

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46502/issn.1856-7576/2023.17.03.4>

Cómo citar:

Hlebova, N., Afanasieva, L., Bukrieieva, I., Glyns'ka, L., & Murtaziiev, E. (2023). Problems of ukrainian school youth in the conditions of forced migration: Sociological dimensions. *Revista Eduweb*, 17(3), 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.46502/issn.1856-7576/2023.17.03.4>

Problems of ukrainian school youth in the conditions of forced migration: Sociological dimensions

Problemas de los jóvenes escolares ucranianos en el contexto de la migración forzada: Dimensiones sociológicas

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Recibido: 05/04/23

Aceptado: 10/06/23

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze the sociological analysis of Ukrainian schoolchildren's attitudes towards the educational environment, learning conditions and current problems of adaptation in countries of temporary residence. The methodology used is an interdisciplinary approach that allows to integrate knowledge of different branches of science about the subject to form a holistic picture of the study. The empirical basis of the article is based on the materials of a sociological study of the educational environment, learning conditions and current problems of adaptation "Forced migration 2022 in the eyes of Ukrainian schoolchildren", conducted by an online survey. It is found that European education systems have responded to the challenges at the state level: they adopt regulations, send out recommendations and manuals for teachers, solve the problems of informatization of education, provide schools with specific tools, and increase the number of teachers. It is established that the main problems of schoolchildren abroad are: language barrier; significant differences in educational programs in Ukrainian and foreign institutions; double load (studying in a Ukrainian and foreign educational institution); imperfect



informatization of education; multi-age classes in schools of the host country; studying new subjects for Ukrainian schoolchildren.

Keywords: migration, Ukrainian schoolchildren, educational environment, informatization of education, educational problems.

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es analizar las actitudes sociológicas de los escolares ucranianos hacia el entorno educativo, las condiciones de aprendizaje y los problemas actuales de adaptación en los países de residencia temporal. Se ha constatado que los sistemas educativos europeos han respondido a los retos a nivel estatal: adoptan normativas, envían recomendaciones y manuales para los profesores, resuelven los problemas de informatización de la enseñanza, dotan a las escuelas de herramientas específicas y aumentan el número de profesores. La base teórica y metodológica del estudio son los principios de los enfoques socio-filosófico, socio-psicológico y sociológico - para generalizar la multidimensionalidad del problema de la educación de los escolares en el contexto de la migración forzada en el marco de la reflexión sociológica. Se establece que los principales problemas de los escolares en el extranjero incluyen: la barrera del idioma; diferencias significativas en los programas educativos en las instituciones ucranianas y extranjeras; doble carga de trabajo de un niño debido a que estudia en una institución educativa ucraniana y extranjera; informatización imperfecta de la educación; diferentes clases de diferentes edades en las escuelas del país de acogida; asistir a lecciones que no se impartieron en una escuela ucraniana.

Palabras clave: migración, escolares ucranianos, entorno educativo, informatización de la educación, problemas educativos.

1. Introduction

In modern conditions, the role of social and personal factors influencing the adaptation of schoolchildren to the adult world, the conditions for successful learning, and planning for the future is growing significantly. Therefore, the subject of sociological science is traditionally school education, objective and subjective characteristics of the processes of individual development of school youth, problems of informatization of education and social formation of schoolchildren and overcoming obstacles on this path. Prior to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops, sociological study of the causes of migration of the Ukrainian population was relevant mainly in the context of implementing preventive measures to overcome the consequences, as well as to maximize the benefits of the results caused by these processes. As of June 2022, the war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has forced a total of about 8 million Ukrainian citizens to flee to other countries in search of safety. As of December 20, 2022, the number of Ukrainians who have crossed the border with the EU countries since February 24, 2022, is more than 16.6 million, including about 3 million children (Rayon.Osvita, 2023).

The figures published by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in January 2023 indicate that as of the beginning of January 2023, there are about 500 thousand Ukrainian schoolchildren abroad. At the same time, as of September 1, 2022, there were 488 thousand of them (Bilenkyi & Kozlovets, 2006).

