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## The organisation of the educational process in the distance learning format in the frontline territories during the period of martial law in Ukraine

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**Abstract.** Analysing current approaches to organising remote learning in the frontline territories of Ukraine during martial law is crucial to ensure the continuity of education in times of crisis. This study aimed to identify the main challenges and prospects of remote learning, particularly by examining international experience and evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented learning models. For this purpose, a descriptive approach involving traditional document analysis, a systematic approach, and analytical and synthetic methods was employed. The primary sources of analysis were Ukrainian Laws, resolutions, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine's orders, Ministry of Education and Science orders and letters adopted after 24 February 2022. The study found that the key challenges for organising distance learning in frontline areas were ensuring the safety of participants in the educational process, a lack of technical facilities and resources, and psychological difficulties for students and teachers. The introduction of cutting-edge technologies and the adaptation of teaching methods could significantly increase the effectiveness of distance learning in times of crisis. Recommendations for enhancing the educational process have been formulated, including the integration of innovative technologies, advanced training for educators, and psychological support for all participants in the educational process. The study's practical value lies in the potential application of these recommendations to improve the organisation of education in the frontline areas of Ukraine, ensuring the continuity of education amidst hostilities and enhancing overall educational quality. The findings can inform the development of national strategies for distance learning during crises and contribute to improving the regulatory framework in the education sector

**Keywords:** remote learning; frontline education; military conflict; continuity of education; learning strategies; educational innovations

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### INTRODUCTION

The war has resulted in numerous problems regarding the accessibility and safety of education. Many children have lost the opportunity to participate in the educational process,

and teachers are forced to work in regions where hostilities are taking place or may take place. In such circumstances, it is essential to ensure proper learning conditions, which



requires significant planning and adaptation of educational programmes. The transition to distance learning was a key solution that enabled the educational process to resume under the challenging conditions of martial law. Distance education allows students to continue their studies regardless of their location, including those who are temporarily abroad. The current state of this issue at the global level reveals significant challenges and opportunities for ensuring continuity of education in times of crisis and conflict.

Many studies have examined various aspects of distance learning in military conflicts and emergencies. One of the key studies is the report prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which analyses the educational situation under martial law and the challenges of developing the post-war perspective (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023). The report titled “Education and War in Ukraine (24 February – 1 April 2022)” examines the impact of the war on Ukraine’s education system and the measures taken to support the educational process (Nazarenko *et al.*, 2022).

At the global level, the issue of distance learning in crisis situations is addressed in numerous studies. Significant studies that examine the issue of distance learning during martial law include research of S. Semerikov *et al.* (2023), which examines the challenges faced by Ukrainian students in distance learning during martial law. In their study, they analyse the results of a survey of Ukrainian students, identifying the main problems and opportunities for improving the educational process. Another study by M. Shlenova *et al.* (2023) compares the implementation of distance learning in the Ukrainian higher education system during the COVID-19 pandemic and martial law, providing insight into the evolution of approaches and teaching practices. H. Marynchenko *et al.* (2022) investigate the development and practice of distance learning in higher education institutions under martial law, focusing on the need to integrate innovative technologies and methods. In addition, N. Dichuk & O. Kravchenko (2024) focus on social and psychological assistance to children during martial law, which is an important aspect of maintaining the psycho-emotional well-being of participants in the educational process. The relevance of the study lies in the need to develop effective strategies and approaches to support the educational process in the context of hostilities. The purpose of the study was to analyse current approaches to the organisation of distance learning in Ukraine’s frontline territories and to identify the key challenges and prospects. The objectives of the study included analysing international experience, assessing the effectiveness of the implemented learning models, and developing recommendations for enhancing the educational process in times of crisis. The scientific novelty of the research lies in a comprehensive analysis of the organisation of the educational process under martial law, based on the latest research and publications. This allows not only to assess the current state of the problem but also to outline ways for further development and improvement of distance learning in crisis conditions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research into the challenges of the educational process under martial law requires a specialised and unconventional approach due to numerous new factors. Traditional methods, such as questionnaires and interviews, cannot be effectively used in war zones and frontline areas due to the physical danger to respondents and correspondents. Additionally, most residents and students have left these settlements, making it difficult to obtain complete, accurate, and reliable data on their current whereabouts. This situation makes the study organisationally and economically challenging, delays the research, and reduces the relevance of the problem.

