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The educational opportunities of Ukrainian children at the time of the Russian invasion: perspectives from teachers

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ABSTRACT

The global Covid-19 pandemic has passed. This process required greater attention and care to the specifics of the organization of distance learning and the resolution of problems that arose for participants in the educational process. By late 2021 face-to-face teaching was returning but Russian aggression against Ukraine interrupted the comparatively carefree life of children and hindered access to kindergartens and schools which required a further focus on remote education. The paper outlines the peculiarities of the organization of distance learning under martial law in Ukraine and presents the problems of the organization of training during a time of conflict as well as the challenges presented by Internet platforms for the organization of the distance learning approaches recommended by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine. The aim of the research was theoretical analysis and generalization of literature on research problems, pedagogical observations, surveys, methods of mathematical statistics. The article provides one of the first analyses of the difficulties faced during this period of immense disruption based on empirical data and explains to what extent Ukrainian teachers under martial law have the possibility to organize distance teaching, what problems they face, what is the psychological state of children.

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Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace.
/John Lennon, Imagine, 1971/

1. Introduction and theoretical background

Despite the appeals of humanity, which experienced two great world wars in the twentieth century, proclaiming the slogan of No More War! – wars are still being waged in all corners of the world. As data collected by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project shows, much of the globe is still involved in some form of conflict (ACLED 2019).

Conflicts, from a psychological point of view, are an eternal part of life. They are situations of conscious, contradictory intentions, tendencies and actions, etc., not only of one person, but also of

whole social groups (see: Bodanko and Kowolik 2007). Armed conflicts, on the other hand, are a type of armed violence consisting in the pursuit of the goals of a state (coalition, social group) through mutual armed actions using armed forces or organised and armed groups (see: Cesarz and Stadtmüller 2002).

Ukraine, a democratic Eastern European country, initially suffered just such a conflict, or rather an attack from Russia, in 2014, which particularly affected the Eastern part of the nation. From that point, living in conflict has had a destructive impact on the psychological and social wellbeing of a generation of children growing up in eastern Ukraine. This has now been exacerbated hugely by the invasion of 2022 which has changed the situation across across the country.

Even before the outbreak of the pandemic, the Ukrainian education system faced challenges arising from the war with Russia in eastern Ukraine. Although the war was localised and hybrid, it did not pose a complete threat to the entire education system. Most primary schools after the Crimean Expansion managed to adapt relatively quickly, evacuating from the occupation zone to other Ukrainian cities (see Tierney 2021). The organisation of learning under martial law is mainly based on lessons learnt during the pandemic. Only distance learning, and blended learning, for every teacher at all levels has become commonplace as the imposition of martial law across Ukraine, due to Russian armed aggression, has maximised education and life in a country where rapid responses, quick and effective solutions are needed. It is important to be able to adapt them to circumstances (in areas of warfare) that change rapidly, sometimes spontaneously, and usually in the direction of rapid destruction.

The greatest damage to mental health during wars is experienced by children. Parties to a conflict very often violate the most basic principle of war: the protection of children (Prucnal 2012). Any armed conflict, often over a long period of time, has a huge impact on the future of generations of children. Lack of access to education for children living in conflict means that they grow up without any chance of proper development.

The last decade of the twentieth century saw a significant decline in the educational enrolment rate in those countries affected by armed conflict. In 1990, at the World Conference in Jomiton, Thailand, UNESCO launched the Education for All programme. However, numerous armed conflicts have obstructed the implementation of the programme's objectives (see: ICRC 2000). In May 2015, the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was opened for endorsement in Oslo, Norway. This was a political commitment to better protect students, teachers, schools and universities during armed conflict, to support the continuation of education during war, and to introduce specific measures to stop the military use of schools. (see: UNICEF 2022a). In May 2017, Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres called on all member states to support the SSD (GCPA 2021). By February 2022, 114 countries had signed it. The most important provisions in the SSD are: *Every boy and girl has the right to an education without fear of violence or attack. [...] Every school should be a protected space for students to learn, and fulfil their potential, even during war.* (GCPA 2021).

