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## ОСВІТНЯ МІГРАЦІЯ УКРАЇНЦІВ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ: АСПЕКТ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ

### EDUCATION-RELATED MIGRATION OF UKRAINIANS DURING WAR: THE DISTANCE LEARNING ASPECT

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#### АНОТАЦІЯ

В статті окреслено основні виклики функціонуванню системи вищої освіти України після початку повномасштабної агресії російської федерації. Серед них поруч із руйнуванням і пошкодженням будівель закладів вищої освіти, постійною загрозою ракетних обстрілів виступає і вимушене переміщення учасників навчального процесу як всередині країни, так і за кордон. Актуальність статті зумовлюється особливим значенням вищої освіти в Україні під час війни у зв'язку з необхідністю підготовки спеціалістів як для повоєнного відновлення країни, так і для розвитку військово-технологічних спроможностей для стримування потенційної агресії в майбутньому. Авторкою зазначається, що додатковим фактором виїзду як здобувачів вищої освіти, так і професорсько-викладацького складу за кордон стало те, що в умовах війни вищі навчальні заклади здебільшого застосовували, а їх значна частка і досі продовжує застосовувати дистанційну форму як основну або навіть єдину форму навчання. В довгостроковому контексті розвитку країни це, крім додаткового стимулювання міграції учасників навчального процесу за кордон, матиме негативні наслідки через зменшення вимог до навчання, зниження якості навчання, а також послаблен-

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ня соціальної згуртованості. Авторкою зроблено спробу довести, що дистанційне навчання в закладах вищої освіти, які перебувають в відносно безпечних умовах, не є адекватною мірою реагування на безпекову ситуацію. Втім навчальні заклади можуть вдаватися до такої форми навчання в тому числі через те, що її організація вимагає менших, порівняно із аудиторною, ресурсів і адміністративних зусиль. Також наводяться приклади заходів, які можуть бути вжиті адміністрацією тих вишів, які ще і досі надають освітні послуги онлайн, з метою організації навчального процесу принаймні у змішаній формі навіть в існуючих безпекових умовах.

**Ключові слова:** освітня міграція; міграційна політика; повномасштабна агресія; заклади вищої освіти; Україна.

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## ABSTRACT

The article outlines the main challenges the Ukrainian system of higher education faced after the full-scale war started. The most important of them are the forced displacement of students and teachers both inside and outside the country, as well as the destructions and damages of higher education facilities. The particular importance of higher education in Ukraine during war determines the relevance of the article: the specialists must be prepared for both post-war reconstruction of the country and military technologies build-up to deter the possible aggression in the future. The author states that in the conditions of war the institutions of higher education mostly used and some of them still use the online learning as the main or even the only form of learning; and this fact became the additional factor of both students and teaching staff migration abroad. The distance learning does not only stimulate the intention of educators and students to migrate to other countries, but it will also have the negative impact on the country development in the long-term context due to the reduced demand to learning, the education quality decrease and to the weakened social cohesion. Author attempts to substantiate that the distance learning in the educational institutions that are located in relatively safe regions cannot be considered as an adequate response to the current security challenges. However, the institutions of higher education can resort to online learning because it requires less resources and administrative effort than learning process in physical classrooms. Article also provides the examples of measures that could be taken by the administration of those universities and colleges that still work online in order to organize the academic process at least in blended form even in the current security situation.

**Key words:** education-related migration; migration policy; full-scale aggression; institutions of higher education; Ukraine.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Ukraine is famous for its traditionally high level of education and science. Although its educational and research sector has lost some of the positions gained before, it still has a strong potential due to the qualified research and teaching staff, existing facilities and the huge storehouse of accumulated knowledge. Unfortunately, intensive migration of scientists and lecturers as well as students for last decades has been undermining the educational system as it is often the most innovative, proactive and adaptive people who

tend to leave Ukraine. The level of education-related migration dramatically increased after 2014 with a lot of students moving to Russian Federation from Crimea and temporary occupied areas of Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts and then after the introduction of visa-free regime with Europe in 2017. In 2017/8 academic year the number of Ukrainian students enrolled at Russian universities increased threefold and at Polish Universities — tenfold comparing to 2008/9<sup>1</sup>. After the 24 February 2022 situation became even worse than that. The large-scale aggression of Russian Federation resulted in huge flows of refugees with almost half of them — children and teenagers under the age of 18<sup>2</sup>.

