

CURRENT CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Tatiana Sokol¹, Liudmyla Melko²

¹Ph.D. (Pedagogical Sciences), Associate Professor of Tourism Department, “KROK” University, Kyiv, Ukraine, e-mail: tgsspectour@gmail.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6106-4911>

²Ph.D. (Pedagogical Sciences), Associate Professor of Tourism Department, “KROK” University, Kyiv, Ukraine, e-mail: ludmilam@krok.edu.ua, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5979-666X>

Abstract. A number of challenges that the system of higher tourism education in Ukraine is facing at this stage of its development is considered in the article. The objective of this article is to analyse some current challenges of higher tourism education in Ukraine. The methods used include the following, namely the study and generalization of literature and sources on the topic, the method of extrapolation, comparison, analysis of practical issues of the educational process, reflection on the author's own pedagogical experience. Problems of digitalization of educational processes, organization of distance learning, changes in teaching methods and criteria for monitoring students' knowledge, outflow of Ukrainian applicants to foreign vocational educational establishments have been formed in recent decades and exacerbated in the current conditions of global pandemic and full-scale war in Ukraine. The conclusions of the publications suggest possible ways to solve these problems, including further improvement of teaching methods and criteria for monitoring students' knowledge in distance learning, improving the quality of Ukrainian scientific school in tourism, using a double degree system, etc.

Keywords: digitalization of higher education; distance learning; advantages; disadvantages; differentiated approach; double degree system.

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Introduction. In recent decades, the world has undergone through significant changes that have affected not only the production sphere, but also the social one. They have radically changed the systems of relations that have developed in the society during a long period of time. The use of modern technologies, globalization and integration that are taking place in various spheres of human life, the commercialization of humanitarian institutions, combined with the deepening of differences in approaches to common social issues have created a number of problems in higher education, including its tourism direction. Today, the world is going through difficult times, i.e., the coronavirus pandemic, political and military conflicts, financial problems for large and small business. All the above could not but affect the main social institutions such as medicine, culture, education, deepening the existing problems.

Literature Review. The problems of higher tourism education in Ukraine at the present stage were highlighted in the works of many domestic scientists, in particular, those of Bykova V., Andrusenko N., Gerasimenko V., Vyshnevskaya G., Lukyanova L., Kucherenko N., Prybylova V., Shtykhno N. etc. But the dramatic changes in the country's educational environment, such as the coronavirus pandemic and, in particular, the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine, have exacerbated the existing problems and necessitated their more detailed consideration.

Aims. The objective of this article is to analyse some current challenges of higher tourism education in Ukraine.

Methods. The methods used include the following, namely the study and generalization of literature and sources on the topic, the method of extrapolation, comparison, analysis of practical issues of the educational process, reflection on the author's own pedagogical experience.

Discussion. One of such problems is the digitalization of educational processes and the transition to distance (on-line) learning caused by the epidemic situation. Opinions of the scientific community in Ukraine are divided on this issue.

Most researchers consider distance learning a promising direction in the development of modern education, highlighting a number of its advantages, including possibilities for students to maintain regular contact with the teacher at any time and in any place [1, p. 7]; a significant increase in the subjects of the educational process; use of materials from electronic libraries; increase of the scale of independent work of students, listeners, etc. ; organization of a single information educational environment; a significant reduction of costs for the organization of the educational process (no costs for rent of premises, cost savings in staff payroll, etc.) [2]. This form of education largely ensures the internationalization of education not only the contentwise but also in terms of organizational forms and methods of teaching [3, p. 81]. The distance education opens access to non-traditional sources of information for students, increases the efficiency of independent work, provides new opportunities for creative activities, and enables teachers to implement fundamentally new forms and methods of teaching [4].

At the same time, a number of disadvantages about the organization of this form of education are emphasized. They include the lack of direct communication between the teacher and students, which reduces the effectiveness of knowledge transfer; insufficient contact between the teacher and the distance student due to the extraordinary professional workload of domestic teachers; low bandwidth of electronic networks, which, first of all, affects distance students of small urban settlements of Ukraine [5] and, finally, a complicated identification of students and a difficult-to-determine extent of students' independence to which the students fulfil their home and control tasks [6, p. 82].

Results. The digitalization of various aspects of the world society will continue to intensify, and we must be ready for that. Today in Ukraine it is possible to organize on-line training on different platforms like ZOOM, Teams, Classroom, Google meet and others. Internet coverage is quite wide. The advantages of on-line learning are indisputable. They include a possibility to get connected and participate in classes almost regardless of the distance and location of the student; a possibility for the teacher to use the Internet materials and his/her own computer archive at any time; absence of needs for training premises or additional technical facilities, etc. However, there are also shortcomings about the on-line learning. The most significant ones are the lack of or limited interactive teacher-student communication, as well as a low feasibility to control students' attention during lectures. Therefore, even in real conditions of quarantine and military restrictions, higher education institutions often use a blended form of the educational process, i.e., lectures are most often provided on-line, while seminars and workshops are conducted in the classroom.

