

The Internationalization of Ukrainian Universities: European, National, and Institutional Dimensions

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Abstract

This article examines how European regionalization influences Ukrainian public universities by exploring the Ukrainian education strategy and institutional internationalization and marketing policies. The study outlines specific historical and geopolitical conditions that have determined the development of the higher education system in Ukraine. Using a case study, the author analyses university development policies within regional, national, and local environments and examines challenges to and supports for the implementation of these policies. The analysis shows how the combined conflicting influences of the Bologna Process and Soviet legacies have affected Ukrainian universities. The article relies on the study results obtained before the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It also offers an analysis of higher education internationalization reforms during the recent events of Russia's war against Ukraine. The study contributes to the understanding of internationalization efforts in an East European country under multiple, sometimes contradictory, influences of the Bologna Process and the Soviet past.

Keywords: European regionalization, institutional theory, internationalization, regional, national, and local influences, Ukrainian universities

У цій статті розглядається вплив європейської регіоналізації на українські державні університети. Особлива увага відводиться дослідженню української освітньої стратегії, інтернаціоналізації та маркетингової політики університетів. У статті окреслюються конкретні історичні та геополітичні умови, що визначають розвиток системи вищої освіти в Україні. Використовуючи кейс-стаді, автор аналізує стратегію розвитку університету в регіональному, національному та місцевому середовищах, досліджує супутні труднощі та розглядає допоміжні фактори реалізації цієї стратегії. Аналіз показує, що Болонський процес та радянська спадщина чинять суперечливі впливи на українські університети. Стаття, в основному, спирається на результати дослідження, отримані перед повномасштабним вторгненням Росії в Україну, хоча також аналізує інтернаціоналізацію вищої освіти під час останніх подій війни. Дослідження сприяє розумінню зусиль з інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти у східноєвропейській країні під численними, іноді суперечливими, впливами Болонського процесу та радянського

минулого.

Ключові слова: європейська регіоналізація, інституційна теорія, інтернаціоналізація, регіональні, національні та локальні впливи, українські університети

Introduction

In 2022, Ukrainian education marked a thirty-year process of withdrawing from Soviet policies and practices. In its attempt to embrace internationalization, Ukraine committed itself to reforming its higher education system in accordance with European standards. These educational transformations brought significant changes in Ukrainian universities. While Ukrainian internationalization policies in general have been widely discussed (Gomilko et al., 2016; Kostrobiiy & Rashkevych, 2017; Nikolaev, 2017; Osipian, 2014), a more comprehensive understanding of Europeanization effects on Ukrainian universities has not been undertaken. The integration of Ukrainian education within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) challenged universities to balance global/regional, national, and local influences (Oleksiyenko, 2021). The response of Ukrainian universities to European regionalization is best understood through their histories, traditions, strategic abilities (Zakharchuk, 2020, 2021), and specific present-day political and socio-economic realities.

This article analyses how European regionalization influences Ukrainian public universities by examining their internationalization strategies. It focuses on university efforts within regional, national, and local environments. The study outlines specific historical and geopolitical conditions that have determined the development of the higher education system, explores the Ukrainian education strategy, and analyses university internationalization and marketing policies. It then examines challenges to and supports for the implementation of these policies. The study incorporates the results of a more comprehensive examination of European regionalization influences on university governance conducted before the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Zakharchuk, 2021). Finally, it offers an analysis of higher education reforms during recent events in Russia's war against Ukraine.

Literature Review

Historical and Geopolitical Influences

From 1917 to 1991, the Soviet regime imposed cultural, linguistic, political, and economic colonial policies to control Ukraine. During that period, the country survived collectivization, three famines—including the Holodomor genocide of 1932-1933 that killed millions of Ukrainians, mass repression, mass resettlement, and the execution of the entire generation of the country's intelligentsia. These extreme measures sought to generate total obedience of the people and to eradicate Ukrainian national self-consciousness (Dziuba, 1998; Oleksiyenko, 2018; Rozenas & Zhukov, 2019).

Oleksiyenko (2018) used the term "soldierism" (p.197) to describe educational realities in Ukraine under the Soviet regime. The education system resembled a military organization with centralized control over all aspects of university life, including rigid administrative hierarchy, extreme bureaucracy, excessive control over students, surveillance of faculty, and severe censoring of curriculum content. Educational administrators were transformed into "obedient performers of the government's will" (Lunyachek, 2017, p. 87) who executed orders without questioning superiors' commands. The Soviet regime attempted to transform Ukrainian higher education into an instrument of Soviet political ideology. Additionally, the Soviet Union launched the internationalist policy to eviscerate any trace of national identity. According to this policy, separate nations were to be deprived of their own national identities and forced to merge into a nationless mass under Soviet-wide Russification (Dziuba, 1998). Dziuba (1998) noted that such continuous oppression turned out to be a prolonged nightmare for the Ukrainian nation, deprived of its history, culture, and language. The lack of a national education led to the distorted knowledge of Ukrainian history and the eradication of Ukrainian national tradition. The Ukrainian language was regarded as inferior and prohibited in public institutions. This internationalist policy eradicated the remnants of national identity in both the Ukrainian collective and individual consciousness (Dziuba, 1998).

