

PART 3.

SOCIAL ASPECT OF ESG IN UNIVERSITIES

Chapter 5.

Gender, freedom and education in the era of war

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Introduction

The chapter is devoted to the gender aspects of the transformation of education and science in Ukraine under war conditions, evaluation of challenges to freedom in academic environment. The results of the study were obtained on the basis of a sociological survey of academic staff from Ukrainian HEIs (displaced, not displaced but physically damaged, not displaced and not damaged).

The study focuses on: respondents' perception of the conditions for personal and professional self-realization / self-development / self-improvement in the context of war; assessment of changes that have occurred in various spheres of life (professional activity, income, self-development, communication, etc.); identification of factors that have a negative and positive impact on freedom, in particular in the professional sphere; understanding of freedom, etc.

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Gender, Freedom, and Education in the Era of War

Gender, freedom, and education are issues that have been studied by many scholars worldwide. As a rule, the most pressing challenges were under the attention of researchers, such as gender aspects of presenting scientific achievements (Suissa et al., 2021), sustainability of education through the prism of academic freedom (Ekwueme et. al, 2016), the importance of peace education in the context of war (Gursel-Bilgin et al, 2023), and others. For Ukraine today, in the context of war, one of the most critical challenges is to ensure access to education and the exercise of rights and freedoms, with due regard for the gender factor. Education is one area of life that has been significantly affected by the war. In particular, in the field of higher education, since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, 29 higher education institutions and 64 separate structural units of institutions of different forms of ownership and subordination to different Ministries of Ukraine have been displaced (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022). Some of them have already been relocated twice: in 2014, after the occupation of parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 18 higher education institutions moved to the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015). In addition, educators themselves are often victims of conflict (Education, 2005), experiencing displacement in different ways, having to work remotely in new conditions that are often not inclusive and do not meet the 'good working conditions' stipulated in their contracts. At the same time, education plays a significant role in the processes of restoring the country as a whole during wartime and post-war periods, which has been confirmed over the years (Institute of Higher Education of NAES of Ukraine, 2020; Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022; Barakat et al. 2013, Milton & Barakat, 2016, Orzhel et al. 2023, Semenenko & Bilous, 2023). Therefore, ensuring the rights and freedoms of educators, as well as providing them with opportunities for development and improvement under martial law, is important, as it will affect not only personal self-development and professional activity, but also the quality of education and the involvement of HEIs in the recovery processes during war and post-war time. In order to develop appropriate recommendations, it is necessary to have an adequate

analysis of the needs and realities of professional activity of academic staff. This study is aimed at analysis and assessment of the war's impact on the freedom of professional activity of the academic environment representatives and analysis of gender-based differences of such impact.

Methodology

In order to obtain information on the impact of the war on the freedom of academic personnel in terms of men and women, the researchers developed a questionnaire and conducted a survey of representatives of the Ukrainian academic community. The survey was conducted via ArcGIS system. The link to the survey was spread among the representatives of HEIs in Ukraine. The scope of targeted HEIs included displaced HEIs, not displaced but physically damaged, not displaced and not damaged. The number of the respondents amounted to 140 people.

The structure of the respondents is the following:

- *by gender*: female – 68 %, male – 32 %.
- *by academic degree*: without degree – 13 %, PhD – 60 %, Dr. Sci. – 27 %.
- *by age*: under 25 years – 17 %; 26–35 years – 9 %; 36–50 years – 43 %; 51–60 years – 16 %; over 60 years – 15 %.

The obtained answers were analysed using statistical and analytical methods.

Impact of War on Freedom: Assessments and Key Gender-Specific Factors

One of the key questions asked to the representatives of the academic community was their own assessment of the impact of the war on various types of freedoms. Moreover, the concept of freedom was not given intentionally to not limit their understanding of this category. In particular, respondents were asked to rate the impact of war on freedoms on a scale from -3 to +3, which we aggregated into positive, neutral, and negative assessments. A summary of positive and negative assessments by men and women is presented in Table 5.1. Thus, most women and men noted the negative impact of the war on personal freedom in general, freedom of choice, freedom of movement, and academic freedom. In particular, the

largest number of negative assessments of the war's impact on general freedom (83 %) and freedom of movement (87 %) were made by men. These types of freedoms were the most vulnerable for men, which can be explained by the limited permission to travel abroad, as well as the need to register and update data at the territorial recruitment and social support centres within a limited time after any changes in location or professional employment. For women, the top negative impacts are personal freedom in general (73 % of female respondents) and freedom of choice (68 % of female respondents). At the same time, it should be noted that 11 % of men and 22 % of women believe that the war had a positive impact on personal freedom in general; and 9 % of men and 26 % of women noted a positive impact of the war on freedom of movement (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Impact of war on freedom (assessments by men and women)

Types of freedom	Men			Women		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Personal freedom in general	83 %	6 %	11 %	73 %	5 %	22 %
Freedom of choice	66 %	21 %	13 %	68 %	13 %	19 %
Freedom of movement	87 %	4 %	9 %	65 %	10 %	26 %
Academic freedom	38 %	34 %	28 %	35 %	32 %	32 %
Freedom of speech	45 %	43 %	13 %	31 %	39 %	30 %
Freedom of thought	32 %	43 %	26 %	19 %	47 %	33 %
Freedom of worldview	32 %	40 %	28 %	22 %	44 %	34 %

Source: research results of the authors

Men also noted a negative impact of the war on freedom of choice (66 %), freedom of speech (45 %) and academic freedom (38 %). For women, freedom of movement is third in the anti-rating of the war's impact (65 %).

Regarding the assessment of the war's impact on freedom of speech, one could notice that the distribution of women's votes is almost equal, with a slight margin of votes (3 %) in favour of a negative impact. According to more than 40 % of male and female respondents, the war has no impact on freedom of thought and worldview. The only difference between men and women can be seen in determining the impact of the war on freedom of speech: 45 % (the largest percentage of male respondents) believe that the impact is negative, while the largest percentage of female respondents (39 %) say that it is neutral.

If we look at the types of freedoms that received the most positive relative value of votes among all the options, for men it is academic freedom and freedom of worldview (28 % each), and for women – freedom of worldview (34 %). The lowest number of positive ratings among men was given to freedom of movement (9 %), and among women – to freedom of choice (19 %).

Thus, in general, the conclusion can be made that men have a more negative perception of the impact of the war on various types of freedoms and the ability to freely and unhindered carry out their professional activities and lead a private life.

To explain their scores, male and female respondents were asked to identify the key factors that have the greatest positive and negative impact on freedom of professional activity. In particular, they were asked to identify the three most significant factors. Among the most positive factors that were offered to both men and women to choose in terms of their impact on freedom of professional activity were the following:

- institutional (choice of acceptable format of work, expansion of forms of control of students' knowledge, etc.);
- preferential (national and international programs to support academic staff, simplified procedures for regulating the educational process, etc.);
- psychological (social mutual support and responsibility, overcoming internal tension by redirecting energy to creative and professional activities, post-traumatic growth);
- motivational (awareness of responsibility to the society and importance as a change agent, value of one's own image in the professional environment);

- intra-organizational (social interaction, internal rules and policies of the functioning of the higher education institution under martial law);
- external (public demand for education, trust in the role of teachers, etc.);
- other.

Table 5.2 provides the rating of the most positive factors, according to men and women. For men, the most significant positive factor is motivation (as an opportunity to realize their responsibility to society and their importance in acting as an agent of change, the value of their own image in the professional environment) – 70 % of male respondents chose this option. For women, this factor is also essential – it ranks second. For women, the most important positive factor is the institutional one (which is manifested in the choice of an acceptable format of work, expansion of forms of control over students' knowledge, etc.) – this factor was chosen by 59 % of women. For men, this factor is in the second place.

Table 5.2. Rating of factors, that have the greatest positive impact on the freedom of professional activity of men and women

Rating of positive factors by men		Rating of positive factors by women	
Factor	% of respondents	Factor	% of respondents
motivational	70 %	institutional	59 %
institutional	51 %	motivational	56 %
intra-organizational	40 %	psychological	44 %
preferential	36 %	intra-organizational	38 %
external	28 %	preferential	35 %
psychological	19 %	external	28 %
other	4 %	other	1 %

Source: research results of the authors

The ranking of the most negative factors that, in the opinion of men and women, have the greatest negative impact on the freedom of professional activity is presented in Table 5.3. Similarly to the positive factors,

respondents could choose the three most significant factors from the proposed ones:

- institutional (requirements and restrictions due to martial law);
- preferential (support programs for academic staff of certain target groups (by place of residence, activity profile, specialty, etc.));
- personal (insufficient level of foreign language proficiency, inability to overcome cross-cultural and adaptation barriers, unpreparedness for mobility);
- security (forced changes in work schedules, lack of access to safe places, unpredictability of dangerous situations);
- psychological (emotional stress, anxiety, inability to fully rest and recover, stress and sleep disturbances);
- internal organizational (competition, outflow of students, departure of colleagues abroad, internal rules and policies of functioning under martial law, etc.);
- external (anxious moods in society, rethinking the priority of education, transformation of research and cooperation areas due to the focus on war, etc.);
- other.

Table 5.3. Rating of factors, that have the greatest negative impact on the freedom of professional activity of men and women

Rating of negative factors by men		Rating of negative factors by women	
Factor	% of respondents	Factor	% of respondents
psychological	64 %	psychological	62 %
security	55 %	external	53 %
institutional	49 %	security	49 %
external	38 %	personal	38 %
personal	32 %	internal organizational	31 %
internal organizational	30 %	institutional	27 %
preferential	6 %	preferential	4 %
other	0 %	other	2 %

Source: research results of the authors

For both women and men, the psychological factor has the greatest negative impact on freedom of professional activity: 64 % of men and 62 % of women said that emotional stress, anxiety, inability to fully rest and recover, stress, and sleep disturbances significantly affect their ability to realize themselves. That is, it is the internal factor and the internal perception of the situation caused by the war that plays the greatest role. The least negative impact on both men (6 %) and women (4 %) is caused by the preferential factor, which is the provision of individual support programmes for academic staff of certain target groups (selected by place of residence, activity profile, specialty, etc.).

Men's professional self-realization is also negatively affected by security and institutional factors, which are more a manifestation of the objective external environment. Women's professional self-realization is negatively affected by other external factors and security situations.

An interesting observation is that the psychological factor, which ranks third among women, is the least important for men: 44 % of women versus 19 % of men chose it as important. For women, the least important group of proposed factors was the group of external factors, such as public demand for education, trust in the role of teachers, etc.: only 28 % of female respondents chose this option. A positive fact about the possibilities of self-realisation during the war is the answers of both men and women about the availability of conditions for personal and professional development, self-realisation and self-improvement. 81 % of men and 89 % of women reported having such conditions, despite the negative impact of various factors (Fig. 5.1).

When asked about the factors that limit personal and professional development, self-realization, and self-improvement, respondents gave different answers, but all of them can be summarised as follows. Men consider war and danger, restrictions on movement, unsatisfactory conditions of professional and personal activity, and poor psychological and emotional state as the main obstacles that limit their personal and professional self-realization, self-development, and self-improvement. Women identified poor psychological and emotional state, low salaries and financial instability, lack of time and excessive workload, and unsatisfactory conditions for professional and personal activities as the main obstacles

to personal and professional self-realization, self-development, and self-improvement. That is, for men, the main factors are restrictions and insecurity, while for women, emotions, psychological state and financial independence were more critical.