Under such conditions, researchers are forced to employ other methods and approaches. Given the prevailing circumstances, the theoretical approach to the study was found to be the most appropriate. Theoretical research methods such as generalisation, analysis, comparison, and systematisation were used to understand and address the problems of education during martial law. Generalisation helped to synthesise extensive findings from various sources to form comprehensive conclusions about the educational process during martial law. The generalisation of specific observations from legislative documents, educational directives, and scholarly articles (UNICEF, 2022; Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023; Petrova & Shevchenko, 2023) provided a broader picture of the systemic impact of martial law on education. This allowed for the identification of common patterns and trends across regions and institutions.

The analysis included an examination of key legislative documents such as the Laws of Ukraine, resolutions (Law of Ukraine No. 2145-VIII, 2022), the decrees of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1411 (2022), Law of Ukraine No. 463-IX (2020) and directives of the Ministry of Education and Science (2023) adopted after 24 February 2022. These documents provided critical insight into the government’s response to the education crisis. A chronological analysis of these documents allowed for the assessment of the changing educational landscape and the measures taken to address the emerging challenges. The comparison facilitated the exploration of different responses and strategies implemented by various educational institutions and regions. The comparison of approaches and results in different areas allowed for the identification of best practices and lessons learned. This comparative analysis also highlighted the differences and unique challenges faced by various communities, which helped to formulate more tailored recommendations. Systematisation involved examining Ukrainian education as a holistic system composed of various subsystems, including the Ministry of Education, local administrations, educational leaders, teachers, and students. This method helped to organise and integrate the diverse elements of the education system, providing a structured understanding of how these components interact and influence each other under martial law. The combination of these theoretical methods provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of

education and the response to martial law. This approach was chosen because it offers a rigorous framework for analysing complex, multifaceted issues in contexts where traditional empirical methods are impractical or impossible.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of martial law in Ukraine, the organisation of the educational process in frontline areas has faced numerous challenges. The war has led to significant destruction of the educational infrastructure, making it difficult to

access education (Opanasenko & Novikova, 2022). Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, more than 3,793 educational institutions have been damaged, and 365 have been completely destroyed (Table 1) (Institute for Analytics and Advocacy, 2023). To ensure the safety of students and teachers, most schools have been equipped with shelters, and education is being conducted in a blended or remote format. This situation requires careful planning and adaptation of educational programmes to ensure accessibility and quality of education in emergency conditions.

**Table 1.** Destroyed and damaged educational institutions in the regions of Ukraine.

Region	Damaged	Destroyed	Region	Damaged	Destroyed
Vynnytska	4	0	Mykolaivska	246	33
Volynska	0	0	Odeska	81	0
Dnipropetrovska	283	9	Poltavska	17	0
Donetska	770	160	Rivnenska	2	0
Zhytomyrska	126	1	Sumska	130	8
Zakarpatska	0	0	Ternopil'ska	1	0
Zaporizka	212	14	Kharkiv'ska	579	51
Ivano-Frankiv'ska	0	0	Kherson'ska	296	51
Kyiv'ska	198	13	Khmeln'ytska	5	0
Kirovohrad'ska	9	0	Cherkaska	11	0
Luhanska	182	23	Chernivetska	0	0
Lviv'ska	8	0	Chernihiv'ska	144	2

**Source:** developed by the Institute for Analytics and Advocacy (2023)

More than a thousand educational institutions have been so severely damaged that they cannot be restored. Approximately 20% of children are unable to attend school or even study in a hybrid format. At the beginning of the school year, out of 13,000 schools, approximately 2,500 are forced to operate exclusively in remote mode, which is almost 20% of the total (Institute for Analytics and Advocacy, 2023). Studies show that distance learning is less effective than face-to-face learning. For many students, this is the fourth year of online learning, which negatively affects the quality of their knowledge. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as of February 2023, almost 1.6 million students were studying online (Ukrinform, 2023). The quality of education is also affected by frequent air raids, power outages, and poor internet connections (Petrova & Shevchenko, 2023). The lack of necessary educational skills and socialisation among schoolchildren could have long-term negative consequences for Ukraine's economy. Ukrainian society should actively fight for equal educational opportunities for children even during the war, especially in the frontline regions (Galynska & Bilous, 2022). Education is the foundation for the development of any society (Vynoslav'ska *et al.*, 2024). The war should not deprive children of the opportunity to acquire

the knowledge and skills necessary to rebuild the country in the future. Today's schoolchildren are the future leaders, professionals, and citizens who will take responsibility for the restoration and development of Ukraine. Since the beginning of the occupation of Ukrainian territories by the Russian army, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine have begun to amend legislation. In particular, Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1411 (2022a) cancelled the increase in salaries for pedagogical, research, and teaching staff of educational and scientific institutions. In early spring 2022, with the outbreak of hostilities, a two-week holiday was declared in Ukraine and the educational process was suspended. As of 28 March, 144 children had been killed and more than 220 injured as a result of the hostilities. 659 educational facilities were damaged by bombardment and shelling, of which 74 were completely destroyed (UNICEF, 2022).

