

Trapped values of education and threat to national security in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

The strong democratic nations tend to follow UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) while weak states choose the way of war for immediate self-affirmation. This destructive way is an insurmountable obstacle for SDGs tracking as a whole and primarily in the educational sector.

Despite the influence of “the Fair War Theory”, the war is perceived as a source of destructive aggression, deaths, destructions, violence and moral degradation. Any war is aimed at the occupation of territories when the occupation regime uses various instruments and the collaborationism is the most widespread. Within the scope of this article the educational collaborationism is subject to a special analysis as it plays one of the major roles in creating an effective occupation system. We do not aim at providing the comprehensive consideration and interpretation of the phenomenon of “Educators’ Collaborationism”, as well as the identification and detailed explanation of the entire spectrum of its destructive consequences. The purpose is to articulate the mentioned phenomenon within the problem of using education as a tool of occupation and threat to the national security of the occupied state. The methodological design of the study is based on a situational approach, which emphasizes the importance of considering a number of factors influencing the changes in the educational process during the occupation, as well as the identification of situational variables that affect the level of access to higher education (HE), its quality and content on the occupied territories. The method of qualitative case-study research made it possible to formulate certain generalizations about this phenomenon and its effect on HE in particular.

It was found out that in the temporarily occupied territories education is used as a tool to strengthen and legitimize the occupation regime. Among the key agents there are also the occupiers’ assistants from the educational sector. The analysis of specific situations gives reason to claim that the conscious, voluntary cooperation of educators with the enemy provokes the erosion of the ethical principles of education, its degradation and blocks the SDGs accomplishing. Such activity has negative consequences as it aggressively denies managerial autonomy, the right for academic freedom and other components of quality HE and other SDGs as they all are interlinked.

Unfortunately, we are to admit that the educational transformative occupation causes total paralysis and even erosion of the national education system in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. Therefore, the consequences of the implementation of educational transformative occupation should determine the directions of the processes of de-occupied territories education restoration.

Introduction

Today without any exaggeration it can be said that the Russian war against Ukraine is an existential war. A convincing demonstration of this is the situation that has developed in the field of education in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. Contradicting the norms of the

international law the Russian occupation authorities are dismantling the local education system and stigmatizing it. The concentrated expression of such actions is the educational transformative occupation, the main purpose of which is to destroy Ukrainian identity.

KEYWORDS

collaborationism, educators’ collaborationism, occupation regime, higher education, educational transformative occupation, SDGs



According to its content, educational transformative occupation in Russian is radically opposed to the principles and values of education, the goals of sustainable development, established and recognized at the international level. Burdened with Russian imperial and Ukrainophobic narratives the educational transformative occupation, which has a distinct xenophobic character, determines the decline of the institute of education, the transformation of every educational institution in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories into centres of propaganda and informational and psychological influence of young generation. An important role in these processes is played by educators' collaborationism, that is, a deviant form of professional behaviour of employees in the field of education, which is expressed in their voluntary cooperation and practical assistance to the occupation authorities. Being involved in the violent imposition of the educational standards of the occupying state, the collaborating educators undermine the trust between the participants of the educational process and call into question the quality of their professional activity.

The matrix of educational transformative occupation identified by the authors of this article, as well as the main directions of collaborative activity of education workers in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine vividly illustrate the thesis of the President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyi that "the invaders have identified culture, education and humanity as their enemies."

Building the education system in the occupied Ukrainian territories within the framework of the anti-democratic educational paradigm, the "agents of change" are moving along the trajectory of involutory transformations marked by the elimination of academic freedom and autonomy of educational institutions, the devaluation of the quality assurance and right to access to education, and the inflation of education in general.

Sharing and tolerating the educational standards of the occupying state threatens to isolate students from the gains and advantages of modern education, for example, academic mobility, etc. leaving them in a situation where they have to settle for surrogate educational services instead.

A Russian professor once noted that in modern Russia, the desire to change borders has combined with nostalgia for a "lost great country." This thesis is remarkable as it fully explains the logic of the occupation practices carried out by Russia in the occupied Ukrainian territories.

Unfortunately, we are forced to state that education in Ukraine has become a victim of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The process of victimization of Ukrainian education caused by educational transformative occupation appears as a critical test for Ukrainian society and the state.

Research methods

In order to test the hypothesis that educators' collaborationism negatively affects the level of access to higher education, its quality and content, we used a situational approach that allows to single out a set of factors that determine the destructive trends in the sphere of education during the occupation period, as well as to articulate key situational variables causing deformations and degradation at the level of higher education in the conditions of occupation.

