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## IS IT POSSIBLE TO PRESERVE EDUCATION IN TERMS OF WAR – EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITIES

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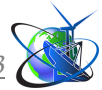
**Abstract.** *The article deals with the educational process at Ukrainian higher educational establishments (universities) in terms of war. It is stated that the full-scale invasion by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, led to the destruction of the higher education establishments' infrastructure, the problem of human capital, and the resumption of the educational process under martial law. The data on the destruction and damage to educational institutions is regularly updated on the platform of The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. After analyzing different sources, the author has defined that most of the higher and professional higher education institutions were destroyed in Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions, and damaged in Kharkiv region. The article emphasizes on accessibility and safety of education and an impact on the curriculum and teaching methods in terms of war. Some advice on how to improve the situation with education is given. It has been concluded that despite the dangerous situation Ukrainian universities continue to function and provide education to their students.*

**Key words:** *education, higher educational establishments, war, education in terms of war, destruction, challenge, educational process, universities.*

### **Introduction.**

The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine has had a significant impact on the education system in the country. According to UNICEF, more than 700 schools have been damaged or destroyed since the conflict began in 2014. This has resulted in the displacement of thousands of students and teachers, and many schools have had to close or operate on a reduced schedule. In areas close to the front lines, schools have had to adapt to the constant threat of shelling and gunfire. Many have built bomb shelters and reinforced buildings to protect students and staff. Some schools have also implemented emergency response plans and drills to prepare for potential attacks. After February 24, the dangerous situation spread all over Ukraine and nowadays all Ukrainian regions suffer from constant air raid alerts and a threat of Russian missiles. Many schools were damaged or destroyed and the curriculum was altered in some areas. Shelters have been built all over the country and despite all the danger Ukrainian educators continue their teaching activity.

The full-scale invasion by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, dealt an even greater blow to the Ukrainian higher education system than during the years of quarantine restrictions. The destruction of the higher education establishments (HEI) infrastructure, the problem of human capital, and the resumption of the educational process under martial law have become real challenges. The aforementioned partial adaptation of Ukrainian HEIs to the educational process under quarantine restrictions has provided useful experience for the resumption of education. It was the skills acquired during the pandemic, even with the destruction of the infrastructure of the institutions, that helped to continue their activity during the war.



Such Ukrainian scientists as A. Dzhurylo, O. Hlushko, M. Horikhovsky, O. Lokshyna, L. Prokhorenko, O. Topuzov and others researched different aspects of Ukrainian education in terms of war. Education in the context of war and the organisation of the educational process in different countries is also the subject of research by many foreign scholars (R. Akresh, D. De Walque, C. Blattman, J. Annan, P. Verwimp, J. Van Bavel)

The article **aims** to analyze the state and challenges which education in Ukrainian universities faced in terms of full-scale war.

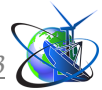
**Main text.**

After February, 24 the life of all Ukrainians changed in one moment completely. Once calm and happy life transformed into periods of stress, anxiety, danger and constant air raid alerts. The war in Ukraine has led to destabilization in many aspects of public life. One of the most vulnerable sectors has been education, which has not had time to stabilize after being tested by the global pandemic. Educational institutions, forced to adapt to restrictions and threats, have faced the challenge of ensuring the safety, reliability, and accessibility of education in the most difficult conditions. The war has directly affected all Ukrainian higher education institutions, regardless of their location. Universities located in the conflict zone have been forced to close or relocate to safer areas, disrupting the education of thousands of students. The educational process in Ukrainian higher education institutions began to resume in mid-March in online or blended formats.

Additionally, the war has led to a brain drain, as many Ukrainian academics have left the country to seek opportunities elsewhere. This has resulted in a shortage of qualified faculty and a decline in the quality of education. More than 6 million people have been forced to leave the territory of Ukraine due to the hostilities. As of the end of September 2022, 4.18 million people have registered in European countries for temporary protection or similar national schemes. More than 8 million people have become internally displaced. A significant number remained in the temporarily occupied territories. In general, the war has led to large-scale population displacements, which has undoubtedly affected the Ukrainian higher education system, including the provision of educational services. According to available data, 665,000 students and schoolchildren (16% of the total) and 25,000 educators (6% of the total) left the territory of Ukraine [1].

Furthermore, the economic crisis caused by the war has led to funding cuts for universities, making it difficult for them to maintain their facilities and provide quality education. According to experts, the amount of damage caused by Russian troops to the infrastructure of our country is almost 136 billion US dollars, of which 8.2 billion, or 6%, is damage to the Ukrainian educational infrastructure. As of the 300th day of the full-scale war in Ukraine, a total of 361 educational institutions have been destroyed and another 2,556 damaged. Taking into account "Education under threat" resource, it can be concluded that most of the higher and professional higher education institutions were destroyed in Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions, and damaged in Kharkiv region [2].

