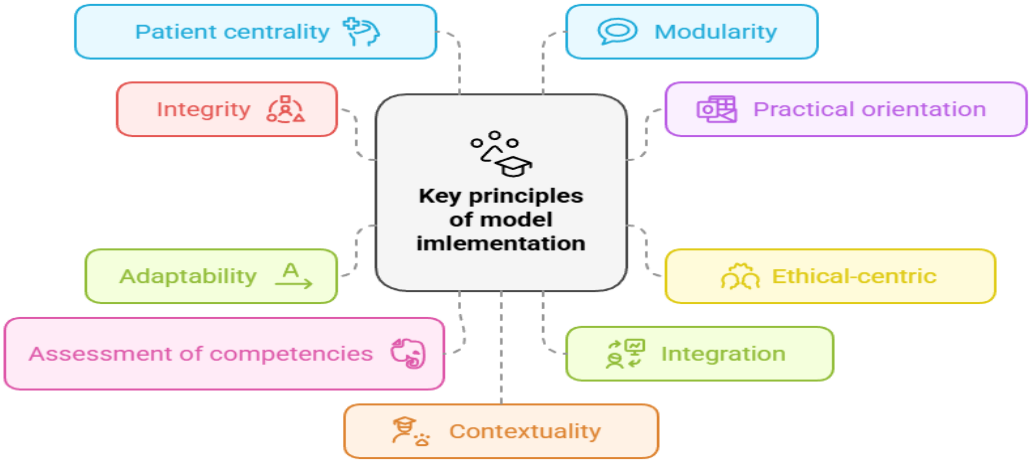

Figure 2. Key principles of implementing the model of formation of professional and ethical culture of the future doctor.

These principles are based on international experience, particularly the programs at Harvard Medical School and Karolinska Institute, which demonstrate the success of integrative approaches. *(Harden, 2018)*.

For the effective implementation of the proposed model, the following conditions are necessary:

– infrastructure (simulation centres, VR technologies, digital platforms);

– educational and methodological support (updating programs, interdisciplinary courses);

– teacher training (development of pedagogical and Soft Skills among the teaching staff);
– funding (state support, grant programs, investments);
– international cooperation (partnerships with universities (Harvard, NUS, etc.));
– cultural adaptation (consideration of local ethical/sociocultural specificities);
– assessment system (comprehensive evaluation of professional and ethical competencies (OSCE, portfolio, behaviour in simulations));
– educational environment (open, supportive, communicative);
– stakeholders (involvement of clinical bases, employers, patient communities);
– administrative support (strategic vision and regulatory framework from higher education institutions);
– feedback (monitoring practice needs, feedback from graduates and medical institutions).

The proposed model is adaptive and can be effectively integrated into the educational space of Ukrainian medical universities, considering their resources, regional context, and strategic priorities. Its implementation will contribute to the formation of a new generation of medical professionals – not only technically competent but also deeply ethical, communicative, psychologically mature, and ready for the challenges of modern medicine.

Taking into account the outlined conceptual model and international experience, specific recommendations are provided below that can be used by medical universities in Ukraine for the effective implementation of an integrated approach to the formation of Hard and Soft Skills (Fig. 3).