According to the Center for Public Monitoring and Control, although more than 100 thousand schoolchildren have already returned to Ukraine, the number of students who remain abroad has been constantly fluctuating and amounts to about 620 thousand schoolchildren (Education Ombudsman Serhiy Gorbachev, 2022).

Thus, we have every reason to believe that current migration processes play an extremely important role in the social development of the country, and are even more important for its future. Therefore, the study

of their factors, mechanisms of adjustment, current and future consequences of their impact on the development of Ukrainian post-war society is one of the primary tasks of sociological science.

2. Literature Review

Researchers of the problem of migration in Ukraine O. Kurbet (Kurbet, 2020); educational migration (Bezzubko L., Topchii K.) (Bezzubko & Topchii, 2020); migration to the EU countries (Dmytruk B., Chudaieva I.) (Dmytruk & Chudaieva, 2018), intellectual migration by L. Didkivska (Didkivska, 2020), O. Demydenko (Demydenko, 2019), forced migration by E. Libanova. (Libanova, 2018); re-emigration U. Sadova (Sadova, 2015), Z. Smutchak (Smutchak, 2019) and others mostly believe that an important factor determining the course of migration of certain social groups is to ensure stability and achieve constructive interaction created by the relevant social environment, taking into account the totality of the needs of all subjects of interaction. Since any migration usually carries a number of problems for both the host community and the displaced person, in our case, the problem of considering appropriate social and psychological support, mutual understanding and support of newcomers by the host party is actualized.

According to the works of national sociologists N. Hlebova (Hlebova, 2015), K. Oleksenko, I. Khavina (2021), O. Kryvylova et al., (2022), R. Oleksenko, L. Fedorova (2017), V. Nikitenko et al., (2022), V. Voronkova et al. (2022), V. Humeniuk (Humeniuk, 2020), S. Nechitaylo (2019), the most significant and problematic category of migrants from Ukraine in terms of long-term prospects for sustainable social development of the state is Ukrainian pupils and students. Given the current socio-cultural situation in Ukraine, the situation is significantly complicated by the situation of forced migration of many subjects of the educational process. Therefore, based on the general theoretical approaches to the study of personality development in the works of representatives of the humanistic direction, the socio-cognitive theory of self-actualization of Albert Bandura (Bandura, 2006) and the issue of student activity in the context of learning a new generation by J. Charteris, and D. Smardon (Charteris & Smardon, 2018), our focus is primarily on latent changes in the minds of students living in difficult conditions of emigration.

Therefore, the main field of our attention is the perception of the situation in the minds of pupils and students who live in difficult conditions of emigration and make their daily choices in favor of a particular life strategy, including in the field of education.

3. Methodology

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is based on the principles of socio-philosophical, socio-psychological and sociological approaches – to generalize, within the framework of sociological reflection, the multidimensional nature of the problem of teaching Ukrainian schoolchildren in conditions of forced migration, due to a number of factors of political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-psychological nature. In the analytical part of the study, we used the methodology of an interdisciplinary approach, which allows us to integrate knowledge of various branches of science about the subject to form a holistic picture of the study. The sociological study of the attitude of Ukrainian schoolchildren to the foreign educational environment, learning conditions and current problems of adaptation was conducted by an online survey using a questionnaire in Google Form.

The empirical basis of the article is based on the materials of the sociological study "Forced Migration 2022 in the Eyes of Ukrainian School Youth" conducted by the Center for Sociological Research of Melitopol Bohdan Khmelnytsky State Pedagogical University. The sociological study of the attitude of Ukrainian schoolchildren to the foreign educational environment, learning conditions and current problems of adaptation was conducted by online survey using a questionnaire in Google Form among a group of Ukrainian schoolchildren from the temporarily occupied territories (50%) or from the Ukrainian-controlled

territories (50%) of Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv and Kharkiv regions, aged 13-17, who have been abroad for 3-10 months (Poland, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Germany, France, Canada, USA).

According to UN estimates, 3 million children and youth have left the country since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The largest number of schoolchildren from Ukraine is registered in Poland - over 528 thousand, Germany – about 290 thousand, and the Czech Republic - 70.5 thousand. 30 to 40 thousand Ukrainian children of school age live in Italy, Romania, Spain, and Slovakia. There are countries with very few families: Iceland has 700 children, Montenegro has about 500, Belgium and Malta have less than 300 students (Nechitaylo, 2019).