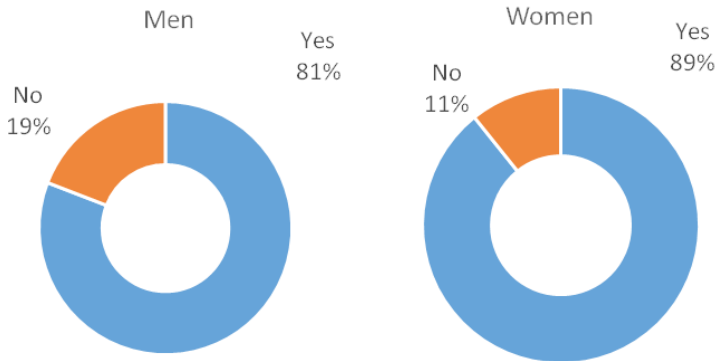


Fig. 5.1. Availability of conditions for personal and professional self-realization / self-development / self-improvement of men and women

Source: research results of the authors

Support by the International Academic Community: Perception by Ukrainians

Despite the restrictions on traveling abroad and the perceived negative impact of the war on freedom of movement, men feel more supported by the international academic community in their professional activities (Fig. 5.2). Almost half of the male respondents (47%) answered this question *positively*. In contrast, only 37% of female respondents reported experiencing such support, and half of them could not provide a specific answer. The percentage of both men and women who do not feel this support is approximately the same.

In terms of the specifics of such support, men and women mentioned the following forms of international cooperation that have become more accessible to them (Table 5.4).

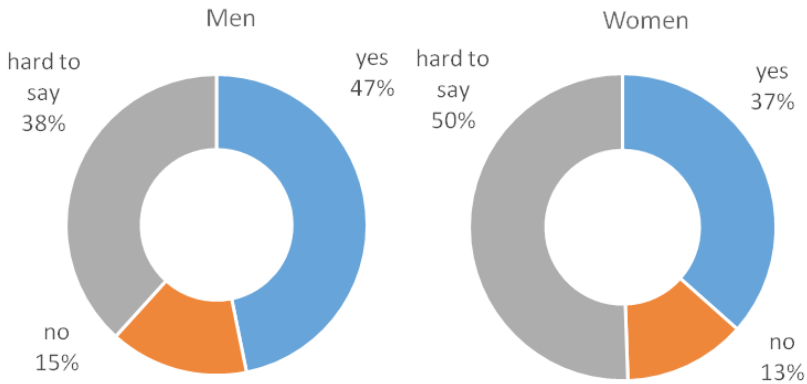


Fig. 5.2. Feeling of increasing support for professional activities of men and women from the international academic community

Source: research results of the authors

Table 5.4. Expanded forms of international cooperation accessible to men and women since the war onset

Forms of most accessible international cooperation for men		Forms of most accessible international cooperation for women	
Form	% of respondents	Form	% of respondents
international internships/ training programs	53 %	international internships/ training programs	69 %
access to international databases / information resources / publications from closed access publications	43 %	access to international databases / information resources / publications from closed access publications	43 %
international project activities	38 %	international project activities	31 %
participation in academic exchange programs	23 %	guest visits to foreign universities	24 %
participation in international research teams	23 %	participation in academic exchange programs	23 %

Forms of most accessible international cooperation for men		Forms of most accessible international cooperation for women	
Form	% of respondents	Form	% of respondents
guest visits to foreign universities	17 %	participation in international research teams	17 %
access to international research infrastructure	13 %	access to international research infrastructure	15 %
other	2 %	other	1 %

Source: research results of the authors

Despite the different conditions and perceptions of restrictions on movement and freedom in general, international internships and training programs have become the most accessible form of international cooperation for both men and women. Access to international databases / information resources / publications from closed access publications and international project activities are the second and third most commonly supported forms of international cooperation for women and men. That is, both men and women equally see this support and the availability of various forms of cooperation. The remaining answers ranged from 13 to 24 % of respondents (men and women), but this does not make a significant difference between their answers.

Work-Life Balance, Changes, and the War: What About Correlation

In recent years, the academic environment in Ukraine has acquired new characteristics, and with each passing day of the war, it is becoming more adaptive to the conditions of the new reality. At the same time, it is characterized by a high level of tension and imbalance, overload and the requirement of multitasking for most employees of HEIs. In this context, managing the boundaries and balance between different spheres of life and work is becoming increasingly complex, requiring innovative solutions to maintain productivity and psychological well-being, as well as personal life. Security concerns have made balancing career and personal life even more difficult and, in some cases, impossible.

According to Zhylinska and Prylutska (2023), work-life balance has gender specifics due to different social expectations and stereotypes that affect

men and women differently. However, such conclusions were mainly formed on the basis of the usual lifestyle inherent in peacetime. It is expected that in the context of military aggression, the ratio of time and effort spent on professional and non-professional activities will be even more distorted for representatives of different genders. The analysis of respondents' answers shows that there have been significant changes in this aspect since the beginning of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion. 54 % of respondents say that work-life balance has changed in favour of professional activities, 28 % – in favour of family life, and only 18 % said there were no significant changes. A gender analysis of respondents' answers (Fig. 5.3) shows that during the war, men were forced to focus more on their work responsibilities (over 70 % of respondents), while every second woman had to shift her focus to work. Women respondents were also twice as likely as men to note an increase in time spent on personal life, such as caring for children and family, performing socially important functions etc.

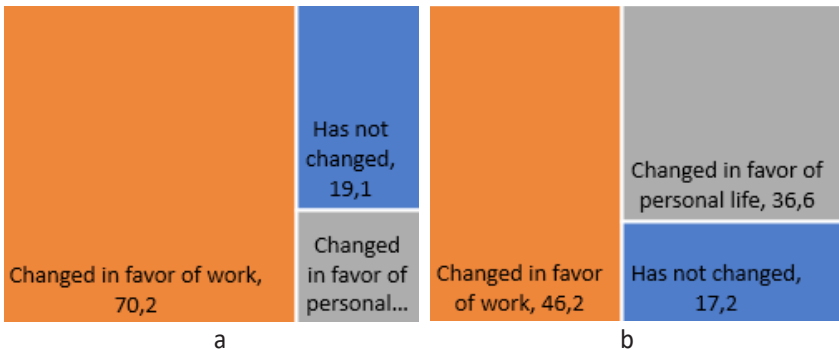


Fig. 5.3. Changes in work-life balance in war period: view by genders, (a) male, %; b) female, %)

Source: research results of the authors

Notably, representatives of Ukrainian universities who were forcibly displaced from the territories occupied by the Russian Federation demonstrated a slightly different picture of their life (dis)balance in their responses. Thus, among women in this category, more than 40 % indicated

that it had shifted in favor of family, 46.4 % – in favor of work, and only 12.5 % managed to keep it unchanged. The distribution of men's responses (15.4 %, 65.4 %, and 19.2 %, respectively) shows that for them, too, a change of location and a new environment requires increased attention to family, but career and professional activities remain a higher priority. Thus, the gendered distribution of social roles under the influence of military aggression increases the imbalance of responsibility for the family and opportunities for professional self-realization between men and women in favor of the former and restricts the freedom of choice of women to a greater extent.

The mentality of Ukrainians is characterized (and confirmed by the survey results) by a higher level of responsibility of men for the material well-being of the family. As a result, 51 % of the surveyed men combine university work with entrepreneurial activity (8.5 %), occasional provision of paid services (23.4 %), and employment in other organizations (19.1 %). A similar strategy of combining sources of employment is practiced by about 36.6 % of women respondents. At the same time, the main additional source of women's income is ad hoc service provision (18.3 %), and entrepreneurial activity – only 2 %. Thus, male representatives of the academic environment in Ukraine are more likely to combine professional activities than women. The gender gap in the proportion of people who supplement their main activity in higher education institutions with other types of employment is 14 % in favour of men, in particular, in the field of entrepreneurship – four times (6.5 %).

One of the explanations for this gap is the level of productivity, which depends on a wide range of factors – motivation, skills, desire for self-realization, freedom, ability to manage emotions, existential experience, and investment in professional growth (Petrigliery and Ashford, 2023). Respondents' subjective assessments of their individual level of productivity have significant gender differences. Thus, among men, the share of those who highly evaluate their own productivity in the current environment is significantly higher than among women – 36.2 % vs. 22.1 %. The identified gender differences in the perception of one's own ability to work are closely correlated with the dominant desire among men to expand their sources of income and take care of financial independence. As a result, they are more easily entered into the system of additional labour relations both in the academic environment and outside it.

The study of the war impact on various aspects of the lives of academics, which are associated with their freedom to some extent, allows us to conclude that women have had a harder time accepting the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion at the psycho-emotional and domestic level, while men have a more negative perception of changes in income, professional self-development and self-realization, and the system of communication with family and friends, colleagues (Table 5.5). At the same time, a group of respondents positively assess wartime changes for themselves. 36.6 % of women noted improved opportunities for professional self-realization, 41.9 % – for personal development, and 14.0 % – for communication with friends. The share of male respondents who positively assessed the changes in communication with family, colleagues and management, as well as in the possibilities of combining different areas of employment during a full-scale war, is higher than among female respondents.

Table 5.5. Change of life since the outbreak of full-scale war, (%)

Areas of life	Assessment							
	negative		without significant changes		positive		difficult to answer	
	F*	M**	F	M	F	M	F	M
Level of income	47.3	53.2	34.4	27.7	11.8	12.8	6.5	6.4
Well-being (living conditions, everyday life)	59.1	57.4	28.0	27.7	3.2	8.5	9.7	6.4
Professional self-realization and improvement	17.2	29.8	37.6	42.6	36.6	21.3	8.6	6.4
Personal self-development and self-improvement	15.1	25.5	34.4	48.9	41.9	23.4	8.6	2.1
Psycho-emotional state	84.9	80.9	4.3	17.0	1.1	0.0	9.7	2.1
Communication and relationships with family	21.5	29.8	46.2	46.8	20.4	21.3	11.8	2.1
Communication and relationships with friends	26.9	57.4	49.5	25.5	14.0	8.5	9.7	8.5
Communication and relationships with colleagues	14.0	19.1	65.6	66.0	12.9	14.9	7.5	0.0

Areas of life	Assessment							
	negative		without significant changes		positive		difficult to answer	
	F*	M**	F	M	F	M	F	M
Communication and relationships with management	6.5	6.4	65.6	66.0	21.5	25.5	6.5	2.1
Ability to combine work at the university with other work	23.7	27.7	38.7	44.7	14.0	17.0	23.7	10.6

*F – female, **M – male.

Source: research results of the authors

The survey results also confirm the subjectivity of the perception of freedom gained by representatives of academic environment. Thus, a more negative impact of the war on academic freedom was noted by men – the share of those who negatively assessed this factor was 38.2 % of respondents against 35.5 % of women (Fig. 5.4). While the difference between the proportion of male and female respondents in

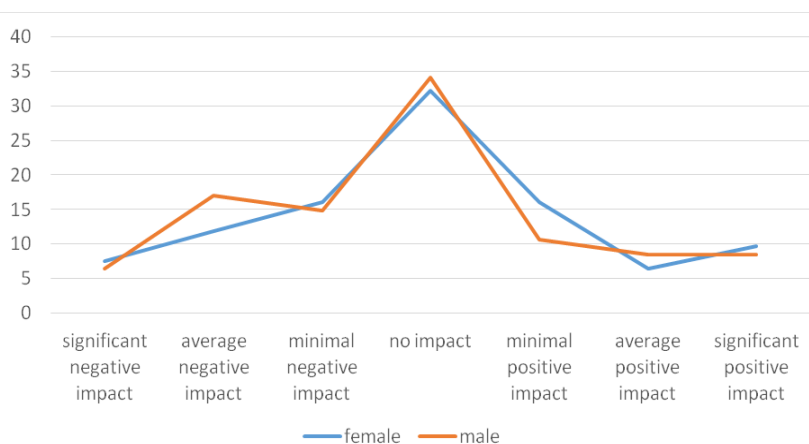


Fig. 5.4. War influence on academic freedom

Source: research results of the authors

the negative context of the war's impact on academic freedom is not very noticeable, in terms of its positive impact, there is a more pronounced difference – almost 5 %.