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine regularly updates data on the destruction and damage to educational institutions on its platform in the form of an

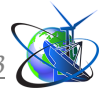


interactive map. According to the data, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, 3,793 educational institutions have been damaged by bombing and shelling, and 365 of them have been destroyed. Thus, most of the damaged and destroyed educational institutions were registered in Donetsk region. Kharkiv, Kherson, Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia regions also suffered significant losses. Education is also one of the most affected sectors in terms of losses. As of August 2023, direct losses are estimated at \$9.7 billion. The largest losses from destruction and damage to educational institutions were in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kyiv regions [4].

It is important to note that the destruction and damage to educational infrastructure occurs systematically regardless of the area of active hostilities. At the beginning of the invasion (in March 2022), in an attempt to seize Ukrainian cities, russians destroyed the building of the Faculty of Economics of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University with missile strikes [7]. In mid-summer, more than a dozen missiles hit the buildings of the V.O. Sukhomlynsky National University and the National University of Shipbuilding in Mykolaiv. The strikes caused significant damage to the facade, walls, roof, and classrooms [9]. In the autumn, when the shelling of Kyiv's energy infrastructure intensified, missiles that hit the crossroads of Volodymyrska Street and Taras Shevchenko Boulevard, as well as Shevchenko Park, damaged the main building of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and the buildings of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. On December 31, as a result of another missile attack, the buildings of the Exhibition Campus of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv sustained significant damage [3].

So, the war has led to issues of accessibility and safety of education. Many children have lost the opportunity to join the educational process, and teachers have been teaching in regions where hostilities are taking place or may potentially take place under the threat of shelling. Such conditions require serious planning of educational processes and ensuring proper learning conditions in war. As of September 2023, there are almost 13,000 schools in Ukraine, of which more than 80% are already equipped with shelters. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, about 7.5 thousand schools operate in a full-time format, 3.8 thousand operate in a mixed format, and 2.5 thousand schools teach exclusively remotely. According to the Minister of Education, the best situation with shelters is observed in vocational education institutions - 95% of institutions are equipped with shelters, 94% of which are vocational, pre-university and higher education institutions. Only 55% of public kindergartens are equipped with shelters [4].

The war has also had an impact on the curriculum and teaching methods in Ukrainian schools and universities. In areas controlled by russian-backed separatists, the curriculum has been changed to promote pro-russian views and downplay Ukrainian history and culture. Teachers and students in these areas face pressure to conform to these views, and some have reported harassment and intimidation. Therefore, the war has directly affected the emotional state of three categories of representatives of the higher education system: students, teachers, and staff. This impact differs depending on their location and the situation they find themselves in: staying in Ukraine, going abroad, or staying in the temporarily occupied territories.



According to an online survey of students, faculty and staff of Ukrainian higher education institutions who remained in Ukraine, 97.8% of respondents noted a deterioration in their psycho-emotional state with complaints of depression (84.3%), exhaustion (86.7%), loneliness (51.8%), nervousness (84.4%) and anger (76.9%). Students were more likely than staff to report exhaustion, loneliness, nervousness, and anger in the survey, and women were more likely than men to report depression, exhaustion, loneliness, and nervousness. The authors of the study note that those respondents who complain of worsening psycho-emotional state have higher levels of fear, burnout and loneliness, as well as lower levels of resilience [1].

Many teachers and students were forced to move to safer regions of Ukraine and abroad, and some continue to stay in the temporarily occupied territories. They are exposed to all the negative psycho-emotional factors that affect their colleagues in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. In addition, representatives of the occupation administration exerted additional pressure on such educators, forcing them to transfer to newly created pseudo-educational institutions and introduce teaching in Russian. Those who tried to continue working remotely in Ukrainian higher education institutions were unable to do so fully due to communication problems. Sometimes, Russian security forces deliberately sought out such individuals to prevent them from continuing to work in Ukrainian universities or to sway them to their side. It was difficult for them and their family members to leave the temporarily occupied territories, and they were forced to undergo numerous checks. This state of affairs threatened not only their mental health but also their safety. There are also reports of abductions of heads of higher education institutions. For example, the vice-rector of Kherson State University, Maksym Vynnyk, was illegally abducted and held for a long time [5].

In the case of the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine and the areas of active hostilities, it should be noted that many higher education institutions have already changed their location and moved to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine to ensure stability and continuity of the educational process. In particular, Donetsk University of Internal Affairs from Mariupol and Donetsk Medical University from Kramatorsk moved to Kropyvnytskyi. The Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs moved to Kamianets-Podilskyi in Khmelnytskyi region, and the Kherson National Technical University moved to Khmelnytskyi. 4 more higher education institutions have applied to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine to relocate to Ternopil region [8].

