

**Prof. Viktor Hladush, DrSc,  
Ing. Zuzana Brčiaková, PhD  
Uniwersytet Katolicki w Ružomberku, Słowacja**

**GRANICE EDUKACYJNE WSPÓŁCZESNEGO PEDAGOGA SPECJALNEGO  
EDUCATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF THE MODERN SPECIAL EDUCATOR**

**Streszczenie**

Celem artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na problemy związane z działalnością człowieka i granicami, które powstają na jego drodze. Działalność edukacyjna jest wiodąca w życiu każdego człowieka. Edukacja jest zjawiskiem, bez którego człowiek nie może żyć w cywilizowanym społeczeństwie. Edukacja powinna być dostępna od wczesnego dzieciństwa przez całe życie człowieka. Istnieje wiele granic, które są zarówno obiektywne, jak i subiektywne. Autorzy opisują problemy pojawiające się na drodze do uzyskania świadczeń edukacyjnych oraz przedstawiają pozytywne wyniki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja, usługi edukacyjne, działalność edukacyjna, granice, bariery,

**Abstract**

The purpose of the article is to highlight the problems associated with human activity and the boundaries that arise on its way. Educational activity is the leading in the life of every person. Education is a phenomenon without which a person cannot live in a civilized society. Education should be available from early childhood throughout a person's life. There are many boundaries that are both objective and subjective. The authors describe the problems that arise on the way to obtaining educational services and present positive results.

**Keywords:** education, educational services, educational activity, borders, barriers.

**1. Introduction**

The concept of "border" means the geographical boundary of a political entity or jurisdictions, but in the life and activities of people this concept is used in a broader and even figurative sense. These can be personal, psychological, moral, cultural, philosophical, etc. In education, there are also conditional boundaries that are formed over time with the help of established rules, under the influence of culture, traditions, customs, beyond which a person can go. The determinants of going beyond the boundaries of existence can be scientific and technological progress, globalization processes, innovation, vital needs, personal interests, etc.

Etymologically, the word education comes from the Latin "education", the verb educare (to educate). Modern Wikipedia interprets this term as follows "Education is a purposeful

cognitive activity of people to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities or to improve them. It is the process and result of a person's mastering of a certain system of scientific knowledge, practical skills and abilities and the associated level of development of his or her mental, cognitive and creative activity, as well as moral and aesthetic culture, which together determine the social face and individual identity of this person<sup>1</sup>.

The education system is one of the systems that, due to constant changes in society, covers human activity throughout life. That is, a person who wants to keep up with the times has to search for new knowledge either through self-development or to obtain the necessary knowledge in an educational institution. The human being is so configured that he actually learns throughout life.

**Research methods:** observation, theoretical analysis of documents, study and analysis of performance results, generalization of materials.

**The purpose of the article** is to highlight the process of development of higher education in Ukraine, in particular, defectology education by overcoming the "borders" that stood in the way. The material is presented in retrospect.

## **2. Presentation of the basic material**

In the system of providing educational services there are pedagogical workers in the specialty "Special Education". Over the past 20 years, the name of this specialty has changed. At first it functioned as "defectology", then "remedial education", now, as in international practice - "special education". Graduates receive the specialty "special teacher" in the following specializations: oligophrenopedagogue, sign language teacher, typhlopedagogue, orthopedagogue, speech therapist. A special teacher (defectologist, correctional teacher) is a specialist who works with children with special needs and deals with the education and upbringing of such children. Not every teacher is able to work with this category of children. This specialty is rather a "vocation", because it requires deep theoretical knowledge of psychology, the basics of medicine, special didactics, personal traits: empathy, tolerance, endurance, and great patience.

