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DOCTORAL STUDENTS AT RISK ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT:  
QUALITY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Academic engagement and support of vulnerable categories of learners is a crucial thematic issue within the EU  
and globally. In this respect, the research is focused on searching for suitable solutions for gaps in doctoral education  
capacity strengthening at institutional and national levels in Ukraine, primarily due to underestimating its societal  
dimensions, and on synchronizing the Ukrainian practices with European policies and standards, including helpful  
initiatives in integrating resilience and sustainability into its academic, research and engagement activities; creating  
an inclusive and welcoming culture within academia that encourages respect, support, and mentorship.  
The developed educational courses aim to facilitate a cross-sectoral dialogue on solutions for the challenges faced  
by Ukrainian academia in reforming the doctoral education sector, within the framework of a sustainable, cohesive,  
and peaceful Europe.  
The implementation of the proposed educational courses aims to achieve the following short-term effects: to ensure  
Ukrainian PhD students' belonging and research engagement, return to stability, and help to alleviate psychological  
 anxiety; to advance doctoral students' research competencies in line with ethical and methodological standards; to  
minimize the risks of doctoral student attrition; to activate faculty and peer mentorship and professional networking within  
the academia regarding doctoral students at risk diversity; to diversify the institutional strategies of doctoral students’  
academic and researcher identity development in war and post-war circumstances.  
This will provide a significant context for advancing a new type of academic culture in doctoral education within  
Ukrainian academia – a culture of university social responsibility that prioritizes human values and addresses the real  
needs of Ukrainian researchers while providing early-career researcher-friendly support, both academic and professional.  
Key words: doctoral education, academic culture, doctoral students' academic and researcher identity development,  
doctoral students at risk.

Problem statement and research context. The  
COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing war in Ukraine have drastically impacted social and educational  
realities. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has caused a lot of scholars to leave their home  
institutions and seek protection in other countries. However, some have stayed in Ukraine and are  
facing numerous challenges daily. The situation has become more severe as a growing number  
of higher education and research institutions have been damaged or destroyed. Despite the crisis,  
the Ukrainian higher education sector needs to maintain resilience and continue to progress. To  
maintain research excellence and investment attractiveness regionally and globally, fostering  
innovative and high-quality doctoral research is crucial for Ukrainian HEIs. However, the risks  
of losing a generation of scholars due to emigration and refugee flow have been exacerbated. Educational  
and managerial efforts should be made to provide support to Ukrainian doctoral students who are  
at risk due to the ongoing war. This includes those who have already been forced to flee Ukraine, as  
well as early-stage scholars who are still in Ukraine but face the risk of displacement. The support should  
also be extended to forcibly displaced PhD students within Ukraine, doctoral students in refugee-like  
situations, and Ukrainian doctoral candidates who have become refugees. The focus should be on  
struggling doctoral candidates, those with family care responsibilities, and international postgraduate  
students affiliated with Ukrainian academia.
The recent international research “Towards a Global Core Value System in Doctoral Education” on assessing doctoral-education changes during the last 20 years states that a doctorate degree should not solely focus on the technical aspects of research. Instead, it is important to consider the broader education of the graduate. The graduate should be trained to be socially conscious and aware of ethical and political issues that may arise during their research. Failure to do so can lead to disastrous consequences, as demonstrated by a powerful example of how research involving human subjects can go wrong when ethical and political considerations are ignored (Nerad, et al., 2022).

**Literature review.** Social support and academic engagement are key elements of doctoral education quality studies (Altbach, 2011; Nerad; Bogle; Kohl; O’Carrol, Peters, Scholz, 2022). Societal dimensions of the problem include doctoral well-being; research capacity and self-efficacy (Kokotsaki, 2023); PhD imposter syndrome; doctoral student attrition; and research supervision (Guerin & Green, 2015); professional identity development; isolation feelings in doctoral programs (Lovitts, 2001; Ali & Kohun, 2007; Szadkowski, 2017, 2029).

Academic engagement and support of vulnerable categories of learners is a crucial thematic issue within the EU and globally. The proposed research is framed by the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (2017); the Paris Ministerial Communiqué (2018); and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020). Since 2022, under the Council of the European Union wide-ranging policies and measures have been put in place to support Ukrainian refugee students, including doctoral candidates, in higher education in Europe (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice reports). In this respect, this study can help in broadening the Ukrainian practices regarding implementing early-career researcher social supports and academic rights safeguarding.