On 20 November 2019, Ukraine joined the Safe Schools Declaration and became the 100th country to endorse the provisions of this document. In order to implement the provisions of the SSD, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of Ukraine has prepared a draft Action Plan for its implementation. On 9 September 2021, the International Day for the Protection of Education from Attacks, a roundtable was held in Kyiv with the participation of 1st Deputy Minister of Education and Science Andriy Vitrenko, Deputy Head of UNICEF Ukraine Mikaela Bauer and Director of Save the Children in Ukraine Kateryna Slobodyanyk. The deliberations, organised with the support of development partners, including the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department – ECHO, were also attended by representatives of authorities, international humanitarian organisations and civil society (MES 2021). The event was a reinforcement of support and acceleration of implementation of Ukraine's commitments under the SSD provisions on school safety, ensuring the protection of children and teachers in all educational institutions in eastern Ukraine. By the date of the outbreak of the war, Russia had not signed the Declaration.

It was noted that children aged 6–7 who have lived near the contact line with Russian – occupied territory in eastern Ukraine since the 2014 conflict have never experienced a peaceful life. Moreover, their schooling was also hampered by the pandemic. However, it is sad to note that there are few humanitarian organisations that would count education in emergencies as part of their own relief efforts. All activities related to the defence and security of citizens come to the fore. Education, especially of the youngest, is becoming a concern for parents and teachers.

2. Children and war

Current data reveal the following: the size of the Ukrainian diaspora in Europe has doubled to 10 million people in the period of a few months during early 2022. Until the outbreak of war, there were 5 million Ukrainians living outside their homeland in the European region (6.1 million worldwide, according to the UN) (300gospodarka 2022). More recently, in excess of two million children from Ukraine crossed borders with neighbouring countries in search of safety. In addition, 2.5 million children have been internally displaced. In total, more than 60% of Ukrainian children had to leave their homes. Not all of them had the chance to escape, some stayed in their places of residence. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, said then: *The situation inside Ukraine is spiralling. As the number of children fleeing their homes continues to climb, we must remember that every single one of them needs protection, education, safety and support.* (UNICEF 2022b).

Children have become victims of war. They were deprived of a happy childhood, of carefree play with peers and family. Apart from a sense of security, most of their learning opportunities were taken away from them. The plans of Ukrainian families have become illusory and uncertain for the future. Some children really need communication, interpersonal contact, some want new knowledge when they have ‘free time’, some like to meet many children on Zoom, and some need the support of teachers during war. Some teachers are happy to do what they love even during the war, some appreciate watching children grow and change, and some like to contribute to their future (NUS 2022; MES 2022a).

Many children and teachers have been forced to leave their homes since the Russian invasion. Some have ended up in other European countries as refugees and joined classes in unfamiliar countries and languages. Some have benefited from initiatives by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education that allow them to continue their education online while sheltering them abroad – even if it is not through their own school district (NYT 2022).

The ‘New Ukrainian School’ website collected feedback from teachers and children about the online meetings organised by the Smart Education non-governmental organisation team. For the organisers these were very valuable opinions of the participants, their stories, emotions, what impressed them and what they said to their relatives after these classes (NUS 2022).

3. The functioning of kindergartens and schools during wartime

Warfare always results in the interruption of teaching, either completely or periodically. Hence the important question: *Is the care and education of children in kindergartens and schools still going on in Ukraine during the war?* Talking about education in wartime can sound like an echo of peace. How do you get to school when missiles are falling on the street? How do you let your child go to kindergarten when the city is still in danger of being hit by a rocket? Is it really possible to focus children on something other than war? In answering these questions, it is worth mentioning perhaps the most important function of kindergartens and schools today. It is the support of parents, teachers and pupils. Thanks to the efforts of the authorities and teachers, more than a million Ukrainian children attend school despite the hostilities. In times of war, much of the work of teachers is directed towards the psychological support of pupils – they have the appropriate training and know how to do this.

Children alone in dark places with their ‘gadgets’ – phones and tablets, is the reality of many Ukrainian families during the war. And it is good if this ‘gadget’ has a place to charge and can connect to the internet from a bomb shelter. For some children in Ukraine, even such an option is a luxury. But in relatively safe areas, and in liberated areas, the educational process is gradually being restored, remotely or classroom based (LB 2022).

