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International students adaptation to the educational environment of Ukrainian universities: Hearing the student voices

Adaptación de los estudiantes internacionales al entorno educativo de las universidades Ucranianas: escuchar las voces de los estudiantes

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of adaptation of international students to the Ukrainian educational environment. The adaptation of international students is carried throughout the entire period of study, but it is especially difficult in the first year. Therefore, the study of the adaptation process, its successful organization contributes to the faster inclusion of international students in the new environment, facilitates the process of their education. This study is a reflection of the real state of needs and problems of international students not only in the educational environment, but also in Ukraine in general. The purpose of the article is to study the challenges and experience of adaptation of international students residing in Ukraine. Methods of analysis, synthesis and systematization of data received after application of questionnaire on the adaptation of international students were used.

Keywords: adaptation, didactic/social-cultural/social-psychological components, educational environment, international students, higher education institution.

Resumen

El artículo está dedicado al análisis de la adaptación de los estudiantes internacionales al entorno educativo ucraniano. La adaptación de los estudiantes internacionales se lleva a cabo durante todo el período de estudios, pero es especialmente difícil en el primer año. Por lo tanto, el estudio del proceso de adaptación, su organización exitosa contribuye a la más rápida inclusión de los estudiantes internacionales en el nuevo entorno, facilita el proceso de su educación. Este estudio es un reflejo del estado real de las necesidades y los problemas de los estudiantes internacionales no solo en el entorno educativo, sino también en Ucrania en general. El propósito del artículo es estudiar los desafíos y la experiencia de adaptación social de los estudiantes internacionales que residen en Ucrania. Se utilizaron métodos de análisis, síntesis y sistematización de los datos recibidos después de la aplicación del cuestionario sobre la adaptación de los estudiantes internacionales.

Palabras clave: adaptación, componentes didácticos/socioculturales/sociopsicológicos, entorno educativo, estudiantes internacionales, institución de educación superior.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, there has been a growing interest in researching the problems faced by the student youth while adapting to new life, education and work conditions in the context of intensification of migration processes and deepening of international contacts in the education field. In particular, the issue of adaptation of international students to the conditions of Ukrainian higher school intensifies the interest of scholars. The higher education internationalization, the academic mobility of students within the framework of trans-European educational programs, the increase in the number of international students of institutions of higher education, the expansion of international activities has become an indicator of the education system attractiveness and a significant factor in the state policy and university strategy (Suslova, 2019).

Since the beginning of military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, migration processes in Ukraine have significantly intensified. The communities of the western regions of Ukraine have faced serious challenges regarding the urgent needs solving of internally displaced people, including educational ones. Thousands of international students who studied at universities in the Crimea, in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were forced to transfer to universities located on the safer territories of Ukraine. Since then, Uzhhorod National University (UzhNU), located in the Transcarpathian region – most western part of Ukraine, has welcomed thousands of international students.

However, the quality of education, which to a greater extent depends on the effective adaptation to the environment, remains one of the main criteria among the international students, affecting the choice of higher education institution for studies. The inclusion in the world rankings serves as the success criterion of modern universities. Currently, one of the most authoritative rankings is the global QS World University Rankings: EECA. In 2022 UzhNU occupied the 251-300 position among the best universities of developing countries of Europe and Central Asia. As of 2022, among the higher education institutions of Ukraine by the international student ratio UzhNU ranked the 4th position. In particular, 1.623 international students from 25 countries of the world studied at 10 faculties of UzhNU in 2022. Approximately 1.300 international students enrolled to the specialty "Medicine" at the Medical Faculty #2 with the English language of teaching, established in 2016.

With international students, new social problems related to the stay and study appeared in the student body structure. As summarized by Gu et al. (2010), adaptation of international students to the new educational environment lasts longer and continues throughout the stay with challenges. It is especially difficult in the first year of studies. Therefore, the thorough attention to the process of adaptation and its

successful organization contributes to the faster inclusion to the educational environment. For high-quality assimilation of knowledge on curriculum, it is necessary to take into account the mentality, psychological state, features of national self-consciousness, since among main difficulties are the psychological ones, in addition to the content-subject, language, didactic, and organizational. International students need to adapt to the educational environment, fit into the basic norms of the international team, find a sense of academic equality, and at the same time study to get a profession. However, the process of mastering professional competences by international students in the Ukrainian higher education institutions is complicated by significant differences in education systems, values, traditions, rules of behavior. It is also necessary to take into account the issues of racial equality, bureaucracy, household problems, the climate, etc., which may multiply the difficulties experienced.