In the *Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe’s Response Report of the Inspireurope Project* it is defined that researchers at risk include researchers, scholars, and scientists who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are or have been forced to flee because of such threats. Some researchers at risk have recognized refugee status, asylum status, or similar protection status. But a higher proportion of researchers seeking the assistance of NGOs specializing in the field of scholar protection are outside the refugee process. These researchers are seeking or holding temporary visas/work permits through visiting research/scholar positions at host universities in Europe or elsewhere, outside their home countries.

The global Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) classifies three broad categories of risk:

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– Risk due to the content of a scholar’s work, research, or teaching being perceived as threatening by authorities or other groups. When the development of ideas, exchange of information, and expression of new opinions are considered threatening, individual scholars/researchers are particularly vulnerable.

– Risk because of the individual’s status as an academic or researcher. Because researchers undertake frequent international travel and have international contacts, this gives them a certain professional standing or prominence. This can mean that attacks on one such high-profile scholar are an efficient means of sending a message to others, quickly creating a chilling effect.

– Risk as a result of their peaceful exercise of basic human rights, in particular, the right to freedom of expression or freedom of association.

The research is aimed at studying and implementing academic and professional supports that are friendly to early-career researchers covering various issues such as research capacity in war and post-war circumstances, quality supervision and training, institutional responsibility for supporting early-stage researchers, societal engagement, mental health and well-being, career-tracking, academic freedom, and research autonomy. The aforementioned issues form a comprehensive system of doctoral education development and quality assurance under the EUA Innovation Agenda 2026, EURODOC, and EUA-CDE initiatives and developments.

In light of the need to transform the educational environments of the Ukrainian academia societally, in particular through a better understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian doctoral candidates at risk in war circumstances and the impact of these experiences on PhD students’ researcher and professional identity development, as well as their academic careers, this research aims to answer the following questions: 1) what socially inclusive supports are available within the European and Ukrainian academia? 2) how does quality supervision affect doctoral research capacity strengthening; 3) how does being involved in professional and research peer networking impact the mental health and social well-being of the PhD students and research supervisors; 4) what early-career researcher-friendly supports are available at the community and institutional levels regarding doctoral candidates at risk need diversity; 5) how the good practices of the European universities may be applied to solve the challenges Ukrainian doctoral students at risk face since 2022 and in the other rebuilding times.

In this respect, the research is focused on searching for suitable solutions for gaps in doctoral education capacity strengthening at institutional and national levels in Ukraine, primarily due to underestimating its societal dimensions, and on synchronizing the Ukrainian practices with European policies and standards, including helpful initiatives in integrating resilience and sustainability into its academic, research and engagement activities; creating an inclusive and welcoming culture within academia that encourages respect, support, and mentorship.

This provides a significant context for advancing a new type of academic culture in doctoral education within Ukrainian academia – a culture of university social responsibility that prioritizes human values and addresses the real needs of Ukrainian researchers while providing early-career researcher-friendly support, both academic and professional.

Through our research, we have established connections with various European partner universities, such as the Department of Physical Culture at the Academy of Physical Education and Sport by Jedrzej Sniadecki in Gdansk (Poland), and the Department of East European Studies at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University (Czech Republic). We have also established contacts with regional universities in Ukraine, including the Laboratory of Academic Culture of a Researcher at Sumy Makarenko State University. These connections have allowed us to develop interdisciplinary educational courses (Table 1).

The methodology of creating the course content is based on four interconnected approaches. These approaches include:

– The course content was designed using a holistic research-based approach. This allowed for the integration of thematic issues related to the support of doctoral candidates at risk, such as research capacity in war and post-war circumstances, quality supervision and training, institutional responsibility for the support of early-stage researchers, their societal engagement, mental health and well-being, and career-tracking.
The comparative approach is crucial to enhance training courses, activities, and events with European policy instruments, quality standards, and practice excellence.

The inclusive approach ensures the effective involvement of various groups such as doctoral candidates at risk, diverse student populations, research supervisors, mentors, designers of doctoral programs, and managers of doctoral schools. This involvement takes place during innovative training courses, doctoral online networking, and various project events.
The digital approach is to be implemented through the integration of technology in diverse activities: training sessions, summer school series, workshops, webinars, doctoral online network.

The educational course “European Standards of High-Quality Disciplinary Research” is aimed at supporting early career researchers’ methodological capacity, especially those in struggling-like situations, and sharing European and Ukrainian good practices in advancing doctoral candidates’ research competencies in line with ethical and methodological standards.