Since its independence in 1991, Ukraine has been rediscovering its national identity and gaining a place on the global stage. Ukraine's geopolitical position between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation has always affected Ukraine's national and international policies. For thirty years, Ukraine had been trapped in the tense

relationship between Russia and the West (Haran, 2013; Kubicek, 2008). While the Ukrainian people favoured a Euro-integration policy, Ukraine continued to experience Russia's destabilizing political and economic pressures. Ukraine underwent significant power upheavals starting with the Orange Revolution in late November 2004, the collapse of pro-Russian governing coalitions, a short period of democracy, the threat of authoritarianism, the Revolution of Dignity (Haran, 2013), and climaxing with Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories and a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

As a nation that had been oppressed and terrorized for decades, independent Ukraine has been rediscovering its identity since 1991. Ukrainian higher education has also encountered challenges in reforming its education system inherited from the Soviet times. Thus, the higher education reforms have attempted to infuse national values into its education and eliminate the Soviet education legacy.

Factors Shaping Internationalization of Ukrainian Higher Education

Several factors determined the focus and scope of higher education internationalization in Ukraine. First, it was virtually unknown in the international arena after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Dziuba, 1998; Kubicek, 2008). Having gained independence, Ukraine began to seek collaboration in higher education, but it was new to these internationalization processes.

Second, Ukraine was trying to step away from its Soviet legacy in education and create a national identity (Myshchysyn, 2008). In response to isolation and uniformity during the communist era, Ukraine diversified its international cooperation in higher education. Independent Ukraine searched for international collaborations not only with the neighbouring European states but also with Asian, African, and North and South American countries. Over the years, the scope of Ukraine's international cooperation increased dramatically. As Kremen and Nikolajenko (2006) exemplified, Ukraine signed international agreements with 46 countries by 1999. In the next several years, this number increased to more than 120 agreements with institutions in 60 countries. The geography of those agreements ranged widely; however, Russia remained in a leading position as its international partner (Kremen & Nikolajenko, 2006).

Third, Ukraine's political orientation towards Euro-integration shifted the focus of educational reforms to prioritize European regionalization (Kvit, 2017; Wynnycky, 2015). Since 2005, Ukraine has been participating in the Bologna Process, the largest intergovernmental initiative to strengthen connections between higher education systems in Europe. Thus, the Bologna Process has influenced educational policies and determined the trajectory of its internationalization (Nikolaev, 2017; Sovsun, 2017).

These three factors have had significant implications for Ukrainian universities. An unproductive mixture of higher education reforms became a main consequence. Gomilko et al., (2016) explained this phenomenon as an unviable crossbreeding of post-colonial, post-totalitarian, liberal-democratic, and national educational trends. The researchers characterized the resultant hybrid as a post-totalitarian bureaucracy with a "post-colonial complex of inferiority and humiliation" (Gomilko et al., 2016, p. 182).

The lack of a coherent national development and internationalization strategy and a clear vision of university development (Kvit, 2017; Sovsun, 2017) became evident in the internationalization of higher education. Kvit (2017) admitted that Ukraine joined the Bologna Process without a national consensus on the necessity to reform its education. Thus, it was hardly possible to expect that higher education in Ukraine would develop successfully when neither society nor the universities comprehended what role international cooperation should play in its institutional development (Sovsun, 2017). A pro-European education policy had been implemented without considering the policy outcomes, its relevance to Ukraine's educational problems, and its value to the stakeholders. Thus, Ukrainian universities responded cautiously and remained rigid to the Bologna reforms.

The shortcoming in the analysis of Ukraine's internationalization of higher education originates from a lack of empirical studies on global, national, and local influences on Ukrainian universities and their response to such influences. While many scholars focused on the analysis of national education reforms (Kostrobij & Rashkevych, 2017; Nikolaev, 2017; Sovsun, 2017; Wynnycky, 2015), little research has been conducted on how Ukrainian universities responded to internationalization. Furthermore, the very analysis of the institutional-level transformations lacked an empirical component

and was predominantly grounded in literature reviews. This paper addresses the existing gap in scholarship by exploring global, national, and local influences that have shaped internationalization in Ukrainian universities.

