



© 2023 Bilyakovska, Horuk & Karamanov. This article is distributed under the terms of CC Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International as described at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>

DOI: 10.31499/2306-5532.1.2023.288416

UDC:

ENSURING THE ACCESSIBLE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT UNDER MARTIAL LAW: RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Olha Bilyakovska

*Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor,
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv, Ukraine,
ORCID: 0000-0003-2880-6826, e-mail: olha.bilyakovska@lnu.edu.ua*

Nataliya Horuk

*PhD in Education, Associate Professor,
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv, Ukraine,
ORCID: 0000-0001-9269-4641, e-mail: nataliya.horuk@lnu.edu.ua*

Oleksiy Karamanov

*Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv, Ukraine,
ORCID: 0000-0002-0067-0747, e-mail: akaramanov@gmail.com*

The article presents the results of the teachers' survey conducted as a part of the OAEE project ("Organization of the Accessible Educational Environment for Internally Displaced Persons under the Martial Law in Ukraine") with the support of the Ukrainian Educational Research Organization (UERA) and the European Educational Research Organization (EERA). The questions of the survey concerned the issue of an accessible educational environment for children of the internally displaced people in the context of interaction and teaching in general secondary education institutions of Ukraine. The purpose of the research was to summarize the diverse experience, understanding and opinions of teachers on the organization of the educational process under the martial law in Ukraine. The teachers were asked about the education format in their schools, the e-learning platforms they mostly used, the forms of communication with students and parents they preferred, the strategies of teaching and the ways of integration of children and their families into the new living and learning environments, in order to collect and analyse the information about the teaching process over the past year of war in Ukraine.

The analysis of teachers' opinions on the problem of an accessible, comfortable, safe educational environment has made it possible to identify some issues that need further discussion and development: the teachers' need for the methodological support of the courses on topics relevant to the crises situations, the lack of knowledge on the effective



forms and methods of psychological support for children and parents who are forced to change their places of residence due to military aggression; the needs for the recommendations on how to provide the accessible, safe educational environment with the effective feedback and objective assessment of students' academic achievements. The results of the study are presented in the form of recommendations which help ensure quality education for the children of internally displaced people and take their special circumstances into account.

Key words: educational environment, accessibility, internally displaced people, teachers, schoolchildren, martial law, survey.

У статті представлено результати опитування вчителів, здійсненого в межах проєкту «ОДОС» («Організація доступного освітнього середовища для вимушено переміщених осіб в умовах воєнного стану в Україні») за підтримки Української асоціації дослідників освіти (УАДО) та Європейської асоціації дослідників освіти (EERA). Питання розробленої анкети стосувалися доступності освітнього середовища для дітей внутрішньо переміщених осіб у контексті особливостей взаємодії і навчання школярів у закладах загальної середньої освіти, вивчення та узагальнення різноманітного досвіду, розуміння і думок педагогів щодо організації освітнього процесу в умовах воєнного стану.

Аналіз думок вчителів щодо проблеми доступного, комфортного, безпечного освітнього середовища дозволив виявити їхні потреби в методичному забезпеченні дисциплін та окремих тем з проблематики, актуальної в умовах воєнного стану; потребу в ефективних формах і методах психологічної підтримки дітей та батьків, які вимушено змінили місце проживання через військову агресію; потреби в рекомендаціях щодо забезпечення доступного, безпечного освітнього середовища з ефективним зворотним зв'язком та об'єктивним оцінюванням навчальних досягнень учнів. Результати дослідження представлені у вигляді рекомендацій, які допоможуть забезпечити учням якісну освіту, що відповідає потребам дітей внутрішньо переміщених осіб та враховує їхні особливі обставини.

Ключові слова: освітнє середовище, доступність, внутрішньо переміщені особи, вчителі, школярі, воєнний стан, опитування.

Introduction

The war unleashed by the Russian Federation against independent, sovereign Ukraine has affected millions of people and caused enormous infrastructural destructions including schools and other educational facilities. Since the beginning of the war, 3281 educational institutions have been ruined by bombing and shelling, while 262 were completely destroyed (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023). According to the UNICEF data, during the first month of the war, almost 4.3 million children were forced to change their places of residence and education, including more than 1.8 million children who left Ukraine, and 2.5 million internally displaced persons within our country. "The war has caused one of the fastest large-scale displacements of children since the Second World War," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. "This is a grim milestone that could have lasting consequences for future generations. Children's safety, well-being and access to basic services are threatened by the ongoing violence" (Unicef, 2022).