Meanwhile, to the author's opinion, the basic reason for education-related migration has changed. As an example, before the large-scale aggression the study in European universities was considered as a first step towards the successful emigration. At the same time the level of education was not regarded as a reason to study abroad as the quality of higher education in Ukraine was high enough. In case of migration after the beginning of full-scale invasion it was the security issue, specifically the intention to ensure safe environment for their children that forced people to flee Ukraine. However, contrary to the pre-war period, the way how education, first of all, the higher one is organized, has become the additional factor forcing young people to leave Ukraine and restraining their comeback even in case their permanent place of residence in Ukraine is relatively secure.

The peculiarities of how the higher educational institutions are run in the conditions of martial law had been analyzed by both Ukrainian and foreign researchers. However, we should point at a lack of comparative studies of learning in physical and virtual classrooms due to the limited number of educational institutions providing lessons in traditional, not in online way. Even the publications that substantiate the necessity to renew the traditional classroom education point out that the education in traditional classrooms cannot be the same it used to be in the pre-war period<sup>3</sup>. On the whole, the scholars, though admitting the advantages of

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<sup>1</sup> Стадний Є. (2019). Українське студентство за кордоном: дані до 2017/18 навчального року. URL: <https://cedos.org.ua/researches/ukrainske-studentstvo-za-kordonom-dani-do-201718-navchalnoho-roku/>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Refugee Situation. URL: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>3</sup> Горбатюк С. В., Поліщук С. В. (2022). Особливості функціонування закладів вищої освіти під час війни: очна та дистанційна форми освіти, їх ключові переваги та недоліки. *Modern*

traditional form of education, underline the necessity to continue the online education and keep considering online education in the context of building the information society<sup>1</sup>.

However, the issue of how rendering to online learning corresponds to the level of potential insecurity for educators and students has not been evaluated in Ukrainian scientific literature. Besides, the author has not find there any scientific papers that analyzed the online education during war as a pushing factor for the migration of students abroad.

## II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the article is to study the dependence of the Ukrainian youth migration abroad on the peculiarities of organization the Ukrainian higher education in the current war conditions. Among the most essential peculiarities, that make the study process different from the one we had before and the one that exist abroad, the following ones can be pointed out: distance learning as a prevailed form of organization the higher education and the reduced demands for both students and teachers. Besides, we have to find out if the way the academic process is organized really corresponds to the degree of insecurity for educational institutions. We also need to draw public attention to the long-term implications of the above-mentioned peculiarities for both the development of Ukrainian educational system and its educational and scientific potential. The research is based on the general scientific methods such as observation and comparison as well as on the abstractedly-logical method and conjectural method.

## III. DESCRIPTION OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

The overwhelming number of students from the whole generation of those who were enrolled at Ukrainian colleges and universities after

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*Information Technologies and Innovation Methodologies of Education in Professional Training Methodology theory Experience Problems*. Вип. 66. С. 5–13.

<sup>1</sup> Крамаренко І., Корнішева Т., Сілютіна І. (2022). Адаптація дистанційного навчання у вищій школі до умов воєнного стану. *Перспективи та інновації науки*. № 4(9). [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-4952-2022-4\(9\)-192-205](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-4952-2022-4(9)-192-205); Мондич О. (2022). Виклики сьогодення — змішане та онлайн навчання у вищій школі. *Вища освіта у міждисциплінарному вимірі: від традицій до інновацій*: зб. матер. II Міжвуз. наук.-практ. конф. (Ізмаїл, 27 бер. 2022 р.). Ізмаїл: РВВ ІДГУ. С. 56–60; Юрій Р., Богута В., Нагорняк С. (2022). Ефективність дистанційної освіти в умовах війни. *Перспективи та інновації науки*. № 8(13). [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-4952-2022-8\(13\)](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-4952-2022-8(13))

2019 couldn't fully realize their right on obtaining higher education. The ubiquitous and protracted distance learning entailed reduced demands and made the learning process relaxed. The period of wide-range and comprehensive implementation of remote online study started in a number of countries in 2020 with the imposing of COVID-19 restrictions. On the one hand the distance learning became the salutary instrument as it enabled to provide educational services during the period of COVID-19 pandemic. The orientation of the process of managing the educational activities of the university on innovation and continuous improvement at all stages of specialist training can significantly improve the quality of educational services and organically adapt it to the real and potential needs of society<sup>1</sup>. At the same time it proved the suggestions that distance learning could be effectively used only as either temporary or supplementary measure. Therefore, the educational institutions in the COVID-affected countries sought to return to lessons in the physical classrooms as soon as it became possible. Actually since the beginning of 2022 students and schoolchildren have been gradually returning to their virtual classrooms to physical ones.