Theoretical Framework

‘Glonocal’ analysis in combination with the institutional theory guided the inquiry. In the global environment, higher education is simultaneously affected in three dimensions: the global/regional, the national, and the local (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). The ‘glonocal’ analysis is used to understand how the layering of these three elements influences the extent to which a university can successfully achieve its objectives. Institutional theory conceptualizes organizations as actors that follow policies and practices that have been successful in their institutional environments. For example, universities conform to external pressures such as government laws and regulations (coercion), imitate successful practices from other universities (mimesis), make decisions based on professional values, backgrounds, and beliefs (normative influence), and compete with each other (Beckert, 2010; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). In addition to the four institutional influences, the strongest social forces and past arrangements affect organizations’ actions. The past determines outcomes and trajectories for the future, and embedded legacies and structures condition organizational development (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Pierson, 2000).

The ‘glonocal’ analysis within institutional theory allows for examining Ukrainian universities within the global/regional environment of the EHEA, the national dimension of the Ukrainian system of higher education, and local university settings. European regionalization forces member-state universities to adapt to internal regulations. Universities have to adhere to market-oriented policies and adopt entrepreneurial governance models to function successfully within the EHEA and compete internationally. However, European isomorphism does not cause the same outcomes in every university. The national context and different organization-specific conditions affect the course of the changes. Global, national, and local connections reinforced with embedded legacies and past arrangements shape university development trajectories. While the Bologna Process acts as a convergent force in shaping university governance structures and practice in Europe, the Soviet legacies and inherited governing models act as divergent forces causing the uniqueness of outcomes in the Ukrainian national setting.

Ukrainian public universities are envisioned within three dimensions. The EHEA constitutes the global/regional dimension and pressures universities to conform to the Bologna requirements. The Ukrainian national education system represents a national dimension that influences universities through embedded structures and legacies. Finally, universities are locally bounded by the discourses and politics in their own institutional networks. Thus, the inquiry on the university internationalization strategies is situated in a complex of the fundamental tensions between Europeanization policies, inherited Soviet structures in Ukrainian higher education, and local institutional discourses and processes.

Methodology

The research was conducted in Ukrainian universities between 2019 and 2021. The qualitative case study examined the internationalization of higher education in three Ukrainian public universities (Behavioural Research Ethics Approval #1221). Document analysis and individual interviews were employed to collect the research data. The analysis of the Bologna-related documents provided insights into the actions, principles, and guidelines of the Bologna Process. Those documents included declarations and communiques, starting with the Bologna Declaration (EHEA, 1999) and finishing with the most recent Rome Ministerial Communique (EHEA, 2020). Particular focus was placed on the analysis of two versions of state laws, national development strategies, university statutes, and their mission and vision statements. The *Laws “On education”* (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1996, 2017), *“On higher education”* (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2002, 2014), and the national strategies for developing higher education were examined at the national level. University statutes and development strategies were analyzed at the institutional level to acquire insights into the changes in Ukrainian state policies in higher education, strategic directions for internationalization, and institutionally specific practices and policies to promote international cooperation.

Overall, eleven individual interviews were conducted at the three research sites. University presidents, provosts, and other senior administrators were selected based on their administrative role. Those who had worked in administrative positions for more than six years were assumed to have extensive knowledge of their universities' responses to internationalization. They could reflect on the institutional changes associated with the Bologna-oriented legislation after 2014.

To understand university internationalization, the following three Ukrainian public universities were selected as research sites: National Aviation University (NAU), Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University (TVHNPU), and Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University (ZIFSU). They all functioned in the EHEA and the Ukrainian system of higher education and were influenced through the initiatives and agreements between the EHEA member-states and the Ukrainian state legislation. All three universities complied with the Bologna principles in their activities and had similar rights and responsibilities granted by state law. The universities were established around the same period – the first half of the 20th century and were assumed to have undergone the same historical influences. They functioned as Soviet educational institutions for most of their history and abode by the administrative principles of the state's centralized control over every aspect of university life, administrative hierarchy, and extreme bureaucracy. The universities were located in mid-to-large-sized regional centers. Finally, for the first time, the universities were able to develop their own strategies between 2016 and 2019.

Results

Responding to European Regionalization Policies

Interpreting the findings, I inquired about the degree to which the Bologna Process had pressured the three research sites to converge to European internationalization policies. Ukraine's responding to the European internationalization policies was discussed within three themes: (1) the increasing role of internationalization, (2) the marketization of higher education, and (3) re-conceptualizing national identity (Zakharchuk, 2021). I used institutional theory to explain the transformation in Ukrainian higher education as a shift from the Soviet to the European educational model. Responding to Europeanization was perceived as a transition from the relative isolation during the Soviet times to the global openness and competitiveness offered by the Bologna Process. Such visualization makes it possible to illustrate an intersection of the Soviet legacies and the Bologna Process in policymaking and to consider historical, social, and political conditions in Ukraine.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian higher education still functioned according to the inherited Soviet principles of top-down administration and central planning. Soviet higher education was required to meet the demand of economic planning (Smolentseva et al., 2018). Central supervision over higher education eliminated competition and weakened the relationships between educational institutions and industry. The concepts of institutional autonomy, internationalization, marketization, as well as global competition were separated from higher education. When Ukraine joined the Bologna Process, the universities had to account for internationalization policies within the EHEA, the orientation toward the labour market, and local, regional, and global demands. Ukrainian universities were pressed to align with the EHEA governance models and practices. The internationalization in three Ukrainian public universities is shaped by the policies and practices within a global/regional environment of the EHEA, the national dimension of the Ukrainian higher education system, and the local university settings. However, no clear division exists between these isomorphic influences, as the institutional contexts within each of the dimensions are interrelated and interdependent.