Using the case-study method based on both, the testimonies of Ukrainian citizens forced to live under the Russian occupation and on identified examples of cooperation of educational sector workers in the temporarily occupied

territories of Ukraine, the matrix of educational transformative occupation and the main directions and content of collaborative activities of educators were determined.

Results and Discussion

The Russian occupation of Ukrainian territories is accompanied by an obvious disregard for the international humanitarian law norms and principles. Completely ignoring the requirements of the occupation law, the occupying state with the help of loyal educators forcibly imposes Russian educational standards, exerts psychological and physical pressure on those who refuse to cooperate with the occupation authorities.

The dismantling of the local educational system takes place through educational transformative occupation, the task of which is the destruction of Ukrainian identity. An important factor in the practical implementation of the educational transformative occupation is educators' collaborationism is a deviant form of professional behaviour of educators expressed in voluntary cooperation and active practical assistance of education workers to the occupation authorities regarding the introduction of educational standards of the occupied state.

Once the outstanding French philosopher Voltaire compared war to a terrible disease that affects nations one by one. Unfortunately, in the modern world there are still occurrences of this disease, which causes people the most painful wounds and the deadly approach of which "every blossom of happiness is instantly blasted, every thing that was improving gradually degenerates and dwindles away to nothing, every thing that was firmly supported totters on its foundation, every thing that was formed for a long duration comes to a speedy end, and every thing that was sweet by nature is turned into bitterness" (*Desiderius Erasmus, 2004: 2*). War, as a manifestation of destructiveness and aggression, generates processes aimed at the "production of violence", both physical and psychological. One of these processes is the occupation of territories, which is accompanied by both of the above-mentioned forms of violence. In order to strengthen and legitimize the occupation regime in the temporarily occupied territories, various tools are used, including cooperation with the aggressor.

Collaborationism is a special form of behaviour determined by such specific situation as the occupation of territory. The regime of occupation is regulated by a number of international conventions, in particular, Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1907), Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war (1949), Geneva Protocol I (1977) and others, which are components of the set of norms of international humanitarian law. In addition, an important regulatory role is played by Human rights law, that is "widely recognized as applicable in situations of occupation, at least as regards". The importance of observing human rights law during the occupation was pointed out by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its advisory opinions [2, p.8]. Therefore, it is assumed that the functioning of territories in conditions of foreign military presence should take into account the requirements of occupation law. At the same time, the organized violence of past centuries is noticeably different from modern wars [3], which obviously affects the effectiveness of occupation law in the realities of the 21st century. And although occupation was and remains an integral feature of war, "to an increasing

degree, contemporary occupation is characterized by tensions between the occupying power and the local population (or at least some sections of the population), and by shifts in the role played by the occupying power in administering the occupied territory – which often means full-fledged exercise of foreign authority. As a result of these developments, people living under occupation have, increasingly, suffered the adverse consequences of occupation, which can be aggravated by the persistence of the situation" (Ferraro, 2012: 4).

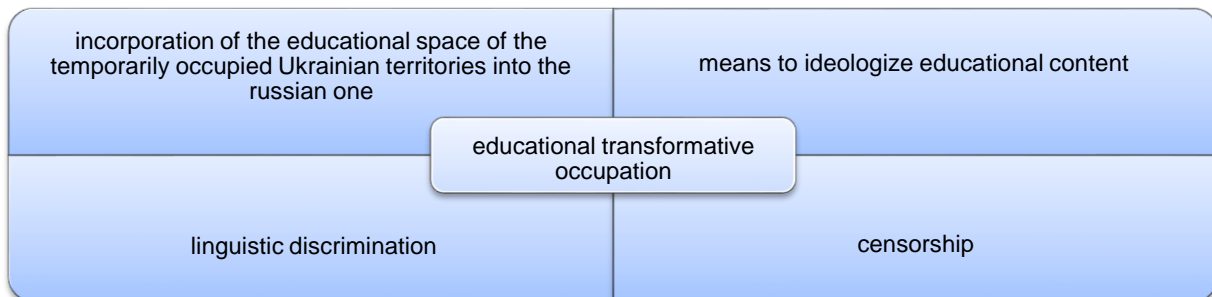
Collaborationism is a complex and controversial phenomenon, which is indicated by the terms "double game", "victims of circumstances", "tactical collaborator", "lesser evil" [4], which are often used to form explanatory structures of this phenomenon. Despite the danger of reductionism, simplified uniformity and fragmentation in the interpretation of the phenomenon of collaborationism, its negative connotation is clearly crystallized and framed, among other things, by the moral and ethical weakness of those who resorted to active collaboration with the enemy. Within the scope of this study, collaborationism is considered in the educational context, which we denote as educators' collaborationism, and is defined as a deviant form of educators' professional behaviour, which is expressed in voluntary cooperation and practical assistance of educators to the occupying power.

