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*e-mail: grybyk.t@gmail.com***HUMANIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION: PHILOSOPHICAL  
PERSPECTIVES ON MICROLEARNING IN EDUCATION**

**Abstract.** The article presents a study of the problem of integrating microlearning into higher education, which is considered through the philosophical lens of contrasting trends toward the humanization and commercialization of education. The relevance of microlearning is explained by its adaptability, conciseness, and ability to meet the requirements of modern digital transformation of society, lifelong learning, and diversification of educational trajectories. Based on theoretical foundations, in particular humanistic pedagogy, self-determination theory, transformative learning, and connectivism, the article argues that microlearning is neither superficial nor commercialized in nature but depends solely on a well-thought-out approach to its development and institutional integration.

This study reviews contemporary scientific literature on microlearning and associated domains, revealing that the majority of empirical research emphasizes short-term metrics, including accessibility, test performance, and graduate employment rates, while neglecting long-term impact indicators such as socialization, ethical reasoning, and student civic engagement. There is currently unclear agreement in the scientific community regarding preventive strategies that reliably improve the micro-design of learning modules within educational systems.

To bridge this gap, the article proposes the author's concept of a Humanized Microlearning Framework, which outlines the basic principles of creating humanistic micro-modular learning, namely contextualization, activation, reflection, and empowerment. This concept considers the practice of microlearning in the range between commercialization and humanization and provides educators, educational policymakers, and technology developers with a structured orientation for aligning microlearning with the fundamental goals of education. The concluding section argues that microlearning, based on philosophical and pedagogical principles, can remain short in form but meaningful in purpose, promoting not only skill acquisition but also the development of autonomy, reflection, and social responsibility.

**Keywords:** microlearning, humanization of higher education, commodification of higher education, philosophy of education, humanistic pedagogy, educational purpose (qualification, socialisation, subjectification), transformative learning

**Problem setting.** The educational landscape is ever evolving in response to emerging societal concerns associated with generational shifts. The scientific community is constantly searching for new methods and techniques for teaching educational programs. A technique that is currently gaining prominence in scientific discourse is microlearning, as evidenced by empirical investigations (Leong et al., 2020). The concept of microlearning aims to create forms of teaching and learning that meet the requirements of the information society, such as highly specialized work with knowledge, information overload, and lifelong learning (Bruck, 2005).

Due to its flexibility, accessibility, and relevance to the digital age, this learning technique is increasingly being taken into account by educational institutions. During crises, such as warfare or pandemics, microlearning can foster a psychologically supportive educational atmosphere that enhances well-being, empathy, and inclusion. However, in the process of implementing microlearning into institutional ecosystems, the question of its dual nature arises. The rapid institutionalization of microlearning within corporate training, digital certification, and learning analytics ecosystems reveals its potential alignment with managerial logic: the atomization of knowledge into consumer units, a focus on performance metrics, and a prioritization of speed over depth.

This duality presents the philosophical dilemma central to this article: can microlearning enhance the humanization of education, or does it represent a covert type of instrumentalization that commodifies knowledge?

**The purpose** of the article is to analyze contemporary concepts of microlearning in higher education and identify the main risks of commercialization of pedagogical processes. As a result, a conceptual framework for a humanized microlearning structure is proposed, which will help educators and educational institutions to develop microlearning practices that promote the development of independence, reflection, and social responsibility, going beyond performance indicators.

**Recent publications analysis.** An analysis of current scientific research reveals two partially overlapping areas of literature concerning microlearning and the issue of «humanization versus commercialization».

Recently, there have been a growing number of empirical studies and review articles on microlearning, typically concentrating on learning efficacy, engagement, and service delivery environment. Simultaneously, there exists concurrent critical literature addressing datafication, the development of a measurement culture, and micro-certificates, which underscores the contentious aspects of the market-driven rationale in modern higher education. Collectively, these elements present grounds for both the humanistic potential of microlearning and its susceptibility to commercialization, but few studies explicitly examine this conflict within the microlearning domain.

