

HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE DURING THE WAR: VECTORS OF DEVELOPMENT

Lyubov Kibenko

Senior Lecturer at the Department of European Languages,
Kharkiv State Biotechnology University, Ukraine
e-mail: kibenkolubov57@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0001-9183-7823

Olena Popadych

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor,
Professor at the Department of General Pedagogy and Pedagogy,
Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine
e-mail: olena.popadych@uzhnu.edu.ua, orcid.org/0000-0003-1426-4114

Summary

The article examines current problems and vectors for development of higher education in Ukraine under martial law. It is noted that the impact of the war on the educational process has significant consequences: the transition to distance and blended learning, the departure of students and teachers abroad, the destruction of educational institutions at all levels; mobilisation of students and teachers, reduction in funding, resettlement and evacuation of the population. Based on this analysis, the strategic vectors of development are discussed, including measures to ensure access to education for all segments of the population, support for internally displaced persons, modernisation of programmes and teaching methods, improving the security of the educational space and attracting international support; integration into the European and global space, taking into account national interests; harmonisation of the Ukrainian higher education system with European standards and practices; improvement of the education management system and ensuring the autonomy of higher education institutions; and ensuring the safety of the population.

The study shows that the war not only poses challenges to the higher education system, but also opens up new opportunities for its reform and development in response to current challenges.

Key words: higher education institutions, war in Ukraine, educational process, challenges, students, modernization.

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1. Introduction

The war that began on February 24, 2022 due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation has led to serious consequences for the higher education system in Ukraine, as well as for many other areas of the country's life. The new stage of the war led to destruction and losses in many aspects: material losses and destruction of infrastructure, because combat and military operations led to the destruction of buildings and infrastructure of educational institutions at all levels. Interruption of the educational process, emigration of students and teachers, loss of scientific potential, because many scientists, scholars and researchers have left

the country, which in the future may lead to a loss of knowledge and innovation. 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 caused to the Ukrainian educational infrastructure. As of the 300th day of the full-scale war in Ukraine, a total of 361 educational institutions were destroyed and another 2,556 were damaged (*Nikolayev E et al., 2023*). Therefore, an important task for the future is the preservation and development of Ukraine's scientific potential, ensuring access to quality education for all Ukrainians, regardless of their place of residence and financial status; integration of the Ukrainian higher education system into the European and world educational space.

2. Analysis of publications and the purpose of the study

The issues of higher education development in Ukraine can be found in the works of O. Volarska, O. Olshanska, O. Spirin, V. Bykov, V. Pavlenko, N. Kolomiets, M. Oliar, L. Kartashova. The above-mentioned scholars enriched pedagogical science by studying the directions of development of higher education in Ukraine in conditions of instability and the peculiarities of implementing innovations in the educational process. In particular, N. Sysoieva, K. Osadcha, S. Bader, A. Oleksienko, K. Mereniuk, O. Spirin, V. Bykov studied the peculiarities of introducing digital transformations into the higher education system.

The aim of the study is to identify the range of problems and challenges faced by the Ukrainian higher education system due to the consequences of the war; analyse the vectors of development of the Ukrainian education system during the war and post-war period.

3. Features of the development of higher education in Ukraine

As of 01/01/2022, according to the Unified State Electronic Database on Education (USEDE), there are about 320 independent universities, institutes and academies, as well as 45 independent colleges in Ukraine. Of this number, 220 higher education institutions are state, 32 are communal and 113 are private. Higher education institutions have 450 branches and professional colleges in their structure (*Nikolaiev et al., 2023*). Opportunities for higher education in Ukraine are offered by four types of higher education institutions, namely universities, academies, institutes, and colleges.

The first three types of these higher education institutions do not have any special differences; they offer bachelor's, master's, and PhD study programs. As for colleges, they can offer the opportunity to obtain higher education only in bachelor's and associate bachelor's programs (*Makliuk, Kononenko, 2023*).

Ukraine is an active participant in the Bologna Process, an initiative aimed at creating a single European higher education space.