Since 14 March 2022, education has resumed in most regions, with the format of classes being determined by regional administrations and educational institutions. By 31 March, 76 Ukrainian educational institutions had been destroyed, and 722 had suffered damage. By August 2022, the total number of educational facilities lost across all regions had reached 790. Distance education recommenced

on 14 March. The Learning Without Borders project was introduced for students in grades 5-11, offering daily video lessons on specific subjects. As of 21 March 2022, the educational process in 11 regions of Ukraine was being conducted remotely, with over 10,000 schools operating in this format. Nearly 3 million students returned to school. By the end of March, general secondary education institutions in three regions, including Kyiv, continued with remote learning; in four regions, education was partially organised; in five regions, education was either partially resumed remotely, holidays were extended, or classes were suspended, depending on the specific community. In the remaining regions, education was suspended due to security concerns. In total, 5,000 children participated in education from their temporary residences after being displaced.

The implementation of remote learning in Ukraine's frontline areas during the war is a critical issue requiring a thorough approach to maintaining educational continuity and ensuring safety. The introduction of martial law on 24 February 2022 due to the full-scale aggression by the Russian Federation has presented significant challenges for the education system. Distance learning became a vital measure to continue education despite the ongoing dangers. It allows students to pursue their education regardless of their location, even in foreign territories. According to Article 57-1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (Law of Ukraine No. 2145-VIII, 2022), state guarantees of the right to education apply to all participants in the educational process. The main regulatory documents governing distance learning are the Laws of Ukraine "On Education" and "On Complete General Secondary Education". The decision to adopt distance learning is based on the free choice of parents or other legal representatives, confirmed by an application or agreement on the provision of educational services. Under martial law, distance learning may be the only viable way to ensure security (Marynchenko *et al.*, 2022).

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MES) has taken several steps to ensure the high quality of distance learning. An important initiative was the introduction of the All-Ukrainian School Online electronic platform, which provides access to learning materials and allows for communication between students and teachers. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a system to automate the work of inclusive resource centres, supporting the education of children with special educational needs. Schools are also integrated into the AIKOM system, which facilitates the use of electronic diaries and journals to record student performance. This system helps to organise the educational process more efficiently and transparently. Distance learning is conducted in both synchronous and asynchronous modes using various electronic platforms. These include Google Workspace, Google Classroom, Novi Znanja, and HUMAN.UA. For communication, online services such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet are widely used. These tools allow for real-time interaction between students and teachers, while also enabling students to view recorded

lessons at their convenience. Distance learning is the organisation of the educational process using modern technologies that allow participants to interact at a distance in a digital environment (Muñoz-Najar *et al.*, 2021; Polianovskiy *et al.*, 2021; Semerikov *et al.*, 2023). This definition is officially adopted in the "Regulation on the Distance Form of Complete General Secondary Education", approved by The Order of the Ministry of Education and Science on 8 September 2020, No. 1115 (2020).

The organisation of distance learning requires an appropriate regulatory framework in educational institutions. This includes a charter with relevant provisions, decisions of the pedagogical council, orders of the director, and an approved internal quality control system (Shuliak *et al.*, 2024). The specifics of distance learning require parents to create appropriate conditions for their children's education, provide technical means, access to the Internet, and monitor compliance with the principles of academic integrity (Education Analyst, 2023). Labour relations have also changed during martial law. The introduction of distance learning does not mean that teachers automatically switch to remote work. This requires appropriate orders on the transition to remote work, which define the rights and obligations of employees and employers. Teachers should be provided with the necessary technical means or receive compensation for using their own (Kyselov & Palekha, 2022; Tkachenko & Pavlenko, 2023).