The training of specialists in the specialty "Special Education" in Ukraine has more than 100 years of history. In the second half of the twentieth century, only the Kyiv State Pedagogical Institute named after O.M. Gorky and the Slavic State Pedagogical Institute were engaged in the training of teachers for the special education system. These higher education institutions

---

<sup>1</sup> Osvita. URL: <https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9E%D1%81%D0%B2%D1%96%D1%82%D0%B0>

had extensive experience in training such personnel. But, as the reporting documents of local education authorities of the late twentieth century show, the need for pedagogical staff of the system special education were met only by 8-10%. Each special school employed from three to 8 defectologists, which made it impossible to raise the level of special education to a high level. Since independence in Ukraine (1991), the special education system has barely survived due to extremely limited funding. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were 387 special educational institutions in Ukraine with 47,378 children and 10,990 teachers<sup>2</sup>. The National Pedagogical University named after M.P. Drahomanov (formerly the Gorky Pedagogical Institute) and the Slavic Pedagogical University could not physically prepare the required number of pedagogical staff, even with the introduction of retraining and a shortened period (1-2 years). There was a catastrophic shortage of defectology teachers in special schools due to staff outflow due to insufficient funding, retirement age, etc. There was an objective need to expand the network of higher education institutions that could train special educators. To meet the staffing needs of special education institutions in the western regions of Ukraine, the specialty "defectology" was opened in Kamianets-Podilskyi State University. Later it happened in the state universities of Sumy, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Lviv, Lutsk, Luhansk, Simferopol, Kherson, Uzhhorod, Ivano-Frankivsk, Uman, Pereyaslav, Ternopil, Zhytomyr. In fact, the monopoly on training and retraining of defectology personnel at the Drahomanov National Pedagogical University ceased to function.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, almost every administrative region began training pedagogical staff for special schools within its region (with the exception of teachers for educational institutions with hearing and visual impairments). The conventional educational "borders" ceased to exist as they had before. The network of special general secondary education institutions decreased by 9 units compared to the previous year and in the 2021/2022 academic year is 310 institutions (2020/2021 - 319 institutions) with a contingent of 36,294 students (in 2020/2021 - 36461 students), of which 2289 are orphans and children deprived of parental care:

80 - educational and rehabilitation centers (8406 students) for children with complex developmental disabilities;

230 - special schools - with a contingent of 27888 students.

---

<sup>2</sup> Osvita osib z invalidnistiu v Ukraini: tematychna natsionalna dopovid. Chernivtsi : Bukrek, 2010. 436 s.

257 special institutions have boarding schools (boarding houses), where 29881 pupils live, including almost 2066 orphans and children deprived of parental care, 5573 pupils come only to study; 1429 preschool children, including 34 orphans and children deprived of parental care<sup>3</sup>.

The question arises - are all graduates of the specialty "special pedagogy" employed? Yes, they are. Due to the expansion of the network of higher education institutions that train special educators, special education institutions are staffed with pedagogical staff with special education by 80% (special education institutions in regional cities by 95-100%). However, a new problem has arisen - the introduction of inclusive education. This innovative form of education has been widely resisted by the special education system, which has accumulated extensive practical experience in teaching, upbringing and development of children with disabilities over 100 years of operation. Administrations and teachers of general educational institutions openly demonstrated their unwillingness to work with this category of children. Thanks to the consistent and persistent educational work of public organizations, the support of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, the legislative initiative of the state educational authorities of Ukraine, this "border" was overcome. The current stage of education development is characterized by the full-scale implementation of inclusive education in preschool, school, vocational and higher education. The scale can be traced from statistics.

In the 2021/2022 academic year, the number of students with SEN in inclusive classes of general secondary schools increased by 7608 people and amounted to 32686 students (in 2020/2021 - 25078 students). The number of inclusive classes increased by 4535 units and amounts to 23216 such classes.

To ensure person-centered learning in inclusive classes, 22758 teacher assistants have been introduced, which is 5543 more than last year (17215).

In total, over the past five years, it has been achieved more than 4.5 times increase in the number of students covered by inclusive education:

- 2017/2018 school year - 7179 students;
- 2021/2022 academic year - 32686 students;

increase in the number of teacher assistants by 6 times:

- 2017/2018 academic year - 3732 assistants;
- 2021/2022 academic year - 22758 assistants;

---

<sup>3</sup> Merezha spetsialnykh zakladiv zahalnoi serednoi osvity. URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/osvita/zagalna-serednya-osvita/navchannya-ditej-u-specialnih-zakladah-osviti>

increase in the number of inclusive classes by 4.6 times:

- 2017/2018 academic year - 5033 classes;
- 2021/2022 academic year - 23216 classes;

increase in the number of general secondary education institutions with inclusive classes by 2.7 times:

- 2017/2018 academic year - 2620 institutions;
- 2021/2022 academic year - 7136 institutions.