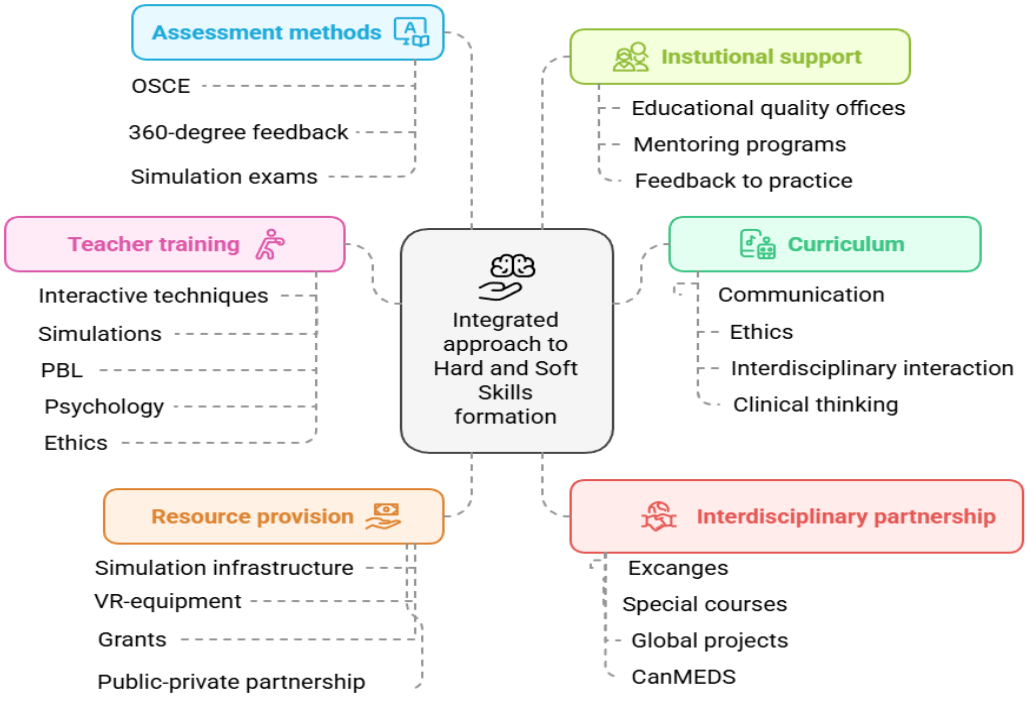

Figure 3. Practical recommendations for medical universities in Ukraine.

These steps aim to overcome key challenges in medical education, such as the overload of curricula, lack of teacher training, and the complexity of assessing Soft Skills. They ensure the holistic integration of technical, communicative, and ethical competencies, shaping a new generation of medical professionals capable of meeting modern societal demands. Implementing these recommendations, including updating curricula, introducing simulation technologies, and validating assessment methods, will improve the quality of doctor training and strengthen trust in the medical profession in Ukraine. Medical universities, clinical bases, and international partners must join forces to implement these changes, ensuring education transformation by global standards and local needs.

3. Conclusion

Modern medical education requires a holistic approach to training specialists who combine technical mastery with developed communicative and ethical competencies. Theoretical analysis confirms that Hard Skills (diagnostic, procedural, technological skills) ensure the safety and effectiveness of medical practice. At the same time, Soft Skills (empathy, communication, emotional intelligence) form the basis of professional and ethical culture, fostering trust, compliance, and teamwork. A comparative analysis of these skills showed their complementarity: Hard Skills guarantee evidence-based clinical decisions, while Soft Skills ensure their ethical implementation.

The research identified key challenges in implementing Soft Skills, including the overload of curricula, lack of teacher training, the complexity of assessment, and underestimating their role. To overcome these, four conceptual approaches were analysed: integrative (combining skills in learning activities), competency-based (focus on standardised competencies), ethics-oriented (emphasis on moral values), and technological (using simulations, VR, AI). Their combination, as demonstrated by the international experience of leading universities (Harvard, Karolinska, NUS), ensures the synergy of technical and ethical competencies through simulation training, problem-based learning (PBL), and early clinical immersion.

The proposed author's model for integrating Hard and Soft Skills is based on interdisciplinarity, ethical orientation, and technological adaptability principles. It uses simulation methods, ethical case studies, and comprehensive assessment (OSCE, portfolio) to form a professional and moral culture. For its implementation in Ukrainian medical universities, it is recommended that curricula be updated, teacher training in soft skills development methodologies be introduced, validated assessment tools be implemented, and clinical bases and international partners be involved.

Thus, the balanced development of Hard and Soft Skills is a response to modern medical challenges, such as digitalisation and society's growing expectations, and a foundation for training doctors capable of combining professional competence with humanity and ethical responsibility. Implementing the proposed approaches and model will contribute to transforming medical education in Ukraine, ensuring high-quality standards and trust in the medical profession.

The prospects for further research will focus on analysing the impact of integrative educational programs on clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and professional burnout of healthcare workers 5–10 years after graduation.

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