With regard to the aspect of «humanization», several systematic reviews have summarized evidence that microlearning can be designed to meet cognitive and motivational needs and, given the right foundation, promote higher-level outcomes. Luo & Li (2025) research emphasizes that microlearning interventions positively affect the development of soft skills and argues that professors should incorporate scenario-based modules into traditional teaching. Bruck et al. (2012) link its value to

increased professional development, where contextualization and learner-centered design are prioritized. Novak et al. (2023) argue that microlearning improves students' understanding of complex concepts when combined with critical thinking tasks.

Most studies report short-cycle metrics (modular tests, immediate post-tests, satisfaction), while relatively few studies measure higher-level or long-term goals (critical thinking, civic engagement, ethical reasoning, identity formation). This factual asymmetry does not simply reflect reality but shapes it – institutions are guided by what they can measure, so investments are directed towards projects that maximize short-term metrics rather than deep outcomes.

As for the issue of «commercialization», criticism is usually directed not so much at microlearning as such but at the ecosystem in which it is institutionalized, namely micro-certificates, platform analytics, and key performance indicator management. Biesta (2010), speaking of contemporary education as an «era of measurement», argues that systems tend to value what is easy to measure, thereby relegating the normative goals of education to the background. B. Williamson's (2017) work on big data technology in education extends this concern to the datafication of learning: detailed telemetry and dashboards that transform pedagogy into a place of optimization and surveillance, creating a dynamic that is easily fuelled by high-frequency microlearning interactions.

Several scholars have expressed negative views on micro-certificates, which have gained popularity in the educational space and are closely associated with microlearning techniques. Ralston (2021) criticizes micro-certificates as transforming education into market tokens dictated by employment programs. Wheelahan & Moodie (2021), in turn, argue that micro-certificates risk narrowing the goals of education to the acquisition of exclusively vocational and technical skills.

To summarize these points, the current state of research can be summarized in four points:

- 1) empirical evidence is convergent, suggesting that planning microlearning with interaction, sequencing, and feedback can improve short-term cycle outcomes and potentially lead to more profound learning. This data aligns with the humanistic notion if the design expressly incorporates reflection, dialogue, and context;

- 2) the majority of microlearning research continues to prioritize readily quantifiable metrics. The reviews indicate a deficiency in theoretical frameworks and metrics pertaining to socialization, subjectification, ethical reasoning, or civic involvement, which are fundamental to humanistic education;

- 3) significant critiques of the commercialization of education primarily focus on the execution of micro-credentials, the transformation of data into information, and the proliferation of a measuring culture, rather than on microlearning itself. Nonetheless, similar objections will also pertain to microlearning once it is assimilated into the institutional framework;

- 4) policies supporting microcredits institutionalize short modules, enhancing their accessibility while simultaneously exposing them to market dynamics. The scientific discourse has yet to reach a consensus on preventive strategies that would

consistently enhance the micro-design of learning modules inside these political systems.

The dominant evidence base attests to effectiveness in learning, understanding, and engagement; it also documents design features that promote humanization (contextualization, interactivity, and reflection), but rarely assesses subjectification, empathy, or civic engagement as key outcomes. The most compelling arguments for the need to consider the threat of instrumentalizing learning for market interests come from related literature.

**Presentation of the basic research material.** Traditional curricula based on the concept of long lectures and cumulative intellectual development are increasingly criticized for causing cognitive overload, low engagement, and limited flexibility. Over the past two decades, microlearning has become an appealing solution to this dilemma. Short, modular content blocks are ideal for an age of attention deficit, global crises that disrupt traditional learning paradigms, and the need for continual learning that may fit into ordinary life. However, it is precisely this appeal that poses a danger. Microlearning fits easily into the logic of commercialization, where education is seen as a service sector and knowledge as a consumer product. Combined with performance indicators, digital badges, and micro-certificates, this type of learning risks becoming a tool for market efficiency rather than a practice for personal development. To counteract this purely instrumental logic, educators must consciously rethink microlearning as part of a broader, relational, and holistic educational project. The possible consequences of two approaches to implementing microlearning in an educational program are reflected in comparative table 1.