In the 2020/2021 academic year, for children with special educational needs of preschool age were created:

- 4 369 special groups in 1630 institutions of preschool education, where 61 668 children receive preschool education;
- 3,796 inclusive groups in 2,242 institutions, where 6,849 children are educated.

In the 2020/2021 academic year, 4,223 students studied in 708 vocational (vocational-technical) education institutions<sup>4</sup>.

A positive attitude towards inclusion did not come immediately. It took about 20 years for Ukrainian society and teaching staff of educational institutions to deeply understand inclusive values and overcome both psychological and moral boundaries.

An important event in the life of Ukrainian educators was the adoption of the National Doctrine of Education Development (2002). It states that "the strategic task of the state educational policy is to bring the education acquired in Ukraine to the market of world educational services, to deepen international cooperation, to expand the participation of educational institutions, scientists, teachers, pupils and students in the projects of international organizations and communities"<sup>5</sup>. Integration of Ukrainian education into the international educational space is based on the principles of priority of national interests; preservation and development of the intellectual potential of the nation; peacekeeping orientation of international cooperation; systematic and mutually beneficial nature of cooperation; tolerance in assessing the achievements of educational systems of foreign countries and adaptation of these achievements to the needs of the national education system.

The beginning was marked by the signing of the Bologna Declaration (Bergham, 2005) by the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, which aimed at establishing a European Higher Education Area and activating the European higher education system on a global scale.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Natsionalna doktryna rozvytku osvity (2002). URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/347/2002#Text>

*The Declaration contains seven key provisions:*

1. Adoption of a system of comparable degrees, including through the introduction of a Diploma Supplement to ensure the employability of European citizens and increase the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.
2. Introduction of two-cycle education: pregraduate and graduate. The first cycle lasts at least three years. The second should lead to a master's or PhD degree.
3. Implementation of the European credit transfer system to support large-scale student mobility (credit system). It also ensures the student's right to choose disciplines. It is proposed to adopt ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) as a basis, making it a cumulative system capable of working within the concept of "lifelong learning".
4. Significantly develop the mobility of students (based on the implementation of the previous two points). Expand the mobility of teaching and other staff by crediting the period of time they spent working in the European region. Establish standards for transnational education.
5. Promote European cooperation in quality assurance in order to develop comparative criteria and methodologies.
6. Implementation of internal quality assurance systems and involvement of students and employers in the external evaluation of universities.
7. Promotion of the necessary European views in higher education, especially in the field of curriculum development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and joint training programs, practical training and research<sup>6</sup>.

The signatory countries covered the educational space of higher education in about 50 countries. This formed transparent prospects for obtaining high quality educational services.

After that, the doors of higher education institutions of the European Union officially opened for the youth of Ukraine. Transition to a two-stage level of training (Bachelor, Master), harmonization of ECTS assessment standards has created favorable conditions for students of bachelor's programs to continue their studies in master's programs, and graduates of master's programs to study for PhD programs at pedagogical universities in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, etc. Thousands of Ukrainians study in Western Europe.

Students of Ukrainian universities have received ample opportunities to participate in international programs, in particular, the *Erasmus+ Program*. More than 10 directions of

---

<sup>6</sup> Bolonskyi protses: dokumenty. Kyiv : Vy-vo Yevrop. univ-tu, 2002. s. 32

international academic mobility have been opened. For example, the direction KA107: International Academic Mobility for Higher Education Institutions (International Credit Mobility - ICM) is quite attractive. What is it?

*Short-term exchange programs:*

- for study (for a period of 3-12 months) and for practice (2-12 months) for Ukrainian bachelors (except for 1st year students), masters, postgraduate students; (for a period of 3-24 months) for medical students;

- for teaching, internship, advanced training (for the period from 5 days to 2 months) for teachers and employees of higher education institutions.

In the future, the Jean Monnet Action is relevant, aimed at promoting excellence in teaching, study and research of European integration in the world, as well as supporting the dialogue between the academic world and policy makers. The aim of Jean Monnet Action is to intensify the European integration discourse, to promote excellence in European integration studies, to involve higher education institutions in the study of European integration processes and to disseminate the ideas of the United Europe.