The above mentioned actualizes the issue of adaptation of international students to the Ukrainian educational environment, since the quality of their professional competence formation and the effectiveness of their future professional activities depend on it.

In the light of these factors, in this study we focus on the experience and challenges international students residing in Ukraine face in the process of adaptation.

2. Literature review

The concept of "adaptation" varies in different fields. Scholars define adaptation as a process and as a result. They are united in the idea that adaptation takes place within the system "individual – society". Sorokin interprets adaptation, its essence and varieties through the relationship with the system of value orientations of an individual and society as a whole, as well as with social mobility. Parsons considers adaptation through the system "individual – society" and believes that social system is a spontaneous result of the processes of its components interaction (Ruchka, 2007).

Berry (2005), Lewthwaite (1996), Zhou et al., (2008) claim, that adaptation is a continuous process and involves striving for a balance between an individual and environment, adjusting and handling stress at different levels, requiring a lot of effort. It primarily concerns the peculiarities of mutual influence and penetration of values, instructions, and long-term plans implemented in the environment (Pachkovskyy, 2001).

GulRaihan and Sandaran (2017) provide the main reasons for the international students to choose their studies overseas – the search for: new environment; different lifestyle and society; new education system; better quality higher education institutions etc.

The phenomenon of adaptation of international students to the environment of higher education institutions is researched within the social-pedagogical or diactic (Bilyk, 2014), social-cultural (Quinton, 2020), and social-psychological context (Weidman, 2006).

There is a relatively small body of scientific literature with analysis, generalization, and systematization of the data on the main challenges international students meet in the process of adaptation to the new Ukrainian educational environment.

Ivanonkiv (2014), Klipachenko and Levkov (2021), Shcherbyak (2015) list the obstacles to the successful adaptation: longing for a family and friends; lack of motivation; depression; stress; worries; anxiety; culture shock; loneliness; reluctance to enter the communicate with others; insufficient understanding of educators and the education system; lectures and assignments misunderstanding; conflicts; poor knowledge of the language of the country of residence; reluctance to meet new social norms and interaction with people of another culture. On these grounds we agree with Kachynskyy (2018), who comes to the conclusion that

during the adaptation of international students to the new educational environment, it is necessary to provide: social-pedagogical supervision (i.e. social-pedagogical activities carried out during the entire period of study); social-pedagogical assistance at the stage of social integration; social-pedagogical support at the stage of social individualization in the process of acculturation through the interaction of international students with educators, mentors, administrative staff, etc. by coordinating the positive efforts of representatives of educational-cultural environment of the university and the social-cultural environment. Supervision, assistance, and support lead to the creation of optimal conditions for the effective adaptation of international students.

Savka et al., (2022) study the main components of adaptation of international students in conditions of quarantine caused by COVID 19. The scholars conclude that general social adaptation, social distancing and communication with other people, nostalgia and adaptation to the new environment become the most important issues for the academic success of international students.

Miziuk (2014) generalized the difficulties that international student experience in the new educational environment of Ukrainian universities:

- i. Educational-cognitive – associated with insufficient language training, differences in the education system, new requirements and knowledge of control systems.
- ii. Social-cultural – associated with learning new things on a social and cultural environment; overcoming the language barrier in solving communication problems.
- iii. Social-physiological – associated with restructuring of personality, entering the new environment, psycho-emotional stress, climate change, personal safety issues (tolerance and individual misunderstandings with local residents and representatives of other nationalities).

The priority tasks of higher education institutions are: 1) to set favorable conditions for effective adjustment to the educational and cultural environment of international students who have not been fully prepared for the successful educational and cultural interaction; 2) to help international students to overcome psychological, communicative and academic barriers in their adaptation process, which is a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of educational tasks, as well as interpersonal and intercultural interaction in the educational environment (Smolikevych et al., 2020).

Hu (2017) claims that adaptation of international students to the Ukrainian educational environment is a complex process of a active development and adaptation to the new social-cultural environment due to the implementation in higher education institutions of a set of conditions that ensure the acquisition and actualization by international students of basic elements of foreign culture, intercultural interaction skills, and educational-cognitive activity. This contributes to their successful professional-personal life formation and to the development in the new social environment. The constituent elements of student adaptation process are: subject of adaptation (an individual or a group that needs to adapt to the surrounding social environment); adaptation environment (external environment to which one needs to adapt); interaction of subject and environment (presupposes the adaptation process continuity, since the first two elements of the adaptation process constantly change).