The next feature of current education in Ukraine is related to the fact that, as a result of military operations, more than 20,000 school graduates are currently completing their studies at Ukrainian educational institutions remotely, temporarily residing abroad in 23 EU countries [6]. At the same time, they planned not only to complete their studies but also expressed a desire to take entrance exams to Ukrainian higher education institutions remotely. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has provided recommendations to higher education institutions on certain issues related to the end of the 2021/2022 academic year. In particular, if it was impossible to resume the educational process in a higher education institution due to hostilities, the subjects of the educational process were recommended to wait until it





resumed or to take certain academic disciplines in other higher education institutions as part of internal academic mobility, or to study independently. However, to ensure the stability and continuity of the educational process, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine had to introduce changes to the procedure for graduation and admission to higher education institutions for the academic year 2022/2023, in particular: 1) cancellation of the state final examination; 2) replacement of the external independent evaluation, which was a mandatory requirement for bachelor's degree programmes, with the National Multiple Subject Test (NMT) for those applying for state-funded places in highly competitive specialities and an application with a motivation letter for other specialities; 3) change of the conditions of admission to the master's programme for bachelor's graduates of all specialities (except for legal and marketable specialities) from the Single Professional Entrance Exam to a Professional Exam for applicants for state-funded places and a motivation letter for admission to a paid education.

In our opinion, several actions should be taken to improve the situation concerning education in terms of war in Ukraine. Firstly, it requires coordination and cooperation between state authorities, international communities, local organizations, social workers and independent experts to ensure maximum educational opportunities and protection of children in the learning environment. To guarantee accessibility of education, it is necessary to provide the system with sufficient funding, infrastructure and equipment, provide educational processes not only with teaching materials, but also with social and emotional support, cultural activities, and access to the latest technologies. It is also vital to implement and adhere to measures that will guarantee safety for all participants in the educational process, provide accessible and equal opportunities for all participants in the educational process to prevent discrimination and inequality of opportunity, promote the training and competence of teachers and lecturers to work with students who have learning disabilities or psychological trauma that impede the full adaptation of students in the team or educational environment.

The authorities and the educational community should focus on overcoming the destruction, developing a new vision of the system, creating conditions for the transformation of the educational network, improving quality and supporting the innovation environment. These are the conclusions reached by the authors of the analytical report "Higher Education in Ukraine: Changes Due to the War" prepared by the Analytical Center "OsvitaAnalytics" of Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Ukraine supported the publication. The report highlights the range of problems faced by Ukraine's higher education system due to the effects of the pandemic and the war. The authors sought to evaluate the experience of the authorities and universities in responding to these problems. In addition, the document contains information about the current state of Ukrainian higher education in the context of war, as well as its priority and future needs [4]. The report also analyzes the decisions of the authorities to support higher education institutions, including the 2022 university admission procedure. Among the negative trends, the report notes a decline in the level of democratization of governance at some universities. Separate sections of the report are devoted to the international



community's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine and European support for Ukrainian students and academics. In addition, the document outlines the priority areas for the restoration of Ukraine's higher education system [4].

### Summary and conclusions.

Overall, the conflict in Ukraine has had a detrimental effect on the country's higher education system, and recovery will require significant investment and rebuilding efforts. Despite all the challenges Ukraine has faced after the beginning of full-scale war, many schools and universities in Ukraine continue to operate and provide education to students. The Ukrainian government and international organizations have provided support to rebuild damaged schools and provide resources for teachers and students. Additionally, some schools have implemented distance learning programs to ensure students can continue their education even if they cannot attend educational establishments in person. However, the impact of the war on education in Ukraine is an issue that needs to be analyzed and discussed at all levels, as it affects the cultural future of the country as a whole and of future generations.

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**Анотація.** У статті розглядається освітній процес в українських закладах вищої освіти (ЗВО) в умовах війни. Зазначено, що повномасштабне вторгнення російських військ 24 лютого 2022 року призвело до руйнування інфраструктури закладів вищої освіти, проблеми людського капіталу та відновлення освітнього процесу в умовах воєнного стану. Дані про руйнування та пошкодження закладів освіти регулярно оновлюються на платформі Міністерства освіти і науки України. Проаналізувавши різні джерела, автор визначила, що найбільше закладів вищої та фахової передвищої освіти було зруйновано у Запорізькій та Донецькій областях, а пошкоджено - у Харківській. У статті акцентується увага на доступності та безпеці освіти, а також на впливі на навчальні програми та методи викладання в умовах війни. Надано кілька порад щодо покращення ситуації з освітою. Зроблено висновок, що, незважаючи на небезпечну ситуацію, українські університети продовжують функціонувати і надавати освіту своїм студентам.

**Ключові слова:** освіта, вищі навчальні заклади, війна, освіта в умовах війни, руйнування, виклик, навчальний процес, університети.

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