Most European education systems have responded quickly to the new challenges at the state level: they have adopted regulations, sent out guidelines and manuals for teachers, addressed the problems of informatization of education, provided schools with specific tools, and increased the number of teachers. For example, in the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has published a "Training Manual for Working with Children from Ukraine," which provides expertise and assistance in school integration of children. Spain has developed a National Plan for the Education of Ukrainian Students, which provides for a sufficient number of teaching staff. Extraordinary quotas of school staff have been introduced, including assistants who know Ukrainian and can become translators for students from our country.

One of the generally recognized steps is to involve schoolchildren in studying in the country's educational institutions. According to European educators, this speeds up language acquisition, provides access to psychosocial support, and promotes children's participation in the social life of the country where they live. But not all Ukrainian parents share this view. There are those who believe that they will be here for a short time, so they would like to focus on teaching their children according to Ukrainian standards. However, according to the monitoring data, less than a third of those living in countries such as Denmark, Greece, Croatia, Malta and Romania attend local schools. Most refugee children from Ukraine go to school in Ireland - 92%, Spain - 75%, Italy - 71%, the Netherlands - 66%, and Austria - 63% (Education Ombudsman Serhiy Gorbachev, 2022).

However, the problem of re-emigration is likely to be a major challenge for the future of the Ukrainian state in the near future, as only 13% of respondents to a UN survey of Ukrainian refugees reported plans to return to Ukraine permanently over the next three months. Instead, 44% of respondents do not plan to return within the next three months, and 43% are undecided. Of the latter group, 79% plan to stay in the host country (UNHCR, 2022). Therefore, the question is no less relevant: Will children studying abroad return to Ukraine? (Shevchenko, 2022).

However, despite the difficult circumstances of the war, the New Ukrainian School should make every effort to:

- providing conditions for self-determination and self-realization of its students abroad;
- Acquiring worldview knowledge as a product for the future;
- formation of the student as a subject of active social activity in the near future.

With regard to Ukraine's current socio-cultural situation, the situation is significantly complicated by the situation of forced migration of many subjects of the educational process. Therefore, based on the conclusions of school education practitioners, we believe that an important area of sociological study should be research whose target group is direct students - children and adolescents (Maksimenko et al., 2022).

Based on these circumstances, the target audience of our study was internally displaced persons from among Ukrainian students in different countries of Europe and North America.

The obtained quantitative data were processed in IBM SPSS Statistics 23 and Microsoft Office Excel. The methods of this sociological study were chosen: an online panel with a closed IP address.

In accordance with the selected research parameters, the questionnaire "Forced Migration 2022 in the Eyes of Ukrainian School Youth" we used includes three blocks for identifying the above characteristics:

Block I. Subjective aspects of the social and psychological adaptation of Ukrainian schoolchildren in the context of forced migration (questions 3, 9, 11, 12, 13).

Block II. Factors of influence of the new educational environment on the level of schoolchildren's academic performance in the context of migration (questions 6, 8, 10, 14).

Block III. Influences of educational practice of schoolchildren in conditions of forced migration on plans for further education (questions 15, 16, 1).

4. Results and Discussion

As a practical application of sociological methods for studying the attitudes of Ukrainian schoolchildren towards the foreign educational environment, learning conditions, imperfect informatization of education, and current problems of adaptation in the context of forced emigration, we present the results of a study that included an online survey of a group of Ukrainian schoolchildren in foreign countries. The group surveyed was made up of schoolchildren aged 13-17 who have been abroad for 3-10 months (Poland, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Germany, France, Canada, and the United States), having left the temporarily occupied territories (50%) or the government-controlled territories (50%) of Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, and Kharkiv regions. School education abroad was continued by 88.9% of respondents, while 11.1% of respondents did not have this opportunity. Distance learning in Ukrainian schools is being continued by 70.6% of respondents, while 29.4% are studying in schools in the host country.

The main results of the study on the attitude of Ukrainian students to the influence of the foreign educational environment, learning conditions and current problems of adaptation.

Block I. Subjective aspects of socio-psychological adaptation of Ukrainian schoolchildren in the context of forced migration (questions 3, 9, 11, 12, 13).