Nyemets et al., (2016) define two groups of factors contributing to the better adaptation of international students to the new educational, cultural, and social environment: those that depend on students themselves; those related to the activities of educators. On the part of students, important factors are: the appropriate level of knowledge of instruction, the level of the basic training, individual ability to study, the peculiarities of the national mentality, etc. Educators, in turn, are to be not only competent in teaching a subject, but are: to have a high level of mastery of modern pedagogical technologies, to improve constantly professional skills, to be ready to assist international students in overcoming difficulties. A significant role

in the international students adaptation to the conditions of new education institution also belongs to the mentor of the academic group.

As a rule, international students are not affected by a single factor in the natural conditions of higher education institutions, but by a complex of environmental factors. In this respect, when researching the international students adaptation, scholars (Hu, 2017; Merola et al., 2019; Boiaryn & Zavatska, 2019) emphasise the importance to include the following components in the structure of adaptation of international students to the educational environment of Ukraine: didactic social-cultural, and social-psychological.

We cannot but agree with this position and in our study we present the results of sociological survey on the issue of adaptation of international students to the educational environment of Ukraine by the didactic, social-cultural and social-psychological components.

3. Methodology

The sociological survey on the topic "Adaptation of international students to the new educational environment" was conducted by the "Center for Sociological Research and Social Initiatives" of the Faculty of Social Sciences at UzhNU during January-February 2022. Our study included 128 international students enrolled in the Medicine program at the Medical Faculty #2 of UzhNU for the 2022/2023 academic year.

The majority of respondents were from India (85.2%), with smaller numbers from Nigeria (6.2%), Ghana (2.2%), UAE (1.6%), Pakistan (1.6%), Bangladesh (1.6%), Poland (0.8%), and Great Britain (0.8%). Out of all the respondents, 58.6% were male and 41.4% were female. The majority of respondents fell within the age range of 18-24 (93.8%), while only 6.3% were between 24-30 years old.

Regarding the duration of their stay in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, 35.2% of international students had resided for six months to a year, 28.1% for more than a year, 32% for more than two years, and 4.7% for more than three years. In terms of accommodation, 64.1% of respondents resided in a rented apartment, 6.3% in a rented house, 22.7% in a hotel or hostel, 4.7% in a university hostel, and 2.2% in their own property.

Adaptation was assessed based on factors such as feeling at ease in the environment, involvement in social activities, good adjustment, the presence of close social relations, and social skills contributing to successful integration.

We employed methods of analysis, synthesis, and systematization of data obtained from a questionnaire on the issue of adaptation of international students. To ensure maximum objectivity and reliability, the survey was conducted anonymously. All the questions were compiled into a single questionnaire, with each international student responding to each question. The obtained results were statistically processed according to standard procedures, considering measures such as the mean, mean error, absolute and relative values, as well as minimum and maximum indices.

4. Results and Discussion

Statistical processing of the data obtained from the questionnaire has allowed to provide the following results by the didactic, social-cultural and social-psychological components.

To the question on the educational process organization, the answers distributed as following: 25% (32 respondents) indicated the high level of organization of the educational process, 64.1% (84 respondents) indicated the satisfactory level, 12.5% (16 respondents) were dissatisfied with the quality of education in

general, 4.7% (6 respondents) complained on being overloaded with classes, 35.9% (46 respondents) mentioned the discrepancy between the studied courses and the specialty they were acquiring.

To the question on satisfaction with the organizational and material base of UzhNU, the answers distributed as following (see Table 1):

Table 1.
Satisfaction with the organizational and material base

Aspect	Fully satisfied		Rather satisfied		Rather unsatisfied		Fully unsatisfied	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Schedule of classes organization	39	50	48.4	62	9.4	12	3.2	4
Access to the department, dean's office, library, administrative part	45.3	58	28.9	37	14.9	19	10.9	14
Access to the scientific literature sources necessary for the preparing to the classes	53.1	68	23.4	30	18.8	24	4.7	6
Access to the Internet	25.8	33	38.3	49	21.9	28	14	18
Availability of well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, medical equipment	43.7	56	30.5	39	13.3	17	12.5	16