This situation can be partly explained by the specifics of the academic environment, which provided adequate conditions for professional activity and development regardless of gender, except for restrictions on men's travel abroad, and thus their opportunities for offline participation in various internationalization projects. Forced mobility restrictions for men are offset by a higher level of their involvement in university management processes: 62 % of male respondents noted their participation in management decision-making (compared to 58 % of female respondents), 68 % participated in the development of strategies, policies, and procedures of the HEI (only one in two women respondents). With regard to the management of HEIs, the survey results specify the respondents' vision of the measures necessary to improve the results of their professional activities at the internal corporate level. These include:

- ensuring student enrolment;
- accelerated adaptation and modernization of universities;
- de-bureaucratization of the educational process;
- transparent development and financial management strategy;
- balancing research and teaching activities;
- combining top-down and bottom-up approaches to management, strengthening communications within the organization;
- physical location and material base;
- equal career conditions and elimination of nepotism;
- human-centeredness and team building.

Gender Differences in Perception of Freedom – Do They Exist?

The final aspect of the survey was the study of the perception and awareness of freedom by each of the respondents. The answers received showed that this concept has a very diverse perception – from the basic characteristics associated with everyday life (the possibility of free choice, expression of will, statements, thoughts and communications, etc.) to the realization of the highest needs of the individual (the possibility of self-realization and development; the irreplaceable value of life; feeling happy

from the activities you conduct; the goal, not the way; absolute ability to act, life's guideline).

Many respondents associate freedom with the peculiarities of professional activity, namely, free choice of the direction of professional activity, the opportunity to realize oneself as a researcher and teacher, no restrictions on research, support for the quality of professional life, creative performance of tasks, financial independence, a conscious need for professional and creative activity, and absence of discrimination. Notably, 66.4 % of respondents (53.2 % of men and 74.2 % of women) answered negatively to the question about discrimination in higher education, and 5.7 % were unable to give a definite answer. Positive responses include complaints about such forms of discrimination as ageism (both against teachers and students who start their studies at an older age), hierarchical and status discrimination, devaluation of the role of colleagues abroad, and gender discrimination (5.0 % of respondents reported its existence).

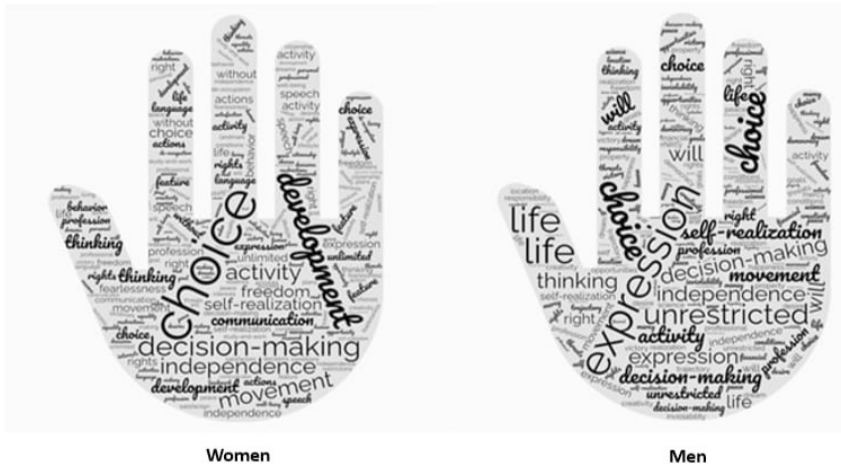
The respondents also pointed to cases of discrimination related to the external environment of higher education institutions – violation of autonomy, unreasonable associations and voluntarism in decision-making on the fate of universities, unequal conditions for displaced and non-displaced HEIs, uncompetitive salaries that threaten the financial freedom of academic staff.

The answers of many survey participants clearly demonstrated the impact of the war on the understanding and value of freedom. Among the most emotionally sensitive responses were the statements that freedom is “the absence of war”, “freedom of action without threatening one's life and the lives of loved ones”, “life without fear”, “freedom is when you wake up in the morning and do not hear sirens, you don't have to wait for the “russian roulette” to choose where it will send its missiles and decide who will live and who will die today”, “ending the war in Ukraine”, “the possibility of self-realization and self-development in an independent and free Ukraine”, “life”, “return of the occupied territories”.

“Freedom is a dream that will be realized after the war is over!” said a male respondent, aged 36–50, holding a PhD and working at a university. He had not been physically harmed by the war and had not experienced displacement.

The interpretation of the concept of freedom by representatives of the academic environment – respondents to the survey, despite its general civilizational significance, turned out to be gender differentiated (Box 23). This result is generally expected given the results of research (Suissa and Sullivan, 2021; Vähäsantanen et al., 2020) and the findings of international organizations (UN, 2021), which emphasize the existence of gender inequality in matters of freedom and its perception.

Box 23. Gender differences in perception of freedom



For example, female respondents most often associated the term “freedom” with the ability to choose and develop, determine one's own career trajectory and make decisions, and the absence of restrictions on thinking, speaking and communicating. In addition, their answers emphasize the importance of such internal aspects of freedom as style and life, dreams and desires, enjoyment of life, etc. In contrast to women's vision of freedom, men's vision of freedom is formed mainly around such aspects of life as goals and decisions, professional activity, rights and responsibilities, independence (including financial) and lack of restrictions.

Conclusions

Therefore, freedom is the most important mental value for every person, and at the same time, it is an immanent feature of a democratic socially oriented society, which is of exceptional importance for Ukrainians in general (and especially for representatives of the academic environment). It is also a sign of Ukrainians' identity, which is manifested through their extraordinary love for freedom and its importance for each individual, as well as their basic existential value. Education is an ideal weapon that can overcome any stigma and prejudice and eradicate discrimination, allowing people to live freely and be themselves. The higher education system should be free from any manifestations of discrimination and should provide education in an atmosphere of equality, respect for diversity, and adherence to human rights standards.

The war has exacerbated the problem of freedom for representatives of the academic environment not so much in the organizational sense, but rather has affected its personal limits and manifestations, and strengthened its value. In addition, it made this problem, even more, gender-differentiated, marking it as a restriction of mobility and a decrease in financial freedom for men and a shift in the balance in favor of the family, living conditions, and psycho-emotional exhaustion for women. At the same time, regardless of gender, respondents noted the importance of conditions for professional self-realization and development, the right to choose and make decisions, independence, and freedom of thought.

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Chapter 6.

Inclusion, cooperation projects and professional education resilience during the wartime: Ukrainian dimension

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Introduction

This chapter describes the challenges of the inclusive education development in HEIs, the strategy of Educational and rehabilitation institution of higher education “Kamianets-Podilskyi State Institute” (ERIHE KPSI) to compound both the educational process and rehabilitation (physical (namely sport rehabilitation), socio-pedagogical and psychological rehabilitation). This chapter examines the changes in the teaching and learning of students with disabilities during the wartime in Ukraine, different efficient tools for the socialization of young people with disabilities.

For the efficient socialization of young people with disabilities, it is necessary to create an accessible barrier-free space, which means mobility and access to premises belonging to the social infrastructure of higher education institutions, provision of important technical means: means of movement (wheelchair, crutches, walkers, handrails, etc.), special means for barrier-free orientation, special means for training and development of hard, as well as soft skills (free access to the Internet and computer equipment, multimedia equipment, resources of the distance education site etc.), special sports and physical culture and sports equipment.

The chapter examines the experience of ERIHE KPSI in the context of professional training of young people with special needs and the creation

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of an accessible barrier-free educational and training environment combined with rehabilitation services, scientific and social-psychological space. It is also the most effective mechanism for increasing their social status and security, socialization, and professionalization, which will significantly reduce tensions in the modern labor market and in the conditions of the development of the information society.

Inclusion in Ukrainian HEIs and Socialization of HEIs: the Case of Inclusive Education in ERIHE KPSI

Numerous works have developed the study of inclusive education. It focuses on national and international cases, individual experiences of institutions, interaction between teachers and students in the framework of inclusive education, their skills, and innovative methods of learning and teaching.

Ukraine made plenty of steps forward toward the development of inclusion, namely, inclusive education. The special role of HEIs is to create an educational barrier-free environment and special educational services for people with special educational needs. The notion of inclusive education is used in the system of Ukrainian research and means the provision of educational services for all students in a wide meaning, and the provision of educational and socio-pedagogical ones for students with disabilities, students with special educational needs (orphans, children and persons deprived of parental care, and after full-scale war – internally displaced children and persons, young people affected by the war, etc.).

The research of inclusive education, i.e., methods and teaching for young people with disabilities, is an issue that nowadays has a special place and is developing even during martial law and wartime in Ukraine.

In the discourse on research into inclusive education, it is important to highlight the key issues and conditions necessary for its development. When comparing the progress of inclusive education at the democratic European level, scientists emphasize the significance of studying this aspect.

Inclusive education is analyzed in urban and rural settings, focusing on national contexts and legal frameworks. The Canadian government is intensively studying the problems and main issues of inclusive education

due to concern about the future of the state, as well as the understanding that the economic and social well-being of Canada currently depends on investments in children, on providing opportunities for the full development of each child potential (Bondar, 2016). Llorent et al. (2024) focus on the relation between the inclusive education by teachers and competences (social and emotional) of their students, who study in the compulsory secondary education in the context of the space – school, classroom, individual. Special issues in the building the inclusive education is studied (Reicher, 2010) in the connection with social and emotional learning, namely, conceptual and empirical issues.

The concepts of “inclusion” and “inclusive education” are examined from various perspectives and encompass a range of dimensions, including national, ethical, legal, and governmental aspects. For instance, researchers highlight ambiguity issues, noting that inclusive education “can be defined in various ways” (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

In Ukraine, the development of inclusive education within the context of barrier-free educational growth raises numerous questions and highlights various directions for further study and research. Bondar (2016) defines inclusive education as the creation of conditions that prioritize the treatment of individuals as a fundamental value. This includes establishing commissions to address issues in the development of inclusive education, fostering the efforts of advocates for a humane society, publishing reports, and developing the principles of effective legislation. For the successful implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine, “it is necessary to overcome social and psychological barriers to inclusion”, which becomes feasible and achievable “through the reformation of social values” (Bondar, 2016, p. 53). Numerous scientifically grounded theoretical and practical resources have been created in the context of developing inclusive education. These resources primarily focus on fostering an inclusive educational environment and accessible architectural design in preschools and schools. Additionally, the concept of the New Ukrainian School—a key reform initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science—has been successfully developed. This reform aims to create schools that are enjoyable for students to attend and that equip them not only with knowledge but also with the skills to apply it in everyday life.

Over the past decade, a range of educational and methodological materials has been developed and disseminated to foster favorable conditions for interaction among participants in the educational process within HEIs. These resources include Basics of Inclusive Education: Educational and Methodological Manual (Kolupayeva et al., 2007), Inclusive Education in Ukraine: Paths from Theory to Practice (Inklyuzivna osvita v Ukraini: shliakhy vid teorii do praktyky, 2017), Inclusive Education in Institutions of General Secondary Education: A Guide for Trainers (Inklyuzivne navchannia u zakladakh zahalnoi serednoi osvity: kerivnytstvo dlia trenera, 2018), and Inclusive Education from A to Z: A Guide for Teachers and Parents, among others (Inklyuzivna osvita vid A do Ya: poradnyk dlia pedahohiv i batkiv, 2016).