The resulting destruction and threats have led to the emergence of a large number of



internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have fled the active war zone to the conditionally safe territories, which nevertheless are under periodic missile attacks. This generally does not reduce the threat of injury and does not prevent children from suffering from traumas and stress. The situation in education remains difficult, despite the consolidated efforts of the government, public, educational administrators at all levels, and the comprehensive assistance of foreign partners. Thus, the recent study of the State Education Quality Assurance Service of Ukraine and the Support to Ukraine's Government Reforms (SURGe) project shows that about 30% of Ukrainian students did not have regular access to education during the war.

One of the documents on the educational process provided under the martial law is the Concept of Safety of Educational Institutions, which emphasizes the issue of security of the educational process participants, ensuring equal, proper and safe learning conditions in response to the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Issued at a Government meeting (April 7, 2023; No. 301-p), the Concept (On approval of the Concept of Security of Educational Institutions, 2023) stresses the need for social and pedagogical support for all participants of the educational process to minimize the stress caused by military actions against our country. Society and the entire educational community are facing the crucial need to provide continuous access to education for all schoolchildren, to ensure the right to education guaranteed by the state, to organize the accessible, safe, comfortable learning environment restore the national educational infrastructure after the war.

Methods

The educational environment is a complex characteristic of the students' life in an educational institution; a certain system of influences and settings aimed at the students' personality development. It is described as "social, physical, psychological, and pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affect student achievement and attitudes" (Closs, L., Mahat, M. & Imms, W., 2022). Organizing a safe educational environment in times of war is an extremely important task for every educational institution, but ensuring the accessibility of the educational environment for students is no less important for the effective and comfortable learning. In our opinion, accessible educational environment means the possibility of equal access to the educational system for all students; comfortable psychological and pedagogical interpersonal interaction of all the participants in the educational process (students, parents, teachers), which contributes to their emotional well-being and security; it guarantees absence of any forms of violence, abusive behavior or humiliation of the person's dignity; respect for his/her rights and freedoms, satisfaction of basic needs.

Thus, the purpose of the article is to present the results of a survey conducted within the framework of the OAEE project ("Organization of an Accessible Educational Environment for Internally Displaced Persons under Martial Law in Ukraine") with the support of Ukrainian Educational Research Organization (UERA) and European Educational Research Organization (EERA). The research was aimed at studying and presenting the ways of ensuring accessible learning environment for internally displaced children under the martial law in Ukraine.

As a part of this study we conducted the surveys for teachers and students in order to deepen understanding of their experiences. The teachers' survey was organized as an online questionnaire with the subsequent analysis of the responses, followed by the identifications of problems and trends in the organization of the schoolchildren's accessible



educational environment in times of war. The questionnaire contained a series of questions related to various aspects of the learning process and the arrangement of the educational environment under martial law. They were formulated in a way to collect the most objective information about the experience and views of teachers on working with children during the war. Respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire anonymously without time limits in a Google form.

It is worth mentioning that the development, planning and conducting of the online survey took place during the active military actions on the territory of our country, under circumstances of different educational formats in various institutions of secondary education. It was influenced by the changes of place of residence, work and study of the Ukrainian citizens, and therefore has a number of limitations. With this in mind, we focused our research on the aspect of accessibility of the educational environment for internally displaced children, the specifics of their learning and interaction within educational institutions. It was important for us to comprehend and generalize various experiences, understandings, thoughts and feelings of students and teachers during the period of wartime. It should also be noted that the study involved a limited number of respondents, namely those who were relatively safe during the online survey, could devote time to answering the questions, and had access to the Internet and the necessary devices.

The survey involved 140 teachers working in general secondary education institutions of Lviv, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Uman, and Rohatyn. The choice of cities was primarily due to the relative safety of the northern-central and western regions of Ukraine and the greater likelihood of interviewing teachers who work with IDP's children. The respondents' age ranged from 26 to 70 years old, they work with students of different age groups and teach different subjects. This variety greatly expanded the range of answers and made it possible to trace certain patterns. 99% of the participants are women. This fact indicates huge gender disproportion among those who have chosen a teaching profession.

