

## TRAINING OF TEACHERS TO WORK WITH UKRAINIAN STUDENTS WHO HAVE SUFFERED DUE TO RUSSIAN MILITARY AGGRESSION

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**ABSTRACT:** *Typical challenges facing teachers educating Ukrainian students affected by the Russian military aggression are identified in the article. The didactic tools and methods most often used by teachers to work with temporarily displaced children due to the war in Ukraine have been determined. The results of an empirical study are presented, teachers of various types of educational institutions (secondary schools, colleges, universities) who are located on the territories temporarily occupied by Russia, are in the status of temporarily displaced persons in Ukraine or abroad, were involved. The ways of preparing future teachers for educational activities with children who suffered war trauma are outlined. The issues of successful adaptation of schoolchildren to the new conditions of the educational environment, mastering methods and techniques for overcoming stress, techniques for providing psychological assistance, as well as the development of infomedia culture, critical thinking to combat misinformation, cyberbullying and cybergrooming are emphasized..*

**KEY WORDS:** *temporarily displaced students, war in Ukraine, Russian military aggression, distance learning, training of future teachers, children of war*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The large-scale Russian military aggression in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, caused new challenges regarding the organization of socio-economic (Lytvynova, Ignatyuk, Knir, et al., 2022), cultural and artistic (Kobylko, Honcharuk, Horbolis, & Antonovych, 2022) and educational and scientific life (Shapiro et al., 2022). Due to the mass shelling of the civilian population, the temporary resettlement of mostly women and children to the west intensified. "...Over 3.62 million refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe. Poland granted the highest number of temporary protection statuses to Ukrainians fleeing Ukraine due to Russia's invasion – more than 1.2 million. Poland was followed by Germany and Czechia, respectively" (Sas, 2022).

Close to 200,000 refugee children from Ukraine have entered the Polish education system, Poland's Minister of Education Przemysław Czarnek noted. 40,000 children were admitted to preschools, about 140,000 to primary schools, and approximately 20,000 to secondary schools, joining mixed classes with Polish students (TVP "World", 2022).

As K. Szczepanik (2022) notes, in the process of integrating Ukrainian children into the Polish education system, the main issue is a foreign language. At the same time, staying in Poland for several months mothers and children face a serious challenge concerning the choice: a remote Ukrainian school or a face-to-face Polish school. For children's socialization in peer circles and psycho-emotional stability, parents tend to choose local offline education, often students study remotely at a Ukrainian school at the same time.

Social networks serve to search for contacts, mutual sharing and presentation of skills. It is important to protect privacy using biometric factors. (Lisnik, Janíčková, Zimmernamová, 2020). According to the Polish television "World", about 500,000 children, staying temporarily in Poland, continue to study remotely at Ukrainian schools (TVP, 2022). To some degree, this phenomenon creates a double burden on students.

However, the war with Russia, according to experts' forecasts, may be lasting, meaning, obviously, these children will still stay abroad for the new school year. Therefore, there is an urgent necessity to train teachers and educational institutions for Ukrainian students. The issue of involving

Ukrainian teachers to work, for example, in Polish schools using appropriate methods, as well as their inclusion in mobile psychological support groups, is also relevant. After all, children of war and their parents experience a high level of anxiety (Świdrak, 2021), fear due to air raids, missile strikes, loss of home and relatives.

The scientific source review proved that people suffering from anxiety are characterized by low self-esteem, excessive self-demand, depression, persistent stereotypes and prejudices regarding personal perception, etc. (Abramson, Alloy, Metalsky, 1988). The largest part of these people has experienced certain stressful situations (family violence, bullying, social phobias) (Wachs, Bilz, Niproschke, & Schubarth, 2019). Therefore, it is important to develop suffering children's certain spiritual and moral values (Budnyk, & Mazur, 2017). In the modern scientific literature, there is still not enough research on rehabilitation and didactic work with children affected by war trauma.

The objectives of this article are: (1) to determine the most typical difficulties facing teachers educating Ukrainian students affected by Russian military aggression; (2) didactic methods used by teachers to work with temporarily displaced children due to the war in Ukraine; (3) based on the scientific sources analysis and the empirical research results, to outline the ways of preparing future teachers for the implementation of the educational tasks mentioned above.

## **METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH**

To identify the most significant challenges and problems facing Ukrainian teachers in war conditions, we conducted empirical research. The survey was completed in June 2022 during organized online training courses for temporarily displaced teachers whose educational institutions were destroyed due to the war with Russia, based on the Center for Innovative Educational Technologies "PNU EcoSystem" of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ukraine).

Teachers/lecturers of educational institutions of various types (secondary schools, colleges, universities) who are located in the territories temporarily occupied by Russia, with the status of temporarily displaced persons on the territory of Ukraine or abroad, were involved in the questionnaire.

