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PECULIARITIES OF UKRAINIAN YOUTH STUDYING AT POLISH UNIVERSITIES SINCE 24 FEBRUARY 2022

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ НАВЧАННЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ МОЛОДІ В ПОЛЬСЬКИХ УНІВЕРСИТЕТАХ ПІСЛЯ 24 ЛЮТОГО 2022 РОКУ

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Abstract. *The article examines the peculiarities of Ukrainian youth studying at Polish universities during the period of Ukraine's war with Russia (admission conditions, study programmes, forms of education, language of teaching, interactions with the teaching staff and groupmates, challenges they faced, strategies for building their resilience, support from the Republic of Poland and students' attitude towards it etc.) The study of these issues shows that neighbouring country has established a supportive environment to accommodate Ukrainian youth, offering both psychological and financial assistance and the opportunity to access a high-quality education with favourable admission conditions. This positive atmosphere has greatly assisted Ukrainian students in effectively assimilating into the host country's society and adapting to life at Polish universities. While conducting the research, 53 anonymous responses were gathered from Ukrainian students across eight Polish universities.*

Keywords: *education, resilience, Ukrainian students, Polish University, war.*

Introduction.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, many people had to leave their homes and go to other countries to stay safe. According to the United Nations, about six million people are registered as refugees across Europe. Another five million are considered internally displaced persons [1]. It also includes the category of students who decided to study abroad because of the war, particularly in Poland, which created all the necessary conditions and provided funding for the Ukrainian students' support.

The topic of peculiarities of Ukrainian youth studying at Polish universities after 24 February 2022 is relevant for both Ukraine and Poland. In recent years, Ukrainian higher education institutions have already faced the problem of the outflow of potential applicants to the EU countries, particularly Poland (the most significant number). Applicants like the conditions of admission, flexible learning process, comfortable living conditions, the possibility of further employment, etc. If earlier it was a conscious choice of Ukrainian youth, since the beginning of the war, many students have been forced to leave Ukraine and choose to study in other countries, including Poland. We decided to find out the peculiarities of studying Ukrainian youth in a Polish university during the period of Ukraine's war with Russia (conditions of admission, study programmes, the format of education, attitudes of the teaching staff and groupmates, challenges they faced, what helped them overcome the crisis etc.) [1].

[1] The publication was prepared as a result of a research internship at the University of Warsaw, Faculty of Artes Liberales, with the support of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA). Special thanks to Hieronim Grala, Professor, Doctor of Sciences, who guided and supported the research.

Main text. Since the first weeks of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, European universities have expressed outstanding support for Ukrainian students. European countries (Germany, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic, etc.) offer favourable conditions for Ukrainian students to enter, study, and transfer to higher education institutions and various scholarship grants within refugee and temporary protection programmes. For example, on 12 March 2022, the Polish authorities adopted the Law on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in connection with the Military Conflict on its Territory, which sets a limit on the cost of education for Ukrainian students in Polish higher education institutions: it cannot exceed the cost that students paid for education in Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions.

The Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA) has launched a programme called "Solidarity with Ukraine", which entitled Ukrainian undergraduate and postgraduate students to study at universities, conduct research, participate in language courses, etc., for almost a year on a reduced fee. The support and loyalty programmes introduced by European governments provide for legal residence for up to three years, access to the education system and labour market, social and financial support.

As a result of the research, 53 anonymous responses were received from Ukrainian students in Google forms from the University of Warsaw, Jan Długosz Academy in Czestochowa, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Pomeranian Academy in Słupsk, Marie Curie University in Lublin, Academy of Applied Sciences in Gniezno, Gdańsk University of Technology, and Mazowiecka Academy in Płock.

The survey involved 20% of male and 80% of female students. According to the survey, 68% of students intended to study in the Republic of Poland before the full-scale invasion, while 32% had no such plans. At the same time, only 9% of respondents were forced to choose a Polish university.

When students were asked what helped them decide which university to go to, most said they were interested in the subject they wanted to study. Many also said they looked for universities that were affordable to get into and were in a convenient location. Some other things that students mentioned were getting extra benefits for being Ukrainian, the university's ranking, the chance to get a scholarship, wanting to experience a European university, and improving their Polish and English skills. Almost half of the students said that benefits or scholarships were significant financial support for them.

Most Ukrainian students (72%) did not need to pass entrance exams to enter the university. Some applicants still had to take exams, the list of which depended on the specific university and speciality. Under the admission rules of certain Polish universities, the rating of education in Ukraine, External Independent Evaluation scores, an interview/exam/test of Polish language proficiency, and proof of English language proficiency were considered. There is an extensive variety of chosen specialities. Mathematics, History, Economics, Biology, Sociology, Pedagogy, Journalism, Psychology, Music, Foreign Languages, National Security, Management, Administration, Programming, ICT and others are among them.

According to the research, the inclusion of optional courses in the curriculum can range from zero to fifty per cent of the total course load. Almost half of the

students have 25% of the total elective subjects.

The educational system in Polish universities is structured to offer online, face-to-face, or blended learning formats, delivered either in Polish or in a combination of Polish and English. The survey results show that training was provided in different modes (online (24.5 %, face-to-face (47.2 %,), blended (28.3%)).

Teaching at a Polish university is mainly in Polish, which is quite logical. 47.2% of students said they had attended language courses after arriving in the country. Studying Polish is compulsory in all study programmes, and it contributes to the quality of students' perception of information and their integration into the cultural society.