Results

To find out the information about the mode of teaching, prevailing in secondary institutions over the past year, we asked teachers about the format of educational process in the schools where they work. More than a half (55.6%) of respondents answered that in their educational institutions lessons are mostly delivered in a face-to-face format and they have daily interaction with students, 38% of respondents teach in a blended learning format, and 6.4% work remotely, which makes it necessary to introduce certain adjustments to the curricula and teaching approaches. The responses show that despite the relative safety of the selected regions, schools often choose distance learning. This became obvious when 90% of the teachers declared that they made some adjustments to the format, curricula and schedule of the lessons to make the learning most accessible and convenient for their students.

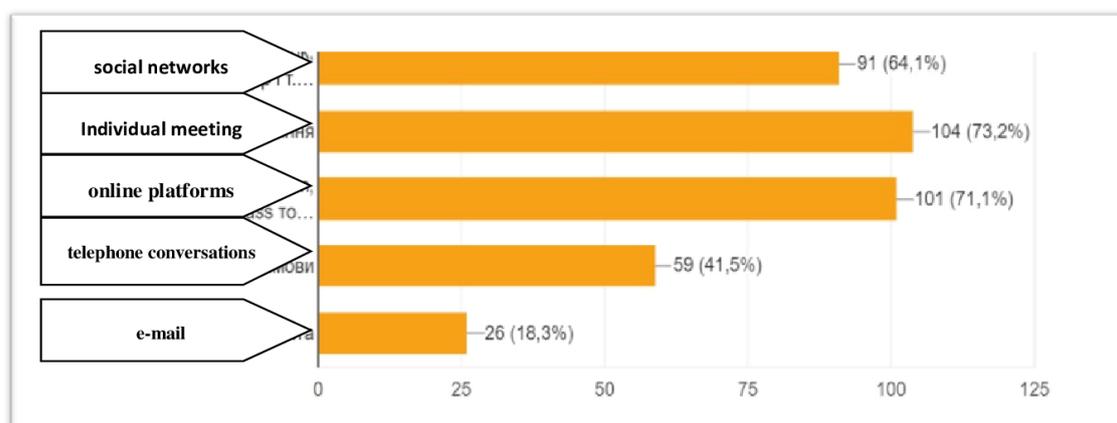
Teachers indicated the use of additional resources and platforms in their teaching, and when asked "Which projects of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine do you use in your work?" most teachers (66.9%) mentioned Nationwide School Online, Learning Without Borders (23.9%), the Nationwide Online Timetable (12%), the children's educational comic book "How to Behave During Martial Law" (9.2%), the telegram channel "Support a Child" (4.2%), and "The Voice of Our State Today" (4.2%). Unfortunately, only a small number of teachers use the project "Daily Online Meetings with Certified Psychologists of the Association for Innovative and Digital Education" (2.8%) that provide



advice from qualified psychologists. Although about 20% of teachers indicated other resources, including the "Electronic School Diary" and others. The majority of respondents (60.6%) have been teaching children who were forced to change their educational institution.

Figure 1.

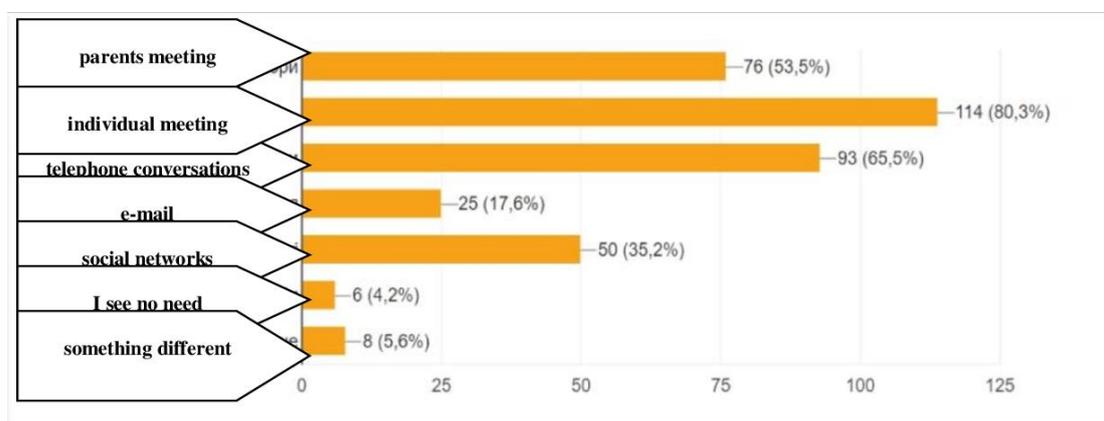
Answers to the question "What forms of communication with students do you use outside the school?"