To answer this quest Therefore, the main question is whether microlearning can be established as a humanistic form of pedagogy, and if so, under what theoretical and institutional conditions such an outcome is possible.

The philosophical foundations of this concept are based on four key principles. Humanistic pedagogy, as presented by Rogers (1969), emphasizes the autonomy of learners, their intrinsic motivation, and their personal development. Humanistic education pays attention to the personal growth and emotional development of the learner, linking cognitive achievement with the cultivation of empathy and emotional intelligence as equally important outcomes (Jones & Abraham, 2014). In microlearning, this tradition opposes the tendency to turn learners into passive consumers of fragments of information, instead calling for the creation of modules that resonate with personal experience and encourage reflection. Microlearning tends to favor qualifications, providing skills that can be measured and verified, while ignoring the equally important tasks of identity formation and the cultivation of conscious subjectivity. Psychological theory deepens this criticism. Self-determination theory, developed by Deci and Ryan (2000), argues that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are necessary for the formation of intrinsic motivation. Microlearning often contributes to increased competence by allowing learners to achieve small successes, but autonomy and relatedness are often ignored. Without them, learners tend to rely on external stimuli such as steps, points, or badges, which commercialize motivation itself. According to the concept of connectivism formulated by Siemens (2005), learning is the ability to navigate knowledge

networks. Microlearning fits perfectly into this paradigm, but only if its modules are connected to broader ecosystems. When viewed as separate elements, they lead to fragmentation of knowledge rather than its expansion. Finally, the theory of transformative learning formulated by Mezirow (1997) reminds us that education should encourage reflection on assumptions and promote a change of perspective. Microlearning is often dismissed as too superficial for this task, but if carefully designed, even a short scenario or question can trigger deeper processes of reflection that unfold over time.

**Table 1**

**Comparative analysis of microlearning in the context of humanization and commodification**

| Dimension                     | Humanization of microlearning                                                                                      | Commodification of microlearning                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Purpose of Learning</b>    | Supports learner growth,   autonomy, and well-being. Education as a process of becoming.                           | Education reduced to outputs and productivity. Focus on skills as commodities for the labour market.               |
| <b>Design of Content</b>      | Short reflective prompts or scenario-based challenges encouraging critical thinking.                               | Bite-sized «fact nuggets» optimised for test performance or job-task efficiency.                                   |
| <b>Assessment</b>             | Formative self-assessment, peer feedback to deepen understanding                                                   | Completion metrics, badges, and automated test scores as evidence of learning.                                     |
| <b>Learning Context</b>       | Adapted to learner's personal situation to sustain engagement and well-being.                                      | Standardised modules designed for scalability and mass consumption.                                                |
| <b>Learner Agency</b>         | Encourages students to choose paths, reflect, and connect micro-units into meaningful personal knowledge networks. | Learners treated as consumers of content with limited choice beyond consuming predefined units.                    |
| <b>Technology Use</b>         | Mobile learning apps that provide flexibility, support accessibility, and include well-being check-ins             | Platforms driven by data analytics, where learners are tracked, scored, and nudged to maximise engagement metrics. |
| <b>Pedagogical Philosophy</b> | Aligns with humanistic and critical pedagogy (Rogers, Freire, Biesta): education as empowerment and dialogue.      | Aligns with neoliberal logic (measurement, efficiency): education as training, managed through KPIs.               |

From these philosophical positions, several pedagogical principles emerge that distinguish humanized microlearning from its commercial counterpart. Contextuality is vital: students must be able to see the connection between the learning material and their lives and community, rather than receiving abstract information devoid of any context. The use of technology in learning and education cannot be limited to the application of a specific function that is indifferent or neutral in its relation to content and pedagogy in general (Friesen, 2004). Equally important is dialogic

interaction, which ensures that even brief interactive exchanges leave students room to communicate with peers or mentors or for reflection, preventing isolation from information consumption.

