



Academic Mobility in the Conditions of Forced Migration in Wartime (experience of Ukraine)

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Doi: 10.2478/gssfj-2023-0004

Abstract: *Forced migration during the war led to significant changes in academic mobility in Ukraine. This challenge received a worthy response thanks to the support of Ukraine from the European Union, the USA and other countries of Western democracy: many Ukrainian students and professors received greater opportunities to study and work in European and Western universities in general. This article aims to identify the main threats to inclusivity and new opportunities to provide additional resources and educational space for the development of inclusivity, which is directly related to forced migration as one of the challenges to higher education in Ukraine during this war. The methodology of this article is a philosophical approach based on the use of interrelated concepts of challenge and response. The case study of challenges for academic mobility in Ukraine is used as well. Obstacles and limitations of academic mobility during the war appear to be partially overcome, thanks to distance education. The new opportunities that have opened up for the Ukrainian higher education system provide broad and strategic prospects for the deep integration of the Ukrainian higher education system into the European and world educational space.*

Key words: academic mobility, forced migration, wartime, inclusion, challenge/response concept.

1. Introduction

The full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine after February 24, 2022, caused great destruction and direct damage to the entire country, society, its economy and the education sector in particular. However, they suffer no less indirect damage – and in particular, as a result of the forced migration of the population of Ukraine, both within its borders and beyond. Forced migration during the war in Ukraine creates numerous challenges for the national system of higher education. These challenges are added to the challenges that existed before the war, caused by the large-scale reform of higher education in Ukraine, which continued throughout the revival of the independence of the Ukrainian state after 1991. During this time, several stages of higher education reforms were carried out, the penultimate of which had not yet been completed at the time of the start of the war, and the last, the current one, is precisely connected to a large extent with the extraordinary circumstances of the war. However, adaptation to wartime conditions was reflected in different directions of higher education reform in Ukraine. Some

areas, especially those that required significant state funding, have experienced stagnation in their development and are experiencing a severe crisis – because almost all state funding in Ukraine during the war was directed to the defence budget. Other areas of higher education reform, such as distance learning, have received significant development over the previous two years in connection with the specifics of education in quarantine conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore, much easier adapted to military conditions and even received additional increased demand from higher education institutions and students. Third directions, such as international academic cooperation and, in part, internal academic mobility, received unexpected rapid development thanks to Ukraine's powerful and comprehensive support from the countries that assisted it in resisting Russian armed aggression.

This article aims to identify the main threats to inclusivity and new opportunities to provide additional resources and educational space for the development of inclusivity, which is directly related to forced migration as one of the challenges to higher education in Ukraine during this war.

2. Literature review

The literature on academic mobility includes statistical information, official reports, sociological and field analytical documents (primary analytics), generalizations and conceptual analysis (secondary analytics). The philosophical approach is used for methodological purposes, namely to avoid terminological errors, value confusion and epistemological contradictions.

2.1 Empirical data and Primary Analytics

Empirical data and primary analytics on the topic consist mainly of documents (Law of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014) and others), official reports and recommendations of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MES of Ukraine) (MES of Ukraine, 2023; MES of Ukraine, 2022b). Statistical information, sociological and field analytical documents come from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MES of Ukraine, 2022a) and from leading Ukrainian universities (for example, Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University (Bugrov, 2023)) and non-governmental organizations, both Ukrainian and international.

2.2 Secondary Analytics

Generalization and conceptual analysis provided by the Institute of Higher Education of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NAON of Ukraine) and the Ukrainian (Education and Science Working Group, 2022) and international working group (Nikolaev et al., 2023), primarily National Erasmus + office in Ukraine (Kremen et al., 2023).

2.3 The Philosophical opera

Classical philosophical texts contain a deep understanding of the regularities of the functioning of the social and cultural system (Nietzsche, 2008; Spengler, 1963; Toynbee, 1987). A special philosophical study of the challenge/response concept (Kearney, 1955) provides the key to solving the role of academic mobility in the development of the national system of higher education. Recent philosophical studies help to understand the main problems of modern higher education (Boichenko, 2021; Boichenko, 2022).