Global/regional Dimension

European governments initiated extensive collaborations and implemented educational reforms inside and across the European region to secure Europe's position as a global higher education market. This wide range of collaborations and reforms, known as the Bologna Process, aimed at (1) opening access for European students and graduates to European higher education and the regional labour market and (2) securing the competitiveness of European higher education at the global level. The first goal was achieved by standardizing key educational elements, such as degree structures, transferable

credits, and academic qualifications in the EHEA member-countries. The Bologna Process promoted the consolidation and international openness of the EHEA while “strengthening dialogue between public authorities, academia, student representatives, and civil society” (Parliamentary Assembly, 2012, p. 1). Education in participating countries had to account for academic mobility, autonomous university governance, students’ participation in university administration, public responsibility for higher education, and the social dimension in education (EHEA, 1999, 2009). However, such a harmonization of European higher education not only promoted the alignment of the key educational elements but also invoked competition among the EHEA member-countries. The second goal introduced a distinct orientation toward the national and global market and society into all Bologna-driven reforms.

The internationalization of Ukrainian higher education was marked by the Ukraine’s targeting the economic and political integration with the European Union. Ukraine chose a pro-European direction to increase the quality of higher education, the mobility of its students and faculty, the employability of its graduates, the amount of its external funding, and the number of its international partnerships (Strategic Advisory Committee: Education, 2014). The implementation of the European higher education policy in Ukraine began in May 2005. The Bologna reforms required transforming structural elements in education and higher education governance and re-assessing the quality assurance system and internationalization policies. However, all Bologna-associated reforms in the Ukrainian higher education system primarily pursued country’s socio-economic development and integration into European and world education. Ukraine hoped that Europeanization would break a long-lasting relatively inward educational orientation and introduce a comparatively outward educational strategy.

National Dimension

Ukraine still has not developed a national strategy for internationalization in higher education. Reforms related to internationalization were somewhat loosely outlined in the laws “*On education*” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017) and “*On higher education*” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014), *National Doctrine on the Development of Education* (President of Ukraine, 2002), and *National Strategy for Development of Education in Ukraine until 2021* (President of Ukraine, 2013). These legal documents conveyed the idea that from now on Ukrainian education policy was aimed at integrating national education into the European and global education space. Given the demands of the global labour market, Europeanization was conceived of as a necessity for Ukrainian higher education.

Primarily, the new legal framework in higher education defined state policy on internationalization, outlined its main directions, and delimited international for-profit activities. Guided by the law, the state partially financed university international cooperation, including agreements with international partners, membership in international organizations, and engagement in international initiatives. Although the *Law “On higher education”* (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014) became a benchmark for educational reforms, it was criticized for preserving some authoritarian elements which interfered with a complete educational transformation. The main concern for some was that the Bologna innovations were not compatible with the influences from the Soviet past (Gomilko et al., 2016; Kostrobij & Rashkevych, 2017; Sovsun, 2017).

However, the prospects of increasing competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education in the European labour market guided educational reforms. The *National Development Strategy* recognized that Ukrainian educational services did not align with the needs of society, its graduates, and the labour market (President of Ukraine, 2013). The global labour market did not need the obedient soldiers following the superior’s commands; instead, it required creative minds and critical thinkers with in-depth theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply it independently in non-standard and ever-changing settings. To address this demand, the Ukrainian higher education called for the restoration of the lost connections between education, industry, and the state. According to the national vision on Ukraine’s sustainable socio-economic development, international partnerships and academic mobility within the EHEA became solutions not only to enhance education quality but also to secure the country’s socio-economic development (President of Ukraine, 2013; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014). Ukrainian universities were encouraged to adopt marketing philosophies and develop their strategies on the basis of their market performance.

Such reorientation prioritized humanistic values over a command economy and promoted a reconsideration of pedagogical ideology in general. The policy emphasized European humanistic values, democratization, and humanization of the educational process (President of Ukraine, 2013). Following the national agenda, the three research sites also redefined their values. ZIFSU accounted for dramatic changes in the country's history and re-assessed values, priorities, and prospects for modern citizens (Academic Council of ZIFSU, 2019). TVHNPU also envisioned the university's strategic direction in rebuilding its academic and research activities based on the idea of human-centeredness (Academic Council of TVHNPU, 2016).