Ukraine acceded to the Bologna Declaration in 2005 and ratified two fundamental conventions: the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Related to Higher Education in the European Region (1997) and the Additional Protocol to the Recognition Convention (2001). Actively participates in the work of the Bologna Group, as well as in projects and programs of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU) related to higher education. It should be noted that Ukraine is actively reforming its higher education system in order to harmonize with European standards and practices and improve the quality and competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education in the international market.

The main areas of reform can be noted the following:

- Implementation of a three-stage higher education system (bachelor's, master's, doctorate).
- Introduction of credit transfer system, which allows students to achieve success in studying and entering various universities.
- Development of academic autonomy of the Higher Educational Establishments.
- Increasing the role of scientific research in higher education.
- Improving inclusiveness and accessibility of higher education.

It is recommended to take into account that Ukraine's participation in the European Higher Education Area gives such advantages:

- Ukrainian diplomas are recognized in EU countries.
- Ukrainian students have the opportunity to study freely in European universities.
- Ukrainian teachers have the opportunity to participate in international projects and programs.
- The competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education in the international market is growing.
- Ukraine has significant potential for the development of higher education.

In our opinion, reforming the higher education sector and active participation in the Bologna process will help Ukraine become one of the leaders in the European education sector.

By analyzing regulatory acts and pedagogical research on the development of higher education in Ukraine, we can assert the relevance of the identified scientific problem.

Thus, the implementation of higher education reform is taking place on the basis of certain documents adopted in recent years, namely: the “National Strategy for the Development of Education in Ukraine for 2012–2021” (2012), the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” (2016), Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2021–2031 (2020), Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles of State Policy in the Sphere of Establishing Ukrainian National and Civil Identity” (2022 g.), which define the main trends in the development of domestic education, in particular its integration into the European and world educational spaces, the formation of a harmoniously developed personality as a key indicator of modern progress of society.

As for Ukrainian legislation, in accordance with the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2021–2031, the following strategic, operational goals and objectives of higher education in Ukraine until 2031 are defined: improving the education management system and ensuring the autonomy of higher educational institutions; ensuring a balanced labor market with higher education; ensuring the quality and accessibility of higher education; integration of science, education and business to ensure economic growth of the country; development of personnel potential of universities; development of a system of continuous education and lifelong learning; integration into the European and world space taking into account national interests.

4. Challenges facing higher education in Ukraine

The war had a direct impact on three categories of representatives of the higher education system: students, teachers and staff of the higher education institution. This influence differs depending on the place of their stay and the situation in which they find themselves: they stayed in Ukraine, went abroad or stayed in temporarily occupied territories. According to an online survey of applicants, teachers and staff of Ukrainian higher education institutions remaining in Ukraine (Kurapov *et al*, 2022), 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 more than staff reported exhaustion, feelings of loneliness, nervousness and anger in the survey, and women more often than men indicated depression, exhaustion, loneliness and nervousness.

The authors of the study (*Kurapov et al., 2022*) note that those respondents who complain of a deterioration in their psycho-emotional state have a higher level of fear, burnout and a feeling of loneliness, as well as a lower level of resilience among students, teachers and higher education workers who are in temporarily occupied territories, find themselves in an extremely difficult situation that could have serious consequences for their studies, careers and overall well-being. Some of the main problems they may face are:

- Limited access to educational resources. The occupation of the territories resulted in limited access to libraries, laboratories, and other educational resources, making learning and academic research more difficult.
- Staying in temporarily occupied territories may pose a security threat to students, teachers and employees, especially due to hostilities and uncertain political situations.
- Violation of human rights and freedom. The occupation of territories is accompanied by violations of human rights and freedoms, including restrictions on freedom of speech, restriction of access to education and persecution of activists and individuals opposing the occupation.
- Loss of educational and career opportunities. Students may lose opportunities for quality education and career development due to limited access to resources and training and employment opportunities.

Of course, as A. Makliuk and S. Kononenko note in their study (*Makliuk, Kononenko, 2023*), the experience of organizing distance learning gained by Ukrainian educational institutions, including higher educational institutions, in 2020–2021 made it possible to more quickly adapt to the implementation of educational activities in conditions of martial law. But more severe obstacles appeared, such as the impossibility of using distance learning technologies in uncontrolled territories and territories where hostilities were (unfortunately, still are) taking place due to the lack of access to the Internet, as well as the destruction or complete destruction of the material and technical base institutions of higher education. The largest number of damaged and destroyed higher education institutions are located in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, but such regions as Kherson, Kharkov, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia also suffered significant losses.