An important component of the quality educational process, ensuring accessibility and comfort, is productive interaction between its participants. Thus, when asked about the regulations and trainings on the specific interaction with people in stressful situations, 85.2% of teachers indicated that in their schools they were conducted for all participants in the educational process. Although some teachers reported that the trainings were conducted only for a certain category of the participants, in particular, only for teachers - 3.5%, and for only students - 9.2%.

Figure 2.

Answers to the question "What forms of communication with parents do you use?"



It is necessary to note that productive communication between teachers, students and their parents is not limited to the time when the child is at school, especially in times of



crises. Answering the question "What forms of communication with students do you use outside the school hours?" (Fig. 1), the vast majority of teachers answered "personal communication" (73.2%), "online meetings" (71.1%), "communication in social networks" (64.1%), and less than a half of them still use telephone conversations (41.5%). Communication via e-mails was the least popular and used (18.3%).

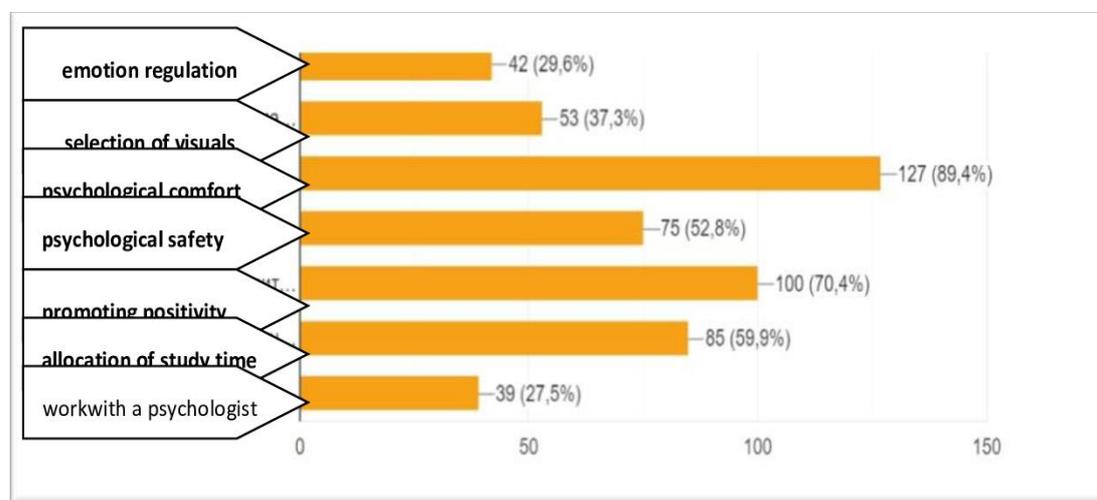
The answers to the question "What forms of communication with parents do you use?" were quite different (Fig. 2). The majority of respondents (80,3%) chose the answers "individual meeting and face-to-face communication", and "the telephone conversations" (65,5%). Thus, we can argue, that parents-teacher meetings remain the leading form of interaction between parents and teachers (53.5%).

Forced replacement from homes to other regions or countries, separation from the family members, new living and studying conditions are often stressful experiences, especially for young children. With this in mind, teachers have a special mission to help students adjust to their new educational environment, to ensure a barrier-free integration into the new community, to protect children from harmful emotional influences, and to establish positive interaction. Therefore, in response to the question "What strategies do you use to facilitate the integration of children and their families into new living and learning environments?", most teachers answered "I try to cultivate the feeling of security in students".

Timely and useful information about various opportunities, financial support and social events can improve the living conditions, physical and mental well-being of IDPs. With this regard, we observe that some teachers contribute to this issue by informing students and their families about current events and various opportunities in the community (49.3%). 39.4% of respondents get their students acquainted with local traditions and customs, trying to foster students' social integration and maintain knowledge of certain cultural differences. They believe it is essential for finding similarities and common grounds in these difficult times for our entire society. 43,7% of surveyed teachers study the internally displaced students' needs and report them to school administration.