The international project KA211 continues to gain popularity: Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education (CBHE). This is a project of international cooperation based on multilateral partnerships mainly between higher education institutions from the Programme Member States and Programme partner countries. They may also include non-academic partners in order to strengthen the links between higher education, society and business and to enhance the systemic impact on the development of society. These are projects of international cooperation of equal partners based on the exchange of experience and successful practices from around the world to support reforms to improve the quality of higher education, convergence and clarity of higher education systems around the world and the development of internationalization.

The presented projects of international programs are real opportunities for cooperation with European universities for the organization of mutual exchange of students, teachers and administrative staff under international credit mobility projects. Students participating in mobility must return to Ukraine and receive a diploma of a Ukrainian higher education institution, and the diploma supplement will indicate the courses they studied in Europe. Participating employees receive certificates on the results of internship or teaching, which are counted as advanced training.

The reverse process is also gaining momentum. Educational borders for foreign students studying in Ukraine have been broken (Table 1).

Table 1

## Number of foreign students by forms of education

Form of educational services		КІЛЬКІСТЬ осіб	%
Basic training		68908	90,02
Language training		4936	6,45
Postgraduate education		1719	2,25
Doctoral studies		974	1,27
Academic mobility programs		11	0,01

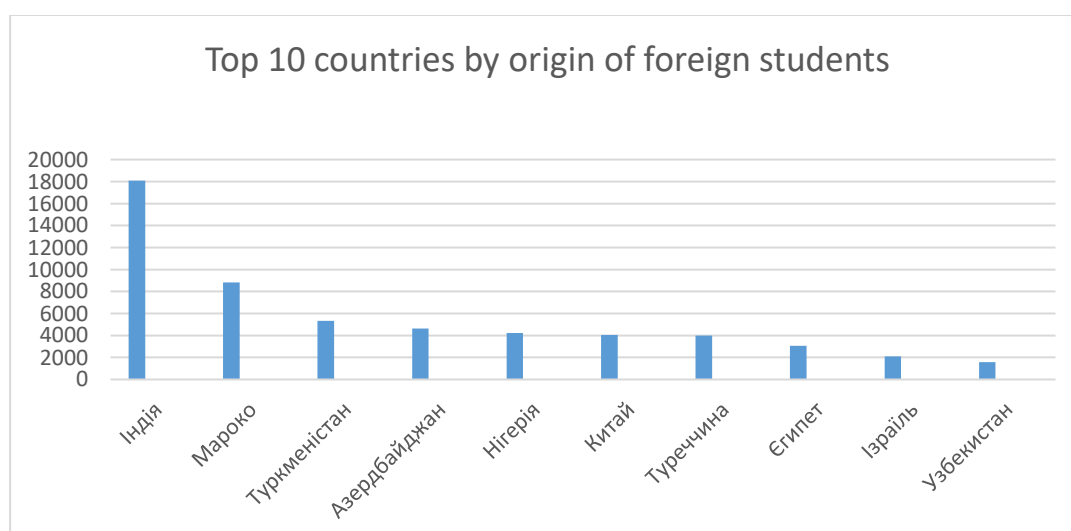
Foreign citizens can study in more than 240 higher education institutions of Ukraine and obtain higher education in various specialties. The main languages of instruction in Ukrainian universities are Ukrainian and English. Every year Ukrainian educational institutions invite students from more than 150 countries of the world.

In 394 higher education institutions of Ukraine 84 136 students from 155 countries study (Table 2, Fig. 1)<sup>7</sup>.

Table 2

## Number of foreign students in Ukraine (2011 - 2020)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of students	5366 4	60480	69969	63172	63906	64066	66310	75605	80470	76548



<sup>7</sup> Inozemni studenty v Ukraini. URL: <https://studyinukraine.gov.ua/zhittya-v-ukraini/inozemni-studenti-v-ukraini/>



Fig. 1. Top 10 countries by origin of students

The website of the Ukrainian State Center for International Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine provides prospective international students with general information about studying in Ukraine, admission rules and other practical advice<sup>8</sup>.

Due to the full-scale Russian military aggression on the territory of Ukraine, many countries of the European Union decided to create a Program for the placement of young teachers in a special period. Ukrainian educators highly appreciate this decision. In very difficult times for Ukraine, European countries have found an opportunity to support schoolchildren and students, who have created conditions for continuing their studies. Kindergarten teachers, school teachers, university professors were also employed.