International cooperation, diplomatic efforts, and support for social and educational programs for students, teachers, and workers in the temporarily occupied territories are needed to overcome these challenges. It is important to ensure their safety, rights and opportunities for education and development despite the difficult political situation.

5. Results of the study

Despite all the difficulties, the Ukrainian higher education system continues to work. We learned that thanks to the dedication of teachers and students, as well as the support of international partners, Ukrainian educational institutions managed to:

- Transfer the majority of higher education institutions to distance and blended learning.
- Maintain access to education for Ukrainian students, including those who have gone abroad.
- Introduce new educational programs and courses that take into account wartime needs.

- Continue scientific research.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Ukrainian higher education system has demonstrated its resilience and adaptability to new challenges. After the end of the war, it will need significant assistance for restoration and further development. Therefore, it is important that in the future the international community continues to provide assistance to Ukraine in this area; new support programs for Ukrainian students and teachers were developed and implemented; steps were taken to strengthen academic integrity under martial law; equipment and material and technical bases were updated; updating curricula and programs taking into account global trends in the development of science and technology; establishing cooperation with the world's leading universities and research centers.

Having analyzed a number of scientific studies (*Nikolayev et al., 2023; Kurapov et al., 2022; Chykurova et al., 2022*), it is possible to highlight the following important vectors of higher education in Ukraine:

1. Integration into the European and world space based on national interests. This also involves the introduction of a system for monitoring and determining the rating of higher education institutions and the approval of a licensing and accreditation system in accordance with international criteria.

2. Harmonization of the Ukrainian higher education system with European standards and practices.

3. Improving the education management system and ensuring the autonomy of higher education institutions. One of the aspects of improving the education management system and ensuring the autonomy of pedagogical higher education institutions is the internal quality assurance of educational activities, which is possible with the help of the efforts of departments, research centers, research laboratories, research and practice centers, student organizations, employers' councils, etc. (*Nikolaiev et al., 2023*).

4. Ensuring openness and accessibility of higher education.

5. Ensuring the professional development of scientific and pedagogical workers.

6. Increasing the international competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education institutions.

7. Development of the system of continuous education and lifelong learning.

8. Introduction of new forms of education (dual, blended, distance, mobile, informal, informal).

9. Implementation of innovative teaching methods. Integration of science, education and business is an important component of successful implementation of innovative technologies. This approach promotes interaction between different industries and creates a favorable environment for the exchange of knowledge, resources and ideas.

10. Informatization and digitization of education. We consider the main advantages of informatization and digitalization of higher education not only to improve the quality of education, but also to ensure the effective use of digital resources and adaptation to the requirements of the modern world.

11. Creation of favorable conditions for the development of science.

12. Creating an inclusive environment for people with special needs.

13. Creation of innovation and entrepreneurship centers in higher educational institutions.

14. Attracting more foreign students, as well as teachers from around the world.

15. Provision of grants, loans, and mentoring support to the students.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of scientific literature, regulatory documents, and best pedagogical practices to determine the vectors of development of Ukrainian educational institutions during the war shows that Ukraine needs to develop the content and conceptual vision of the restoration and further transformation of the higher education system, taking into account the consequences of the war. First and foremost, the restoration process should affect those educational institutions that have suffered significant material, human and organisational losses as a result of the Russian armed invasion. In our opinion, in the near future Ukraine will have to focus on several priority areas in the field of education, such as creating a safe and favourable educational environment, developing the infrastructure for distance and blended learning; supporting the provision of an innovative learning and research environment; adapting curricula to the needs of the labour market; developing civic consciousness and interethnic dialogue, as educational institutions can play a key role in shaping these values; supporting internally displaced persons. It should be recalled that the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union enshrines the need to intensify cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in the field of higher education, in particular to reform and modernise the higher education system, promote convergence in higher education within the Bologna Process, improve the quality and increase the importance of, and facilitate access to, higher education; deepen cooperation between higher education institutions, and enhance the mobility of students and teachers (*Association Agreement between Ukraine, 2014*).

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