

MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS DURING CRITICAL DISRUPTIVE TRANSITIONS

This paper explores the challenges and opportunities faced in managing international educational projects during times of war. It focuses on the adaptation of project management strategies in conditions of instability, changes in process organization, and the role of international cooperation in supporting educational initiatives. Through the analysis of real-world case studies, the paper demonstrates how universities adjust their strategies and infrastructure to sustain the educational process in times of crisis.

Keywords: project management, international educational projects, adaptation, challenges, opportunities, strategy, education.

In recent years, project management in education has faced significant challenges due to global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The military conflict, destruction of infrastructure, migration flows, and geopolitical instability have presented new challenges for educational institutions. In this context, project management has become a key tool for successfully implementing educational initiatives, especially in international projects.

This research focuses on the analysis of project management in international educational projects during wartime, with an emphasis on adaptation strategies, challenges, and opportunities in managing such projects during a crisis. The study will primarily focus on universities and educational institutions that continue to operate and evolve despite difficult conditions.

The war in Ukraine has become one of the largest crises affecting educational processes not only in Ukraine but across Europe and beyond. According to UNICEF, over 5 million children in Ukraine have had their education disrupted due to the conflict [1]. International educational cooperation, traditionally based on student, faculty, and researcher mobilization, faces several serious problems, such as:

- **Communication breakdowns and infrastructure destruction:** Many Ukrainian universities have experienced the destruction of infrastructure, hindering both national and international cooperation. Key communication channels and partnerships have been paralyzed.
- **Mobility of students and faculty:** The war has severely limited opportunities for students and faculty to participate in exchanges, conferences, and other international programs [2]. It has also complicated the recruitment of international students, which could aid in the restoration of educational processes.
- **Financial issues and blocked grants:** Many international educational projects and grants have been suspended or blocked, creating significant challenges in securing funding for research and educational programs.

Project management during wartime requires universities to be flexible and rapidly adapt to new conditions. A key aspect of this is the ability of educational institutions to realign their strategies and methods of operation to continue implementing international projects and maintain the quality of education. Key principles of adaptation in project management for educational institutions during war include (Fig.1):

Flexibility and innovation	Use of digital technologies	Adaptation of educational programs
Universities are expected to utilize innovative technologies and approaches to adapt their programs to new conditions, such as the introduction of online courses and digital platforms for learning and partner collaboration.	The shift to remote learning has been a key step for many universities, enabling them to maintain educational processes and continue international cooperation despite physical and logistical restrictions.	Educational institutions are developing new formats of programs that can be implemented in crisis conditions, including hybrid and blended learning models to adjust traditional courses to remote formats.

Fig.1. Key Principles of Adaptation in Project Management for Educational Institutions

Adaptation Strategies for International Educational Projects During War:

Collaboration and Partnerships in Crisis. One of the biggest challenges universities face during wartime is the disruption of traditional international cooperation and partnerships. However, these connections become even more crucial in times of crisis.

Project management in education enables universities to develop strategies that shift their methods of interaction with international partners. Instead of traditional student and faculty exchanges requiring physical mobility, universities focus on creating virtual partnerships, online courses, and international scientific platforms.

A successful example in PMBSNU is the DIGISTAR NEXT project (Digital Transformation of Education in Entrepreneurship), funded by DAAD and in collaboration with Saarland University (University of Saarland, Saarbrücken, Germany). The project supports Ukrainian universities by creating online educational programs and virtual knowledge-sharing platforms, enabling the continuation of education despite the inability for physical presence. The project includes internships in Germany, joint seminars, conferences, and the enhancement of educational components related to the digital transformation of the economy.

Adopting Flexible Learning Models. One of the key adaptations in project management during wartime education is the shift to flexible learning models, combining online and hybrid approaches. This shift was accelerated by COVID-19 and became a necessity in the war context. Universities began developing online courses for students both within Ukraine and abroad. Project management plays a crucial role in coordinating all participants and resources.

Ukrainian institutions adapted their programs for remote learning, using hybrid models to continue education despite safety concerns.