The purpose of the course “Quality of Supervision: Negotiation and Ethics in the Doctoral Journey” is to enrich doctoral students and academic supervisors’ practices of productive interaction based on mutual trust, support, and equality; discuss the pleasures and risks of supervision; present European online resources for improving research supervision and training.

The upcoming discussion session titled “Institutional Support of Doctoral Candidates’ Research Capacity: EU Approaches and Trends” will focus on various policies and measures related to the functioning of the Ukrainian doctoral education sector under martial law. The session will also shed light on the steps taken for modernization in line with Euro integration priorities.

The proposed educational courses aim to facilitate a cross-sectoral dialogue on solutions for the challenges faced by Ukrainian academia in reforming the doctoral education sector, within the framework of a sustainable, cohesive, and peaceful Europe.

**Conclusions.** The implementation of the proposed educational courses aims to achieve the following short-term effects: to ensure Ukrainian PhD students’ belonging and research engagement, return to stability, and help to alleviate psychological anxiety; to advance doctoral students’ research competencies in line with ethical and methodological standards; to minimize the risks of doctoral student attrition; to activate faculty and peer mentorship and professional networking within the academia regarding doctoral students at risk diversity; to diversify the institutional strategies of doctoral students’ academic and researcher identity development in war and post-war circumstances.

The medium-term effects include: establishing a longer-term mechanism of the doctoral students at risk successful completion rates; diversification of the university resilience strategies in crisis circumstances regarding doctoral education issues; broadening the understanding of the social dimensions of doctoral training and supervision in line with the European universities’ strategic priorities; enriching the national doctoral education sector reforming strategies with EU best practices; strengthening Ukrainian academia research capacity within the institutional and national levels.

The long-term effects of the project are as follows: strengthening the resilience and recovery capacity of Ukrainian academia under the Education 4.0-Ukrainian Sunrise Concept Plan; promoting innovative and high-quality doctoral research as a key factor in enhancing the research excellence and investment attractiveness of Ukrainian HEIs regionally and globally; sharing best policy instruments and practices for doctoral education through cross-national exchange within the context of the “sustainable, cohesive, and peaceful Europe” agenda.

**REFERENCES**


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АКАДЕМІЧНА ТА ПРОФЕСІЙНА ПІДТРИМКА ЗДОБУВАЧІВ СТУПЕНЯ ДОКТОРА ФІЛОСОФІЇ У КОНТЕКСТІ УПРАВЛІННЯ ЯКІСТЮ ДОКТОРСЬКОЇ ОСВІТИ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ

Академічне залучення та підтримка вразливих категорій учасників освітнього процесу є ключовим питанням освітньої політики у ЄС та в усьому світі. У цьому контексті дослідження зосереджено на пошукі відповідних рішень щодо прогалин у зміцненні спроможності докторської освіти на інституційному та національному рівнях в Україні, насамперед через недооцінювання її суспільних вимірів, а також на синхронізації українських практик з європейською політикою та стандартами. Важливо здійснити наукові та прикладні рефлексії корисних ініціатив у зарубіжних країнах щодо інтеграції цінностей стійкості та сталості в академічний, дослідницький супровід молодих науковців, покращити їх залученість через розвиток інклюзивної та привітної культури в академічному середовищі, яка заохочує повагу, підтримку та наставництво.

У контексті євроінтеграційних стратегій реформування української системи підготовки докторів філософії авторами розроблено зміст вибіркових освітніх курсів, що, передбачається, сприятиме міжгалузевому діалогу в рамках аджеї стали, згуртованої та мирної Європи. Це забезпечить важливий контекст для просування нового типу академічної культури в українському академічному середовищі – культури соціальної відповідальності університету, яка надає пріоритет людським цінностям і враховує реальні потреби молодих дослідників, забезпечує їх академічну та соціальну підтримку у кризових обставинах професійного та особистого життя. Все більш гостро постають питання соціальної підтримки вразливих категорій здобувачів освіти докторського рівня – біженців, внутрішньо-переміщених осіб, студентів, що залишилися на територіях, близьких до зон бойових дій, докторантів у кризових життєвих ситуаціях та інші категорії.

Ключові слова: докторська освіта, академічна культура, розвиток академічної та дослідницької ідентичності молодих дослідників, вчені у кризових ситуаціях.