3. Research Methods

This article is based on a philosophical methodology that argues for using interrelated concepts of challenge and response. Case studies of challenges for academic mobility in Ukraine are also included.

3.1 Philosophy of Challenge and Response

From a philosophical point of view, the situation of the need to give an adequate response to the challenge has a basis in the philosophy of life: at one time, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that “what does not kill me makes me stronger” – “Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker” (Nietzsche, 2008: 9). This means that every challenge can be useful for development – provided that it is strong enough to prompt a response and not excessive so as not to make the response impossible. This idea of Nietzsche, which in many respects also had a more ancient Protestant origin, formed the basis of the concept of civilizations created by Oswald Spengler (1963) and later developed by Arnold Toynbee (1987) and re-conceptualized by H. F. Kearney (1955). According to this concept, each civilization develops until it turns out unable to respond to the next challenge at a certain moment. It should also be taken into account that “the calling of education, therefore, will inevitably also nurture the national idea – because one specific people always provides education to other specific people, including those determined by their citizenship” (Boichenko, 2021 p. 25). Academic mobility in itself is always a challenge to the national educational system. However, there is still an opportunity to strengthen it. War creates non-academic challenges for the educational system: “The educational system has its own educational functions, and education agents believe in specific educational community values, but there could always be additional influences on the sphere of education from other social systems and non-educational agents and authorities. It is the transit area between academic and non-academic values and functions” (Boichenko, 2022, p. 16). The war destroyed this area and forced the educational system to seek academic answers to non-academic challenges.

3.2 Case Study of Challenges for the Academic Mobility in Ukraine

The question for our research is to demonstrate, using the example of an inclusive solution to the problems of higher education caused by the forced migration of

Ukrainians. The paper's hypothesis is to demonstrate in the case of international academic mobility that Ukraine is not some kind of a separate Ukrainian civilization but a part of European civilization. After all, Ukraine is unable to respond to extremely powerful and large-scale threats from the Russian Federation on its own. At the same time, Ukraine gets such a capability thanks to the constant and large-scale collective support of the countries of the European Union, the USA, Canada, other democratic countries of the modern Western world, as well as other democratic countries of the world (such as Australia), which developed under the influence of European culture. In essence, the Russian Federation is opposed by modern European civilization – and this is well demonstrated by the fairly quick and almost problem-free inclusion of Ukrainian students, professors and scientists in the educational and scientific systems of those countries that provide assistance to Ukraine.

This is especially vividly demonstrated by the general success of Ukrainian citizens in academic mobility projects – both international and domestic Ukrainian. After all, representatives of Ukrainian universities and research institutes successfully develop European-style academic projects in the EU, together with European partners, and independently in Ukraine.

4. Main Types of the Academic Mobility in Ukraine

Academic mobility consists of internal mobility in the country, i.e. national mobility, and external mobility, i.e. international mobility. They are not always equally intensive and developed: in some countries, internal mobility prevails; in others, it is external.

4.1 Internal Academic Mobility in Ukraine

The internal mobility in Ukraine remains at a low level. Temporarily, it was artificially stimulated by the war situation: since 2014, some Ukrainian universities were under Russian occupation, mainly in Donetsk and Luhansk, and some of their students and teachers transferred to study and work in other Ukrainian universities. The state even created special support programs for such temporarily displaced persons who wanted to keep studying or working at universities (Nikolaiev et al., 2023; MES of Ukraine, 2022a). Some universities moved almost entirely to the unoccupied territory of Ukraine (MES of Ukraine, 2022b).