As of the 11th April 2022, MES reported that in 14 (out of 24) regions of Ukraine, children are taught remotely, and in one region, blended and stationary education of children has been organised. Earlier, the Minister of Education called on educational institutions in a relatively secure situation to resume work. However, the final decision on the form of educational institutions is taken at the level of each region. It happens that in regions where there are no active hostilities, some schools function as centres for displaced persons. Kindergartens are reopening in many places, but they are also working remotely. According to the MES, in several regions some kindergartens operate in a mixed format, some in a regular format. In many districts, some establishments have regular groups and kindergartens work according to the needs of the community in which they are located (Apostrof 2022). Education authorities emphasise that while it is possible to organise distance learning for general education establishments, it is quite difficult for pre-school establishments. Because even if children gather in front of screens and the activities take place for them remotely, they need the presence of an adult, for safety as well as organisational assistance. Where possible, in safe settlements, kindergartens can work offline. As all settlements on Ukrainian territory are at risk of missile strikes, the availability of shelter in an educational institution should be taken into account when organising the educational process (KUS 2022).

For pre-schoolers, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education have launched the NUMO online garden on YouTube, which consists of educational video activities for children aged 3–6 years. The NUMO project aims to help parents organise their children’s free time and stay connected to the educational process (NUMO 2022). The ‘online kindergarten’ consists of forty-minute videos that appear daily on the MES channel. They teach little Ukrainians to read, count, draw and do coordination exercises. In general, everything is like in a normal kindergarten, except that it is online.

As far as schools are concerned, the MES has recommended measures to be taken in a situation of war attacks. Teaching in high-intensity areas has been stopped altogether or has been ordered to go online in consultation with the local military–civil administration. In any case, each school decides how to teach at its own discretion (MES 2022c).

The coronavirus pandemic allowed teachers to make better use of distance learning through the *All-Ukrainian Online School* programme. In addition, private educational institutions opened their educational platforms to all students: *Optima*, *Meridian Lyceum*, *Mozaik Education*. If there is no Internet connection, then within the framework of the project *Lets Learn without Borders*, students can enjoy video lessons in the broadcast of TV channels *PLUS PLUS*, *Pixel*, regional channels of the public broadcaster. If the Internet connection is stable, the same lessons are broadcast on *MEGOGO*, *Kyivstar TV*, *1 + 1 video*, *sweet.tv* and *volia.tv*. platforms (Apostrof 2022).

4. Participants, materials, and methods

24 February is the day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The day, for 7 million children, when Russia tried to take away their future. So far, Russian bombs have killed more than 223 children and injured 408. 1,635 educational institutions have been affected by bombing and shelling, and 126 have been completely destroyed.¹

In order to investigate the state of children’s education and upbringing during the Russian aggression against Ukraine, a survey of Ukrainian teachers was conducted. 120 primary school teachers from different regions took part in the survey. The survey was conducted online using Google’s tool, Google Forms. The survey was posted on the social network Facebook and the free application Viber in various educational groups. It is important to understand that in times of war the internet may be unstable or non-existent. We are sure that in peacetime more teachers would take part in the survey.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions aimed at gaining knowledge: whether and how teachers organise the learning process during warfare?, what is the technical condition of educational institutions?, what is the number of children receiving education?, how is the core curriculum implemented?, what is the psychological condition of children?

Initially, the researchers were morally reluctant as to whether it was ethical to conduct the research under conditions of regular warfare. However, it was decided to ask respondents for honest answers, which was met with much appreciation, thanks and the belief that the results would be made available to the wider community.

The research assumption was a target group of 100 teachers. Understanding the situation, a response was not expected from the whole territory of Ukraine, even from places regularly affected by hostilities. The results obtained during the research were subjected to statistical, quantitative and qualitative analysis.

It is important to note that the whole text is written in different grammatical tenses, because the situation in Ukraine is so dynamic that some facts become outdated overnight and a new, different reality emerges. The text was supplemented on an ongoing basis with the changing situation on the frontlines and, consequently, the educational situation in Ukraine. The intention of the research was to reflect as closely as possible the realities of the prevailing situation, which posed a great difficulty in preserving the chronology and interpreting the research results. It is likely that the questions in the survey would be different today, perhaps more detailed. While creating the questionnaire, we faced a new, unknown situation.

We express our deepest gratitude to the respondents for their voluntary participation in the online survey and their consent to the publication of its detailed results. We guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided to us. The data obtained were used solely for scientific purposes. Given the martial law and the possibility of bombing schools, we cannot identify a specific village, town, or school in Ukraine where kindergarten and primary school teachers work. We will present generalised results on areas on the map of Ukraine (Figure 1).