The starting concept for collaborationism, including for such a type as educators' collaborationism, is the "situation of occupation", the specific context of which comes from the fact that, first, this situation arises as a result of an armed conflict, when "the forces of one party advance and drive the forces of the other party out of parts of their own

territory", second, "the occupying power has gained an advantage that it wants to retain" (Ferraro, 2012: 36), third, "occupation is a temporary situation neither causing nor implying any devolution of sovereignty". Accordingly, there is a number of legislative norms based on the understanding of the temporary nature of the occupation, in particular prohibition of population transfers, prohibition against requiring allegiance to the occupant, limitation on the use of the resources of the occupied territory (Ferraro, 2012: 36). However, it is worth noting that in modern conditions there are significant difficulties in complying with the norms of occupation law. Recent history knows a number of examples when the occupation authorities violated, in particular, the human right to access education, and forced educators to cooperate with the occupation regime, contrary to international law norms (Soto, 2001).

Educators' collaborationism is a kind of "functional attribute" of occupation, a means of which educational transformative occupation is carried out. The latter, by analogy with transformative occupation, is aimed at restructuring the sector of education in accordance with the occupying state's own preferences (Ferraro, 2012: 67). As an example of the practical implementation of educational transformative occupation, the key participants of which are educators-collaborators, is the situation that has developed in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. Being in an anti-democratic educational paradigm, the Russian formula of educational transformative occupation is aimed at "destroying the mechanism of inheritance of Ukrainian identity in order to make its renewal impossible" (Potapova, 2022: 69).

Table 1. Matrix of the educational transformative occupation



The given matrix of educational transformative occupation is verified by numerous testimonies and other evidence recorded in special reports and studies of both Ukrainian and international organizations. For example, in December 2023, Amnesty International published the study "Ukraine: children's education is one more casualty of Russian aggression", which presents the testimony of 23 education workers and 14 Ukrainian families with school-age children from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odesa regions. As stated in this publication, "the stories the 14 families shared were not only of their own but also of others' experience".

The fact of the incorporation of the educational space of the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories into Russian is confirmed, in particular, by the testimony of Olena, a history teacher from a community in Kharkiv region, who noted that they heard rumors that Russians were taking teachers from the occupied Kherson region to Crimea for

requalification and forcing them to teach the Russian curriculum (Ukraine: children's education..., 2023: 10).

As for linguistic discrimination, the testimony of a teacher from the occupied Berdiansk community in Zaporizhzhia region, who left the occupied territories in July 2022 but continues to give online classes to children who are still living in the occupied community, is quite revealing, reported that "informants have been appointed from among the school students whose task is to identify and report on those children who speak Ukrainian. Such reported "offenders" have been summoned to the Headteacher "for a re-educational chat" during which they were warned about "punishing the parents for [their] improper upbringing" and being "sent to Russia for re-education." In addition, according to this teacher, those who refuse to learn and sing the Russian national anthem are threatened with being taken away from their parents for "re-education in Russian orphanages". In general, as

noted in the study, "all those interviewed for this publication, and specifically those who have been directly exposed to schooling under the Russian occupation stated that anti-Ukrainian, pro-Russian indoctrination was the clear direction of the Russian-imposed curriculum and other school changes" (*Ukraine: children's education...*, 2023: 13).

So, based on the collected testimonies and evidence, Amnesty International concludes that "while access to quality education is every child's right, residents of Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine are being coerced to

send their children to schools which do not meet the criteria of quality education. In these schools, reopened under the occupying Russian authorities, the children as well as their teachers are subjected to intimidating practices, are forced to study in Russian, and receiving poor-quality schooling some of which amounts to indoctrination" (*Ukraine: children's education...*, 2023: 13).

Thus, abovementioned facts and the educational transformative occupation matrix determine the directions of educators' collaborative activity which we classified in the Table.

Table 2. Main directions of educators' collaborative activity

Areas of activity	Meaningful aspects of activity
Introduction of Russian educational standards	Transition from a 12-point to a 5-point (Soviet) evaluation system, "certification training" according to Russian standards
Russification (de-Ukrainization) of the educational process	Introduction of the Russian language of instruction, removal of the history of Ukraine, Ukrainian language and literature and other Ukrainian subjects from the curricula
Indoctrination	politicization and ideological unification of humanitarianism, marginalization and vulgarization of "Ukrainian subjects"
Censorship	Removal from the libraries of educational institutions of Ukrainian educational and literary literature which is mostly being destroyed
Militarization	Formation of paramilitary children's and youth organizations, cadet classes
Persecution	Pressure on the participants of the educational process for refusing to cooperate

The nature and orientation of the collaborative activities of educators in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories poses the greatest threat to such fundamental principles and values of higher education as academic freedom and institutional autonomy, which are "essential to improving and maintaining the quality of higher education and research" (*Bergan, 2007: 42*). Anti-democratic educational transformations initiated and introduced by the Russian occupation authorities distort the goals and objectives of education, which "shall be directed to the human personality's "sense of dignity", it shall "enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society", and it shall promote understanding among all "ethnic" groups, as well as nations and racial and religious groups" (*CESCR General... 1999*). In fact, the educational transformative occupation is a manifestation of the violation of the human right to education, neglecting the principle of the rule of law and justice.