HEIs develop new platforms for the research and presentation of their educational and research activities. ERIHE KPSI has founded scientific journals and monographs in the field of inclusion (Inklyuzivna ekonomika, 2024; Vyshkil vyshchoi ta fakhovoi peredvyshchoi inklyuzivnoi osvity, 2024; Inklyuziia i suspilstvo, 2024; Sotsialna robota ta psykholohiia: osvita i nauka, 2024).

The issue of inclusive education in professional pre-tertiary and higher education institutions is particularly relevant today, as inclusion serves as an educational approach designed to teach and support individuals with special educational needs by creating conditions that maximize the efficiency of the learning process.

Professional and vocational training for young people with special needs is one of the most effective mechanisms for enhancing their social status and security. For society, it contributes to reducing tension in the labor market. According to the State Employment Service, 4 013 individuals completed professional training in 2018. This figure has remained relatively consistent over the years, with 4 016 individuals trained in 2017 and 3 941 in 2016 (SES, 2018).

The total number of persons with disabilities eligible for employment remains high. Compared to 2017, employment recommendations were issued to 303 546 persons with disabilities. Among them, 145 279 individuals were registered with the Medical and Social Expert Commission (MSEC) and required professional rehabilitation. However, only a quarter of these individuals underwent professional rehabilitation and gained employment. This situation reflects the limitations of financial support provided by the

state. Significant barriers persist in the professional training and social integration of young specialists within society (SES, 2018).

The socio-economic and financial-psychological socialization mechanisms in inclusive professional pre-tertiary and higher education institutions of national importance involve an active and selective process. This process aligns with individual needs and values in the context of the economy and the internationalization of socio-economic values. It emphasizes the active engagement of students as individuals within the system of educational, scientific, and socio-economic relations.

Socialization is one of the central and priority issues in social psychology. This issue has become increasingly critical in the current context of significant societal challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine. The transition to widespread distance learning in higher education has reshaped socialization processes, emphasizing the need to adapt to new realities while maintaining meaningful educational and social connections. These transformations highlight the importance of understanding and supporting socialization as a dynamic process within the educational system and society.

Inclusive socialization is a multifaceted process involving the adaptation of individuals with special educational needs to life within society. It encompasses the assimilation of social connections, communication, and mutual relationships. Through this process, individuals develop a system of values and orientations, acquire socio-economic skills, and learn behavioral forms and methods that facilitate effective interaction within the broader social context.

In socialization, students explore social realities and develop practical skills for interacting with others in various social roles and contexts. ERIHE KPSI has defined its mission as integrating educational services with rehabilitation efforts. These include physical, socio-psychological, and socio-pedagogical support, aimed at fostering comprehensive student development. During the full-scale war, the institution has also prioritized social and volunteer activities, further enhancing its role in supporting students and the broader community.

ERIHE KPSI's activities focus on developing professional education, sports, and rehabilitation. Key areas include enhancing digital skills,

providing physical and socio-psychological rehabilitation, establishing professional training and research laboratories, and offering socio-psychological and pedagogical support. These efforts aim to facilitate students' adaptation to the educational process, foster interaction, and improve communication skills.

A student with a disability is a young individual who often requires extensive rehabilitation services, including during their pursuit of higher education. An inclusive HEI offers comprehensive rehabilitation support for students with disabilities throughout their studies. While professional (educational) rehabilitation is a priority, it represents only one component of the broader rehabilitation process. This holistic approach is the defining characteristic and distinguishing feature of such specialized HEIs.

Education and Rehabilitation in the Structure of Inclusive HEIs: ERIHE KPSI Approach

One of ERIHE KPSI's primary priorities is to create favorable conditions that support the social, pedagogical, physical, and socio-psychological rehabilitation of students with disabilities and special educational needs.

Aligned with its strategy, ERIHE KPSI offers comprehensive rehabilitation services for students with disabilities throughout their studies. The Center for Health Rehabilitation and Physical Culture was also established to support physical rehabilitation. It is staffed by skilled physical therapists who provide accessible and high-quality care in a supportive environment.

ERIHE KPSI offers innovative educational programs at both the Bachelor's and Master's degree levels, supported by a well-developed barrier-free environment and infrastructure. This includes educational, scientific, research, rehabilitation, and learning facilities. The institution continually assesses and addresses the needs of young people with disabilities and special educational needs, including orphans, individuals deprived of parental care, internally displaced persons, and those affected by the war.

ERIHE KPSI is the only higher education institution in Ukraine that integrates advanced health-preserving and valedological technologies into its educational approach. These methods ensure effective learning and high-quality professional training for students with disabilities, orphans, and those deprived of parental care. The institute also fulfills a vital social

function by fostering youth initiatives, supporting the activities of the Student Council, and organizing events that promote the development of all students, particularly those with special educational needs.

The rehabilitation of students with disabilities at ERIHE KPSI is conducted under the Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation”. During their studies, students receive a comprehensive system of medical, psychological, pedagogical, physical, professional, and social support. This includes measures in physical culture, sports, and daily living assistance aimed at restoring or compensating for impaired or lost body functions. The ultimate goal is to help students achieve and maintain social and economic independence, adapt to the workforce, and integrate into society.

A key objective of the educational policy at ERIHE KPSI is to organize an effective educational process while promoting health preservation and fostering a healthy lifestyle among the younger generation. Since 2021, rehabilitation services—encompassing physical and socio-psychological rehabilitation—have been provided to students with disabilities and special educational needs. Starting in 2024, these services have been extended to internally displaced persons and individuals affected by the war, utilizing the following methods:

- Physical rehabilitation was implemented through tailored physical education classes organized by disease nosologies; sports activities, including traditional and adaptive sports such as sitting volleyball; specialized rehabilitation group sessions; individual exercise programs conducted outside the class schedule; art therapy sessions; wellness massage services; training students in wellness and self-massage techniques; and organizing hiking and tourist trips to promote physical and social rehabilitation.
- Labor rehabilitation was facilitated by establishing special or specially adapted workplaces for conducting educational practice sessions and practical classes.
- Professional rehabilitation is implemented by fostering positive motivation among students with disabilities toward professional training (Fig. 6.1), organizing the educational process methodologically, establishing integrated groups, and creating conditions for individualized training plans. Additionally, it included



Fig. 6.1. Physical rehabilitation in ERIHE KPSI

organizing extracurricular activities to optimize interpersonal communication, provide opportunities for self-expression and self-affirmation, and encourage active participation in the social life of the group, institution, and community. Teacher and group supervisor training was also conducted to identify and address the challenges faced by students with disabilities in adapting to the educational environment.

- Social rehabilitation is conducted through social and household patronage provided by medical professionals, social pedagogues, and group supervisors.
- Psychological-pedagogical rehabilitation is focused on identifying the psychological characteristics of students with disabilities, preserving their mental health, supporting their adaptation and integration into the educational environment, and fostering self-assertion and accurate self-assessment of their abilities.

At the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the rector and Academic Council of the Institute initiated the creation of an environment for hippotherapy at the Institute's summer camp (Fig. 6.2). Hippotherapy, or therapy involving horses, is a recognized and effective method of rehabilitation supported by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. It is included in treatment protocols for children with organic central nervous system lesions. As a form of medical and social rehabilitation, hippotherapy offers significant benefits for physical and psychological recovery.

ERIHE KPSI's educational policy focuses on fostering inclusivity and equity, offering accessible admission pathways and inclusive practices that increase higher education opportunities, particularly for students

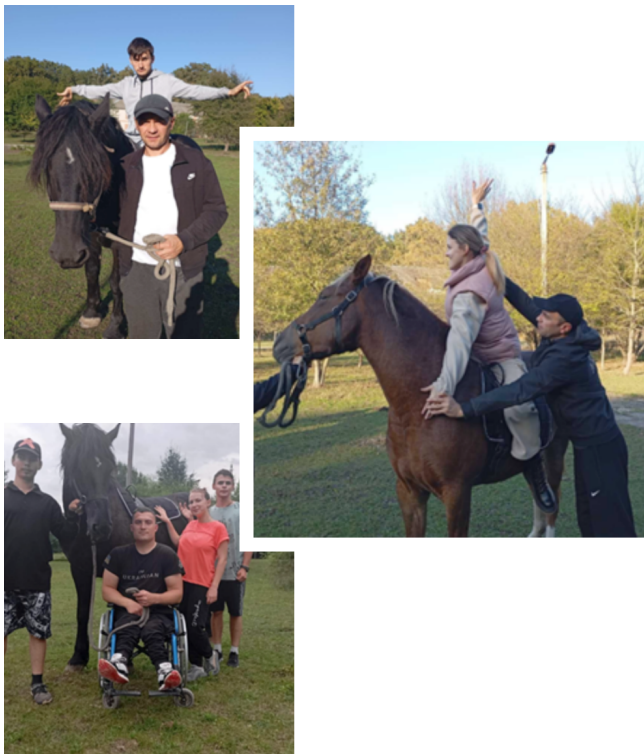


Fig. 6.2. Horse therapy rehabilitation in ERIHE KPSI

with disabilities. ERIHE KPSI is dedicated to implementing innovative and strategic initiatives that strengthen the reach and impact of its educational programs, enabling the institution to adapt to evolving educational contexts and seize new opportunities to engage with young people.

To support the sports rehabilitation of students with disabilities, ERIHE KPSI actively develops Paralympic sports programs. These include sitting volleyball (with ERIHE KPSI students serving as members of the National Women’s Sitting Volleyball Paralympic Team), Para arm wrestling, and bocce. Additionally, plans are underway to establish a hockey field to expand rehabilitation and sports opportunities further (Fig. 6.3).



Fig. 6.3. Students of ERIHE KPSI excelling in Paralympic Sports and achieving championship titles

Physical rehabilitation aims to support or restore the health of individuals with disabilities. This process is carried out through various activities, including physical education classes tailored to specific medical conditions, traditional and adaptive sports (e.g., sitting volleyball), rehabilitation group sessions, individual physical education classes outside the regular schedule, art therapy, and health massage services.

The primary goal of these activities is to restore lost functions and improve students' overall well-being. Each rehabilitation program adopts an individualized approach, with exercises and physical loads carefully selected to meet each student's needs.

Swimming classes, conducted using modern physical therapy methods and supported by the systematic work of the swimming section, play a key role in enhancing physical fitness and health. Throughout the study period, medical professionals constantly supervise students with special needs, ensuring their safety and well-being.

Creating a Barrier-Free Environment and Volunteering

The creation of barrier-free access to all premises of social infrastructure and the provision of necessary technical resources are crucial for the comprehensive rehabilitation of students with disabilities. These resources include mobility aids (wheelchairs, canes, walkers, handrails, crutches), orientation tools, and devices for information exchange (dictaphones, mobile phones for written communication). Additionally, self-care aids (knee pads, elbow pads, anti-bedsore cushions), personal hygiene tools (special chairs, toilet seats, bath stands, washbasins), and specialized educational equipment (distance learning resources, multimedia devices, copiers, sound amplification systems, voice recorders, laptops) are essential.

Specialized equipment, such as cardio trainers, strength trainers, and additional tools to enhance physical capabilities, is also provided for physical education and sports. These measures ensure that students with disabilities have access to an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Since 2016, ERIHE KPSI has focused on increasing student enrollment, particularly among students with special needs—such as orphans, children deprived of parental care, internally displaced persons, individuals affected

by the war, and young people with disabilities. The institution provides educational and rehabilitation services tailored to their specific needs and individual rehabilitation programs based on their medical conditions.

In collaboration with charitable organizations, including the “Sunflower Community Fund”, ERIHE KPSI began developing a barrier-free educational environment as part of the “Equality for Everyone” project.