Looking at the map of Ukraine, we see that not in all regions teachers took part in the survey. This means that they did not have access to the Internet, went abroad (22 thousand Ukrainian teachers) or were afraid that with the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Russian hackers broke into the personal social



Figure 1. Quantitative indicators of teachers who took part in the survey /by regions/.

networking sites of Ukrainian users. Among the respondents, the highest number is in Zakarpattia (70 teachers) and Zhytomyr (19 teachers) regions. The overall picture of respondents by region is as follows: Lviv region – 3, Ivano-Frankivsk – 3, Chernivtsi – 2, Ternopil – 1, Volyn – 2, Rivne – 1, Khmelnytskyi – 1, Vinnitsa – 2, Kyiv – 4, Kirovohrad – 1, Odessa – 2, Sumy – 4, Poltava – 1, Dnipropetrovsk – 2, Zaporozhye – 1, Kharkiv – 1.

Teachers from 6 regions: Chernihiv, Cherkassy, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol did not participate in the study. Since the beginning of May, due to the massive Russian invasion of Ukraine and the need to protect the lives and health of participants in the educational process, as well as limited opportunities to continue learning in temporarily occupied territories, teaching ended on 30 April in Kherson and 2 May in Zaporizhia (SE 2022, 2022a).

Of the 120 respondents who answered the survey questions, 83 people (69.2%) were from villages, although of different sizes. As reported in the media, villages were safer places than cities due to the different type of infrastructure and population (Figure 2).

According to press and media sources, hostilities are mainly in the east of Ukraine (Mariupol, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhansk, Zaporozhye and others), Kiev and its surroundings, Odessa and refugee centres in the west, mainly Lviv, the city closest to the European Union borders. Teachers were therefore asked to provide information on whether hostilities were taking place in their area. Here it was to be expected that these answers would be given mainly by those who live in relatively peaceful places. Others had to be involved in emergency or defensive actions (Figure 3).

A graphical representation of the data shows that most of the respondents were in relatively safe places where there was no direct fighting. Mostly these were teachers from Transcarpathia. Approximately 6% of the respondents were located in regions where attacks regularly took place.

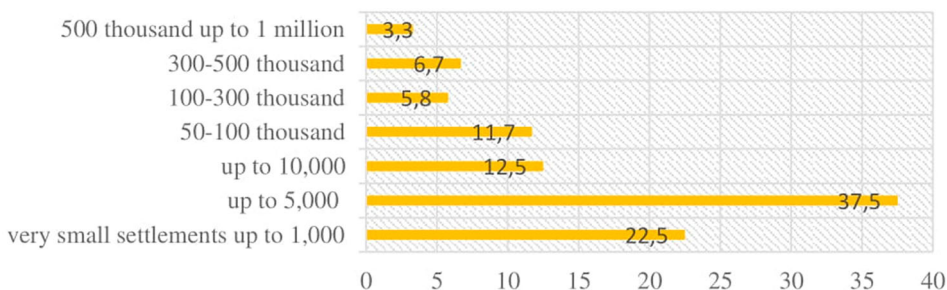


Figure 2. Number of inhabitants in towns according to respondents /percentage data/.

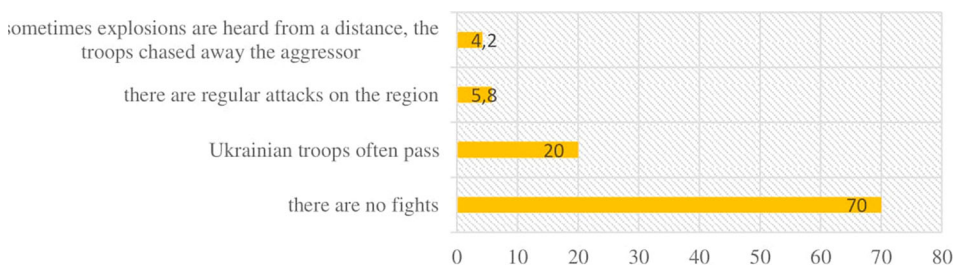


Figure 3. War activities carried out in the places of residence of respondents /percentage data/.