Alongside the internationalization and marketization of Ukrainian higher education, the revival of national values occurred gradually over several decades. The new national education policies promoted democracy, humanism, cultural diversity, and tolerance and encouraged the development of Ukrainian culture and national self-identification. In fact, Ukraine's pro-European direction in higher education was legally guided by the principles of the priority of national interests, the preservation and development of the intellectual potential of the nation, tolerance towards the achievements of other educational systems, and the adoption of those achievements to the needs of the Ukrainian education system (President of Ukraine, 2002).

Institutional Dimension

While the *Law "On higher education"* provided general internationalization guidelines, each research site developed more specific activities. The geographical focus of their international partnerships varied considerably – from European-focused and those that expanded to other continents. Similarly, internationalization initiatives included but were not limited to academic mobility, cooperation with universities and organizations, and research projects (Academic Council of NAU, 2018; Academic Council of TVHNPU, 2016; Academic Council of ZIFSU, 2019). For all three universities, academic mobility became one of the targets of their internationalization strategies, and they established bilateral cooperation agreements with their European partners. Faculty and students participated in European mobility programs, such as Horizon 2020, *Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS)*, and Erasmus+.

Even though the geography of the universities' cooperating partners varied, the three research sites prioritized Polish institutions as their primary international collaborators. Each university had developed and maintained strong ties with Polish partners at the institutional and departmental levels. Such cooperation included academic mobility, dual diploma programs, and study visits. The universities established joint programs with Polish partners that allowed students to study in Poland and receive diplomas from two higher educational institutions (TVHNPU, n.d.; ZIFSU, n.d.).

While universities' partnership lists were similar, the nature of those partnerships differed slightly. Educational partnerships became a focus for TVHNPU and ZIFSU. For example, one of the TVHNPU priorities was cooperation with the European Association of Universities, including universities in Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, France, and Poland. TVHNPU also launched a Confucius Institute program to facilitate Chinese language and culture learning through academic programming and promote educational and cultural exchanges. In general, TVHNPU had 35 agreements of cooperation with universities in Asia, Europe, and North America (Academic Council of TVHNPU, 2016). ZIFSU also encouraged its academics to participate in international competitions and mobility programs (Academic Council of ZIFSU, 2019). ZIFSU even established the Department of International Relations and Regional Affairs to promote international cooperation at the European and global levels (ZIFSU, n.d.).

By comparison, NAU targeted strategic partnerships through cooperation with aviation industries and international organizations. Among those organizations were the *Airports Council International*, *International Air Transport Association*, *International Civil Aviation Organization*, and *International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations*. For several decades, two *International Civil Aviation Organization* training centres had already operated at the university. Joint projects were launched with technical universities of Great Britain, Spain, Holland, Germany, France, South Korea, and China (Rector of NAU, 2018). NAU was also developing industrial cooperation with China to train aviation specialists. At the regional level, NAU sought partnerships with the *European Civil Aviation Conference*, the *European Union Aviation Safety Agency*, and the *European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation* (Academic Council of NAU, 2018).

While internationalization actions were well-outlined in the universities' development strategies, some senior administrators assessed that the implementation of those actions would benefit from more comprehensive planning. The universities should have adopted a holistic approach to internationalization instead of a simple imitation of some European structures and practices. Such copying was often not productive and lacked in-depth understanding. For example, establishing separate units to manage international cooperation could not bring about the intended outcomes, as the structural changes alone were not enough to change the nature and quality of practice. One participant complained that any international cooperation could hardly be called a result of coordinated institutional effort; it mainly happened due to the efforts of proactive individuals:

A great deal of international cooperation is not taking place... All collaboration [is] at the correspondence level. International partners send us some suggestions; we send them ours. Close cooperation occurs only at the level of separate researchers and teachers. When our researchers [...] become interested in some grants or programs, they contact international colleagues directly. After that, the collaboration between the departments is established and institutes or faculties become involved. (Interview C)

Alongside internationalization, market-oriented approaches guided the universities' decision-making. Marketization prompted universities to operate as market-oriented organizations aligning their policies with business and commerce impacts. Their marketing agendas were set toward student-customer orientation and global, European, national, and local economic cooperation. Thus, NAU's orientation toward global and European cooperation manifested through establishing the Quality Board to align the university's development strategy with global market requirements. NAU cooperated with several leading international aviation organizations to meet regional and global labor market demands (Academic Council of NAU, 2018). In comparison, ZIFSU focused more on the needs of national and local labor markets when it licensed and opened new educational programs. The university systematically analyzed its graduates' employment and facilitated two-way communication with employers and the Association of University Alumni (Academic Council of ZIFSU, 2019).

A transparency policy became a part of the universities' market-oriented strategies. Following the *Law "On higher education,"* NAU, TVHNPU, and ZIFSU disclosed information about university governance, strategic directions, economic activities, and academic and research records. They opened access to university statutes, development strategies, and annual budgets, including financial reports and reports on university performance. As an interviewee explained, "the consequence [of the marketization] is the transparency of the educational process, even for reducing and preventing corrupt schemes, increasing employment opportunities, and improving quality" (Interview D). This transparency policy was crucial for universities' survival and maintaining their reputations in the national and international markets. Another interviewee elaborated on the topic: "Now every respectable university must also care about its image policy and university branding" (Interview J).