The survey questions concerning educators' attitude to distance learning of students in wartime conditions, difficulties in organizing the educational process, ways of coping with them in wartime conditions, etc. were used.

61 respondents took the survey, mostly teachers from the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. Almost half of all respondents are representatives of the Donetsk region (44.3%), as well as Luhansk, Kherson, Cherkasy, Kharkiv, Sumy, Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhya, Chernihiv, and other regions. The gender profile of the respondents was the following: men – 4 (6.6%), women – 57 (93.4%), because of the female dominance in the teaching profession.

The presented research is not representative, as it analyzes the respondents' data regarding pedagogical work with children affected by the war in Ukraine. A representative sampling does not allow extrapolating its results to all similar groups of respondents.

However, the authors revealed a clear trend concerning current research directions and the necessity for didactic developments to overcome communication challenges, the language barrier in a foreign language environment, psycho-emotional disorders, depressive states of mind caused by stress, and effective pedagogical support for the adaptation of children of war to new conditions, traditions (on the example of Ukraine).

## **RESULTS OF RESEARCH**

In modern conditions, when most countries of the world have already recovered from the coronavirus pandemic (Rembierz, 2021a) and are gradually switching to offline education, all Ukrainian institutions continue to work remotely due to the military invasion of Russia (Blyznyuk, Budnyk & Kachak, 2021). Alternative education as a modern challenge is digital education, so it is important to pay attention to improving digital literacy and competence of participants in the educational process (Budnyk, Matveieva, Fomin et al., 2021). After all, digital culture and human thinking affect the results of learning and the implementation of innovations (Rosen, 2010).

According to the data of our research, the majority of Ukrainian teachers from the temporarily occupied territories fully support distance learning of students in the conditions of martial law, which is explained, first of all,

by the inability to guarantee life safety and health of all participants in the educational process (students, teachers, lecturers, etc.). Thus, 85.2% of the respondents, 52 persons from the total number, supported the organization of online training, 9 respondents (14.8%) partially supported this form. None of the survey participants expressed categorical opinions and objections concerning the form of work of educational institutions in the conditions of martial law due to the Russian invasion. The realities of the war led to the creation of special educational projects in Ukraine so that children could continue their education even during martial law. They can use online lessons, video lessons on YouTube; programs of the International Ukrainian School, and online resources offered to students evacuated to other countries. For example, on the website “All-Ukrainian School Online” there are educational materials for secondary school students on various subjects. Ukrainian television is also involved in the educational process, systematically broadcasting video lessons for students in grades 5-11 as part of the “Learning without borders” project with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Learning without borders, 2022). Thus, methods of learning/ teaching are being improved using distance education technologies, and the use of digital resources and tools.

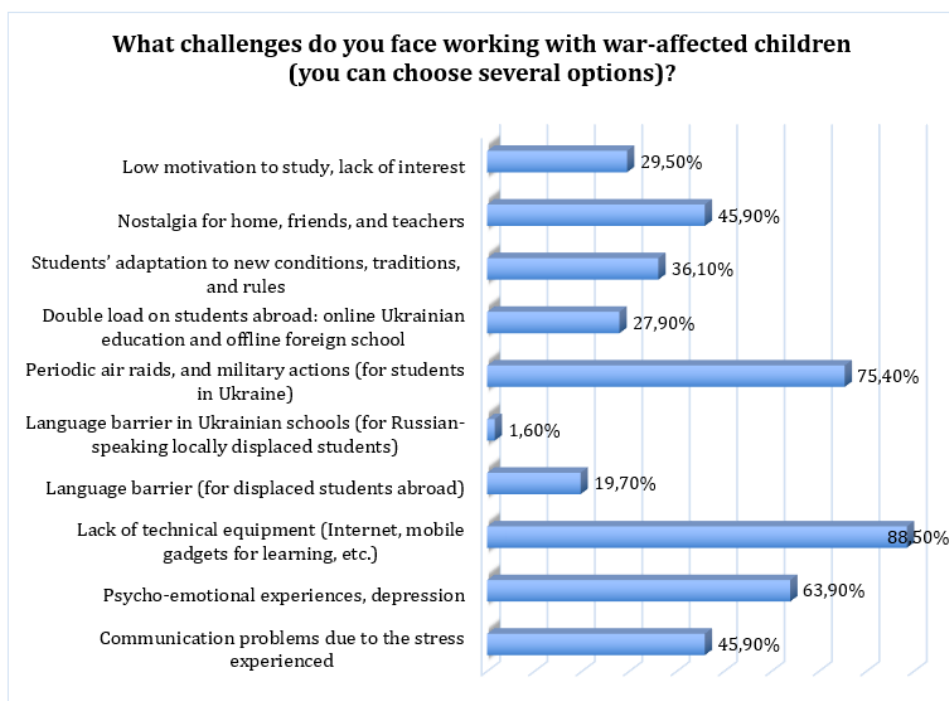
Since the beginning of the war, the International Ukrainian School of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (externship on an individual basis) has begun to work due to the social challenges of the war. The school website contains programs for independent work with links to electronic textbooks and didactic/multimedia materials for different grades and classes (<https://uis.org.ua/>).