Unfortunately, the large-scale invasion of Russian Federation to Ukraine, that started on February 24, 2022, resulted in falling the work of educational institutions into abeyance. Moreover, according to Human Rights Watch report on November 9, 2023, since the beginning of large-scale aggression 3790 educational institutions have been either destroyed or ruined<sup>2</sup>. Almost all the educational establishments, including schools, pre-school facilities, colleges and universities in the country didn't work till 1 April 2022. Then they gradually started to initiate the resumption of the study process, however in the form of distance learning. Notably, in spite of the one-month gap in study process, a lot of educational institutions, at least the higher ones, finished the academic year at its usual time, in June.

After the beginning of the large-scale aggression educational institutions faced additional challenges regarding the organization of the classroom

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<sup>1</sup> Kurova A., Kuryliuk Y., Zaskalieta S. et al. (2023). Organizational and Economic Aspects of Improving the Process of Managing the Educational Activities of a Higher Education Institution in the Conditions of the Socio-Economic Development of the Country. *Review of Economics and Finance*. Vol. 21. No 1. p. 642.

<sup>2</sup> HRW (2023). Ukraine: War's toll on schools, Children's future. Damage from military use of schools, bombing, shelling, looting. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/09/ukraine-wars-toll-schools-childrens-future>

study process: the ensuring of their students and staff safety. However, step by step some educational institutions started to gradually run the classes in the classrooms following the safety measures. There were schools and universities that did manage to organize the academic process in the classrooms even in the circumstances of the warfare. They equipped the school's basement floors and shelters, organized the transportation of schoolchildren and students to the facilities with shelters in other places in case they didn't have ones in their institutions. Of course, the room of shelters was not big enough to place all the children and students there. However, the administrations developed the schedules for different classes and groups to take turns having classroom lessons and distance lessons.

Unfortunately, not all the schools, colleges and universities did that. Actually, we will concentrate our attention on the higher educational establishments. For some of them it was really difficult to organize study process in physical classes, especially for the displaced educational institutions. They often didn't have the premises and their staff often had to move to different places in Ukraine and abroad. So, the distance learning was the only way of the educational process for them.

What is even worse than that, there were and still are higher educational institutions owning the proper shelters, both in academic buildings and students hostels, but not using these safety facilities to organize the classroom study process. Surprisingly, among the universities that didn't show their interest in renewing the residential educational process the ones from the top of the rating could be found. Actually, they didn't do that not only during the war, but also during the periods of pandemic, when the situation got better and the restrictions were weakened.

It is difficult to say what reasons the administrations operated with — concern about the safety of pupils and staff or unwillingness to solve all the necessary issues connected with the organization of residential study process.

For example in Kyiv, after the Russian troops retreated in spring 2022, the normal functioning of city services was quickly restored and the life in the city became almost the same it used to be before the invasion. The Air Defence system worked effectively and provided both the early warning and the interception of the enemy missiles. Nevertheless, a number of universities located in Kyiv (with the leading national-level ones among

them) didn't renew their work in physical classes, even in the form of blended learning, but continued to teach online.

Therefore, we can divide the educational institutions according to the organization of their work during the war into three groups:

- the ones that managed to organize classroom academic process, at least in the form of blended learning;
- the ones that didn't have the opportunity to do that because of obvious and objective reasons — mostly the displaced educational institutions, educational institutions located in the combat zones;
- the ones that have had the possibility to organize the classroom academic process but didn't make enough effort (if any) to do that.