The organisation of distance learning under martial law is based on the following theoretical principles: flexibility and adaptability of educational programmes, continuity of education, psychological support for participants in the educational process, and technical support (Garbe *et al.*, 2020). The flexibility and adaptability of educational programmes are a key factor that allows for a quick and effective response to changing conditions, including the possibility of switching between full-time and distance learning. Continuity of education means ensuring a continuous educational process even in the event of evacuation or relocation of students and teachers (Zhukova & Tkachenko, 2023). Psychological support for participants in the educational process is an important aspect that helps reduce stress and anxiety arising from the hostilities (Dichek & Kravchenko, 2024). Technical support includes providing the necessary equipment and Internet access for the effective conduct of classes. In the context of martial law in the frontline areas, the main task is to ensure the safety of participants in the educational process. Constant danger due to hostilities, interruption of classes due to air raids, and risks to the lives and health of students and teachers pose serious obstacles to the organisation of remote learning. Additionally, technical and infrastructural problems, such as insufficient access to the Internet, missing or damaged equipment, and power outages, make it impossible to have stable access to online resources (Zahorodnia & Mishchenko, 2023). Social and psychological aspects also play an important role in the organisation of distance learning. The stress and anxiety caused by the war, the disunity of teams, the lack of

live communication, and the need for psychological support for both students and teachers create additional challenges for the educational process (Dichek & Kravchenko, 2024). The forced relocation of students and teachers to safer regions, problems with integration into new educational environments, and the lack of necessary documents to continue their studies also complicate the situation.

Distance learning in frontline areas requires the implementation of special measures and initiatives. One of these measures is the transition to distance learning using online platforms for classes, the introduction of blended learning where possible, and the use of special programmes such as Learning Without Borders to provide access to learning materials. Providing the technical infrastructure, including the necessary equipment (laptops and tablets) and free Internet access for educational purposes, is crucial to the success of distance learning (Carter Jr *et al.*, 2020; Bakhov, 2021). Cooperation with providers to ensure stable connectivity in difficult conditions is also an important aspect. Social and psychological support for participants in the educational process includes organising online consultations with psychologists, conducting group classes to support social interaction, and providing access to resources to help overcome stress and anxiety. The adaptation of curricula involves developing individual schedules for students who cannot attend classes as usual, providing academic mobility opportunities for students from frontline areas, and introducing simplified procedures for transferring students to other educational institutions (Marynchenko *et al.*, 2022; Dichek & Kravchenko, 2024).

Integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) into the educational process is an important aspect of distance learning. Admitting students without the necessary documents or with copies of those documents, creating conditions for continuing their studies in safer regions, and providing access to resources and support for integration into new educational institutions are key elements of this strategy (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023). An example of good practice is the Learning Without Borders project, a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, Ukrainian TV channels, and online platforms that broadcast video lessons for students in grades 5-11 in various subjects, engaging a wide range of students from different regions of Ukraine. Distance learning during martial law addresses many of the challenges faced by education in Ukraine but requires the combined efforts of parents, students, and teachers. The support of the state is important, as it should provide a regulatory framework and funding for the proper organisation of the educational process in the context of military conflict.

The impact of war on education is a global issue, with numerous countries experiencing significant disruptions to their educational systems due to armed conflict. The situation in Ukraine is not unique in this regard, and examining international experiences can provide valuable insights into mitigating the adverse effects of war on education. According to international reports, such as the one

by Concern Worldwide (2023), conflict zones often see a drastic decline in educational participation and quality. The destruction of infrastructure, the displacement of populations, and the psychological trauma inflicted on both students and teachers create substantial barriers to education. In Ukraine, similar challenges have been observed, where the ongoing conflict has led to the destruction of thousands of educational institutions and forced a significant shift to distance learning. However, international experiences show that despite these challenges, education can continue with the implementation of specific strategies. These include the adaptation of curricula to conflict conditions, the provision of psychosocial support to learners, and the use of technology to facilitate remote learning. For instance, in countries like Syria and Yemen, educational programmes have been adapted to include psychosocial support, and community-based education has played a crucial role in continuing learning in areas where formal schooling is disrupted. Additionally, the integration of technology has allowed for the continuation of education in settings where traditional schooling is not feasible. In Ukraine, similar approaches have been adopted, with the use of online platforms like the All-Ukrainian School Online, which aligns with global practices observed in other conflict-affected regions. The adaptation of these strategies within the Ukrainian context highlights the potential for resilience in education even amidst ongoing conflict, emphasising the importance of international cooperation and knowledge sharing in addressing educational challenges in crisis settings. The experience from other war-torn regions underscores the importance of a flexible and adaptive educational framework that can respond to the dynamic challenges posed by war, ensuring that education remains accessible and effective for all students, regardless of their circumstances.