To the question on satisfaction with the atmosphere and psychological climate in the educational process, the answers distributed as following (see Table 2):

Table 2.
Satisfaction with the psychological climate in the educational process

Aspect	Fully agreed		Rather agreed		Rather disagreed		Fully disagreed	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
I feel comfortable while communicating with my classmates, students of other specialties	25	32	62.5	80	9.4	12	3.1	4
I feel comfortable while communicating with a mentor	18	23	70.3	90	10.1	13	1.6	2
I feel comfortable while communicating with educators, the department staff	22.7	29	67.2	86	7.8	10	2.3	3
There were cases of biased attitude towards me personally on the part of educator(s)	5.5	7	25.8	33	45.3	58	23.4	30
My expectations regarding education coincided with what I received	18.7	24	55.5	71	16.4	21	9.4	12

To the question on assessing the chances on realizing life plans having received an education in the Ukrainian universities, the answers distributed as following: 43% (55 respondents) estimated the chances as very high, 33.6% (43 respondents) estimated the chances as high, 17.2% (22 respondents) estimated the chances as average, 1.6% (2 respondents) estimated the chances as low, 2.3% (3 respondents) estimated the chances as very low, 2.3% (3 respondents) could not answer this question.

To the question on the level of command of the Ukrainian language, the answers distributed as following: 44.5% understood the interlocutors if they spoke slowly and clearly, 42.2% could support a conversation on everyday topics, but made grammatical mistakes, 13.3% did not understand the Ukrainian language at all.

To the question on having Ukrainian friends among friends, the answers distributed as following: 2.3% (3 respondents) – had many Ukrainian friends, 55.5% (71 respondents) – had several Ukrainian friends, 42.2% (54 respondents) – communicated only with countrymen. Respondents also noted, that they received the most significant help and support in the process of social-cultural adaptation from their countrymen (75%), from the dean's office and mentors (61%), from educators (36%).

To get acquainted with culture and traditions of Ukrainian society, of a higher education institution, international students participated in various social activities (see Table 3).

Table 3.
Participation in various social activities

Participation in	Active		Periodical		Not interested in	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Local festivals and fairs	20.3	26	56.3	72	23.4	30
Concerts	18.7	24	47.7	61	33.6	43
Charity events	15.6	20	51.6	66	32.8	42
Student events	37.5	48	49.2	63	13.3	17
Local religious events	25	32	51.6	66	23.4	30
Personal national religious events	57	73	34.4	44	8.6	11
Celebrating of local holidays	26.6	34	53.1	68	20.3	26
Celebrating of national holidays	58.6	75	35.9	46	5.5	7

Free time organization is an important component for the friendships and getting acquainted with new norms of behavior. Thus, we studied the activities the international student participated in (see Table 4).

Table 4.
Free time organization

Activities	Several times a month		Several times a week		Every day		Almost never	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Sports activities	35.9	46	31.3	40	3.1	4	29.7	38
Traveling	35.9	46	8.6	11	0	0	55.5	71
Earning money	3.9	5	9.4	12	4.7	6	82	105
Learning languages	20.3	26	49.2	63	18.8	24	11.7	15
Chilling with friends	12.5	16	53.1	68	30.4	39	3.9	5

International students evaluated the social distance between them and Ukrainians (see Table 5):

Table 5.
Social distance between international students and Ukrainians

I would like (allow) seeing Ukrainians as....	Agreed		Rather agreed		Disagreed		Difficult to answer	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
my family members, close relatives	48.4	62	26.6	34	9.4	12	15.6	20
my close friends	75	96	18	23	3.9	5	3.1	4
my neighbors	77.3	99	12.5	16	4.7	6	5.5	7
my colleagues	77.3	99	12.5	16	4.7	6	5.5	7
as citizens of my country	71.1	91	16.4	21	3.9	5	8.6	11
visitors, tourists of my country	82	105	8.6	11	3.9	5	5.5	7

To the question on being satisfied with the attitude of others towards them (international students) and their countrymen, the answers distributed as following: 21.9% (28 respondents) were very satisfied with the attitude, 48.4% (62 respondents) rather satisfied with the attitude, 14.8% (19 respondents) rather dissatisfied with the attitude, 10.2% (13 respondents) fully dissatisfied with the attitude, 4.7% (6 respondents) could not answer the question. Respondents also evaluated the attitude of others towards them in particular locations (see Table 6):