To consciously move towards a humanistic position, a new model is needed that puts human values at the center of attention and does not treat them as a by-product. Such a model is the humanized microlearning model (fig. 1), which is based on the CARE principles (Contextualize, Activate, Reflect, Empower). It offers four interrelated stages: contextualization, activation, reflection, and empowerment. Together, these four stages form a roadmap for counteracting commercialization and aligning microlearning with deeper educational goals.

**Fig. 1 The visual diagram of Humanized Microlearning Framework**



The initial phase, called «Contextualization», focuses on grounding education in individuals' individual experiences, aspirations, and cultural contexts. Commercialization transpires when content is devoid of context and transformed into interchangeable segments. Contextualization, conversely, guarantees that even the briefest micro-unit is coherent. In programming, the concept of «encapsulation» transcends a mere technical description when considered in the context of producing secure medical records, intertwining knowledge with ethical duty. Through contextualization, microlearning avoids becoming a generic product and instead mirrors the student's environment.

The second level emphasizes involvement via active participation. Commercialized microlearning emphasizes rapidity and efficacy: learners view brief

films, respond to assessment questions, and accrue points. Although this approach is highly effective, it often renders learners passive participants. Activation mitigates this inclination by incorporating engagement, communication, and problem-solving. In teacher training, rather than viewing a video on classroom management tactics, participants may be given a brief scenario involving a hypothetical student behavior issue, analyzing the underlying causes and potential responses. Such challenges stimulate empathy, creativity, and dialogue, converting microlearning into a communal inquiry rather than solitary consumption.

The third stage, reflection, facilitates a more profound learning experience. Critics frequently contend that microlearning, because of its conciseness, is incapable of fostering higher-order thinking. This assumption undervalues the efficacy of a meticulously crafted reflection system. A brief inquiry – «What assumptions underpin your decision?» – can foster transformational awareness. Reflection integrates new information with existing knowledge, contests established perspectives, and fosters critical analysis. Thus, reflection enables microlearning to serve not merely as a conduit for skill transfer but also as a catalyst for profound transformative processes.

The concluding phase, called «Empowerment», channels the outcomes of microlearning towards fostering initiative, confidence, and accountability. This indicates that learners develop particular abilities and obtain the capacity for independent action, experience a sense of competence, and cultivate positive relationships with others. In professional development, empowerment may entail providing students with options on their trajectory or motivating them to utilize micro-blocks in collaborative endeavors. In the absence of this final phase, microlearning may devolve into a commercial endeavor, producing efficient yet disempowered learners; conversely, its inclusion fosters the development of reflective and accountable individuals.

Collectively, these stages constitute a cycle instead of a linear advancement. In contrast to linear approaches, the Humanized Model of Microlearning provides a normative framework. It prioritizes significance over quantification, discourse over consumption, contemplation over redundancy, and empowerment over accreditation. Thus, it opposes the trend of commercialization and reinstates microlearning as a practice of humanization.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** The analysis conducted in this article shows that microlearning is not a neutral or self-sufficient pedagogical innovation but rather a practice that is situated within broader philosophical, institutional, and cultural debates about the purpose of education. The growing utilization in higher education and professional training has revealed both its potential and its risks. Microlearning provides flexibility, inclusivity, and cognitive equilibrium, enabling students to engage in brief sessions that accommodate the tempo of contemporary life and the limitations imposed by crises or displacement. Conversely, the attributes that render microlearning competitive also render it susceptible to commercialization. By segmenting information into distinct pieces and assessing it mainly through measures like completion rates, badges, and micro-

certificates, education risks devolving into a production economy rather than a practice of character development.

The suggested concept of a humanized microlearning model offers a framework for resolving this issue. This theoretical system presents new options for educators, policymakers, and technology developers to resist commercialization and reaffirm education as a fundamentally human endeavor.