5. Results of research

In the first days of the war all Ukrainians, all spheres of life, including the education system, were dazed, confused and uncertain about the next steps and measures and the continuation of the educational process in a state of war. Despite the disappointing state of affairs and the fact that war is the enemy of education, the distance education process was resumed on 14 March 2022. *Education in all its forms is a discourse and instrument of how humanity learns to analyse extreme conditions, find appropriate solutions and in the broadest sense nurture peace* (see: Tierney 2021).

In regions where the situation was calm, the educational process could be resumed. Due to the fact that in some regions of Ukraine there is a real threat to the life and health of the civilian population, and in most regions the Air Alert is heard several times a day, it was recommended (after the compulsory holiday, which occurred immediately after the outbreak of the war) to organise educational institutions depending on the situation: temporary suspension of the educational process (implementation by employees of educational institutions of measures and tasks defined by the military-civilian administration) and organisation of the process of distance education (in agreement with the military-civil administration) (Ukrinform 2022).

A significant number of children who were not able to evacuate from areas of intense warfare or temporarily occupied areas did not study at all during the occupation. These are residents of the Kiev, Sumy, Chernihiv, Donetsk and Luhansk regions. There, the educational process did not take place at all due to the threat to the life and health of students and educators and the lack of technical conditions for learning (electricity, mobile telephony, Internet) (Cedos 2022). It was important to establish *whether schools were functioning on Ukrainian territory?* It is known that most of them were destroyed already at the beginning of the operations, despite the fact that the aggressor knew the type of facilities being bombed (as in Mariupol, where the Russians killed about 600 people in a theatre building in front of which a sign saying CHILDREN was visible). Some facilities were occupied by the army, refugees from the east of the country and for other war-related needs (Figure 4).

The vast majority of teachers reported that conditions are difficult but that learning takes place, mainly remotely. Some institutions do not function at all because the buildings are heavily damaged. As other answers, teachers indicated mainly: moving classes to other places or organising them in children's homes.

Another key question for the research was *whether classes were being conducted in accordance with the core curriculum?* It was known that the assumptions of the core curriculum (MES 2022d; DES 2022) could not be fully implemented everywhere and initially, when activities were organised for children, they were primarily caring, to support families during difficult times. The answers given were surprising. 93.3% of respondents answered in the affirmative: *we work according to the curriculum*.

In 10 regions of Ukraine, some kindergartens use distance learning elements to work with pupils and parents, some work in a mixed or stationary form. In 6 regions, some kindergartens use distance

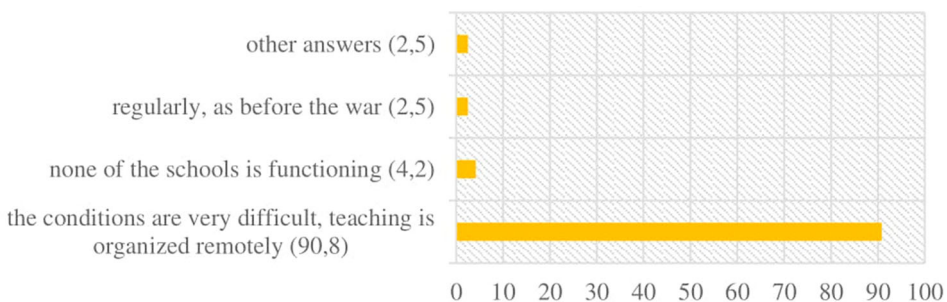


Figure 4. Functioning of school facilities during the war /percentage data/.

learning elements to work with children and parents, and some have established regular groups or continued a mixed or stationary form. More than 3400 pre-school establishments run the educational process. 1800 internally displaced children attend kindergarten. In martial law, distance learning is conducted by teachers in synchronous and asynchronous mode using electronic educational platforms (Google Workspace, Google Classroom, New Knowledge, HUMAN.UA) and online communication services and tools (Zoom, Skype, MS Teams, basic Google services: Gmail, Calendar, Meet, Jamboard, Chat, Hangouts, YouTube and more). Unfortunately, in a wartime environment, a characteristic feature of distance learning is the likelihood of hearing the signal during online meetings: *Attention! Air Alert!*