Table 6.
Attitude of others towards international students

Location	Positive		Neutral		Negative		Difficult to answer	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Public transport	39.8	51	50	64	5.5	7	4.7	6
Stores, shops	4.7	60	42.2	54	9.4	12	1.6	2
Public catering establishments	59.4	76	37.5	48	3.1	4	0	0
State institutions (migration service, city administration, tax administration)	54.7	70	36.7	47	4.7	6	3.9	5
Places of residence	53.9	69	36.7	47	9.4	12	0	0
Medical institutions (hospitals, outpatient clinics, polyclinics)	55.5	71	33.6	43	6.2	8	4.7	6

To the question on feeling safe in the new environment, the answers distributed as following: 82% (105 respondents) felt safe in the new environment, 7% (9 respondents) did not feel safe in the new environment, it was difficult for 11% (14 respondents) to answer this question.

Regarding the factors that affect the personal safety in the new environment, the answers distributed as following: 88.3% (113 respondents) pointed to the language barrier with local residents, 39.8% (51 respondents) highlighted the discriminatory attitudes of local residents, 27.3% (35 respondents) pointed to the problems of medical care, 26.6% (34 respondents) highlighted corruption and the bureaucracy of state bodies, 23.4% (30 respondents) pointed to the criminogenic situation in the city.

Respondents also reported on (see Table 7):

Table 7.
Attitude of others towards international students

Aspect	Fully disagreed		Rather disagreed		Rather agreed		Fully agreed	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Discomfort of staying at the university and near it	24.2	31	60.1	77	12.5	16	3.2	4
A tense situation in the dormitory, conflicts	17.2	22	50.8	65	27.3	35	4.7	6
Locals single me out in some way	14.8	19	60.2	77	24.2	31	0.8	1
Local young people do not wish to come into contact, communicate	10.9	14	44.5	57	35.2	45	9.4	12
Conflicts on the basis of racism and nationalism	18.7	24	46.1	59	25.8	33	9.4	12
Inappropriate attitude of police officers	26.6	34	56.2	72	12.5	16	4.7	6
Low security in the city itself	31.2	40	51.6	66	11.7	15	5.5	7

To the question on recommending the study at UzhNU, the answers distributed as following: 10.9% (14 respondents) fully agreed, 64.1% (82 respondents) rather agreed, 21.9% (28 respondents) rather disagreed, 3.1% (4 respondents) fully disagreed.

To the question on further plans after obtaining professional education, the answers of the respondents distributed as following: 52.4% (67 respondents) intended to return home, 38.3% (49 respondents) planned to migrate to the European countries or the USA for the permanent residence, 2.3% (3 respondents) planned to stay in Ukraine and find a stable job. Also, 2.3% (3 respondents) planned to continue obtaining higher education in another country.

Since the adaptation of international students to new didactic, social-cultural, and social-psychological conditions upon admission to the institution of higher education is the main factor affecting the educational process effectiveness, international students studying in Ukraine find themselves in a difficult situation: they are forced not only to master the new type of activity – studying at an institution of higher education, prepare for a future profession, but also to adapt to the new environment.

Hu (2017) defines the didactic component as a set of knowledge, skills and abilities of international students on the forms and methods of educational and cognitive activity, which are typical for a higher school of Ukraine, which gives them the opportunity to effectively organize their studies and successfully master their future profession.

When studying didactic adaptation, we proceeded from understanding it as a structural element of the general adaptation process, which: is determined by the specifics of adaptation of students to the components of the didactic system of a higher education institution; depends on the specifics of professional training chosen; is characterized as mastering the forms and methods of learning, the skills and abilities of mental work, skills of self-education and self-control. International students: familiarize with the content and prospects of the profession chosen, form the new attitude towards the future profession, accept social requirements for the professional activity; adapt to the conditions, content, character and organization of the educational process; study the organizational structure and requirements of the institution of higher education; familiarize with new norms of educational work, assessment, forms of independent work; form independence skills in educational activities and scientific work; adjust their behavior to the appropriate norms.

Utkyna (2011) examines the mechanisms of adaptation of international students in the Ukrainian universities and defines them as a certain integrity, which includes: (i) on the one hand, the active

adaptation to the new education system in a foreign country within new foreign social-cultural conditions, norms, values, and environment; (ii) on the other hand, a certain change of the environment itself in accordance with the needs and characteristics of foreign students, as objects of social adaptation. In this regard, foreign students can be considered both at the individual level and at the collective level – communities, groups, united by ethnicity, religion, interests.

