CURRENT DIRECTIONS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STRUCTURES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Education, especially primary and secondary education, is a fundamental right for all humans. The right to education is recognised as a fundamental human right in various international conventions, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights [1]. This covenant guarantees free primary education for all, mandates efforts to expand access to secondary education with a gradual move toward free secondary education, and calls for the promotion of equitable access to higher education, preferably through the progressive introduction of free higher education [1].

The right to quality education is also enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Regarding the equality of different groups being able to access quality education, the United Nations writes that, "Worldwide, young females have more difficult access to education. About 40 percent of countries have not achieved gender parity in primary education. These disadvantages in education also translate into a lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market for young women' [2].

Education and training are crucial for preparing people for the changes that result from the accelerated development and diffusion of technological innovations. Education systems need to be transformed to better meet the needs of the current society and in the future, with a focus on the changing demands for employment and decent work. As Luc Cortebeeck put it in his seminal book titled 'Still Work to Be Done: The Future of Decent Work in the World,' the development of artificial intelligence already has, and would have more in the future, a significant impact on the future of work, and this requires education systems to provide people of all ages with appropriate learning opportunities to acquire the skills needed for decent employment [3]. It is also crucial that people acquire the critical and social skills necessary to understand the interests underlying the development and diffusion of such technologies and have the mental acuity to appreciate their role in shaping a sustainable world in which everyone can live peaceful, just, safe, and fulfilling lives [4].

An important role in the development of education, its adaptation to the current challenges, ensuring the compliance of educational programs with the needs of practice is played by higher education institutions, which in modern conditions act as platforms for establishing interaction with civil society institutions, public authorities, scientific institutions, as well as

international organizations, in particular the structures of the United Nations. Moreover, higher education institutions, through the implementation of interdisciplinary research, holding international conferences, round tables, seminars and other events, identify existing problems and propose directions for improving such interactions.

Thus, higher education institutions have long been venues for fruitful discussions, comprehensive understanding of issues, as well as provided an impetus for the realization of bold initiatives by education seekers. At the same time, in Ukraine, under martial law, the sphere of higher education faced a number of challenges that have affected the priority of ensuring the safety of all participants in the educational process, led to constant interruption of educational process due to the announcement of the "Air Alert" signal, which caused the relocation of higher education institutions from the south-eastern regions of the country to more western ones.

The activities of higher education institutions are also affected by problems observed at the level of general secondary education institutions, when the very process of a child's education at school is already associated with many risks that inevitably leave an imprint on the quality of knowledge acquired and cause mental health problems at a young age.

According to some domestic researchers, the integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the global educational space creates both challenges as well as opportunities. The researchers used statistical data from the 2022 Quacquarelli Symonds Higher Education Institutions Rankings and global rankings, including the Education Index and Education Spending as a Percentage of GDP for 2022. Qualitative data were collected by searching scientific databases such as Ebsco, Google Scholar, PubMed, and WoS. The results showed that the integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the global educational space faces a number of problems, including limited experience in international cooperation and participation in European educational programs, as well as inadequate preparation for submitting project proposals and low proficiency in foreign languages, including English. In addition, insufficient financial support for international projects hinders the modernization of Ukraine's higher education system and improving the quality of personnel training [2, p. 459].

However, despite extremely difficult conditions, higher education institutions continue their relentless development, adapting to the new security reality. This is largely facilitated by the purposeful activities of the United Nations structures, as well as the initiatives of higher education institutions themselves, which promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals during meetings, binary classes, trainings, as well as during the implementation of social projects, thereby implementing progressive directions of interaction of higher education institutions with the United Nations structures.

One of the key areas of such collaboration should be the active participation of scholars, educators, and students in seminars, training sessions, and other events organised under the auspices of the United

Nations. A notable example is the webinar hosted by the International Centre for the Study, Prevention, and Treatment of Multi-Generational Legacies of Trauma, held in recognition of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of Resolution 79/122 on December 4, 2024, titled "United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity." During the conference, several critical issues surrounding the future Convention were addressed, including the need to ensure robust protection of victims' rights and access to justice, with particular emphasis on gender-based crimes. Discussions also covered international strategies to combat human trafficking, measures to eradicate systemic forced labour, and the relevance of integrating ecocide into the new treaty to address contemporary global challenges. Additionally, mechanisms for identifying and prosecuting individuals responsible for crimes against humanity were examined, highlighting the importance of accountability and enforcement. [3].

Higher education institutions, in collaboration with United Nations agencies, are actively producing publications on pressing issues related to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Ukraine. One such initiative is led by Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Eastern Europe. Together, they have developed a comprehensive set of educational and methodological materials for the National Police of Ukraine. These guidelines are designed to support police officers who interact with at-risk individuals and those with a history of drug overdose in their line of duty. A key focus of the recommendations is enhancing the effectiveness of efforts to prevent the use of psychoactive and narcotic substances, as well as reducing drug-related crimes. This is to be achieved by equipping police officers with mechanisms to inform at-risk individuals about available services, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and other support programs within their communities [4].

Thus, higher education institutions have been affected by a number of challenges under martial law, but through fruitful interaction with civil society institutions, public authorities, and scientific institutions, as well as international organisations, in particular the United Nations structures, they continue to successfully implement international projects and hold scientific and educational events dedicated to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Ukraine.

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