Students at ERIHE KPSI are encouraged to grow as active, initiative-driven individuals who strive to impact society positively. Regardless of gender or health challenges, they are empowered to contribute meaningfully, influence societal progress, and help build a better future for their country as full-fledged community members.

The student body of ERIHE KPSI acquires professional knowledge and actively addresses youth-related issues in collaboration with the administration. To support this, the institution has established a Student Council, led by an elected Chairman chosen through a secret ballot (Fig. 6.4).



Fig. 6.4. Together toward an inclusive environment: students and rector of ERIHE KPSI

Democracy, freedom of speech and thought, and opportunities for intellectual and professional growth accompany students from the moment they apply for admission to the institution. The rector and faculty support and encourage any initiative or project proposed by students.

This inclusive and collaborative approach, promoted by the Institute administration and rector, fosters active engagement from all participants in the educational process. It embodies the principles of European open and inclusive education, aimed at preparing intellectually developed and competitive specialists who are well-equipped to meet contemporary challenges and requirements.

The collaborative efforts of the teams at the Vocational College and the Institute have been remarkable since the onset of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. The educational institution's staff members have been actively collecting funds to purchase ammunition, a special-purpose vehicle for the military, and food supplies for both the front lines and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

A notable contribution includes producing and delivering 1 600 trench candles to the front. In the initial days of the war, staff members donated a portion of their salaries, raising over 300 000 UAH to support the Armed Forces and local territorial defense units. Approximately 50 % of the team is engaged in volunteer activities, with two teachers serving in the Armed Forces since the beginning of the war. Additionally, fairs and auctions were organized, with the proceeds to support the military. This joint effort exemplifies the institution's commitment to national resilience and support during a time of crisis.

The most recent charity auction was organized to support the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers who are also HEIs employees. Rehabilitation specialists also dedicate their efforts to arranging leisure activities for internally displaced children, including sports such as tennis, football, and volleyball. Additionally, medical, rehabilitation, and psychological-pedagogical assistance is provided to children and internally displaced persons in need.

The College, alongside the Institute, remains deeply committed to the welfare of children affected by the war, particularly orphans. The institution has welcomed orphans from occupied territories, offering full support, educational opportunities, and social and psychological assistance.

The Institute, in close collaboration with the public organization “*Protection of the Rights and Interests of Youth with Disabilities 'Bezbarernist'*” (led by Kyrylo Bogdanyuk) and volunteer Oleksandr Hlibka, consistently provides support to several boarding schools and their choirs, including *Oleshkiv Children's Boarding School, Bogoduhiv Specialized School, KZ Nizhinsky Children's Boarding School*, and internally displaced children with disabilities living in a boarding school in the village of Orinin.

This cooperation extends beyond immediate assistance, encompassing initiatives to protect the rights and interests of youth with disabilities. The Institute and “Bezbarernist” work together to develop and implement socio-cultural, socio-economic, and political projects, often in partnership with Ukrainian, foreign, and international organizations.

Psychological and Pedagogical Support and Activity in ERIHE KPSI

ERIHE KPSI houses two units dedicated to providing socio-psychological and pedagogical support: the Psychological and Pedagogical Department and the Laboratory of Psychological Trainings and Counseling.

The Psychological and Pedagogical Department aims to foster the comprehensive social, personal, and intellectual development of young people, as well as to create conditions that inspire motivation for self-education and self-development.

The department's specialists successfully provide psychological support and enhance the effectiveness of the pedagogical process by:

- Promoting the full development of students' personalities and fostering motivation for self-improvement and self-directed learning.
- Safeguarding the social well-being of all participants in the educational process, including pupils, students, and teaching staff.
- Assisting students in adapting to new learning environments.
- Organizing events to prevent and address deviations in psychophysical, personal, and intellectual development.

This comprehensive approach ensures a supportive environment for all members of the educational community, contributing to both academic and personal success.

Regular activities for youth at ERIHE “Kamianets-Podilskyi State Institute” include scientific events (conferences, round tables, webinars), trainings,

support groups, and volunteering initiatives. At the local level, students participate in events organized by the Institute's teachers and specialists from the Psychological and Pedagogical Department. These events include (Fig. 6.5):

- Activities as part of the All-Ukrainian campaign “16 Days Against Violence”.
- Trainings during the All-Ukrainian Anti-Bullying Week, such as “Let’s Say No to Bullying” and “What Do I Know About Bullying?”.
- A student-focused quest titled “Take Care of Yourself”, aimed at promoting mental health awareness and encouraging a positive attitude toward mental well-being as a key element of a successful life.
- Training sessions on “Live is Free”, dedicated to the European Day Against Human Trafficking.



Fig. 6.5. Activities organized by the Psychological and Pedagogical Department at ERIHE KPSI

- Group consultations such as “*Anti-Burnout: Resources for Recovery and Stabilizing Your Condition*”, organized as part of the project “*Her Strength: Support for Women of Ukraine in Times of War and Recovery*”.

Students also actively participate in the international project “*Social Actions of Youth and Authority*”, designed for young people seeking to improve their communities. Through this project, participants gain practical knowledge about youth policy, communication strategies, advocacy campaigns, and the GESI (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion) approach.

Additionally, specialists from the Psychological and Pedagogical Department regularly assess the adaptation process of students using methods such as observation, conversations, social support groups, and analysis of interpersonal relationships within student groups.

The Laboratory of Psychological Counseling and Training provides higher education applicants with practical experience and opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, preparing them for future professional activities (Fig. 6.6).



Fig. 6.6. Laboratory of psychological counseling and training in ERIHE KPSI

To uphold the rights of students with special educational needs and disabilities to access higher education, and to support the implementation of the **National Strategy for the Creation of a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine** (under the auspices of the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska) for the period until 2030, the institute has launched a pilot project—the creation of the **Student Support Center**.

Representatives of the Student Support Center at ERIHE “Kamianets-Podilskyi State Institute” actively participate in a working group led by Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, E. Smirnova, focusing on the development of methodological foundations for inclusive education in higher education institutions.

The center provides methodological, educational, psychological, and advisory assistance to students. Its primary goal is to implement state educational policies that support individuals with special educational needs within a barrier-free environment. The institution welcomes students requiring inclusive support from across Ukraine, including regions such as:

- **North:** Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, and Kyiv oblasts.
- **South:** Odesa, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts.
- **West:** Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Volyn, Rivne, and Lviv oblasts.
- **East:** Luhansk oblast.
- **Center:** Vinnytsia, Poltava, and Kirovohrad oblasts.

Social pedagogues and psychologists at the institute continuously enhance their professional skills by integrating international best practices, particularly from Israel and the United Kingdom.

Conclusions

The cooperation of ERIHE KPSI with local and national government entities, charitable organizations, and international initiatives has been instrumental in creating and advancing an inclusive environment. This collaboration fosters a society of creative and proactive young people, addresses pressing challenges, and establishes effective frameworks for providing education and rehabilitation for youth under martial law.

The development strategy of ERIHE KPSI outlines the systematic pursuit of key objectives across all areas of the institute’s activities. These include

launching new educational programs, modernizing inclusive education to align with contemporary needs and European integration, developing innovative approaches and methodologies for inclusive education, expanding research on building an inclusive society, and broadening the institute's international engagement.

ERIHE KPSI's operations are fully aligned with the goals of the **National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education (2024–2029)**, as approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on June 7, 2024 (Order No. 527-r). The institute offers specialized educational conditions, rehabilitation services, and other support for students with special needs. Its unique model integrates educational, scientific, and social-rehabilitation components, providing comprehensive support to students with disabilities, those deprived of parental care, defenders of the country, and internally displaced persons.

Today, Ukrainian higher education institutions must embrace a distinct role in creating inclusive environments and contributing to an accessible and open system of inclusive education and science. ERIHE KPSI prioritizes equipping students with disabilities and special educational needs with professional training that adapts to labor market demands, ensuring their social protection and enhancing the competitiveness of graduates.

ERIHE KPSI has already achieved significant milestones and remains committed to advancing a robust social-psychological, medical-social, educational, scientific, and rehabilitation ecosystem. This holistic approach ensures the consistent delivery of high-quality educational services to students with special needs, spanning vocational and technical training, professional pre-university education, and higher education levels.

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Chapter 7.

Social dimensions of university resilience: a case study of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University

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Introduction

The complexity and diversity of the programmes offered, as well as the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of a full-scale war, force educational institutions to constantly adapt, demonstrating flexibility and resilience while maintaining high teaching standards and sustainable development. Distance learning has become an essential requirement in today's rapidly changing world.

With the outbreak of the war, volunteerism has become an integral part of the culture and worldview of the Ukrainian nation. Notably, young people are actively involved, demonstrating a strong sense of civic duty. This shared effort unites students from Ukraine and abroad, fostering intercultural exchange and cooperation. The value of volunteerism lies in the interaction between generations and the community-oriented exchange of experiences. It provides medical students with knowledge beyond the traditional university curriculum, sharpening critical communication skills and helping students better understand the contextual health issues community members face (Zheng et al.,2021). Simulation-based learning

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has become an integral part of the traditional education of medical students, contributing to the development of communication skills, teamwork, professional expertise, and cognitive skills. The Simulation Training Center serves not only as a training facility for medical students but also a vital educational resource, addressing community needs during periods of crisis.

Teaching and Learning

With the start of the full-scale invasion, the educational process at I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University (TNMU) has been conducted in a blended format. All Ukrainian students study onsite. To ensure the safety of students, all university buildings are equipped with shelters where students can take cover during air raid alerts. International students study in a mixed format, attending classes in person and others participating synchronously online. In clinical departments, in-person students engage in practical sessions at the bedside of patients, developing necessary practical skills, while online students work with virtual cases, presenting their findings at the end of the session.

In a blended learning environment, a substantial portion of the learning process takes place outside formal educational institutions. This is due to the flexible and adaptable nature of blended learning, which allows students to tailor their learning routines to their individual needs. However, it is essential that students effectively leverage the opportunities provided by blended learning by engaging in independent and self-directed learning practices (Ballouk et al., 2022). The blended learning format affects the learning behavior of medical students, challenging traditional forms of education while also requiring teachers to possess excellent facilitation skills, manage both in-person and remote audiences, and evenly distribute time among all participants in the educational process.

Regular peer group meetings provide substantial support to teachers. These groups offer a safe, collegial environment where they can share experiences and discuss pedagogical cases from their practice. Peer groups have been successfully functioning at TNMU since 2021.

The Peer Group initiative was made possible through TNMU's participation in the Ukrainian-Swiss project "Development of

Medical Education in Ukraine”. Through the project, university teachers have had the opportunity to undergo training in teaching proficiency, feedback facilitation, peer group strategy development, and project management, and to implement the acquired knowledge.

To support the educational process and enhance technology use, faculty members upload video lectures to the repository, accessible through Moodle and YouTube. The university employs virtual learning programs, including “Body Interact – clinical reasoning education” for studying clinical cases in internal medicine and neurology. International educational platforms bolster the quality of distance education, offered free of charge during wartime. These include platforms from Elsevier Health (ClinicalKey, Complete Anatomy, Osmosis), AMBOSS, and EBSCO (DynaMed, Nursing Reference Center Plus, Rehabilitation Reference Center). TNMU students and faculty also have free access to short-term online courses via FutureLearn, as part of the Twinning program from UK Universities and Cormack Consultancy Group.