As of 14 March, the educational process was being resumed in areas where the safety situation allowed it (see: Cedos 2022). Decisions on where and in what form to hold classes were made by the regional administration and educational institutions. In addition to the implementation of the educational process, the issue of psychological support for children also requires constant attention, so it is a mistake to overload them in a distance learning environment. At the same time, attention has been drawn to the requirements: how long can children of different ages work continuously with technical means in lessons so as not to damage their health? These requirements are formulated in particular in the Sanitary Regulations for schools: for pupils of classes I – no more than 10 min, and for pupils of classes 2–4 – no more than 15 min (KUC 2022). So the next question was justified: *In what form does education take place?* (Figure 5)

Considering that Ukrainian communities have been, or are, under Russian occupation for different times and under different conditions, the situation in the field of education is developing according to several scenarios, which may be alternative or coexisting. As the data indicate, most of the classes are held on a platform – online. As can be seen, Ukrainian teachers continue to work mainly remotely, in few cases it is hybrid teaching. Teachers create video lessons, communicate with children via social networks or phone. Pupils who have left their homes can return to study, in temporary accommodation, either in Ukraine or abroad. Teachers, on the other hand, who have the opportunity to work, can do so from anywhere in or outside the country using the internet (NUS 2022).

War takes its toll on all sides of a conflict, especially the side that has been attacked. Its effects are experienced by all adults, but also by children. Every day, stories are written of the fate of children in war, and of those on whom their lives and futures depend. Ukraine has introduced *mentoring*, which national law defines as *unpaid activity of a mentor for providing a child living in an institution for orphans and children deprived of parental care, another institution for children, individual support and assistance, especially in preparation for independent living* (Life 2022).

Psychiatric and psychological research has shown that war has long-term consequences for children and adolescents. During war, children – to varying degrees – face two types of traumatic events:

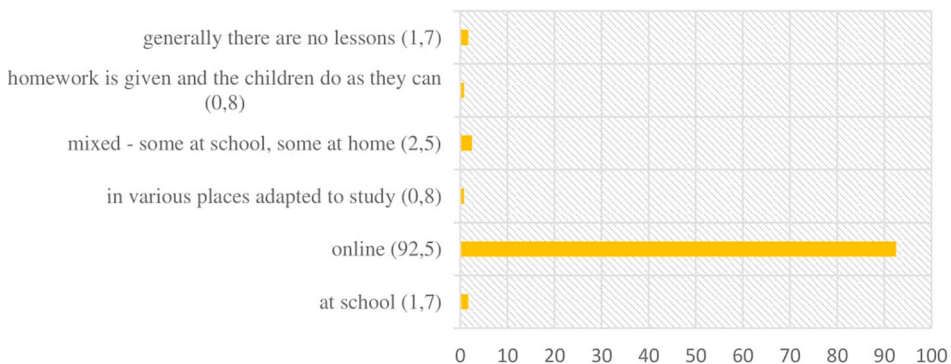


Figure 5. Forms of teaching /percentage data/.

unexpected traumatic events and long-term adverse events that lead to unproductive coping strategies (WCM 2022). As a result, children who have experienced war are much more likely than their peers to suffer from problems such as anxiety syndrome, post – traumatic stress disorder, depression, dissociative disorders (voluntary social isolation, depersonalisation, derealisation, aversion to talking, catatonic syndrome), conduct disorders (including aggression, antisocial behaviour). In short, mental disorders are in fact normal reactions to abnormal events. Thus, the long-term impact of violence on children increases the risk of many, often long-lasting forms of physical, mental and social maladjustment (HEALTH 2022; TVP3 2022; Khan 2022).

A childhood turned upside down – that is what one could say about the situation of children in Ukraine. Despite the inhuman conditions brought about by the war, the children have a tremendous level of vitality which allows them to grow and become fully-fledged individuals – despite the psychological trauma. The children adapt fairly quickly to the new conditions, although it is difficult and not accepted by all.

How did children's behaviour change after the outbreak of war? – is another question addressed to teachers (Figure 6).

Children like children, trivial though it sounds, but, as their teachers note, $\frac{3}{4}$ of them behaving almost normally: they play and seem happy in their own way. However, it is not clear whether these are not just appearances? And do they have any other way out? They are at an age when they need to be active – such are the rules of development. It is often the case that children behave in an overly 'adult' way, do not want to upset their parents and 'pretend' to be happy.