The social-cultural component includes a set of ideas on the basic culture elements of the Ukrainian society, the culture and traditions of a higher education institution, the system of values and norms of behavior (Merola et al., 2019).

Social-cultural adaptation takes place both during educational activities and in the process of extracurricular activities. The latter significantly contribute to the acceleration of the adaptation process, forming linguistic and sociocultural competence. Adjustment to the new environment can take the form of friendships developing, participating in formal and informal social activities, free time organization, learning the Ukrainian language. It covers the active or passive adaptation of an individual to the new environment, the new team and its traditions, the building of interpersonal relationships and relations in student groups and the establishment of friendly relations with fellow students, the formation of personal style of behavior.

The social-psychological component involves the presence of motives, interests, needs, goals, and values-based instructions that provide emotional comfort to international students, their positive perception of another culture, the feeling of being a part of the university student body (Boiaryn & Zavatska, 2019).

International students with their specific cultural, ethnic and psychological characteristics are to overcome various psychological, social, moral and religious barriers, experience new types of activities and behavior forms. Indicators of successful adaptation are the high social status of an individual in the environment, satisfaction with this environment and with its most important elements. Indicators of low adaptation are behavior deviating from generally accepted norms.

During social-psychological adaptation, the interaction of an individual or a social group with the social environment takes place, in connection with which the requirements and expectations of social subjects are reconciled with their capabilities and the reality of the social environment. The main indicators of social-psychological adaptation are emotions, well-being and mental comfort. The success of adaptation depends on the characteristics of the environment and an individual. The more complex the new environment (for example, more social ties, more complex joint activities, higher social heterogeneity), the more changes occur in it, the more difficult adaptation is for an individual.

The integration of theoretical and applied aspects of the issue of adaptation of international students to the environment of higher education institutions in Ukraine is an important characteristic of the development of Ukraine's modern higher education, displayed, in particular, through its internationalization. In this respect further research of determinants of social adaptation, the development of special psychological-pedagogical and social-psychological programs aimed at providing assistance to international students for entering the new culture, society, educational environment of higher education institution, researching the dependence of the success of studies from the level of adaptation of international students to the social-psychological conditions of educational activities is rather promising.

5. Conclusions

These days, one of the most important tasks of Ukrainian higher school is to set favorable conditions for student (international as well) successful entry to the educational process, which is a necessary factor in removing difficulties in social adaptation. Adaptation is a rather complex, structured phenomenon that

encompasses all the essential (physiological, psychological, and social) powers of an individual, who not only reacts to changes in the environment, but also changes this environment.

International students face a number of problems in the process of adaptation, related both adaptation to the educational process and to the new environment. Peculiarities of adaptation of international students are determined by a complex of factors: didactic (educational), social-cultural, and social-psychological.

The results of the analysis of literary sources on the problem of adaptation of foreign students in the educational environment of Ukraine and the empirical data obtained in our study allowed us to conclude that:

- More than half of respondents are satisfied with the organization of the educational process and a quarter of respondents even indicated a high level of educational process organization. Among the problems the respondents mentioned the discrepancy in the studied courses with the specialty acquired;
- In their first months of studies international students face such difficulties as the lack of clear tasks and recommendations for performing practical tasks, independent work, the lack of information on the organization of the educational process, large scope of educational information and a fast pace of teaching;
- International students are quite satisfied with the atmosphere and psychological climate in the educational process, although they mention the cases of biased attitude of educators towards them;
- Language challenge is the most severe of all other challenges making socio-cultural and academic adaptation very hard. It is a positive fact that in general 40% of international students understand and can communicate in the Ukrainian language, despite the fact that their studies are conducted in English and they are not required to speak the Ukrainian language;
- The majority of international students take part in local festivals and fairs, concerts, charity events, and student events;
- Despite the fact that international students sometimes participate in local religious events, they prefer to participate in their national religious events and observe their traditions in celebrating holidays;
- When measuring the social distance towards Ukrainians, the attitude of international students turned out to be quite positive and friendly. Also, the majority of international students feel safe in the new environment, but among the factors affecting personal safety they mention the language barrier, discriminatory attitudes, problems with medical care, corruption and bureaucracy of the state bodies, as well as the criminogenic situation in city.
- more than half of international students have friends among Ukrainians, but more than a third still interact and communicate only in their social circle.

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