3. How do you define your emotional state in forced emigration?

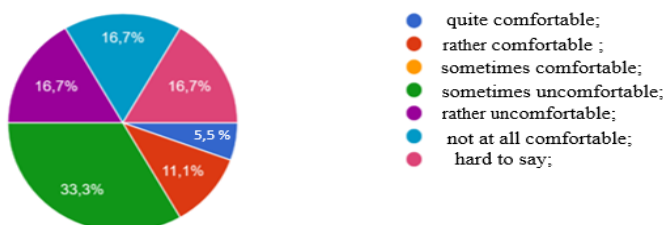


Figure 1. Self-assessment of schoolchildren emotional state abroad.

Only less than 10% of surveyed students feel completely comfortable abroad; 16.7% feel rather comfortable. A significant part of the survey participants (33.3%) indicate problems with their emotional state, 16.7% of respondents feel extremely uncomfortable, and the same number of respondents have not decided on their assessment (Fig. 1).

9. How satisfied are you with your studies in forced emigration?



Figure 2. Assessment of schoolchildren satisfaction with studying abroad.

As we can see, despite the problems with emotional state, about half of the respondents are satisfied with studying in these conditions (11.1% - very satisfied; 44.5% - rather satisfied). The number of extremely dissatisfied with studying abroad is less than 5%, 11.1% are inclined to a negative assessment, and 27.8% have not decided on the answer (Fig. 2).

11. How do teachers treat you in your host country?

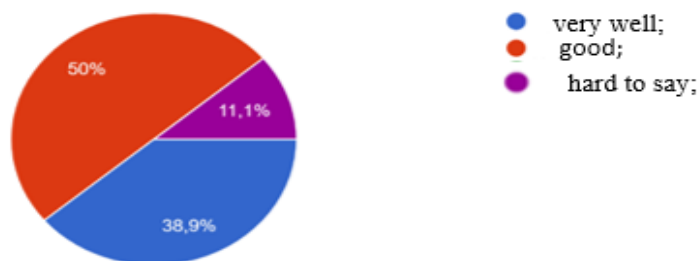


Figure 3. Teachers' attitudes towards schoolchildren in the host country.

Students' subjective assessment of teachers' attitudes towards them in conditions of forced stay abroad shows the following: 88.9% define it as good and very good, 11.2% are undecided (Fig. 3).

12. How do students in your new class treat you in the host country?

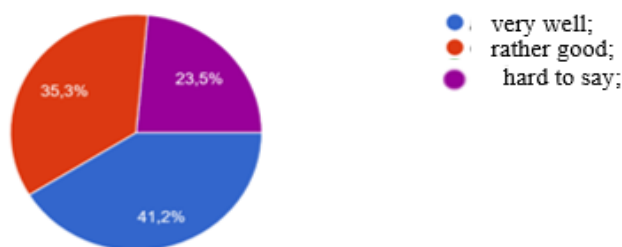


Figure 4. Students' attitudes toward Ukrainian schoolchildren

The respondents' assessment of the situation with relations in the new class is similar, mostly positive: 41.2% report a very good attitude, 35.3% rate it as good, and 23.5% are undecided (Fig. 4).

13. What are your relations with other schoolchildren -emigrants from Ukraine?

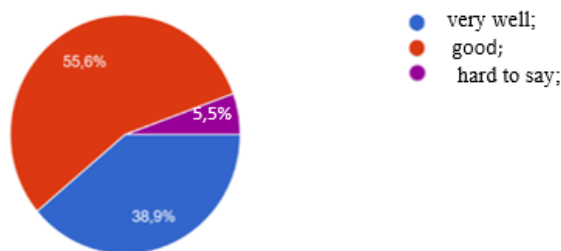


Figure 5. Assessment of relationships with other migrant schoolchildren.

Their relationships with other migrant students are considered very positive by 38.9% of respondents, and rather positive by 55.6% of students (Fig. 5).

Thus, summarizing the data obtained on the subjective aspects of social and psychological adaptation of Ukrainian schoolchildren in conditions of forced emigration, we can note the general positive assessment of respondents regarding their current school environment. However, more than half of the survey participants indicate problems with their emotional state. Nevertheless, about half of the respondents are quite satisfied with their studies in these conditions (11.1% - very satisfied; 44.5% - rather satisfied).