The author's belief, based on the observations and conversations with people involved in managing the education process in the educational institutions that didn't renew the education of physical classes, one of the reasons is the certain inertia of Universities staff that goes from the COVID-19 period when they have not had to burden themselves with all the issues connected with students' presence in the classrooms. The period of online study that started in March 2020 could have demonstrated to the universities administrations how advantageous it is in terms of maintaining the institution facilities and managing the faculty and supplementary personnel. During that period they had much less to do with maintaining the student hostels, dining-halls, sport facilities, paying bills, etc. that had consumed a lot of financial resources before as well as a lot of administrative and organizational work. Besides, dealing with a huge quantity of students, with some problematic ones among them, as well as with university staff is consuming in terms of human resources. Thus, online learning significantly simplifies the work of universities' administrations. After the war started the administrative teams of higher educational institutions faced with the additional challenge, namely the need to ensure the security of both students and staff.

Another aspect that was influenced by war is that the tasks for the students were simplified and teachers became less demanding and the overall intensity of academic process was lessened. Of course it was difficult for some students to use internet in shelters, in the basements and in the small villages where a lot of people decided to go to escape war. Sometimes not only the students, but also the teachers found themselves in the situation when they were not able to run the lessons and they had to record their

lectures and upload them to the internet. It minimized the possibility for students to contact teachers, discuss the material with them and with peers. In some cases teachers just posted the links to the materials for students to learn them by themselves. The control over the attendance was lessened too. It created the opportunity for students and schoolchildren to miss classes without the affordable reasons too.

But, again, all this inconveniences were relatively quickly eliminated. People left the areas where the combat actions were taking place and moved to relatively quiet regions of the country or abroad. Russian troops were expelled from a lot of regions, including Kyiv and Kharkiv region. However, a number of higher educational institutions have neither invited their students in the classrooms yet, nor made their educational process demanding again.

There is no need to list all the weaknesses of educational process provided only online, — all of them were vividly demonstrated during the COVID period. However, there are the specific aspects that are extremely essential during the period of war and that should be taken into account by decision-makers from Ukrainian government and universities. During the stressful conditions of war the opportunity for students to communicate and to socialize is gaining the particular importance. During the online-learning the students have to stay at their homes alone being under psychological pressure made by war and frustrated due to the uncertainty of their future. On the contrary, in case they attend their schools or universities, communicate with their buddies, teachers, get involved into extra-classes activities they not only develop their soft skills but feel themselves physically, mentally and psychologically better.

When it comes to the safety issues, the students are more secure when they are at schools or universities then when at home. In case there is an air alarm during the lessons in the classrooms it is required from both students and teachers to go to the shelter zone immediately. At the same time, when people are at home they usually stay in their flats. Given that, it cannot be unequivocally stated that the unwillingness to transfer the educational process to the physical classrooms can be explained by the security concerns only.

While there can be the students who are happy with online learning process, certain number of students, the so-called knowledge-eaters, are not satisfied as they are oriented on obtaining the high-quality education



and the complete immersion in the future profession. In its turn, the high-quality academic process is strictly associated in people's minds with the classroom education. In case the leading national higher educational institutions do not provide them with the in-site study process opportunities they might look for them in other countries.

Such diligent and intelligent students are the ones that stimulate universities' development, their high academic performance and further professional achievements advertise their universities and national education system as a whole. That's why the foreign universities and colleges tend to attract such students offering them essential benefits. When the large-scale russian invasion started the number of universities and colleges from different countries, particularly from Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, Canada, etc., intensified their advertising campaigns towards Ukrainian young people, first of all towards those with high academic performance, offering them the range of benefits. Among them there were the tuition fees discounts and even the fully covered scholarships, free student's accommodation, free language courses, monthly allowance, psychological support, etc<sup>1</sup>. Russia has even adopted the regulatory documents in order to reinforce the process of Ukrainian students to start or continue their education in its higher educational institutions. In such conditions Ukrainian colleges and universities should everything possible to raise their attractiveness for the actual and potential students to prevent their out-migration, first of all due to the renewing the traditional classroom education.

Moreover, educational institutions, both Ukrainian and foreign ones, are interested not only in high-performing students, but also in students ready to pay for their education. In case people can afford to pay for the education they might prefer to pay for their children to study in classrooms, but now they can for sure expect this to be provided only outside Ukraine. For some students it is also important to feel this "students' life", that is impossible when they study only online. It is young people's natural need, so they are forced to look for these opportunities abroad.