Nonetheless, substantial gaps persist, signifying considerable potential for future investigation. Specifically, empirical validation of the notion across several fields and cultural contexts is required. Research should investigate the impact of humanization-oriented design principles on both short-term memorization and advanced outcomes, including critical thinking, empathy, civic participation, and ethical reasoning. Despite its promotion as widely accessible, microlearning necessitates digital infrastructure, institutional backing, and cultural contextualization. Neglecting these elements may result in anticipated inclusivity perpetuating existing disparities.

For practitioners, the research aim transforms into a practical necessity: to cultivate microlearning not as discrete fragments, but as significant elements of broader educational narratives. For educational institutions, this entails resisting the inclination to fragment curriculum only for market advantage and instead incorporating microlearning into comprehensive educational programs that fulfill more significant educational objectives. This necessitates that education officials establish micro-certification and digital learning frameworks that acknowledge skills, employability, socialization, and subjectification as valid educational outcomes. Technology developers must create platforms that promote autonomy, facilitate dialogue, and assure ethical data management, rather than merely reducing student data to engagement metrics.

In conclusion, the future of microlearning in higher education remains indeterminate. The outcomes will be influenced by the choices of instructors, institutions, policymakers, and the students themselves. By grounding microlearning in humanistic theory, fostering it via reflection and dialogue, and integrating it within supportive ecosystems, we may transform microlearning into a practice of humanization rather than merely a vehicle for commercialization. Education fundamentally transcends mere efficiency. It pertains to cultivating individuals proficient in critical thinking, ethical judgment, and social responsibility. When aligned with these objectives, microlearning can serve as an effective instrument for attaining excellent education in an era frequently dominated by metrics.

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## ГУМАНІЗАЦІЯ ТА КОМОДІФІКАЦІЯ: ФІЛОСОФСЬКІ ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ МІКРОНАВЧАННЯ В ОСВІТІ

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**Анотація.** У статті подано дослідження проблеми інтеграції мікронавчання у сферу вищої освіти, яке розглядається крізь філософську площину протиставлення тенденції до гуманізації та комерціалізації освіти. Актуальність проблеми мікронавчання пояснюється його адаптивністю, стислістю та здатністю відповідати вимогам сучасної цифрової трансформації суспільства, навчання впродовж життя та диверсифікації освітніх траєкторій. На підставі теоретичних засад, зокрема, гуманістичної педагогіки, теорії самовизначення, трансформативного навчання та коннективізму, в статті стверджується, що за своєю суттю мікронавчання не є ні поверхневим, ні комерціалізованим, а залежить виключно від продуманого підходу до його розробки та інституційної інтеграції.

У цьому дослідженні розглядається сучасна наукова література з мікронавчання та пов'язаних з ним галузей, в якій виявляється, що більшість емпіричних досліджень акцентують увагу на короткострокових показниках, таких як доступність, результати тестування та рівень працевлаштування випускників, ігноруючи при цьому довгострокові показники впливу, такі як соціалізація, етичне мислення та громадянська активність студентів. Наразі в науковому співтоваристві немає одностайної думки щодо профілактичних стратегій, які б надійно покращували мікродизайн навчальних модулів в освітніх системах.

Щоб подолати цей розрив, у статті пропонується авторська концепція Гуманізованої мікронавчальної моделі, яка окреслює основні засади створення гуманістичного мікромодульного навчання, а саме: контекстуалізація, активізація, рефлексія та розширення можливостей. Ця концепція розглядає практику мікронавчання в діапазоні між комерціалізацією та гуманізацією і надає освітянам, творцям освітньої політики та розробникам технологій структуровану орієнтацію для узгодження мікронавчання з фундаментальними цілями освіти. У заключному розділі стверджується, що мікронавчання, яке ґрунтується на філософських і педагогічних принципах, може залишатися коротким за формою, але змістовним за метою, сприяючи не лише набуттю навичок, але й розвитку автономії, рефлексії та соціальної відповідальності.

**Ключові слова:** мікронавчання, гуманізація вищої освіти, комерціалізація вищої освіти, філософія освіти, гуманістична педагогіка, освітня мета (кваліфікація, соціалізація, суб'єктивація), трансформативне навчання.

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