As for the English language, opinions are divided: one-half of the respondents believe that knowledge of English has helped them in communication, studying and adaptation, while the other half is convinced that knowledge of Polish is enough for them to adapt in the Republic of Poland, and they use English in situations where they cannot express themselves in Polish.

Moreover, 60.4% of respondents indicated that they continue to study English independently, and 28.3% attend language courses and choose disciplines taught in English. It means they are interested in learning English and want to improve their language skills.

The perception of Ukrainian students regarding their interactions with university staff is largely favourable. The great part of students (about 80.7%)) acknowledged teachers' willingness to help and a positive, friendly attitude towards them. But, Ukrainian students also indicated that some teachers exhibited limited openness in their communication (5.7%) and displayed bias toward them (13.2%). It was mentioned that most groupmates were also welcoming and available. Still, some fellow students were not open to communication (9.4 %) and were prejudiced against them (7.5%).

Similarly, the majority of their fellow students were found to be amiable and approachable. However, it was noted that a fraction of fellow students tended to be reserved in their interactions (9.4%) and harbored preconceived notions against them (7.5%).

Among the most challenging moments after moving to the Republic of Poland were the first exam session, the first weeks/months of stay, finding accommodation, studying at two universities at the same time, completing the necessary documents, the language barrier, understanding one's own powerlessness in the war, financial problems, longing for relatives, lack of Internet connection with relatives, understanding one's powerlessness to change the situation in Ukraine, job search, etc.

The main everyday problems faced by students were: the cost of living (34%), proper time management (26.4%), finding accommodation (11.3%), learning the rules and laws of the country (11.3%), etc. As for educational problems, the most common ones are The complexity of the curriculum (20.8%), high academic requirements (18.9%), learning a foreign language, and teacher-student relations.

Among the identified socio-psychological problems were a new life abroad, worries about the fate of Ukraine, sadness for relatives and homeland, cultural differences, different mentality, peculiarities of the banking and legislative system,

etc.

Ukrainian students were also asked to identify the educational problems they faced. The majority of students said they had no such problems at all. The other part of the respondents highlighted the complexity of the curriculum and high learning requirements, as well as the teacher-student relationship, the necessity to know Polish at the proper level, the peculiarities of the educational process, etc.

The survey findings also indicated that the most significant support for the adaptation process from the host country came from various sources, including international student departments (34%), the local diaspora (30.2%), as well as classmates, psychologists, teachers, and university advisors. A portion of the students (23%) mentioned they didn't receive any external assistance in adapting. Meanwhile, other respondents expressed self-sufficiency, stating that they managed critical adaptation challenges independently and didn't require external support.

Ukrainian students rated their level of resilience differently on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is low, and 10 is high. These ratings spanned from 1 point (1.9%) to 10 points (20.8%), highlighting diverse perspectives on the current situation and varying abilities to navigate through crises.

The respondents also noted their strategies for building resilience in a stressful situation, namely: setting specific goals (18.9%), social contacts (17%), developing the ability to solve problems independently (15.1%), optimism (7.5%), trying to find meaning in difficulties (5.7%), friendly attitude towards oneself and one's abilities (5.7%), maintaining connection with the homeland (5.7%), ability to detach oneself (3.8%), etc.

One of the tasks for the respondents was to continue the sentence "The Republic of Poland for me is...". As it turned out, the Ukrainian students described their vision as follows: a second home, a new home, a temporary home, a ticket to Europe, salvation, new experience, new opportunities, a second homeland, a new page in life, salvation, "a country of wonderful people and new opportunities", "a country that has already helped me and is still helping my Ukraine", etc.

Conclusion.

Poland has diligently created a nurturing environment to welcome Ukrainian youth, providing essential psychological and financial support. Moreover, they have extended the opportunity to pursue a high-quality education with favourable admission conditions. This overall positive ambience has played a pivotal role in significantly aiding Ukrainian students in successfully integrating into the host country's society and effectively adapting to their academic life at Polish universities.

Of course, Ukrainian youth have faced academic, domestic, social and psychological problems, but they have learnt to solve them, which has helped increase their resilience.

We hope that after the war, Ukrainian youth will be interested in returning to Ukraine and implementing their experience in various fields. The government should also develop measures to encourage and motivate Ukrainian graduates to enter and study at higher and specialised education institutions in Ukraine.

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1. Ukraine refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe. 2023. URL: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine (дата звернення: 17.08.2023).

Анотація. *У статті розглядаються особливості навчання української молоді в польських університетах в період війни України з Росією (умови вступу, навчальні програми, форми навчання, мова викладання, взаємодія з викладацьким складом та одногрупниками, виклики, з якими вони стикалися, стратегії формування життєстійкості, підтримка країни-сусіда та відношення студентів до неї тощо). Вивчення цих питань показує, що Республіка Польща створила сприятливе середовище для проживання української молоді, пропонуючи як психологічну, так і фінансову допомогу, а також можливість отримати якісну освіту за сприятливих умов вступу. Ця позитивна атмосфера значною мірою допомогла українським студентам ефективно асимілюватися в суспільство приймаючої країни та адаптуватися до життя в польських університетах. У ході дослідження було зібрано 53 анонімні відповіді від українських студентів з восьми польських університетів.*

Ключові слова: *навчання, резильєнтність, українські студенти, польський університет, війна.*

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