TNMU collaborates with the powerful learning platform Lecturio, which provides unprecedented support to Ukrainian higher medical education. To mitigate the impact of potential power outages and ensure quality education for students during wartime, Lecturio has developed a mobile app (Lecturio Android and iOS). TNMU faculty and students also have free access to the English-language educational programs of Henry Stewart Talks Ltd (HSTalks), which include multimedia lectures from leading experts worldwide. These programs are part of The Biomedical & Life Sciences Collection, featuring animated presentations and seminar-style talks for medical schools. Ternopil National Medical University is a member of the Twin For Hope partnership programme with UK universities. Within the framework of this programme, there is active cooperation with the University of Manchester, which provides academic support and shares educational materials, holds regular online webinars and workshops at the request of university teachers. The opportunity to use international professional educational platforms that meet the highest quality standards free of charge allows us to keep the quality of the educational process in focus despite daily challenges.

Box 24:

Case: Establishment of the Centre Teachers Excellence (CTE)

At TNMU, in 2022, an independent structural unit was established under the Internal Quality Assurance Department to promote pedagogical and professional development, enhance creativity and professionalism among the faculty, and build their capacity. CTE was created with the mission to provide continuous professional development for the university's academic staff, improving their ability to responsibly perform their professional duties and functions. CTE is a hub for creativity, mobility, and active support of academic staff, providing an effective platform for professional and individual development.

CTE vision focuses on active participation in the university's educational process and contributing to the formation of its educational strategy. The principles guiding CTE activity are based on continuous improvement and professionalism, fostering creativity, critical thinking, supporting a culture of student-centered learning, academic integrity, and freedom. CTE also promotes academic mobility and lifelong learning for instructors.

Quality assurance in the university is maintained on three levels: institutional, programme, and individual. The first level – institutional – involves the development of both short- and long-term strategic plans aimed at improving internal quality assurance systems. The programme level covers all necessary measures for evaluating, updating, and structuring academic programs. The third level – individual – consists of projects that help academic staff achieve their goals by implementing modern methods that enhance the quality of teaching and student learning, as well as encouraging the adoption of student-centered teaching approaches.

CTE operates mainly at the second and third levels of quality assurance. On its website, relevant information regarding different aspects of teaching improvement and soft skills development is organized into categories. This allows faculty to access lectures, online courses, or training at their convenience, helping them acquire the necessary skills.

One of the key activities of CTE involves selecting trainers and organizing various forms of training for academic staff. CTE has developed a professional development course titled “How to Teach Students to Communicate: Interactive and Student-Centered Methods” and conducted training on “Enhancing Pedagogical Competence: Challenges During Crisis,” in response to faculty requests.

Source: TNMU (2024)

University Volunteer Outreach

Active volunteer activities at TNMU began in 2014 during the Revolution of Dignity. Research indicates that over 90 % of doctors view participation in community life and health promotion as an important and necessary aspect of their profession. However, only 39 % of doctors engage in volunteering throughout the year (Metzger et al., 2024). For medical students, volunteering offers valuable opportunities for self-discovery, the development of social work skills, and hands-on experience. Studies have demonstrated that volunteer activities have a positive impact on the academic success of medical students, showing a clear correlation between these activities and their annual grade point average (Alsuwaidi et al., 2016)

Medical education is often linked to high levels of stress, tension, fatigue, burnout, and exhaustion. These factors can negatively impact academic performance and lead to a significant decline in empathy, beginning as early as the third year of study (Phillips et al., 2022). Volunteering serves as an important means of fostering resilience, empathy, and overall well-being among medical students. According to Zheng et al. (2021), volunteerism is valuable because it fosters interaction between generations. This engagement offers medical students knowledge that goes beyond the traditional university curriculum, enhances their critical communication skills

Volunteering has a positive impact on mental health. Social work and active civic engagement reduce stress levels and improve the quality of life among medical students, regardless of their year of study (Duncan et al., 2023). They can also serve as useful tools for preventing burnout

among students and healthcare professionals (Metzger et al., 2024). Volunteering is also about leadership. Organizing events requires excellent communication skills, digital skills, teamwork, and emotional intelligence development.

The volunteer activities of students in Ukraine have deep historical roots. A prominent example is the “Medical Society,” which was composed of Ukrainian medical students and operated from 1910 to 1944 with the support of the Ukrainian Medical Society (Bilavych et al., 2022). This organization stands out as a unique national phenomenon in the provision of public healthcare in Galicia, unparalleled in the history of Ukrainian medicine. The society exemplified the high degree of civic consciousness, patriotism, and self-sacrifice among students for the benefit of the Ukrainian people. It was primarily dedicated to delivering medical services to underprivileged populations, including widows, orphans, war veterans, disabled individuals, as well as providing pediatric and youth healthcare services. The “Medical Community” activities reflect a profound sense of moral and social responsibility among the student population in early 20th-century Galicia. Their work highlights the application of medical knowledge in addressing public health challenges and offering free medical care to vulnerable groups, establishing a significant precedent in both national and European medical volunteerism (Bilavych et al., 2022).

The volunteer movement at TNMU has a long history of charitable work, encompassing various initiatives. These include supporting orphanages, geriatric homes, hospices, and providing first aid training for civilians and the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Additionally, the movement focuses on educating children about pressing issues such as HIV infection and early pregnancies. The main goal of the university's volunteer initiative, “MISERICORDIA,” is to support sick children and elderly individuals with disabilities. For nearly ten years, medical students have consistently visited social care facilities to provide assistance and companionship.

With the onset of the full-scale invasion, the volunteer movement redirected its efforts toward supporting the military and gathering humanitarian aid. From the very first days of the war, students and faculty began sorting food, medicine, clothing, hygiene items, and more, which were supplied by the local community and international partners (Fig. 7.1).



Fig. 7.1. Volunteer activities in TNMU

Source: TNMU (2024)

Collaboration with foreign partners is highly valuable for the university, particularly when it encompasses volunteering opportunities in addition to scientific partnerships. As part of the partnership between TNMU and Akkon University of Humanities in Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Research on International Aid (IRIA), Professors Timo Ulrichs and Gaby Feldmann have established themselves as reliable partners, consistently providing humanitarian assistance. One notable project is the joint podcast initiative, which aims to support healthcare professionals in Ukraine during times of war. These podcasts cover a variety of medical topics, addressing common clinical challenges faced by medical and nursing staff in such difficult circumstances. Additionally, the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice has maintained a long-standing partnership with TNMU in areas of education and research, and it is now actively engaged in volunteering efforts. Dr. Sandor G. Vari, President

of the RECOOP HST Association and Director of International Research and Innovation Programs at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California, collaborates with the university on several fronts, including volunteering initiatives. Furthermore, the university's longstanding partners, IGeneX, which specializes in Lyme disease and tick-borne disease testing, have also extended their support

A particularly noteworthy area of research involves the volunteer activities of medical students in the Czech Republic, who assisted thousands of Ukrainian refugees arriving daily at Prague's central train station. According to Motlová et al. (2023), the study identified five emotionally challenging situations faced by the students: caring for injured refugees, dealing with refusal of treatment, disruption of daily routines, making independent decisions, and navigating the complexities of volunteer work. Throughout this experience, the students utilized both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies in response to stress and trauma. Nearly half of the students reported signs of secondary traumatization and moral distress; however, none sought psychological support. This highlights the need for medical education curricula to incorporate training on trauma-informed care, promote healthy coping strategies, and destigmatize psychological issues (Motlová et al., 2023).

Both scientists and medical practitioners actively collaborate with the university and provide medical supplies. For instance, Italian physician Carlo Pedrina has generously donated essential medications to the volunteer center on several occasions. The university greatly values this partnership. Faculty members of TNMU regularly contribute to the volunteer center by donating and organizing various events, including scientific gatherings, to raise funds. For example, participants of the international conference titled "Prospects for the Development of Medical and Physical Rehabilitation at Different Levels of Medical Care," held on September 28-29, 2023, donated all organizational fees to the volunteer center.

Volunteering has become a matter of honor among the community. In celebration of the 95th birthday of former university rector Ivan Smiyan, all congratulatory messages were converted into donations for three FPV drones (Fig. 7.2), a charging station, and medical supplies.



Fig. 7.2. FPV drones

Source: TNMU (2024)

Students and faculty at the university are engaged in significant efforts to provide the Armed Forces of Ukraine with essential medical supplies, including personal first-aid kits. The staff at the volunteer center sorts medical supplies, hygiene items, and other essentials donated by international partners and donors. TNMU participates in the operations of the “Volunteer Warehouse of the Ministry of Health,” ensuring that Ukrainian healthcare institutions receive the necessary medications and medical supplies based on requests registered in the MEDDATA system (Fig. 7.3)

The TNMU Volunteer Center offers psychological support to internally displaced persons and provides dental care to military personnel, territorial defense forces, and displaced individuals at the university’s dental clinic. Faculty members from both the Simulation Training Center and the Department of Disaster Medicine and Military Medicine regularly conduct voluntary pre-medical care courses under extreme conditions. Currently, some faculty members and students from TNMU are serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, contributing to the defense of the country.



Fig. 7.3. The TNMU Volunteer Center

Source: TNMU (2024)



Fig. 7.4. Making trench candles

Source: TNMU (2024)

“TNMU Crafts Hub” encompasses the production of trench candles, camouflage nets, and suits, along with the sewing of underwear and knitting of socks by both students and faculty (see Fig. 7.4). Volunteers assist in preparing food and sorting medical supplies, hygiene products, and food at humanitarian hubs throughout Ternopil, across Ukraine, and even internationally.

The university often hosts charity recitals to raise funds for various needs, including gifts for children with cancer. Students independently prepare the programs for these events, which helps them develop their talents in the humanities.

Simulation Training

Simulation-based learning has become an essential component of medical education, significantly enhancing the development of communication skills, teamwork, professional expertise, and cognitive abilities. Improved coordination within multidisciplinary teams also increases the efficiency of medical responses during disasters (Shrestha et al., 2023). Additionally, simulation training aids students in developing their fundamental competencies and helps them manage the stress associated with emergencies and disasters (McCarrick et al., 2024).

The Simulation Training Center at TNMU serves as both a training facility for medical students with a practical exam conducted using the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) format across four stations; and an educational hub that meets the community's needs during crises. Students who excel in the OSCE may earn certificates from the Ukrainian Council for Resuscitation and Emergency Medical Care (Fig. 7.5, TNMU, 2024).

Under an agreement between TNMU and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the project “Improvement of Health Services for People” is ongoing. In 2023, 102 instructors from the Ukraine's Emergency Medical Care and Disaster Medicine Centers were trained. Additionally, a methodological guide titled “Methodological Recommendations for Instructors” was developed. An on-line course consisting of video lectures and workshops for Emergency Medical Care professionals was also launched on the Prometheus platform, which has seen over 12,000 emergency medical service employees in Ukraine register for the program (TNMU, 2024).



Fig. 7.5. Simulation-based learning

Source: TNMU (2024)

In May 2023, a course called “School of Simulation Learning” was conducted for a group of faculty members from TNMU to enhance their pedagogical skills. Additionally, a series of first aid courses were held, which included programs such as “Emergency Medical Technician”, “First Aid Instructor”, and “First Responder at the Scene”. In collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Simulation Center is implementing three projects: the international certified course “Advanced Life Support” (European Resuscitation Council) for instructors of the Emergency Medical Care and Disaster Medicine Centers of Ukraine; courses for members of disaster medicine teams deployed to liberated territories; and two courses on “Generic Instructor Course” (European Resuscitation Council) with the

participation of three international experts from Slovenia, Norway, and the Netherlands.

The concept of modeling and simulation (M&S) has long been an integral part of military training since the Second World War, when pilots and infantrymen trained on simulators and mock-ups to prepare for combat (Eubanks et al., 2022)

Ukrainian military medicine needs expanded, enhanced military medical training and high-fidelity simulation of long-term care for the wounded to improve its readiness in war. Most of the volunteers involved in providing healthcare services lack prior experience in military or emergency medicine. Simulation-based training has proven to be an effective approach for preparing military medical personnel, improving their knowledge and skills while receiving feedback from instructors, and shaping their professional identity (Shumaker et al., 2024).

