

EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: PERSPECTIVES AND REFLECTIONS

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Flávio Henrique Machado MOREIRA¹
e-mail: flavio.machadomoreira@gmail.com



Alexander Vinicius LEITE DA SILVA²
e-mail: alexandervinicius.s@gmail.com



Caio Augusto Martins FURTADO³
e-mail: caio.martins@unesp.br



José Anderson SANTOS CRUZ⁴
e-mail: anderson.cruz@unesp.br

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¹ Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), São Carlos – SP – Brazil. Master in Political Science.

² Sagrado Coração University Center (UNISAGRADO), Bauru – SP – Brazil. Graduating in Letters – Translator.

³ São Paulo State University (UNESP), Assis – SP – Brazil. Master's student in the Graduate Program in Letters.

⁴ Continuing Education Program in Economics and Business Management (PECEGE) (ESALQ/USP MBAs), Piracicaba – SP – Brazil. Assistant Professor. PhD in School Education (UNESP). Deputy Executive Editor (RPGE).

When thinking about education in today's world, one glimpses a scenario of continuous challenges and adaptations, both to the growing internationalization triggered by the expansion of information technologies, as well as by the continuity of the development of new ways of looking at and doing education, from the basic level to the higher level. Added to this is the vast expansion of distance learning, whose growth has occurred in recent years due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on locomotion imposed, which has caused the impossibility of attending physical classrooms.

Thus, even if the forced digital expansion as a result of the recent pandemic is considered, education and digital information technologies are increasingly working together, generating an influx and exchange of information at extremely high levels, which can allow education to advance in the world as a whole through this digital sharing of information, enabling educational systems to be rethought, theories and ways of doing education to be developed, adapted and improved in an increasingly agile way and with the participation of educators and researchers from different parts of the world.

Thus, digital tools can play a relevant role in terms of sharing knowledge and expertise at the service of sustainable development and in a spirit of solidarity. To this end, educational spaces, when considering the advantages of digital technologies, should think of them as a guide that allows students, throughout their learning paths, to develop and advance through the labyrinth of knowledge in constant expansion (MACHADO; SANTOS; COSTA, 2020, p. 701, our translation).

It is possible to envision several positive effects of integrations and digital adaptations provided by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Overcoming physical barriers allows, and has allowed, not only greater integration and exchange of knowledge between institutions and professors/researchers from different parts of the planet, but also the overcoming of restrictions imposed in a generalized way by the pandemic event, and even if that event cannot be taken as a rule, the development of educational methods from the imposed restrictions has different uses and applications, including the accessibility and development of a quality distance education which already constitutes a social demand in several countries, either because of access difficulties that certain regions may have, or because of mobility problems on the part of students, teachers etc.

It is also important to consider that all this technological development that enables greater accessibility to education even in regions with more difficult access, is already in line with global “demands” for rights and access to education, considering education as a right for all is an ever-increasing quest and for that it is necessary not only the digital infrastructure, or

the internationalization of studies, but also the development of society itself and the vision of education, because at the same time that it is internationalized, it also becomes extremely important to value local cultures, recognizing and praising the cultural particularities of each region and each people while at the same time internationalizing and particularizing, are challenges that are faced by those who work with education today.

It is possible to see this movement towards education as a right for all in documents from international agencies, such as UNESCO (2016), which lists the responsibilities of states that are part of the organization to comply with the obligations to expand and guarantee access to quality education for all, posting education as one of the only ways for a real emancipation of people by making them capable of interpreting their realities and the multiple realities around them.

As a result, this issue of the *Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional* brings to its pages these reflections made from the Ukrainian context with texts by various authors from the country reflecting on the various challenges, dilemmas, weaknesses and innovations present in the educational system.

In line with the global scenario, we will also see that in Ukraine international integration, especially at the higher level, is becoming an ever-increasing reality, enabling a large flow of both foreign students into Ukraine and the opposite. Ukraine's position in relation to the European Union and the adoption of educational criteria and goals coming from the bloc also becomes an integrative factor for education systems, but this integration can also be a source of problems, such as "student flight" of the country and the difficulties of integration with the local culture.

When considering the cultural aspect, other relevant factors are also pointed out, demonstrated through the development of new ways of dealing with foreign languages for Ukrainian students. Analyzes on the difficulties and facilities of learning foreign languages, as well as ways to improve the quality of teaching of such languages, especially English for its international value, are prominent in the thinking of pedagogues and scholars in the country, who point out, many times for the possibility of using digital platforms for a better development of foreign language teaching in general, in addition to analyzing and evaluating the efficiency of the use of such resources by students in the country.

Within the context of digital technologies, new ways of observing and carrying out educational processes based on this have been analyzed around the world, as is the case in Ukraine, which, in addition to digital integration that enables distance learning, which has been

greatly enhanced by the pandemic, the use of new didactic resources and new educational approaches that make a more elaborate use of the possibilities opened up by technologies in teaching is also observed, either with the constitution of a teaching based on games (gamification), or with the use of assistive technologies and integrative practices for better development of an inclusive education.

Currently, in the Ukrainian context, when talking about inclusiveness in education, despite also addressing the issue of people with disabilities and assistive media resources that can improve the quality of education for children and adults who have any type of difficulty or learning impairment, it is also considered the use of information technologies for the continuity of distance classes due to the scenario of a military offensive that continues in Ukrainian territory for more than a year. Such an attack limits the mobility of many Ukrainian citizens who are in occupied regions, temporary settlements or even places with partially destroyed infrastructure and also those who managed to leave the country before the start of the war, but who need to continue their studies. In view of these, the technologies that allow distance education, despite facing major challenges, especially when considering higher education and specialties that have proficiencies and skills that cannot in fact be trained digitally (biology, arts, etc.), become an even more important resource in the country and with a broad investigative focus in view of the urgent need for its improvement and expansion.

In this scenario, many of the learnings about distance education achieved during the Covid pandemic are again relevant, as war becomes a restrictive factor that has as much or more impact than the disease in past years and, unlike the disease, war tends to affect infrastructure in a more drastic and limiting way. In this scenario, students, teachers, parents and everyone involved in education systems are faced with a new challenge of how to constitute an effective education in a scenario of limited mobility, in a scenario of armed conflict and uncertainties, with the use of knowledge and professionals who were developed during the pandemic, as well as support from international education networks, these challenges become an increasingly relevant and worked object of study.

With that, in the midst of its own structural and historical challenges, the incorporation of new technologies, internationalization processes and the breaking of limits that bring many positive things but also pose great challenges for national education systems, and the recent military offensive in its territory, Ukraine finds itself in a difficult position for the development of its educational system, but many scholars, students, teachers continue their work and continue to draw, even from the greatest and most disastrous occasions, new ways of working

and of improving education, seeking to guarantee the right of access to its people, as well as the development of a modern education capable of forming citizens not only to deal with the reality of Ukraine, but also with the reality of an increasingly integrated world.

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