The theme of universities becoming market-driven organizations was brought up multiple times during the interviews. Marketization changed education philosophy. To survive and develop, universities were forced to resemble private businesses and, thus, be governed as ones. The curriculum was adapted to different stakeholders' needs. Internal policies and regulations were adjusted for universities to compete with each other. One senior administrator reflected on such influences:

The industry does not only serve as a customer of experts, but it also influences teachers' ways of thinking: how they should work at universities so that a future expert becomes the one wanted by the industry in five years. [...] A global market is a global market; there are already global players, and no longer simply regional but global problems. (Interview A)

Senior administrators perceived internationalization and marketization through the lens of past Soviet practices. The previous experiences of the abnormal internationalist policy during the Soviet times had marked participants' attitudes toward Ukraine's internationalization within EHEA. Europeanization influences were discussed in relation to "reconceptualizing national identity and preserving Ukrainian national values" (Zakharchuk, 2021, p. 112). Thus, the

participants' past-dependent opinions were divided over the interconnectedness of internationalization and reconceptualization of national identity. On the one hand, integration with Europe was opposed to the Soviet uniformity. On the other hand, some senior administrators questioned the difference between Europeanization and Soviet colonialism.

The supporters of the first stance contrasted the internationalization within the EHEA with integration with Russia and the oppressive educational policies. The internationalization of Ukrainian higher education was perceived as a political and social shift away from Soviet influences toward the revival of Ukrainian cultural traditions. In this regard, two revolutions and the Russian war against Ukraine were interpreted not only as Ukraine's response to Russia's invasion but as a struggle for national survival and the preservation of Ukrainian national identity. Senior administrators kept referring to the Soviet totalitarian policies under which Ukrainian culture and language had been prohibited and those who opposed had been persecuted, tortured, or killed. One participant remarked:

[W]e were going through very difficult times. The Orange Revolution. We survived it. It became 'before,' 'during,' and 'after.' When the wave rose, then fell, that wave brought something to its surface... And this entails both language issues and national cultural issues. Students need to be citizens of their own country, educated in certain values which they are responsible for defending. (Interview G)

Some senior administrators connected the events of Maidan with the emergence of social discourses on democracy and individual liberty. They emphasized that the recent social and political transformations introduced the concept nation-building in education and redefined the role of education according to these democratic and liberal tendencies in society. For instance, one interviewee commented on such changes,

It seems these challenges in the state mainly helped. We have gone through several revolutions [...]. As a result of these revolutions, some things changed locally [at universities] as well. Some things changed in governance. From a certain authoritarian mode of governance, we went towards democratization. (Interview C)

However, another participant complained that meaningful changes could not happen right away, as revolutions alone are not enough. Social transformation should start in peoples' minds by breaking from the collective consciousness of the oppressed nation:

'The ruin is not on the streets; the ruin is in our minds' [a quotation from *Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov, a revolutionary writer born in Ukraine during the Soviet times]. The generations must change, the consciousness and the feeling that something depends on your thought, your voice, and your action should emerge. (Interview I)

The supporters of the second stance were less favorable to European integration. They doubted whether it would be any different from the Soviet oppressive internationalist policy. The participants emphasized multiple distinctions between the Soviet and the Ukrainian and between the Ukrainian and the European. These differences fueled their concerns that the government might concede the newly rediscovered national values in the name of conforming to Europeanization policies. Some senior administrators expressed the following: "[T]here are plenty of advantages in unifying educational programs, courses, education systems, but there are many disadvantages because many institutions lose their identity, their history, their system of education" (Interview C) and "Ukrainian educational traditions must be taken into account and not lost" (Interview F).

While some participants perceived internationalization as a step away from the Soviet past, others were afraid it might interfere with nation-building and rediscovering national identity. However, all senior administrators were unanimous that the long-lasting Soviet policy of self-isolation had finally been broken when Ukraine joined the Bologna Process. At last, scholars could promote their research beyond national borders – freely communicate with their international partners, co-publish together, participate in international conferences, and present their works to international audiences. Moreover, Ukrainian academics could access uncensored information in international journals, repositories, and archives through global databases and search engines.