The system of college and higher education in Ukraine also continues distance learning, however, the external independent evaluation to get Bachelor's or Master's degree isn't required, only a complex entrance exam or a complex professional entrance test is necessary for admission. The Ukrainian education system proved teachers', students', authorities, and the community's flexibility and mobility in responding to changes and real-life challenges, introducing innovative forms and methods of work using digital technologies and electronic resources (Tsependa & Budnyk, 2021). For temporarily displaced people in different countries (in particular, in Poland, the Czech Republic, Canada, etc.) appropriate conditions have been created for their comfortable offline study,

Ukrainian schools are opening, and free educational programs are offered for students at Polish universities, as well as grant projects for Ukrainian scientists.

The survey results proved that Ukrainian teachers who work with children of war today face many difficulties (Fig. 1: respondents were able to choose several answer options at the same time).

Evidently, most often temporarily displaced students and teachers have technical problems in learning/teaching (lack of Internet, mobile gadgets for learning, etc.) because their educational institutions and homes have been destroyed (88.5% of respondents admitted this problem). A significant part of the respondents (75.4%) noted that periodic air raids or even active hostilities (like those who remained in Ukraine) are an obstacle to high-quality distance learning. Because of this, students experience stress, depression, and despair (63.9%), as a result, have low motivation to study, express a lack of interest (29.5%), and often have communication problems due to psycho-emotional experiences (45.9%). For temporarily displaced persons, nostalgia for their native home, friends, and teachers is characteristic (45.9%). Students of Ukrainian immigrants in other countries often experience a language barrier (19.7%), which is one of the reasons for difficulties in the adaptation period to new conditions, traditions, and rules (36.1%).



**Figure 1: Education challenges for war-affected children  
(according to the survey data).**

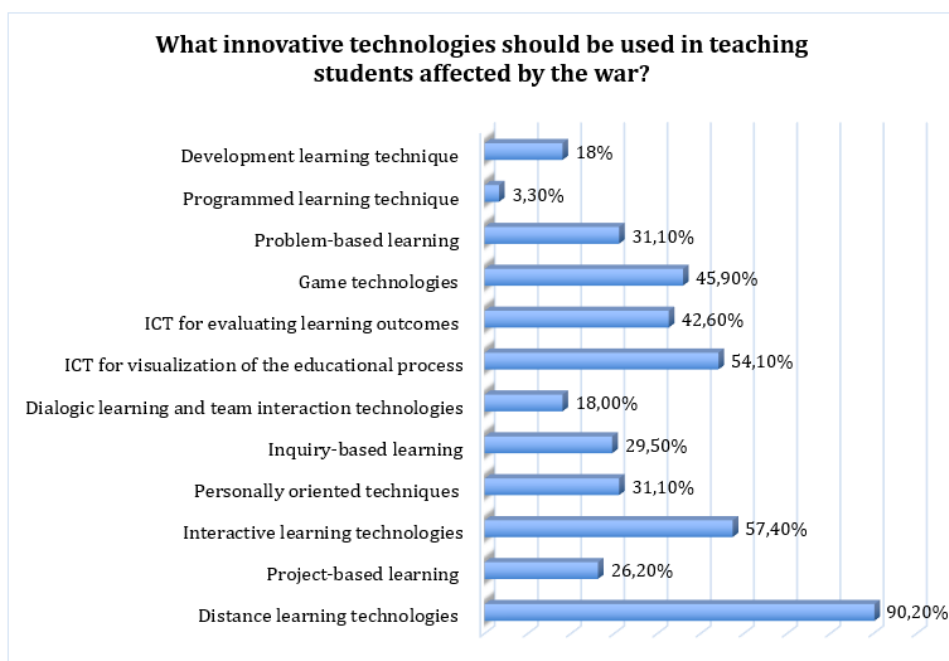
Therefore, teachers' primary tasks in working with students who suffered from armed Russian aggression are their moral and psychological support, accompanying adaptation, and creating conditions for distance learning. The respondents indicated the necessity to solve the following educational tasks:

- students' return to their usual psychological state and learning regime, choosing exercises for psychological relief, creating comfortable conditions for development;
- taking into consideration students' psycho-emotional state of mind, assistance in overcoming psychological stress, and individual approach to each student;
- patriotic education, a high level of civic culture;
- increasing motivation to study and stimulating students' cognitive interests;
- establishment of productive communication, and educational dialogue;
- optimization of the training load;
- improvement and diversification of forms and methods of distance learning, flexible choice of pedagogical technologies;

- promoting successful adaptation to life in wartime conditions, mastering the rules of behavior in emergencies, as well as establishing relations with students on the territories temporarily occupied by the Russians;
- development of students' critical thinking and media literacy, ability to check and analyze information, and recognize fakes;
- development of media lessons corresponding to different technical conditions and students' age categories;
- psychological and pedagogical support of children with special educational needs.