Children are always looking for a sense of security and stability from their parents, but also from their teachers. At some point the question arises, how to talk to a child about war? To talk or not to talk? And at what age should the child be? There are two important things to keep in mind during such conversation: 1/ children feel everything, but they cannot name these feelings, but when they see that something is wrong and do not receive an explanation, they themselves feel guilty; 2/ the explanations must be rational and honest, because they help the child to live more calmly in difficult circumstances, absolutely do not scare them. Talking is difficult but necessary (UNICEF 2022c).

Respondents were asked *if they have conversations with their children about the situation in Ukraine?* (Figure 7)

It is important to bear in mind that not all children have the same sensitivity. Talking about war is not appropriate with everyone and not at every age. As the data show, most teachers occasionally have such discussions. One should think that they know when and what topics can be taken up with children. Almost 15% decide to discuss the war with children and it should be thought that this is only among older children. About 20% decide to talk about the situation in Ukraine after classes, with children who need such conversations. Perhaps they do not talk about the war at home for various reasons: someone has died, someone is on the front line, etc.

Normal life has been shattered for many children. The home situation has changed the social atmosphere and limited contact with peers, and so-called 'going to school', has often turned into

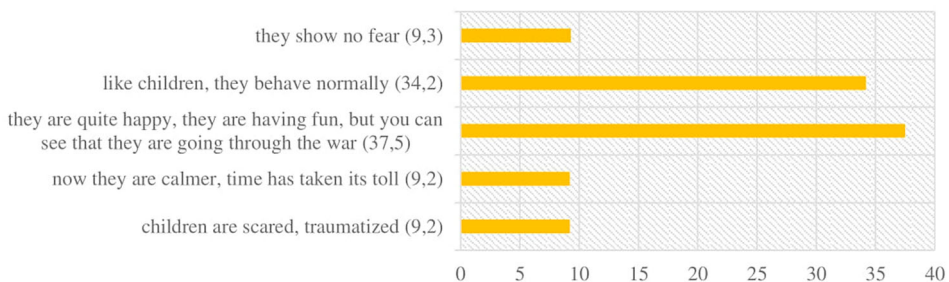


Figure 6. Children's behaviour after the outbreak of hostilities as observed by teachers.



Figure 7. Attempts to talk to children about the situation in Ukraine /percentage data/.

attending lessons remotely in a shelter, basement, or at best, at home. The activities of children studying in dark basements as portrayed by the media include stooped silhouettes and faces illuminated by the brightness of a phone or tablet screen. They want to learn, but in normal conditions. Teachers were asked about their willingness to participate in activities and lessons, despite the difficult conditions, which children certainly understand (Figure 8).

From the data it can be concluded that the desire to go to school for classes was manifested by children from Transcarpathia. It is (was) relatively peaceful there, there is (was) no warfare.² Reluctance or total reluctance to take part in activities was probably shown by children who had lived in occupied territories or had experienced unpleasant experiences related to the war. Their reluctance to leave 'safe' places, mothers and loved ones was very justified in this respect.

Sometimes Russian occupiers in temporarily occupied areas force children and teachers to teach in areas where there is fighting. *While monitoring the social media of the occupying authorities, we discovered information that in the temporarily occupied town of Volnovakha in the Donetsk region, from 11 April 2022, the Russian occupiers are forcing children to go to education establishments* (UT 2022). This is what children, parents and teachers are afraid of.

The children's willingness to participate is one thing – such long isolation is very difficult for them and they expect some kind of change. Another issue is the attitude of parents and their willingness to send their children to kindergartens and schools due to the dynamically changing situation (Figure 9).

Parents are in tears. They would very much like their children to have contact with other children, because they are aware how much they need this for normal, full development. And they want to and they don't want to ... The fact that they are afraid is entirely reasonable. They know the atrocities committed by the Russians against civilians and children, they know the uncertainty of the moment when an air raid may occur. They want to wait out the bad time, even at the sacrifice of promoting their child to the next grade.