Challenges of Responding to Europeanization

The new institutional reality of the EHEA forced all three research sites to adopt the market-driven approach. However, the emerging policy priority on internationalization and marketization significantly challenged Ukrainian universities. It not only promoted competition between universities at multiple levels but also served as a ‘push’ factor for Ukrainian students to seek education abroad. Ukrainian universities faced competitive isomorphism at multiple levels. At the national level, universities competed for state funds and endowments, which depended on the university’s position in national rankings, for research funding and highly qualified staff, and for tuition-paying domestic students. At the international level, the competition was predominantly for being present in global rankings. Only a handful of Ukrainian universities were included among the best universities in the world. At the same time, such a representation could secure international funding, attract international students, and enhance international collaborations. The senior administrators from all three research sites admitted that the financial capacities of their universities were insufficient to compete effectively in the global market. To appear in global rankings became a secondary concern for the universities; they primarily struggled to remain visible among hundreds of Ukrainian universities. One senior administrator explained:

We do not say that we can compete today with European universities or with American ones. We have different financing. We must realize clearly that an American university, which is among the top ten in the world ranking, has a budget of tens of billions of dollars, while we have only a few tens of millions. (Interview A)

Senior administrators from NAU and TVHNPU talked about being internationally competitive. For instance, NAU aimed to become one of the top 100 Technical Universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and enter the global top 1000 universities in the QS World University Rankings. In comparison, ZIFSU focused all resources predominantly on national and local competition. Operating among over 200 Ukrainian universities, ZIFSU required administrative changes and revisiting governing practices to secure its position within local education markets. ZIFSU representatives recognized that the university could not possibly dream about competing at the global level with their current funds, and maintaining their ranking at the national level was their sole priority at the moment. Ultimately, all respondents concluded that participating in an endless competition and enhancing universities’ reputations posed extreme pressure for university administrators and academics. This situation was described as follows: “We are constantly in the race and constantly competing” (Interview H), “Every self-respecting university has to prove its existence not only in the city, district, in the region, but also beyond these borders” (Interview J), and “It is difficult for us to compete in the global market” (Interview A).

The second challenge Ukrainian universities faced was the outflow of students seeking education abroad. Ukraine’s joining the EHEA opened European universities to Ukrainian students and increased their employment prospects outside Ukraine’s borders. The national and university development strategies pointed out that the brain drain had become a national issue to be immediately addressed. Analytical center CEDOS reported alarming statistics: in the 2014/2015 academic year, Ukrainian students at foreign universities numbered 59,648, which constituted an increase of 129% from 2009 (Slobodian & Stadnyi, 2016). No recent data has been published to provide updated numbers and the scope of students’ outflow from Ukraine.

All three universities acknowledged the brain drain as a threat from internationalization and emphasized the need to regulate students’ outflow from their respective regions. The senior administrators could not but admit that internationalization had broadened the opportunities for Ukrainian students to study abroad. At the same time, integration with Europe promised to attract international students to Ukrainian campuses. However, while that promise was still on the horizon, increasing brain drain became a reality. The outflow of Ukrainian students challenged the universities more than ever:

Now there is a demographic fall in Ukraine. Moreover, a considerable number of citizens leave. They have a right to self-realization in life, work, and study in other countries. The number of students in our university has been decreasing in recent years. (Interview I)

The decreasing number of domestic students caused significant difficulties for the three research sites. Those difficulties included but were not limited to more competitive admissions campaigns, domestic student recruitment and retention, decreases in salaries for faculty and staff, and insufficient income to maintain the facilities or launch new

programs. Despite the universities' intentions to solve the existing problems, the senior administrators had no shared understanding of how to reduce the brain drain or attract international students.

Discussion

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has dramatically impacted the internationalization of Ukrainian higher education. While Ukrainian universities have been at the forefront of major disruptions in their usual operations, few studies have assessed how the war has impacted universities' internationalization. The updates on universities' operations in these extraordinary circumstances are drawn mainly from news releases on university websites.

Russia's heavy shelling of Ukrainian cities has affected the activities of all educational institutions. Most Ukrainian universities continue their usual activities as best they can and have adjusted to challenging circumstances. The universities in the occupied territories have had to evacuate to safer regions controlled by the Ukrainian government. The universities in Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, and other cities in the line of fire have suffered the most. They have faced challenges to their survival yet continue providing educational services while adapting to radically new conditions (Skrypnyk, 2022). The university representatives admitted that the community was the cornerstone that allowed them to continue working. Under the heavy shelling, the universities have prioritized safeguarding their students and staff over preserving their infrastructure (Skrypnyk, 2022).

When the war started, Ukrainian universities were allowed to determine independently the duration of their academic year. Universities could also adjust the teaching mode and the duration of academic calendar depending on the military situation in a region (Kumber, 2022). If located in the temporarily occupied territories or in the territories along the front lines, universities shifted to distance education. In other regions, a mixed format of online and in-person education was made possible. Located in northern and western Ukraine, the three research sites focused on maintaining a resemblance of normal educational processes. In particularly dangerous periods, they reverted to distance education and continued in-person classes whenever possible. During air raids, staff, faculty, and students had to retreat to shelters until the raids ended (Blyzniuk, 2020; Lobur & Prokopiv, 2022; Rector of NAU, 2022).