At the same time, in peacetime, almost all students in Ukraine finish their study programs (bachelor's, master's, PhD programs) at the same university they entered, and, as a rule, without implementing academic mobility within these study programs. Yes, there are still rare cases of a semester or one-year study program at another university within the framework of mastering one's own study program at the university where the student entered. However, with the transition to a three-level program of higher education (bachelor's degree, master's degree, studies in PhD programs), the academic mobility of students has increased significantly when moving from one level of education to the next: at the same time, not only the

university of study but also the specialty mastered by the student may change. In this regard, Ukrainian higher education is confidently approaching European standards. The wartime situation created additional conditions for the growth of such types of internal mobility. In general, internal academic mobility promotes the realization of the right of students with different needs to their inclusive consideration, but in times of war, inclusiveness is especially important as consideration of the specific needs of refugees who do not leave the territory of Ukraine, but acquire the status of temporarily displaced persons.

The academic mobility of teachers is more active in Ukraine. Changing the place of work here is fundamentally no different from most other countries of the world: although universities are traditionally quite conservative in the matter of keeping their professorships, in all universities of the world, and Ukraine is no exception, there is a constant gradual dropout of professors who do not demonstrate sufficient success in teaching and research. However, the practice of more active transfers of the best professors (“academic stars”) from one university to another is still not sufficiently developed in Ukraine. This is due to an insufficiently flexible system for determining the salary level of professors in state universities (87,5% of students studying in the state universities in Ukraine – 861.7 out of 984.1 thousand all over Ukraine for 2022 (Nikolaiev et al., 2023 p. 16)), as a result of which it is almost impossible to provide academic stars with a significantly higher salary compared to most professors. However, in 2024, radical changes are planned to be made in this area in Ukraine, which may change this situation for the better.

4.2 External Academic Mobility in Ukraine

External academic mobility in Ukraine has developed over the past ten years no less actively than internal academic mobility. This situation gradually developed after the entry of the national system of higher education in 2005 into the so-called Bologna process: this happened as a result of the gradual preparation and adoption of the relevant laws of Ukraine, which regulated the rules of academic mobility – including after the adoption in 2014 of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014). After all, in the Soviet Union, which included Ukraine until 1991, academic mobility was limited only to the opportunity to continue studying in the chosen field, and all other types of academic mobility were in percentage terms below the level of statistical error. After the restoration of the independence of the Ukrainian state in 1991, the general level of academic mobility in the 1990s and early 2000s began to increase gradually but was significantly limited by the low level of development of the Ukrainian economy. There were critically small educational and scientific budgets – in the state program and for the citizens who wanted to study. Also, there were several legal and institutional limitations caused by the lack of development of the relevant national legislation and the absence of the necessary framework international political documents. The signing of the Bologna Declaration documents by the Minister of Education of Ukraine on May 19, 2005, opened the way to reforming national legislation in the direction of

correlation with European legislation on higher education and gradual full integration into the European educational space (National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine & Institute of Higher Education NAESU, 2020). This required the adoption of some accompanying international regulations, but the process was already underway. So, it was the intensification and expansion of international academic mobility that became the driver of internal academic mobility in Ukraine.

According to the conclusion of a group of researchers led by Vasyl Kremen, who worked within the framework of the Institute of Higher Education of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, "The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022-2032, approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated February 23, 2022 No. 286, is a key strategic document that defines the prospects for the development of the internationalization of domestic higher education. Strategic goal 4. The internationalization of higher education in Ukraine singles out the following operational goals:

ensuring comparability and recognition of Ukrainian educational qualifications in Europe and the world;

implementation of the best foreign educational experience in Ukraine;

dynamic growth of the number of foreign students in Ukraine;

adaptation of graduates of higher education institutions to life and work in a multicultural environment;

increasing the number of international educational and scientific cooperation projects, integrating scientific and pedagogical workers into the global scientific space" (Kremen et al., 2023: 101).

This strategy was adopted on February 23, 2022, that is, one day before the start of a full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine [Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2022]. It is obvious that it had to be adapted to wartime conditions. First of all, this strategy focused on attracting foreign citizens to Ukraine as students and teachers of Ukrainian universities. Of course, with the start of hostilities, this became almost impossible: the attractiveness of Ukrainian universities to foreigners sharply decreased in the conditions of the war, which the Russian Federation unleashed against Ukraine.

Thus, the number of foreign students decreased at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, the leading one in Ukraine, for the first time in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and for the second time due to Russia's war against Ukraine in 2022.