A striking example is the decision of the Ministry of Education of Slovakia to provide assistance in employment of Ukrainian teachers of higher educational institutions.

Call for support for researchers threatened by the conflict in Ukraine

Dear researcher, if your career as a scientist is threatened by the war in Ukraine (meaning, you are based in Ukraine, alternatively in Russia, Moldavia and Belarus and your livelihood is threatened by the conflict), you can apply to receive a stipend at a Slovak university, research institution or an NGO. The stipend can support researchers of all career phases, whether you are a doctoral student, a postdoc, a researcher or a senior researcher, including associate professors and professors. Financial support can be paid for up to 36 months for all but doctoral students, who can receive the stipend for up to 48 months. The stipend also covers research expenses.

To apply, please contact any eligible institution: a Slovak university, research institution or any other non-profit organisation that carries out research. If successful, the application for the stipend will be processed by the receiving institution. The receiving institution will then ask you to submit your CV in English and a written consent to process your personal data. They may ask you for additional information needed to fill out the funding application. Should you need further information, you can reach us at [stipendia.ukrajina@vlada.gov.sk](mailto:stipendia.ukrajina@vlada.gov.sk)<sup>9</sup>.

### 3. Discussion

A significant barrier on the way of integration processes of the Ukrainian education system into the European community was and, unfortunately, remains the language barrier.

---

<sup>8</sup> Veb-sait Ukrainskoho derzhavnogo tsentru mizhnarodnoi osvity Ministerstva osvity i nauky Ukrainy. URL: <https://studyinukraine.gov.ua>

<sup>9</sup> Scholarship for scientists from Ukraine. URL: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/vyzva-na-podporu-vyskumnikov-ohrozenych-konfliktom-na-ukrajine/>

Problems in communication with partners, acquaintance with new scientific publications remain relevant for higher education institutions. In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has gradually and systematically implemented measures to improve the knowledge of foreign languages by teachers and scientists. These include:

- obligatory availability of a certificate of knowledge of a foreign language at the level "B" for obtaining the academic title of "associate professor", "professor", "senior researcher"
- publications in international scientific and metric publications cited in Scopus, Web of Science CC;
- international internships for the purpose of learning a foreign language;
- course training;
- involvement of volunteers from the British and Americans in foreign language classes;
- distance language learning courses, etc.

This significantly raises the level of foreign language proficiency of teachers, but this direction should be expanded and improved.

#### **4. Conclusions**

For 30 years of its independence, Ukraine has made significant steps towards reforming the education system. All educational levels from preschool to higher education are being reformed. On the way to progressive changes, Ukrainian society fought hard to enter the European market of educational services. The boundaries that are encountered are objective and subjective. But thanks to perseverance, willpower of Ukrainian educators, support of friendly European countries we have significant progress. Now 10 universities of Ukraine are included in the world ranking of the best higher education institutions of the world.

#### **Bibliografia**

Osvita. URL:

<https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9E%D1%81%D0%B2%D1%96%D1%82%D0%B0>

Osvita osib z invalidnistiu v Ukraini: tematychna natsionalna dopovid. Chernivtsi : Bukrek, 2010. 436 s.

Merezha spetsialnykh zakladiv zahalnoi serednoi osvity. URL:

<https://mon.gov.ua/ua/osvita/zagalna-serednya-osvita/navchannya-ditej-u-specialnih-zakladah-osviti>

Natsionalna doktryna rozvytku osvity (2002). URL:

<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/347/2002#Text>

Bolonskyi protses: dokumenty. Kyiv : Vy-vo Yevrop. univ-tu, 2002. 169 s.

Inozemni studenty v Ukraini. URL: <https://studyinukraine.gov.ua/zhittya-v-ukraini/inozemni-studenti-v-ukraini/>

Veb-sait Ukrainskoho derzhavnoho tsentru mizhnarodnoi osvity Ministerstva osvity i nauky Ukrainy. URL: <https://studyinukraine.gov.ua>

Scholarship for scientists from Ukraine. URL: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/vyzva-na-podporu-vyskumnikov-ohrozenych-konfliktom-na-ukrajine/>