It is not as easy to find out the number of students who are going to enter the foreign higher educational institutions or have already started

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<sup>1</sup> Яковлева О. (2022). З житлом та стипендіями: які європейські університети приймають українців під час війни. URL: <https://vikna.tv/styl-zhyttya/z-zhytloom-ta-stypendiyamy-yaki-yevropejski-universytety-pryjmayut-ukrayincziv-pid-chas-vijny/>

their study abroad. There exist relatively reliable data — more than 506 thousand people — as for the number of Ukrainian schoolchildren abroad. But contrary to pupils, which number is controlled and estimated by schools, the location of students is not tracked so meticulously. We can calculate the approximate number of Ukrainian students abroad, taking into account that the number of male students as well as male high school students and university applicants under 18 is expected to be much higher than number of male pupils and students. The only really exact number is the number of applicants who registered for taking the Ukrainian state exam (National Multi-Subject Test) abroad — 23 250 people, that comprises the 8% of all people registered for the exam (281 198)<sup>1</sup>. However, this figure does not demonstrate us the amount of applicants with the intention to apply the foreign university. It mostly shows the number or percentage of people ready to apply for non-residential study in Ukrainian university or college.

The abuse of online learning during war is the example when technologies are used in a way to solve the short-term problems avoiding dealing with complicated issues related to organization of educational processes in physical classes. At the same time it may, and actually, will lead to deterioration of the educational process itself, worsening the academic achievements, and, as a result, emigration of students and teachers abroad. In its turn all mentioned above can result in slowing down of the scientific, industrial and economic development.

At the same time even in the current conditions it is possible to arrange the classroom lessons, first of all in those oblasts of Ukraine that are not affected by combat actions at the level that makes the classroom academic process impossible. For example while some teachers run the classes in the classrooms for students that can attend the educational institution, others can do that online with the ones that can't reach the physical classroom. Universities' Departments for Studies just need to revise their curriculum and time-table, maybe reorganize some groups. Actually, if we talk about not all the lessons, but, at least, the certain part of their number — it is absolutely possible. The short-term sessions can be organized for students

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<sup>1</sup> Київський РЦОЯО (2023). НМТ-2023: підбито підсумки основного періоду реєстрації. URL: <https://kyivtest.org.ua/2023/05/19/nmt-2023-pidbyto-pidsumky-osnovnogo-periodu-reyestratsiyi/#more-8253>

from abroad. Many of them visit Ukraine from time to time. The specific period could be established for them to come and attend the lessons.

Besides, the new means of communication enable the pedagogical staff to run the lesson in the classroom and, at the same time, broadcast via internet it to people connected online. Some students are present physically while the others — virtually. The virtually present students can participate in discussions, seminars, round table, etc. Therefore, it is fully possible to meet the safety requirements and to provide high level educational services.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

The large-scale aggression of russian federation worsened the situation in the national system of higher education. By 24 February, 2022 Ukrainian educational sphere had already been experiencing the substantial level of students' and teachers' emigration abroad. It had also been facing another challenge as for almost two years it had been working in online regime because of pandemic restrictions and it had just started to renew when the aggression started. The russian aggression prolonged the distance learning process and, at the same time, forced a number of students and high school under-graduates to leave Ukraine.

Many buildings and facilities of educational institutions were destroyed during the combat actions and almost every institution now is being under the constant threat of shelling. However, even in such severe conditions the educational sphere of Ukraine continues its functioning being provided with all necessary resources. The state created additional opportunities for students and school-graduates from temporarily occupied and war-affected regions — most of them were enrolled or transferred to the budget-funded educational programs. At the same time, a number of higher educational institutions chose the simplest and easiest way to organize the academic process during war and continued to teach students remotely even when they have the possibilities to arrange the lessons in classrooms, at least in the form of blended learning.

However, in a long-term perspective distance learning, that continues to be the main, and sometimes the only way of learning in some institutions, decreases the objective level of student's academic achievements, deteriorates the competitive advantages of Ukrainian universities in the world. Moreover, it acts as an additional push factor for emigration of Ukrainian youth abroad. It is evident that the full restoration of academic

process in higher educational institutions will be only possible with the end of hostilities. Nevertheless, even now there are the available opportunities to improve and enhance the study process, with the opportunity to study in physical classrooms as the main one, though not being fully used.

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