2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
bachelo r	maste r	bachelo r	maste r	bachelo r	maste r	bachelo r	maste r	bachelo r	maste r
2407	38 3	2290	16 0	2230	233	2064	58	2054	83

Table 1: Enrollment for Studies of Foreign Citizens 2019-2023 at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Bugrov, 2023: 24)

On the other hand, opportunities for participation of Ukrainian students and teachers in international academic projects have significantly increased, and the number of them travelling outside Ukraine to foreign universities within the framework of various academic mobility programs has increased.

The last two years were a time when external academic mobility in Ukraine received a powerful impetus in its development: the tragic circumstances of the war in Ukraine, on the one hand, and the significant increase in international support for Ukraine from the countries of the democratic world, and above all the EU and the USA, on the other hand, strongly intensified the participation of Ukrainian students and professors in foreign programs training, internship and teaching.

The following main challenges arise for the higher education of Ukraine in the conditions of war: "threat to the life and health of students of higher education and the personnel of higher education institutions, large-scale destruction and damage to infrastructure, forced relocation of institutions, the impact of war on the contingent of students of higher education and the composition of scientific and pedagogical workers, the problem of ensuring equal access to high-quality higher education in war conditions, the difficulties of carrying out scientific and innovative activities, restrictions on the implementation of international cooperation, the aggravation of the problem of the mismatch of the qualifications of graduates with the requirements of the labour market" (Kremen et al., 2023, p. 3).

External academic mobility is becoming the leader of all types of academic mobility in Ukraine and the driver of intensive reform of the higher education system in Ukraine.

5. New Opportunities and New Restrictions for the Academic Mobility in Ukraine

In the conditions of the war in Ukraine, already in 2022, the top managers of higher education in Ukraine and researchers of higher education in Ukraine began to build a strategy for the recovery of Ukrainian society, and the internationalization of education was considered as one of the important tools that will facilitate and improve such recovery.

"The plan for the recovery of Ukraine (project, 2022), which was developed with the participation of scientists of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in war conditions, provides synergy with the Strategy for the Development of Higher

Education in Ukraine for 2022-2032 and provides, in accordance with Goal 4. Internationalization of higher education in Ukraine, the following steps: introduction of remote admission of foreigners to Ukrainian universities on a regular basis; determination of priority measures for learning English; bringing the list of fields of knowledge and specialties into compliance with the ISC (stage 1: June 2022 – the end of 2022); complete completion of the training of higher education applicants at levels (degrees) not provided for in the governing documents of the EPVO; support for the development of English-language educational programs, as well as joint (coordinated) educational programs with universities belonging to the TOP 1000 world rankings; increasing opportunities to study foreign languages at universities, raising requirements for mastering them (stage 2: January 2023 – December 2025); support of higher education institutions in entering the best world rankings (stage 3: January 2026 – December 2032)” (Kremen et al., 2023, p. 104).

It is obvious that the proposed measures can only partially solve the problem of attracting foreign students and professors to Ukraine. However, it will significantly contribute to the opportunities for Ukrainian students and teachers to go to foreign universities – in particular, thanks to better mastery of foreign languages, primarily English. Thus, on July 25, 2023, the order of the MES of Ukraine approved “Methodological recommendations for ensuring quality study, teaching and use of the English language in higher education institutions of Ukraine” (MES of Ukraine 2023). Indeed, this document provides a much better preparation of Ukrainian students and professors for academic mobility within the framework of stationary and distance learning and teaching at foreign universities.

5.1 New Opportunities and New Restrictions for the External Academic Mobility in Ukraine

After the Russian military invasion of Ukraine on February 24 2022, the countries of the democratic world, and above all, the EU and the USA, have constantly been creating *new opportunities* for external academic mobility in Ukraine. Among them are the following:

- Special study programs for Ukrainian citizens in European universities and universities in the USA, Canada and other countries
- Special internship programs for Ukrainian citizens in European universities and universities in the USA, Canada and other countries
- Additional quotas in research projects for Ukrainian citizens in European universities and universities in the USA, Canada and other countries
- Additional quotas for teaching as visiting professors for Ukrainian citizens in European universities and universities in the USA, Canada and other countries.