The Simulation Center team conducted three international courses on “Inter-hospital Transport of Critical Patients” for emergency medical staff and academic personnel from medical universities in Ukraine, involving instructors from Portugal. Additionally, a master class titled “Massive Transfusion Protocol” was held with Brian MacMurray, a representative from the international collaboration group of the American College of Emergency Physicians (Fig. 7.6).

Tactical-specialized training in pre-hospital and emergency care during combat conditions, in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service, the National Guard, and the National Police of Ukraine. Over the course of a year, the Department of Emergency and Simulation Medicine, with the support of the World Bank and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, has trained 100 certified instructors for emergency medical centers. In 2023, the Simulation Training Center became Ukraine’s first and only center to receive international certification from the European Society for Simulation (SESAM).

The staff of the Simulation Training Center consistently participate in international grant programs aimed at implementing and developing simulation-based learning, notably within the Ukraine-Swiss project “Medical Education Development” and “Safemed+”. Collaboration has been established with specialists from simulation centers in Japan, Poland,



Fig. 7.6. Master class “Massive Transfusion Protocol” by Brian MacMurray
Source: TNMU (2024)

Lithuania, Portugal, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Within the framework of cooperation with international organizations (WHO, IFEM, ICRC, Cadus, IMC, and others), the center’s staff have undergone training in programs such as: “Healthcare Facility Operations in Mass Casualty Incidents”, “Tactical Medicine”, “Emergency Medical Teams Operations in Chemical Threats”, “Coordination of Emergency Medical Teams”, “Emergency Medicine Course”, “Emergency Medicine Instructor Course”, and “Critical Patient Management on board Helicopters”.

The center's staff also served as consultants for the WHO European Office in developing and conducting simulation training on the “Management of Severe and Critical Adult and Pediatric Patients” for healthcare professionals and academic staff from medical universities in Central Asia. Additionally, the Centre's staff conducted training in five hospitals on the “Healthcare Facility Operations in Mass Admissions of Victims” in Kramatorsk, Selidovo, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Volyn.

The team of the Centre and the Department of Emergency and Simulation Medicine conducted training for instructors of training departments at twenty-five Emergency Medical Centers and Critical Care

Units across Ukraine. Specialists from the center also participated in a Ministry of Health project aimed at standardizing student education on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in medical universities, during which they conducted 14 two-day workshops for all institutions of higher education subordinated by the Ministry of Health.

In 2023, the staff of the Simulation Centre participated in the International Olympics within the framework of the European Congress of Emergency Medicine “EUSEM” (Barcelona, Spain – September 2023), as well as in the International Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Championship within the framework of the International Congress of the European Resuscitation Council (Barcelona, Spain – November 2023). They also served as part of mobile disaster medicine teams from the Ukrainian National Scientific and Practical Center for Emergency Medical Care and Disaster Medicine (UNPC EMCD) of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, providing medical aid in Kherson, Donetsk, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, and Kharkiv regions.

An essential aspect of the Simulation Center’s work is its information and communication activities, including producing video content and disseminating educational materials on the center’s social media platforms, particularly on the YouTube channel “TESIMED – Center for Medical Simulations”. The center has also fully operationalized a 600-square-meter shelter, which, if necessary, houses all training laboratories and stations for the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

The Simulation Center plays a critical role in supporting the educational process for higher education students and in conducting knowledge assessments in the form of the OSCE. This exam is an integral part of the Unified State Qualification Exam (USQE) for students in Medicine, Dentistry, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy. As part of the ongoing practical skills assessments, the OSCE was conducted for third, fourth, and fifth-year medical students, as well as third and fourth-year Dentistry students. Notably, despite the war and missile threats, the deans, along with the preparation and examination team, ensured that all regulations and instructions were strictly followed, and the students were assessed objectively. Standardized patients were involved at the OSCE stations, and all checklists were digitized. Students’ practical skills algorithms were assessed using tablets and specialized computer software.

For students studying remotely from outside Ukraine, the center introduced a new format for OSCE, using virtual simulation of clinical cases as part of the SAFEMED+ project, “Simulation-Based Learning in Undergraduate Medical Education to Improve Patient Safety and Quality of Care”.

Conclusions

To ensure the quality of the educational process during a crisis, flexibility, adaptation, and resilience as a part of sustainable development are of paramount importance. A blended learning format allows students to receive educational services either in person or remotely, depending on circumstances and helps retain international students by offering them the freedom to choose their preferred mode of study and effectively leverage the opportunities provided by blended learning by engaging in independent and self-directed learning practices.

Collaboration with international partners and access to high-quality educational platforms help maintain the standard of education at an appropriate level. The Center for Teaching Excellence has supported faculty in their continuous professional development, offering opportunities and providing essential up-to-date information, ensuring the sustainability of educational quality, especially in times of crisis.

Volunteering provides medical students with valuable community-oriented experiences that extend beyond the traditional curriculum of a medical university. It helps students gain a deeper understanding of the contextual health issues faced by community members. It positively impacts students' mental health, as active civic engagement and social interaction reduce stress levels and improve the quality of life for medical students. This engagement can also be beneficial for preventing burnout among both students and healthcare professionals.

Simulation-based learning contributes to mastering the basic competencies, teamwork, and quick decision-making in complex situations. It also helps students manage the stress associated with emergencies and disasters, developing rapid response skills in disaster medicine. Simulation has become an integral part of emergency and urgent medical education and is a highly demanded component of the educational process, particularly in times of war.

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Chapter 8.

Sustainable educational platform for regional recovery and social development: a case study of integrating educational initiatives and community projects

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Introduction

Where constant changes fundamentally transform approaches to education, there is a need for educational institutions capable of responding flexibly to challenges and ensuring societal development. This issue is particularly relevant for Ukraine, which faces a series of complex challenges brought about by the war. On the one hand, infrastructure destruction, population displacement, and the loss of skilled professionals demand adaptability and resilience from higher education institutions (HEIs). On the other hand, the war also presents opportunities for rethinking the educational model, reorienting it toward sustainable development, and aligning it with the current needs of society. In these circumstances, HEIs are not only responsible for preparing qualified specialists for rebuilding the country but also for playing a role as social institutions that support cohesion and foster civic engagement. Thus, the social impact of HEIs implies their ability not only to provide knowledge and skills but also to promote social integration, economic stability, and civic engagement within society. In the context of Ukraine's post-war recovery, these institutions become key players in rebuilding and modernizing processes. Their mission expands: they not only perform an educational function but also actively influence social processes, shaping a new generation of citizens who are adaptable, responsible, and conscientious. This is especially important when society needs professionals capable of responding to new challenges, supporting

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community development, and participating in the nation's recovery processes. From this perspective, HEIs that can quickly adapt to market needs and implement the latest innovative practices are particularly important.

Education as a Driver of Sustainable Development in Ukraine's Recovery

In Chernihiv, institutions such as the "University of Future Transformation", the "Institute of Professional Transformations", and the "University of Future Transformation College" create a unique educational system that provides not only the training of qualified professionals but also promotes the sustainable development of the region. This comprehensive approach to education, encompassing programs for young people, postgraduate education, and innovative projects, is increasingly significant given the challenges Ukraine faces due to the war.

Researchers often link the development of HEIs with the sustainable development of regions. This connection is explored through various dimensions, such as economic growth, social stability, and environmental sustainability (Pedro et al., 2022). The effectiveness of teaching, learning, and social responsibility within educational institutions also positively correlates with regional economic growth and innovation intensity (Fuchs et al., 2023). Adopting sustainable development goals in higher education institutions fosters the progress of social relations and synergy, reinforcing sustainable development strategies (Krukhmal & Kryklii, 2022). Institutional partnerships among education providers enhance the resilience of regional socio-economic development by promoting educational practices aligned with sustainable development. Such partnerships help to transform everyday practices and integrate educational content that strengthens regional resilience (Zinevich & Melekhina, 2023). Universities contribute to sustainable development by implementing strategies that address both global goals and local practices, thereby supporting the development of educational environments. Despite contemporary challenges, educational institutions play a transformative role, engaging diverse stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and students, in sustainability initiatives (Hinduja et al., 2023).

At the same time, the war in Ukraine has posed serious challenges to society, especially for the education system. Many educational institutions

have been destroyed, a significant number of students and teachers have been forced to leave their homes, and there is an acute need for specialists capable of participating in the country's recovery processes. In these conditions, there is a demand for innovative and flexible educational models that could restore lost resources and contribute to transforming the region into a promising development zone. In this context, the educational complex in Chernihiv can play an essential role by providing basic youth training, professional retraining, and fostering social initiatives and projects to strengthen communities and promote gender equality.

HEIs play a key role in shaping a sustainable society, especially in the context of the social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by Ukraine. Integrating sustainable development principles into the activities of educational institutions not only prepares students for professional careers but also fosters socially responsible citizens. This is particularly relevant in the post-war period when there is a need not only to restore the economy but also to enhance social integration and community cohesion.

The Social Significance of HEIs in the Context of Sustainable Development and Post-War Recovery in the Chernihiv Region

This chapter focuses on studying the social significance of higher education institutions in the context of the sustainable development of the city of Chernihiv and the region as a whole. The educational activities of institutions such as the "University of Future Transformation", the "Institute of Professional Transformations", and the "University of Future Transformation College", which together form a logical system of educational institutions, create not only a new generation of highly qualified professionals but also play a key role in the social, economic, and cultural sustainability of the region.

University of Future Transformation (UFT). The university's activities, focused on innovative approaches and European integration, meet the current needs of the information society, preparing bachelor's and master's students in the fields of "Management," "Marketing," "Public Administration," and "Psychology." The university's educational mission emphasizes the development of innovative and strategic thinking, essential for social development and public administration in contemporary

conditions. This focus is especially relevant in the Chernihiv region, where there is a demand for specialists capable of implementing new management approaches and adapting to dynamic changes. The university is oriented toward future labor market needs and integration into the international arena. Importantly, the UFT is committed to training specialists in public administration, a critical area for the recovery and modernization of the country in the post-war period. Additionally, its programs in management, integrated technologies, and robotics pave the way for advanced technological solutions in infrastructure and economic rebuilding (Khudiakov & Sukhonos, 2021; He & Ding, 2022).

Institute of Professional Transformations (IPT). Founded to provide conditions necessary for personal and professional growth, the IPT enables individuals to deepen, expand, and update their professional knowledge, skills, and other competencies based on prior education and practical experience. The institute offers a wide range of advanced training and retraining programs, as well as various courses, including preparatory courses for the National Multidisciplinary Test in Ukrainian language, mathematics, and English, conducted online. The institute collaborates actively with community organizations and government institutions, organizing training and projects aimed at developing soft skills in youth and creating positive changes in the community. This role is vital for professional development and contributes to social integration and economic stability in the region. The official website of the IPT (<https://www.ipt.cn.ua/>) provides extensive resources for professional growth.

The IPT offers certification programs, including:

1. Professional training for civil servants.
2. Short-term program on “Public Information Access Law Implementation”.
3. Short-term program on “Information Security and Data Protection”.
4. Short-term program on “Communication and Interaction in Public Administration”.
5. Short-term program on “Anti-Corruption and Integrity”.
6. Short-term program on “Change Management”.
7. Short-term program on “Ensuring Rights and Interests of People with Disabilities”.