This study, similar to that of S. Semerikov *et al.* (2023), identified the main challenges faced by students in distance learning under martial law. Both studies highlight significant difficulties related to the technical infrastructure and the psychological state of the participants in the educational process. While this study focuses on the issues of technical and psychological support, M. Shlenova *et al.* (2023) compare distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and martial law, offering insights into the evolution of approaches and methods in these different crisis conditions. They focus on the changing approaches to learning and the use of technology that has evolved over time. The study by N. Dichek & O. Kravchenko (2024) focuses on social and psychological assistance for children during martial law, which is an important aspect of maintaining the psycho-emotional state of participants in the educational process. The importance of integrating psychological care and support to ensure effective learning is considered, complementing the findings on the necessity of a comprehensive approach to distance learning. Overall, the findings are consistent with those of other studies, highlighting the importance of technical infrastructure and psychological support in times of crisis. However, this approach is more

focused on the specific aspects of martial law in Ukraine, while other studies look at broader contexts or compare different crisis situations.

The research into the educational process under martial law in Ukraine has necessitated the use of unconventional and theoretical approaches due to the dangers and logistical challenges of collecting data in frontline areas. Traditional empirical methods were replaced with theoretical methods such as generalisation, analysis, comparison, and systematisation. These methods allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the impact of martial law on education. By synthesising findings from various legislative documents, educational directives, and scholarly articles, the study provided critical insights into the systemic effects of the conflict on education. The analysis of key legislative documents and the comparative study of different regional approaches enabled the identification of best practices and unique challenges. Systematisation offered a structured understanding of the educational system's various components and their interactions under crisis conditions. Overall, this rigorous theoretical framework facilitated the development of informed recommendations to enhance the organisation of distance learning in Ukraine's frontline territories during martial law, ensuring continuity and quality of education amidst the ongoing conflict.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study showed that the organisation of the educational process in the frontline territories of Ukraine during martial law has faced numerous challenges, including the

destruction of infrastructure, frequent air raids, power outages, and poor internet connections. Despite these difficulties, distance learning has become a necessary step to ensure the continuity of education. Most schools were equipped with shelters, and classes were held in a blended or distance learning format, which required the adaptation of educational programmes to maintain their quality in the face of crises. An analysis of international experiences has shown that it is important to support the psycho-emotional state of participants in the educational process, especially children, by providing social and psychological assistance. Ukrainian society should actively fight for equal educational opportunities for children, as education is the foundation for the development of any society and the future recovery of the country.

Prospects for further research include the development and implementation of new models of distance learning that take into account the specific conditions of the frontline areas, as well as the creation of effective strategies to support the educational process in the face of prolonged crisis situations. Additionally, it is necessary to continue researching the impact of war on the psycho-emotional state of students and to develop psychological support programmes that would help maintain and improve children's mental health during the war.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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## **Організація освітнього процесу в дистанційному форматі навчання на прифронтових територіях у період дії воєнного стану в Україні**

**Анотація.** Аналіз сучасних підходів до організації дистанційного навчання на прифронтових територіях України в умовах воєнного стану є вкрай важливим для забезпечення безперервності освіти в умовах кризи. Це дослідження мало на меті визначити основні виклики та перспективи дистанційного навчання, зокрема шляхом аналізу міжнародного досвіду та оцінки ефективності впроваджених моделей навчання. Для цього було використано описовий підхід, що передбачає традиційний аналіз документів, системний підхід, методи аналізу та синтезу. Основними об'єктами аналізу були Закони України, постанови, розпорядження Кабінету Міністрів України, накази та листи Міністерства освіти і науки, прийняті після 24 лютого 2022 року. Дослідження виявило, що ключовими викликами для організації дистанційного навчання на прифронтових територіях є забезпечення безпеки учасників освітнього процесу, брак технічних засобів та ресурсів, а також психологічні труднощі для студентів та викладачів. Впровадження новітніх технологій та адаптація методик викладання можуть значно підвищити ефективність дистанційного навчання в умовах кризи. Сформульовано рекомендації щодо вдосконалення освітнього процесу, які включають інтеграцію інноваційних технологій, підвищення кваліфікації викладачів та психологічну підтримку всіх учасників освітнього процесу. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у можливості застосування цих рекомендацій для покращення організації освіти у прифронтових районах України, забезпечення безперервності освіти в умовах воєнних дій та підвищення загальної якості освіти. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані при розробці національних стратегій дистанційного навчання під час кризових ситуацій та сприяти вдосконаленню нормативно-правової бази в освітній галузі

**Ключові слова:** дистанційне навчання; прифронтова освіта; військовий конфлікт; неперервність освіти; стратегії навчання; освітні інновації