For example, Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University has made significant progress in the development of international institutional academic ties. “In the difficult conditions of the martial law in the current year 2023, the University was able to significantly strengthen international cooperation. In particular, the University joined several European alliances” (Bugrov, 2023, p. 2). These are such associations as the Alliance of European Universities EUniWell (KNU joined four projects as an associate partner in 2023), the Association of Eastern Partnership Universities Cluster (EPUC), INU (International Network of Universities), Utrecht Network and others. “In general, during 2023, 1,450 people were included in the academic mobility programs, which allows us to state that this indicator increased by 39% compared to last year” (Bugrov, 2023, p. 221).

The ***new restrictions*** for the external academic mobility in Ukraine are related first of all to military mobilization in Ukraine and other restrictions caused by the war:

- Gender restrictions (ban on men of conscription age to leave Ukraine without special permission);
- Age (the same ban – especially for men);
- By certain specialities (for example, medical and others that are in high demand for military purposes – for all genders).

5.2 New Opportunities and New Restrictions for Internal Academic Mobility in Ukraine

The MES of Ukraine and non-governmental organizations in Ukraine are looking for ***new opportunities*** to improve internal academic mobility in Ukraine. Such improvement relates to the following:

- Additional quotas for individual teachers and students as internally displaced persons;
- Relocation of entire universities from temporarily occupied territories to regions of Ukraine remote from the combat zone;
- Broad involvement in all forms of distance learning and teaching.

Several ***new restrictions*** prevent the implementation of internal academic mobility in Ukraine:

Some students and teachers found themselves in the temporarily occupied territories;

Some of the students and teachers went abroad to Ukraine.

These and some other difficulties in internal and partly external academic mobility were overcome with the help of distant forms of education, using such instruments as Google Classroom, Classtime, Google Forms, Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, Viber, Telegram, etc. The educational program control elements (credits and exams) were provided using Google Forms, Online Test Pad, Google Class, and Zoom software services. “From the very beginning of the military aggression of the Russian

Federation, the team of the MES of Ukraine reached agreements with the world's leading online educational platforms Coursera, UdeMy and Edx regarding the free provision of online courses for those seeking professional (vocational and technical), professional pre-higher and higher education (Letter of the MES of Ukraine 1/3874-22 dated 04.04.22), the effect of which was extended for this academic year as well” (Bugrov, 2023, p. 40). At Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, 3,951 students of all educational levels are registered on the Coursera platform – despite the fact that in 2023, almost all students attended the university's classrooms. This total is 1,019 more students than the previous war year, which was almost entirely online.

Internal academic mobility is becoming more interconnected with external academic mobility and is being integrated into international academic mobility.

6. Conclusion

The war situation openly poses new challenges to Ukraine's higher education system, which reveals the problems implicitly faced by every modern national system of higher education. First of all, external academic mobility is gaining priority, which can not only compensate for various organizational problems of the national higher education system but also intensify the involvement of national students and professors in solving larger-scale academic and research tasks. In particular, the situation of military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine significantly strengthened Ukraine's academic ties with other countries of Europe and the western democratic world, revealed common European values at the basis of higher education, and also more closely integrated Ukrainian researchers into work on European academic projects. Internal academic mobility in Ukraine is increasingly developing under the influence of external academic mobility, which provides role models for the former.

An important role in overcoming the difficulties of the war for the Ukrainian higher education system was played by the unconditional solidarity and reliable support that Ukraine received from the European Union, the United States and other Western democracies. Thanks to this, the possibilities of inclusion for Ukrainian students and professors in the work of European and generally Western universities were significantly expanded.

Obstacles and limitations of academic mobility during the war appear to be partially overcome, in particular, thanks to distance education. And the new opportunities that have opened up for the Ukrainian higher education system provide broad and strategic prospects for the deep integration of the Ukrainian higher education system into the European and world educational space.

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