Block II. Factors of influence of the new educational environment on the level of schoolchildren's academic performance in the context of forced migration (questions 6, 8, 10, 14).

6. Did you find the foreign language you learned at school in Ukraine useful?

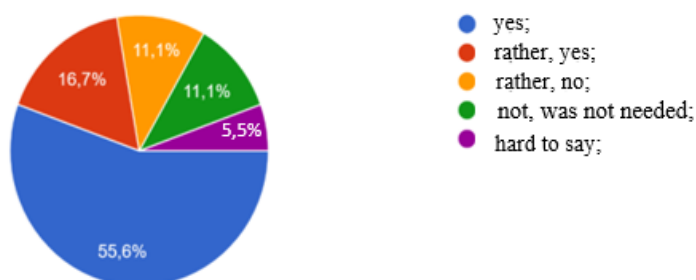


Figure 6. Use of a foreign language learned at school in Ukraine.

Consideration of the factors influencing the new educational environment on the level of schoolchildren's performance in the context of migration allows us to state that more than 70% of respondents used the foreign language knowledge gained in Ukraine, while about 25% did not use this knowledge for various reasons. The vast majority of students (72.3%) made efforts to master the language of the host country (Fig. 6).

7. Did you try to learn the language of the country you were in?

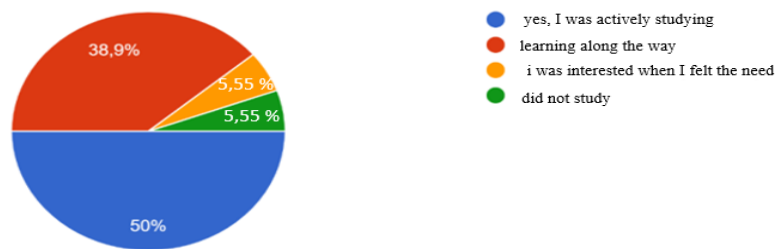


Figure 7. Activity of Ukrainian students in learning the language of the host country

According to the survey, only half of the respondents (50%) actively learn the language of the host country, 38.9% learned it as they communicated, 5.6% were interested only when they felt the need, and 5.5% did not try to learn at all (Fig. 7).

8. How do you assess the success of your studies in forced emigration?

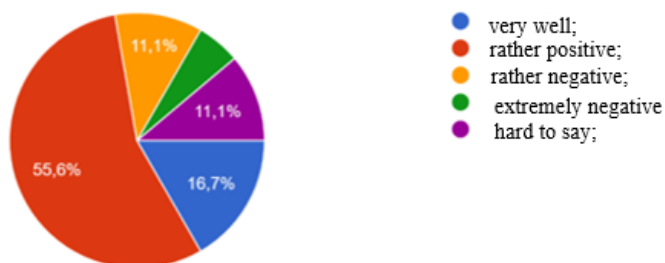


Figure 8. Assessment of the success of studying abroad.

Overall, more than 70% of respondents consider their studies to be successful. About 20% of respondents gave a negative assessment of studying abroad. The assessment of the difficulty of studying abroad among the respondents was distributed as follows: an invariant answer (in some ways harder, in some ways easier) was chosen by 66.7% of participants; more than 20% of students consider it difficult and very difficult to study; only about 5% of students found it easy (Fig. 8).

10. How difficult was it for you to study in exile?



Figure 9. Assessment of the difficulty of studying abroad

The results of the study show that only 27.7% of respondents still found it difficult to study abroad (22.2% - very difficult, 5.5% - difficult). 66.7% of respondents believe that in some ways it was difficult and in others it was easy to study abroad. And only 5.6% of respondents found it easy to study (Fig. 9).

14. What are the main problems that arose while studying abroad?



Figure 10. Main factors of difficulties in studying abroad

We can also state that the overwhelming majority of respondents expectedly attributed a difficult emotional state (55.6%) (anxiety for relatives and friends) and the language barrier (22.2%) to the main reasons for difficulties in studying abroad. Out of the rest of the proposed options, 4 positions were noted: material conditions, lack of textbooks, lack of friends, and time coincidence of class hours - about 5% each (Fig. 10).