Retaining students and teachers became difficult for Ukrainian universities. By September 2022, more than three million Ukrainians, 8% of which were students, were forced to leave the country to seek international protection (Zharykova, 2022). Many international students had to evacuate quickly. Some domestic students were forced to take academic leave. When they returned to the universities, they found that they had lost their financial support (Kabanets, 2022). The universities addressed the problem with several measures. First, they transferred to a hybrid form of work. Second, they intensified international partnerships and searched for opportunities to offer in-person education for their students in foreign universities (Skrypnyk, 2022).

Some Ukrainian universities tried to create alliances, both domestic and international, predominantly with European universities. The goal of these partnerships was to develop joint educational programs and centres for the collective use of equipment (Kabanets, 2022). In cooperation with international organizations, Ukrainian Global University has been launched by leading Ukrainian educational institutions and the Ukrainian government (UGU, n.d.). This initiative connected Ukrainian students and academics with educational institutions worldwide. Seventy-one educational institutions have already partnered with Ukrainian universities to ensure that Ukrainian students and scholars receive quality educational opportunities under these wartime conditions.

The overall internationalization trajectory of Ukrainian universities also changed. When Russia invaded, Ukrainian universities terminated all relationships with Russian and Belarus organizations. Moreover, Russia and Belarus were excluded from the Bologna Process. The Bologna Follow-Up Group emphasized that the Russian invasion of Ukraine ran counter to the EHEA values and goals and fundamentally violated obligations and commitments undertaken since 2003 (Bologna Follow-Up Group, 2022). Among possible European partners, the close alliance between Ukraine and Poland proved to be the most beneficial choice for international cooperation (Madzhumdar, 2022). The strengthening of the Ukrainian-Polish educational partnership has been rooted in the political and economic support between the two countries.

Information on the impact of war on academic mobility at the three research sites was insufficient to draw firm conclusions. The universities' news releases have indicated that many students and some faculty volunteered to join the territorial defence and the Ukrainian army to defend the country's sovereignty (Blyzniuk, 2020; Lobur & Prokopiv, 2022; Rector of NAU, 2022). Other local news sources have reported on multiple students' fundraisers to support Ukrainian soldiers, student initiatives to weave camouflage nets, media campaigns to raise international awareness about the war in Ukraine, and events to promote national culture and history.

Because of the war, nationalist discourses in Ukraine have shifted from the political fringes into the mainstream. Despite the international perception of the Ukrainian resistance struggle as an attempt to preserve its freedom and maintain its democracy, Russia's war against Ukraine has had a more contextualized and 'sacred' meaning for Ukrainians (Motyl, 2022; Rees, 2022; Shevtsova, 2022). As an oppressed nation, Ukrainians understand the sacredness of the war through their experience of past Soviet mass repressions and genocides, and they hold Russia accountable for the current attempt to renew its attacks on a fully distinct ethnic society (Motyl, 2022; Rees, 2022). The Russian government continues to use "the so-called 'denazification' of Ukraine and the need to free the country from the radical nationalists" (Shevtsova, 2022, p. 132) as a central argument to justify its military invasion. This myth of Ukrainian nationalism fueled discussions about Ukraine's history, traditions, and language while Ukrainians were re-establishing their national identity reshaped by the years of Russia's misinformation and its war against Ukraine. Over the past several years, the discussions of nationalist ideals have intensified in universities as students and faculty rediscover concepts of the Ukrainian nation and nationhood.

Implications and Conclusion

For the past eighteen years, the internationalization of Ukrainian higher education resembled an "interplay between the Bologna Process and the Soviet legacies" (Zakharchuk, 2021, p. 120). Ukrainian universities were embedded and functioned in the institutional environments formed by the EHEA and the Ukrainian educational system. Both pressured Ukrainian universities to either change through the Bologna Process or to remain rigid, preserving Soviet education legacies. The combined conflicting influences affected the three research sites in multiple ways. For example, Europeanization promoted change toward market orientation and accelerated higher education internationalization. NAU, TVHNPU, and ZIFSU developed or renewed their marketization and internationalization strategies. Their policies tended to reject Soviet governing practices in favour of more open and democratic EHEA values.

At the same time, the Bologna Process challenged universities by promoting strategic competition at the local, national, and global levels and facilitating a brain drain from Ukraine. Internationalization was commonly perceived as helpful in reviving Ukrainian national identity, but sometimes there were doubts. Would Europeanization be any different from the Soviet oppressive internationalist policy? Would Ukraine be forced to sacrifice the national values in the name of adapting to European ideals? These fears sometimes provoked resistance to changes.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine sped up all that could only have been achieved in normal times by years of educational reform. Over the last two years, social and political movements inside the country reverberated in academia. Critical thinking and civic values of democracy, social justice, free speech, liberty, and equality found their way into education and became cornerstones of modern Ukrainian higher education. Reconceptualizing national identity manifested itself through shifts towards reviving national identity, and re-examining worldview, curriculum, and pedagogy.

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