These certification programs play an essential role in sustainable development in Ukraine, especially in the context of post-war recovery and strengthening government institutions. Programs focused on public information access and public administration communication enhance transparency and accountability, strengthening public trust in government. Courses related to disability rights support inclusivity and equality, while change management and anti-corruption training align with principles of economic sustainability and efficient resource management. Thus, the IPT's certification programs not only enhance professional skills but also lay the foundation for a sustainable society where social justice, inclusivity, and transparency are valued.

University of Future Transformation College. The UFT College prepares students for future challenges, offering programs for junior specialists in “Management,” “Marketing,” and “Integrated Technologies and Robotics” (UFT College, n.d.):

- Program “Integrated Technologies and Robotics” prepares specialists to design, develop, implement, and maintain automated systems and robotic complexes. Covering diverse fields from industrial automation to artificial intelligence, graduates bring technological solutions that optimize production processes and enhance organizational efficiency.
- Program “Management” equips students with skills for effective organizational and resource management. Graduates are prepared for roles in human resources, financial management, and strategic decision-making, making them valuable contributors to the region’s growing entrepreneurial activity.
- Program “Marketing” develops expertise in managing product and service promotion, meeting consumer needs, and analyzing market trends. Graduates drive competitive marketing campaigns, supporting regional businesses’ interactions with consumers.

The college plays a crucial role in raising the professional competence of young people prepared for the modern knowledge economy and fostering the region’s innovative potential. The UFT College employs advanced technologies and interactive methods, adapting students to rapid professional changes and workplace realities. The college’s practical training,

aligned with the dual education model, bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. Dual education fosters sustainable social development by equipping students with workplace skills, enhancing their integration into the job market, and supporting economic stability through a qualified workforce.

Educational and Cultural Development Initiatives in Chernihiv

NGOs play a vital role in regions' cultural and educational development by improving public policies, offering alternative education, and organizing cultural activities. Despite facing challenges like resource constraints and economic inadequacies, their contributions significantly enhance communities' social and cultural fabric (Abiddin et al., 2022). For furthering cultural and educational development, the Educational Compass NGO was established, aimed at:

1. Supporting and developing informal education through seminars, training, and lectures in science, art, culture, and financial literacy.
2. Expanding educational opportunities for youth through preparatory programs for national exams, university entrance, and specialized programs to boost employability.
3. Promoting cultural exchange by organizing events such as exhibitions, film screenings, and literary meetings.
4. Enhancing digital literacy with IT and cybersecurity courses, enabling citizens to navigate the digital environment.
5. Engaging the community in volunteer activities and creating a network of volunteers for social and cultural projects that positively impact local communities.

On October 5, 2024, a youth space called “ROOF” was opened. This modern center for active and creative youth was designed for development, inspiration, and self-realization. Here, young people come together to find like-minded individuals, learn, share ideas, and implement new projects. The main areas of work at ROOF include training sessions and workshops (for personal and professional growth), a co-working zone (a comfortable space for work, study, and team meetings), thematic discussions and workshops (exploring current topics with experts to develop new skills), creative studios (a space for artistic ideas and inspiration), and

more. The activities of this space are focused on implementing projects that encompass youth development and social activity enhancement. Notably, the organization has implemented the “Informal Education Lecture Hall” project to equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in social life and professional activities. Programs supporting youth initiatives and community development are also given significant attention, with active cooperation established with local communities. Thus, this space plays an essential role in developing youth initiatives and promotes social engagement among young people in the Chernihiv region by implementing projects to increase awareness, skill development, and support for community initiatives (Cheline, 2023).

The presented system of organizations collectively forms a resilient platform for community development, enabling an effective response to social, economic, and educational challenges, fostering integration and inclusion among diverse population groups, and ensuring sustainable regional development. For instance, with support from the “Educational Compass” NGO and the Institute of Professional Transformations, a project was implemented in the ROOF youth space for young people ready to take responsibility for their future and build successful careers. Under the project “Start Up: Career and Entrepreneurship,” organized by the Youth Platform NGO with support from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Ukraine and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), training sessions were conducted for interested individuals (primarily youth) from the Chernihiv region and Chernihiv city (Molodizhnyi prostir “ROOF”, n.d.).

Thus, the network of educational institutions established in Chernihiv creates a unique environment for youth and adult development, supporting the sustainable social development of the region, and its active involvement in socially significant initiatives serves as a tool for sustainable development. Specifically, the University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations actively contribute to regional sustainability by participating in numerous initiatives focused on youth development, community support, and the implementation of gender and youth programs. These efforts not only meet regional needs but also

promote sustainable social practices that support integration, engagement, and equality in the communities of Chernihiv. For example:

1. Collaboration with the “Go Beyond” NGO and the “Informal Education Lecture Hall” project. The project “Skills for Young People’s Public and Social Life via Informal Education” aims to help young people develop soft skills essential for active participation in public life. This initiative focuses on cultivating skills that not only foster individual student development but also contribute positively to the community. Young people acquiring new competencies, particularly in communication, leadership, and critical thinking, become active participants in social processes, increasing social cohesion within the region. These educational programs lay the foundation for sustainable development by nurturing conscious citizens capable of creating and sustaining positive changes.

2. Training sessions for territorial communities in the Chernihiv region. In partnership with the Regional Military Administration, the Institute of Professional Transformations and the University of Future Transformation conducted a series of training sessions titled “Restoring the Region's Future through Public Management Tools for Youth and Gender Initiatives”. The primary goal of these training sessions was to develop and implement effective public management mechanisms to support youth and gender initiatives, ensuring these initiatives are integrated into regional recovery and development strategies. This approach allows communities to consider various aspects of social equality and inclusiveness, which are foundational to sustainable social development. Enhancing local leaders’ competencies in gender equality and youth work strengthens civil society and ensures a long-term impact on social processes in the region.

3. Youth Space “PRIKOLEJ” as a platform for youth development. The university established the “PRIKOLEJ” youth space, a platform for youth initiatives and comprehensive support. Collaborating with the National Youth Center and planning educational programs like “Youth Worker” enables young people to acquire professional knowledge and develop skills for active participation in public life. This youth space not only provides a venue for meetings and idea exchange but also serves as an essential tool for regional sustainability by creating conditions for developing social initiatives oriented toward community needs.

Each of these initiatives demonstrates the integration of sustainable development goals into the work of educational institutions. Through these projects, the presented educational institutions not only educate students but also contribute to the region's overall social development, supporting youth integration into social life, enhancing community workers' professional competencies, and fostering positive community changes. Such activities are a powerful tool ensuring long-term positive regional impact and creating a foundation for sustainable development in the future.

In light of the growing need to foster a gender-equal society, universities and educational institutions play a crucial role in implementing initiatives aimed at promoting gender education and women's leadership. The University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations are active participants in such programs in collaboration with local and international partners (Rosa & Clavero, 2021; Condrón et al., 2022):

1. Project “Gender Education for Youth”. This project aims to raise youth awareness on issues of gender equality, sexual education, and health. Educational programs and training sessions under this project equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary for participation in social life and interpersonal interactions. This initiative, supported by partners like the Chernihiv Regional Administration's Department of Family, Youth, and Sports and international partners, is vital for achieving sustainable development goals. Educational activities prepare youth for social life and foster the formation of conscious citizens who will support gender equality and contribute to creating an inclusive society.

2. Project “Women's Voices and Leadership – Ukraine”. This initiative focuses on enhancing the role of women in public and political life, supporting gender equality and sustainable social development. Through educational programs, training sessions, and grant support, the project helps women acquire leadership skills, actively participate in decision-making processes, and implement their initiatives. Advocacy campaigns and support for network platforms create a favorable environment for experience sharing and strengthening women's community organizations. These activities promote equality and strengthen the social fabric, laying the foundations for inclusive development and social justice.

Expected project outcomes include increased women holding leadership positions, more significant influence of women’s organizations, increased public awareness, and decreased gender discrimination. Such projects significantly contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable society, providing women with professional and social growth opportunities, supporting youth, and fostering a new generation that values gender equality and inclusion.

Integrative Educational and Social Initiatives for Regional Recovery and Sustainable Development

In conclusion, HEIs in Ukraine today have become centers of support, promoting equal opportunities, inclusion, and the development of local communities. Programs that provide students with practical skills, along with projects on gender and civic education, help unite the population and meet labor market needs (Table 8.1). Environmental initiatives foster responsible attitudes toward the environment among students, laying the groundwork for sustainable development.

Table 8.1. Contribution of UFT, IPT, UFT College, “Educational Compass” NGO to sustainable development

Focus on Sustainable Development	Examples	Initiatives
Social Development	Integration and Inclusion – Support for youth, women, gender equality, and leadership development, fostering social integration and equal opportunities.	– The projects “Gender Education for Youth” and “Women’s Voices and Leadership” promote greater participation of youth and women in social life.
	Community Cohesion and Local Identity Support – HEIs support communities, helping to preserve cultural identity and enhance social cohesion.	– Educational training sessions to develop leadership and civic skills.
	Youth Health and Well-being – Gender education, sexual health education, and lifestyle health prevention programs.	– Implementation of educational programs focused on enhancing civic engagement and local culture.

Focus on Sustainable Development	Examples	Initiatives
Economic Development	Professional Training and Skill Development – Educational programs providing practical skills to engage graduates in the post-war economy.	– Partnership with local organizations (regional state administration, territorial communities of the Chernihiv region, NGOs, and businesses) to support socially significant initiatives.
	Labor Market Demand Fulfillment – Programs aimed at preparing specialists in high-demand fields, contributing to economic stability.	– Programs on gender education and sexual health.
Ecological Development	Environmental Education and Awareness – Integration of environmental knowledge into curricula to foster responsible attitudes toward nature.	– Information campaigns and training for youth aimed at increasing health awareness and promoting positive behavioral models.
	Sustainable Practices in HEIs – Implementation of sustainable practices in daily activities (recycling, energy efficiency), serving as an example for students and society.	– Dual education programs that provide training and internships with local enterprises.

Table 8.1 highlights the role of the educational system described by the authors as a driving force for sustainable development, combining social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This system of organizations collectively forms a resilient platform for social, economic, and educational development, serving as a foundation for regional recovery and prosperity. Through the interaction of HEIs, community initiatives, and local partners, this system ensures a coordinated response to contemporary challenges, meeting society’s needs. This approach promotes integration and inclusion, creating conditions for personal and professional growth, which is particularly important in the context of post-war recovery. Such joint activity not only strengthens local identity but also lays the groundwork for sustainable development, where each

participant has equal opportunities and support for contributing to the region's rebuilding and future.

Conclusions

Establishing a sustainable educational platform is a crucial step for regional recovery and social development, as it has the capacity to unite educational initiatives and community projects into a cohesive support system for local communities. Such a platform not only raises the population's educational level but also stimulates civic engagement by involving residents in the region's development process. Integrating the educational programs of the University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations with community initiatives enables more effective solutions to social and economic challenges, particularly through informal education, digital literacy training, cultural events, and volunteer projects. These initiatives foster new professional skills, stimulate entrepreneurship, and provide flexibility to the local economy. Consequently, the University of Future Transformation and the Institute of Professional Transformations not only fulfill their educational mission but also actively contribute to the creation of a sustainable, equitable, and socially inclusive society in the Chernihiv region. This work is an essential step toward building a society that ensures equal opportunities for all, supporting both individual and collective development at the regional level.

The social responsibility of these HEIs is evident in programs focused on community support and increased civic engagement. Through projects like "Women's Voices and Leadership" and "Gender Education for Youth", the university actively contributes to forming a more integrated and inclusive society. Gender education initiatives, youth leadership development, and community organization support help these institutions not only fulfill their educational mission but also influence social processes. As a result, they instill qualities in young people that enable them to take responsibility for their future, develop teamwork and community engagement skills, and be ready to participate in the region's and country's recovery processes.

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