Block III. Influences of educational practice of schoolchildren in conditions of forced migration on plans for further education (questions 15, 16, 17).

15. What are the main positive aspects of your stay abroad?

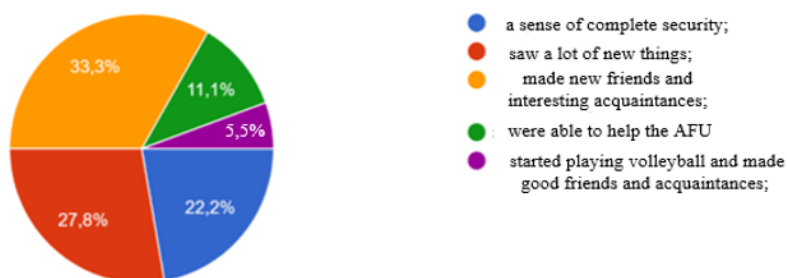


Figure 11. Positive aspects of staying abroad

Among the positive aspects of their stay abroad, 22.2% of respondents mentioned feeling completely safe, 33.3% - the opportunity to make new friends, and 27.8 respondents - to broaden their horizons. It should be noted that 11% of students mentioned the opportunity to participate in helping the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Fig. 11).

16. Do you want to continue your school education abroad?

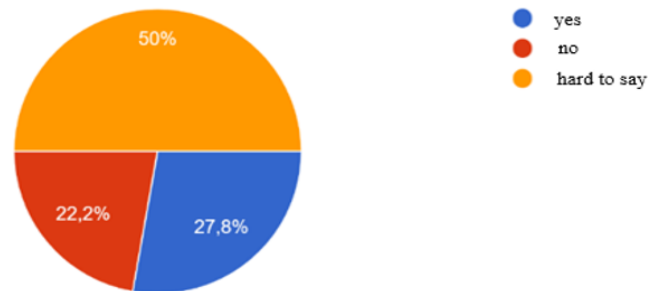


Figure 12. Desire to continue school education abroad.

27.5% of respondents firmly expressed their desire to continue their school education abroad, 50% are still considering, and only 22.2% of students expect to return home (Fig. 12).

17. Do you have a desire to pursue higher education abroad?

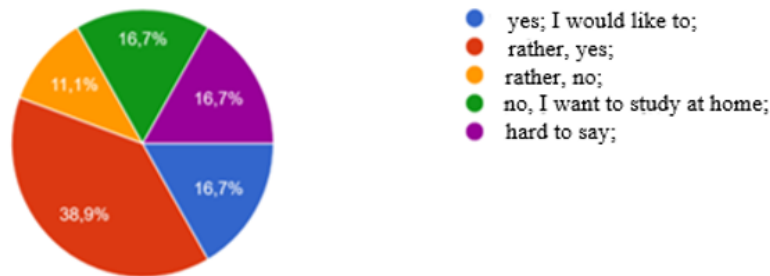


Figure 13. Desires and intentions to obtain professional education abroad

About 16.7% of students answered affirmatively about their intention to receive professional education abroad, 38.9% of respondents have a strong desire to do so, and 16.7% are thinking about it. Less than a third of students (27.8%) are inclined to return to Ukraine to continue their education in higher education institutions (Fig. 13).

Implementation stages

Our study confirms the main conclusions of a large group of researchers on educational migration (Bezzubko L., Topchii K.) (Bezzubko & Topchii, 2020); migration to the EU (Dmytruk B., Chudaieva I.) (Dmytruk & Chudaieva, 2018), intellectual migration of L. Didkivska (Didkivska, 2020), O. Demydenko (Demydenko, 2019), forced migration of E. Libanova (Libanova, 2018). Libanova (2018); re-emigration by U. Sadova (2015), Z. Smutchak (2019), on the importance of ensuring stability and achieving constructive interaction created by the relevant social environment, taking into account the totality of the needs of all subjects of interaction for displaced social groups. The research methodology offered by modern sociological science (interviews, focus group discussions, online surveys, etc.) makes it possible to describe the features, trends, and main problems of Ukrainian schoolchildren in the context of forced emigration.