Like other UN Member States, Ukraine joined the global process of sustainable development. A participatory and inclusive process to adapt the SDGs to the Ukrainian context was launched to establish a national strategic framework for Ukraine up to 2030 based on the principle 'leave no one behind'. Every global target was reviewed, taking into consideration the specific national context (*Sustainable Development Goals, 2017*). However, the spread of the Russian educational space to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine by means of educational transformative occupation blocks progress in achieving one of

the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals - quality education.

Conclusion

Ukrainian education became one of the critical targets for the Russians. In the situation of occupation which brutally means the end in which the set of other factors and conditions favorable for the educational transformative occupation naturally ends, the domestic education system shows catastrophic deformations and degradation. Educators' collaborationism is a key factor of the process of educational transformative occupation which is identified as a deviant form of educators' professional behavior expressed in their deliberate cooperation and practical assistance to the occupation authorities. The educators' collaborative activity in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories is focused on the formation of educational landscape where Russian narratives dominate. The latter are spread with the help of mechanisms of suggestion, means of destructive propaganda which is a tool of domination, not enlightenment.

The educators' collaborationism becomes not only a moral and ethical aberration of educators, but also a violation of the norms of international law, namely the Geneva Convention (1949), the prescriptions of which provide, among other things, education in the native language during the occupation period.

Imposing the aggressor state's educational standards in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories cancels

and denies the values of higher education, the devaluation of education as a social institution.

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Спотворення освітніх цінностей та загроза національній безпеці на тимчасово окупованих територіях України

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Сильні демократичні країни прагнуть дотримуватися Цілей сталого розвитку ООН, тоді як слабкі держави обирають шлях війни для негайного самоствердження. Цей деструктивний спосіб є непереборною перешкодою для реалізації цілей сталого розвитку (ЦСР) в цілому і насамперед в освітньому секторі.

Незважаючи на вплив «теорії справедливої війни», війна сприймається як джерело руйнівної агресії, смертей, руйнувань, насильства та моральної деградації. Будь-яка війна спрямована на окупацію територій, коли окупаційний режим використовує різні інструменти, а найбільш поширеним є колабораціонізм. У рамках даної статті освітній колабораціонізм підлягає спеціальному аналізу, оскільки він відіграє одну з головних ролей у створенні ефективної окупаційної системи. Ми не ставимо за мету всебічний огляд та тлумачення феномену «колабораціонізму освітян», а також виявлення та детальне пояснення всього спектру його деструктивних наслідків. Метою є артикуляція значеного феномену в рамках проблеми використання освіти як інструменту окупації та загрози національній безпеці окупованої держави. Методологічний дизайн дослідження базується на ситуативному підході, який наголошує на важливості врахування ряду факторів, що впливають на зміни освітнього процесу під час окупації, а також визначення ситуативних змінних, що впливають на рівень доступу до вищої освіти (ВО), її якості та змісту на окупованих територіях. Метод кейс-стаді дослідження дав змогу сформулювати певні узагальнення щодо цього явища та його впливу на ВО зокрема.

З’ясовано, що на тимчасово окупованих територіях освіта використовується як інструмент зміцнення та легітимізації окупаційного режиму. Серед ключових агентів є й помічники окупантів із сфери освіти. Аналіз конкретних ситуацій дає підстави стверджувати, що свідомо, добровільна співпраця освітян із ворогом провокує розмивання етичних засад освіти, її деградацію та блокує досягнення ЦСР. Така діяльність має негативні наслідки, оскільки агресивно заперечує управлінську автономію, право на академічну свободу та інші компоненти якісної ВО та інші ЦСР, оскільки всі вони взаємопов’язані.

На жаль, ми змушені визнати, що сумарним ефектом освітньої трансформаційної окупації є параліч і, навіть, ерозія вітчизняної системи освіти на тимчасово окупованих українських територіях. Тож, наслідки реалізації освітньої трансформаційної окупації мають визначати напрямки відновлюваних процесів в секторі освіти на деокупованих територіях України.

Ключові слова: колабораціонізм, колабораціонізм освітян, окупаційний режим, вища освіта, освітня трансформаційна окупація, цілі сталого розвитку

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