For Ukrainian students temporarily displaced in various countries of Europe and America, the language barrier, overcoming traditional stereotypes and fears regarding the establishment of active intercultural communication is of primary importance (Rembierz, 2021b). It is no coincidence that at this stage, Polish schools that accept Ukrainian students perform not so much an educational, but an adaptive and psychological function, providing them with help and advice for further education (Shapiro et al., 2022). According to the survey of teachers whose educational institutions were destroyed due to the war with Russia, the participants in the educational process were affected physically and/or psychologically, distance learning technologies are the most effective in wartime conditions (90.2% of respondents indicated this). Considering the difficulties of communication due to psycho-emotional experiences, and the necessity to overcome the language barrier in a foreign environment, more than half of the respondents consider effective interactive learning technologies (57.4%), the use of ICT for visualizing educational material (54.1%), game technologies (45.9%) (Fig. 2). Almost one-third of educators chose Problem-based learning and personally oriented learning techniques (31.1%), Project-based learning (26.2%), Inquiry-based learning (29.5%).





**Figure 2: The most effective teaching techniques for students affected by the war (according to the survey data).**

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the study results, it is worth defining ways of preparing future teachers to work with Ukrainian students affected by Russian aggression. For this, it is necessary to master the methods and techniques of overcoming stress and psychological “overload”, and the techniques of providing psychological assistance. It is necessary to develop, systematize and offer parents and students relevant information resources on how to help people in difficult life circumstances due to forced relocation, loss of relatives, etc. They can use scientific articles, manuals, webinars, tips, thematic interviews with famous people, self-help techniques, children's art books about war, educational infographics, etc.

The survey recommends relevant organizations in the financial sector to engage in systematic education of the population as financial literacy clients can better identify their needs and consider the financial possibilities. The development of financial literacy and financial education in Slovakia is considered to be significant. The Ministry of Education, the Slovak Banking Association and Junior Achievement Slovakia cooperate to bring these subjects to schools. (Zatrochová, Janáková, 2018).

The teacher's digital literacy and competence, among other things, involve mastering the latest digital tools for visualization, team interaction and evaluation of learning results, increasing learning motivation, and engaging children who feel moral discomfort or depression.

The use of electronic communication tools and distance learning actualize a separate aspect of modern teacher training – the development of infomedia literacy, critical thinking, media lesson creation skills, and media hygiene (Bulger & Davison, 2018). After all, in modern conditions, there are information wars, cyberbullying, and cybergrooming, which all participants in the educational process may face (Katz, Lemish, Cohen & Arden, 2019). Stressed students with psychological trauma, affected by the war, become more sensitive and can be influenced by virtual fraudsters, most often through social networks and fake accounts.

Another aspect of future teacher training is the ability to organize dialogic learning of students, teamwork, express empathy and tolerance in group interaction, etc. (Fomin, Budnyk, Matsuk et al., 2020; Sajdak-Burska, 2018), as well as overcoming fear, anxiety, insecurity, language barriers.

Using innovative teaching methods, introduced to the faculty in 2016, and in cooperation with organizations dedicated to education in the field of financial literacy (Junior Achievement Slovakia, Slovak Banking Association), we try to bring students subjects focused on their development in this area and try to attract them with new methods (e-learning) and motivate them with certificates obtained after completing the course. In the research, we showed a positive growth in financial literacy knowledge among students who attended the Basics of Financial Literacy subject, whose output tests achieved better results than their entrance tests. (Katrenčík, Zatrochová, 2022).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study highlights the typical educational challenges faced by teachers during wartime in Ukraine. Based on this, the effective ways to overcome them are outlined for the successful students' adaptation to new educational conditions.

Working with war-affected students, teachers need to master the techniques of providing psychological assistance to participants

in the educational process during the war, which will help overcome communication barriers and moral discomfort (Rembierz, 2017).

Effective technologies for teaching modern “digital” children in wartime include distance learning, the use of ICT to visualize the educational process and evaluate its results, as well as interactive, project and and game technologies. With the use of Internet resources, it is worth emphasizing the critical understanding of information and media hygiene to prevent the spread of fakes, cyberbullying, and cybergrooming, especially among children and people with disabilities.

Prospects for scientific research are the study of the experience of European teachers in working with children of war, techniques of psychological assistance to displaced families, as well as in the preparation of future teachers to work with students who have suffered war trauma.

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