Figure 3.

Distribution of teachers' answers to the question "How do you take into account the psychological and emotional health of students in the classroom?"





Teachers understand the importance of the psychological and emotional health of students in the classroom for the quality of learning. The actual percentage of respondents' answers to the question "How do you take into account the psychological and emotional health of students in the classroom?" is shown in Fig. 3. We can see that 89.4% of teachers try to create a psychologically comfortable environment in their classes, and 70.4% try to stimulate positive emotions in the classrooms.

However, to teach students effectively and interact productively with all participants in the educational process, teachers themselves need special knowledge and time to address the issues, caused by military aggression. In particular, 38.7% of teachers need help in using teaching forms and methods that are relevant in times of war, 36.6% need knowledge on providing psychological support to students, and 22.5% recognize the lack of skills for effective students' feedback and assessment.

Discussion

The analysis of teachers' opinions on the problem of the accessible, comfortable, safe educational environment under martial law has made it possible to identify a number of issues that require discussion and solutions, namely:

- improvement of teaching forms and methods in order to facilitate productive interaction in the safe, accessible educational environment;
- need for methodological support of the courses on topics, relevant during the martial law, namely: the first aid training, handling with dangerous objects, safe behavior in the emergency situations etc. (Melnyk, 2022);
- need for the development of recommendations on effective forms and methods of psychological support for children and parents who are forced to change their place of residence due to military aggression;
- lack of recommendations for teachers on how to provide the accessible, safe educational environment with effective feedback and objective assessment of students' academic achievements.

Conclusion

Study of different views and approaches to the issue of accessible educational environment for IDP's children allows concluding that:

1. Education in the wartime is a key topic for national authorities, humanitarian organizations and international societies, because it creates conditions for proper adaptation and accessibility of educational opportunities for children of all ages;
2. Cooperation with local non-governmental and community organizations is crucial for the involvement of additional financial resources and educational equipment;
3. It is necessary to expand educational opportunities for children outside the school; they should focus on social and emotional support, cultural and informational activities, provide access to modern information technologies;
4. Accessibility of education for all children, regardless of their nationality, social status, physical ability or religion, should play a decisive role in the times of crises in order to prevent any kind of discrimination and ensure equal chances in the future.

One clear implication is that any strategies to support access to more effective educational environment should be developed at the national level. Open access to online learning, mobile schools, partnership with non-governmental and community organizations, additional in-service teacher trainings and psychological support are some of the ideas that could help to ensure access to education for children experiencing war



hostilities, providing them with the opportunity to receive quality education in the environment that meets their needs and takes into account their different circumstances.

Acknowledgements

The authors of the article would like to thank the European Educational Research Organization (EERA) and its President Joe O'Hara, and the Ukrainian Educational Research Organization (UERA) and its President Oksana Zabolotna for the given opportunity to study the educational environment under the martial law and its impact on replaced teachers and students. The project allowed to conduct research and develop recommendations on how to ensure quality education for displaced students taking into account their specific circumstances.

References

- Closs, L., Mahat, M., & Imms, W. (2021). Learning environments' influence on students' learning experience in an Australian Faculty of Business and Economics. *Learning Environments Research*, 25(1), 271–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-021-09361-2>
- Melnyk, M., & Malynoshevska, A. (2022). Pro rezultaty opytuvannia uchniv, batkiv i vchyteliv pro osvritni problemy v umovakh vojennoho stanu. [About the results of the survey of students, parents and teachers on the educational issues under the martial law]. *Visnik Natsionalnoi Akademii Pedagogichnykh Nauk Ukrainy [Herald of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine]*, 4(1), <https://doi.org/10.37472/v.naes.2022.4142> [in Ukrainian]
- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. (2023). *Education in emergency*. <https://saveschools.in.ua/en/>.
- On approval of the Concept of Security of Educational Institutions, Order, № 301-p, dated 07 April 2023 (2023). <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-skhvalennia-kontseptsii-bezpeky-zakladiv-osvity-i070423-301> [in Ukrainian]
- Unicef. (2022, March 24). *More than half of Ukraine's children displaced after one month of war*. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-half-ukraines-children-displaced-after-one-month-war/>

Received: March, 12

Accepted: May, 05