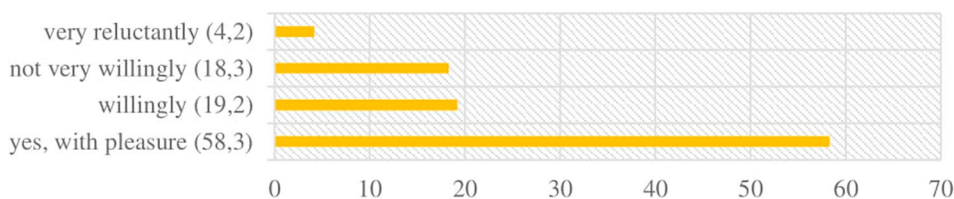


Figure 8. Willingness to 'go to school' of Ukrainian children during hostilities /percentage data/

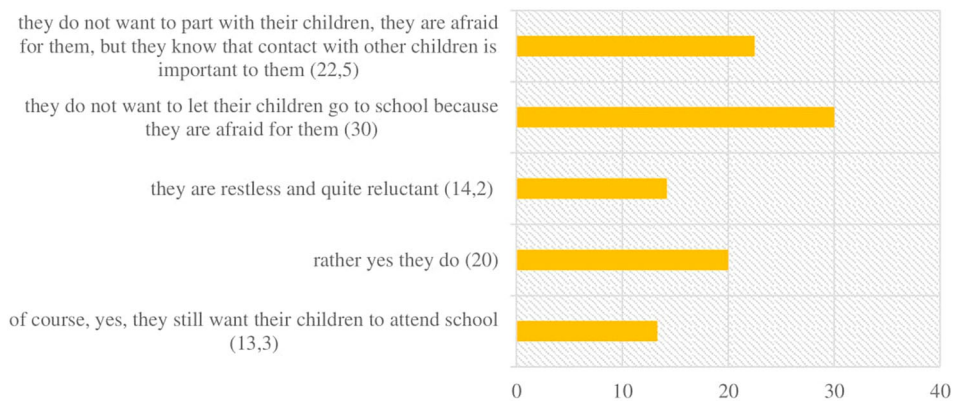


Figure 9. Parents' readiness to send their children to kindergartens and schools during the war /percentage data/.

6. Discussion

In a strategic approach, education has the potential to be a catalyst for effective and sustainable post-war reconstruction. But, as world history shows, war is often a stressor that forces a rapid reassessment of values, changing the vectors of development in favour of those most progressive. Today education in Ukraine faces the challenge of maintaining an active educational process with all possible tools and forms of interaction for those children in kindergartens, primary schools students, high school students and university students. It is necessary to strive to complete the school year and issue documents to graduates, regardless of whether they study in the territory of Ukraine or abroad, and to consider potential ways of organising education for the school year 2022–2023 against the background of military operations in Ukraine, since the life of every Ukrainian is a constant threat (Shkarlet 2022; Public News 2022; SE 2022). In our opinion, all this is feasible mainly in the format of information and communication technology and with the continuation of distance learning, which unfortunately is sometimes difficult to organise under martial law due to a number of factors that we have analysed in the article.

It is difficult to have a specific polemic here. With whom and about what? What is currently happening in Ukraine is unprecedented and let us hope it never happens again.

7. Conclusions

Ukraine's education authorities are doing what they can to sustain the continuity of learning. The MES team is constantly updating the list of useful resources for adults and children for psychological support, training and to acquire important information during the war (see: MES 2022e). Those teachers who have remained in the country are sacrificially providing care and education. They teach children and keep them safe. It may sound trivial, but the life and health of children is the greatest value of humanity. They are suffering, although sometimes you may not see it, because of Russian military aggression. It is an important task for every adult to ensure that children have the knowledge they need to continue living safely. Now, in times of war and immediately afterwards, children's movements inside and outside the buildings they are in should be controlled. The dangers of unfamiliar objects or abandoned toys should be explained to them. There is a high risk of land and objects being mined with explosives.

In a state of war, it is important to organise a learning process that will provide the opportunity to solve the key problems of war. No one even thought that Ukrainians would be living in a time of war in the twenty-first century. *Unfair, ruthless, inhumane ...* - these are the voices heard in online and offline spaces in Ukraine. Between the shelling, bullets and bombing, Ukrainians must look with

confidence to a bright future. And the future of Ukraine is for the creative youth who adapt and want to learn and gain knowledge even under the conditions of war.

Does the end of the war seem imminent or still conceptual?

Let John Lennon's words, as they once were and are today, be heard by the whole civilised world.

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Notes

1. Data as of 06.05.2022.
2. On May 3, Russian troops shelled Transcarpathia for the first time in the 2022 war.

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