Since any migration usually carries a number of problems for both the host community and the displaced person, in our case, the problem of considering appropriate social and psychological support is relevant, so in our survey we focused on three relevant practical aspects:

- social and psychological adaptation of Ukrainian schoolchildren in the conditions of forced emigration;
- the role of the educational environment of the host country in the self-assessment of Ukrainian schoolchildren's performance in the context of emigration;
- the factor of educational practices of Ukrainian schoolchildren in conditions of forced emigration on planning for the near future.

Considering the factors that influence the new educational environment of Ukrainian students abroad, it can be argued that more than 70% of respondents used the foreign language knowledge gained in Ukraine, while about 25% did not use this knowledge for various reasons. The vast majority of students made significant efforts to master the language of the host country. Overall, over 70% of respondents consider their studies to be successful. The assessment of the difficulty of studying abroad revealed the following: 66.7% of participants chose an invariant answer (in some ways harder, in others easier); more than 20% of students believe that it was difficult and very difficult to study; only about 5% of students believe that it was easy. It can also be stated that the vast majority of respondents, as expected, attributed a difficult emotional state (55.6%) and a language barrier (22.2%) to the main reasons for the difficulties of studying abroad. No more than 5% of respondents consider other options important: material conditions, lack of textbooks, lack of friends, and coincidence of class schedules.

These works confirm the conclusions of the analytical materials on education in the conditions of war by O. Maksimenko (Maksimenko, 2022) and S. Shevchenko (Shevchenko, 2022) that the socio-educational problem of pupils and students who are displaced is actualized by latent changes in the minds of students living in difficult conditions of emigration. It is not without reason that personality orientations in the process of going abroad are associated with changes in motivational aspects, in particular, the vast majority of students are in one way or another significantly influenced by the educational and social environment of the countries of temporary residence. Their desire to continue their school education abroad was firmly expressed by 27.5% of respondents, 50% are still thinking about it, and only 22.2% of students expect to return home. About 16.7% of students affirmatively stated their intention to receive professional education abroad, 38.9% of respondents have a strong desire to do so, and 16.7% are still thinking about this issue. Less than a third of students (27.8%) are inclined to return to Ukraine to continue their studies at a higher education institution.

As we can state, most European education systems have responded quickly to new challenges at the state level: they adopt regulations, send out recommendations and manuals for teachers, solve problems of informatization of education, provide schools with specific tools and increase the number of teachers. One of the generally recognized steps is to involve students in the country's educational institutions, which, according to European educators, speeds up language acquisition, provides access to psychosocial support, and promotes children's participation in the public life of the country where they live. However, not all parents of Ukrainian students share this view. Therefore, based on the identified socio-psychological, socio-pedagogical, and sociological approaches to the problem of education of schoolchildren - forced migrants, at this stage of the study we can state that important parameters of the sociological study of the state of education of Ukrainian schoolchildren in these conditions are both subjective characteristics and a number of external factors - socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-psychological and technological.

We believe that today the problem of returning students from forced emigration is also actualized by the fact that Ukrainian society is entering a new historical and social space in the context of an extreme increase in the pain thresholds of most social strata and the transformation of the worldview of society, which allows us to attribute the use of sociological methods to study the attitude of Ukrainian students towards the

foreign educational environment, learning conditions, imperfect informatization of education and actual problems of adaptation in conditions of forced emigration to the necessary and timely tasks of sociological science.

5. Conclusions

In this context, our data on the subjective aspects of the social and psychological adaptation of Ukrainian schoolchildren in the context of forced emigration indicate a generally positive assessment of the respondents regarding their current school environment. However, more than half of the survey participants indicate significant problems with their emotional state. Children have their own opinions, and they can be decisive.

It is obvious that without qualified professional help, many children will not be able to make an informed decision and return home safely, where they have experienced so much pain and fear. Therefore, it is important to set up hotlines in schools, qualified assistance groups, and organize individual meetings both online and offline to provide students and their parents with advice on the educational aspects of the re-emigration process.

For children far from their homes, every piece of news, every online lesson, for example, on the history of Ukraine, the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian art, as well as participation in events to support the Ukrainian state in its fight against the aggressor, is important.

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