Such a system of organization of classes proves correct. However, in our opinion, as it is up to the teacher to decide how to conduct classes based on the characteristics of the subject/course. For example, when it comes to the course “Excursion Studies” (“Organization of excursion activities”) it is recommended to conduct practical activities related to excursion materials on-line, while lectures are increasingly becoming interactive and require direct communication with the audience. Moreover, study tours and direct acquaintance with the materials during the route tour proved to be an effective form of such classes.

Some employees of higher educational establishments believe that students are less likely to attend lectures if they are conducted via distance learning, although this is not the case. Unfortunately, students often miss classes both on-line and off-line, as they are forced to earn money on their own and are not always able to combine work with studies. At present, some students are outside the city where the higher educational institution is located, and sometimes outside the country, being in forced emigration. This results in another serious problem, i.e., the lack of current control and the need to evaluate students' knowledge in the process of final control, which makes control provisional and turns learning into profanation.

In search of a solution to this problem, we had to focus on a differentiated approach to evaluating the student's knowledge. When it comes to bachelor's courses of specialty 242 “Tourism” “Organization of excursion activities”, “Organization of tourist activity”, “Tour operating” the students who completed the program in full and diligently accomplished their final project (i.e. they developed a selection of excursion materials, a travel agency project, tour projects), can claim an excellent grade; students who have not completed the program in full, but performed the task well can get a good grade; further on, depending on the extent to which the program has been completed as well as on the final result students can receive a satisfactory (60 - 69 points) or mediocre grade (50 - 59 points).

In addition, in the future it will be useful to review the organization of the educational process and remuneration forms for academic staff in terms of individual teaching of students.

However, the problems associated with the digitalisation of education have been considerably exacerbated by the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. The active phase of the war in Ukraine now requires almost complete transition to distance learning. Today, more than 10 million people in Ukraine have fled their homes, out of which almost 6.5 million are internally displaced persons and 3.5 million Ukrainians have emigrated abroad. The war hit the civilian population, causing great losses in the country's economic infrastructure and economy. This has caused great damage to Ukrainian tourism. According to the head of the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine M. Oleskiv, the capacity of the Ukrainian tourist market in pre-war times was estimated in the amount of billions of dollars, and the main task of the agency has been and remains such up to now is to attract these funds to the Ukrainian economy and help it work more efficiently. Unfortunately, the hospitality industry in Ukraine cannot now do what it has always done best, i.e., to receive and serve tourists. Now hospitality establishments are doing what they have to do. In other

words, they are feeding the Ukrainian army in "hot" areas and accepting refugees in the western part of the country [7].

On the one hand, in this situation higher education in Ukraine should be result-oriented, training professionals that are to reignite the Ukrainian economy and social sphere and develop them further. At the same time the education sector is experiencing additional difficulties related to the problems of accessing cyberspace. This applies both to students and teachers. The situation requires the maximising of teachers' means of communication with students, review of educational tasks with emphasis on creative tasks, improvement of methods of organizing independent work of students, revision of the evaluation system, search for alternative means of teacher-student communication.

Finally, a serious and urgent challenge for higher education in Ukraine today is the outflow of applicants abroad to universities of Poland, the Czech Republic, and other countries of Western Europe. This has objective reasons. Ukraine is actively integrating into the European community, adopting its standards. Studying abroad gives students an opportunity to obtain a European diploma, gain a foothold in Europe or get a more prestigious and well-paid job in Ukraine. There are other reasons: sometimes education abroad is cheaper or offered for free, there is mass advertising of foreign universities and so on. This problem is going to be exacerbated in the future, as the higher educational institutions of some countries that have accepted our refugees offer them education in their own educational institutions, in particular in higher professional education institutions. This enables Ukrainian youth to receive a quality European education.

At the same time, in our opinion, foreign educational system should not be thoughtlessly projected on the realities of Ukrainian society. This is especially true in the field of tourism education, as tourism is recognized as a dialogue between different civilizations, lifestyles, and cultures [8, p. 51]. The most effective way to solve this problem, of course, is to improve the quality and prestige of domestic education, of the Ukrainian scientific school. At the present stage, applicants can also be attracted by a possibility of receiving a double degree based on agreements with higher educational institutions of this profile abroad, foreign practices and internships. In the future, after the victory of Ukraine, which has already gained prestige in the world as the only stable nation capable of defending itself and taking a worthy place in the world community, such cooperation in higher education should be significantly simplified and strengthened.

Further digitalization of educational processes in the current circumstances in Ukraine leads to strengthening the role of distance learning and requires its further improvement by maximizing the means of communication between teachers and students, reviewing educational tasks with emphasis on creative tasks, improving methods of independent student work, review of the evaluation system, search for alternative means of communication teacher-student. The complexity of the current control of the evaluation of the students' real knowledge in the process of final control in the context of distance learning can be removed by a differentiated approach to the criteria for evaluating this knowledge.

In our opinion, the problem of outflow of Ukrainian applicants to foreign institutions of higher education should be solved, in particular, by improving the quality and prestige of domestic education, of the Ukrainian scientific school. Applicants can also be involved in the organization of a double degree based on agreements with higher educational institutions of this profile abroad, foreign practices and internships, which should be intensified after the active phase of the war in Ukraine.

In this article we have identified only some of the problems of modern higher education in Ukraine, named possible ways to solve them. However, the problems of optimizing higher education in Ukraine in modern conditions are by no means limited to those listed above and require further research and solution.

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