Resilience and Long-Term Planning. Project management in educational projects during wartime goes beyond short-term tasks and focuses on long-term strategies for resilience. These strategies account for potential future scenarios, including further conflict, infrastructure destruction, and migration flows. Project management includes risk analysis and long-term planning, ensuring flexibility and sustainability for international projects, despite instability.

The Erasmus+ program in Ukraine continues to operate using virtual and hybrid formats, helping universities remain part of the European educational space and ensuring resilience in the face of crisis. The Erasmus+ project "Distance Education for Future" (DEFEP – 101083143) focuses on adopting best European practices in distance learning to meet the needs of modern higher education seekers and the labor market [3]. Managed by the grant-holder institution PMBSNU, the project strengthens digital learning approaches and supports the modernization of Ukrainian universities during wartime. Project aims to establish a sustainable and effective distance learning system as a distinct form of education in Eastern Partnership countries. This will address future educational challenges arising from generational, ideological, and technological shifts in the labor market. Simultaneously, it promotes barrier-free education and a safe learning environment. The project will enhance existing distance learning in Ukrainian and Moldovan HEIs, incorporating European best practices. It focuses on creating institutional units, developing distance learning system methods and materials, and training faculty. Ultimately, this will systemize distance education as an independent field, developing students' professional competencies and soft skills to meet labor market demands.

Overcoming Barriers: Risk and Logistics Management. Project management involves managing risks, which is crucial in wartime. Educational projects face barriers like transportation issues, financial difficulties, and security concerns. Effective risk management is essential to not only maintain the project but also achieve its goals. Managing logistics and security challenges in international projects allows universities to continue their educational initiatives despite wartime conditions.

Table 1

Problems and Risks of International Educational Projects in Wartime

Risk Type	Description	Risk Management Strategy
Financial Constraints	Grant blockages, difficulties with international financing	Search for alternative funding sources, expense optimization
Logistical Issues	Limited mobility, destruction of transportation infrastructure	Use of digital platforms, process virtualization
Safety of Students and Faculty	Threats to the life and health of project participants	Implementation of remote learning activities
Legal Barriers	Uncertainty in legislation, sanctions	Development of new partnership agreements, legal support

Development of New Funding Models. One of the key aspects of successfully adapting international educational projects in wartime is the ability to find new sources of funding. Traditional grants and support from public and private funds are often unavailable, prompting universities to seek alternative ways to raise funds. Project management helps organize these processes by utilizing various funding models, such as crowdfunding, private investments, and mobilizing internal university resources. Faced with financial difficulties, universities have started developing internal strategies like paid online courses and attracting private investors. These approaches help compensate for the lack of external funding and ensure long-term sustainability of educational projects.

Using Digital Platforms for Educational Projects. In wartime, where physical mobility is limited, digitalization becomes a crucial tool for maintaining educational processes. Many universities, including Ukrainian ones, have already started using digital platforms for online courses, academic conferences, and educational programs. In war conditions, digitalization not only helps maintain connections with international partners but is essential for restoring and preserving educational standards.

Table 2

Impact of Digitalization on Educational Processes in Wartime

Platform	Implementation Strategy	Advantages
Online courses (MOOC)	Development of hybrid courses	Enables global student learning regardless of location
Virtual conferences	Live broadcasts, video conferences	Facilitates international meetings and experience sharing without physical presence
Communication platforms	Discussions, forums, chats	Strengthens connections and knowledge exchange between students and faculty

Assessing the Effectiveness and Resilience of Project Management During War. Project management in wartime must continuously assess the effectiveness and resilience of managed projects. Risk analysis is a key method for identifying potential threats and developing strategies to address them. Indicators like student engagement, quality of content, and partnership levels are used to evaluate project sustainability. Regular monitoring allows for strategy adjustments and corrective measures.

Ukrainian universities in the Erasmus+ program implemented regular risk assessments to address threats to student and faculty safety, enabling timely updates to educational programs and support for project participants.

Supporting Vulnerable Student Groups. Project management in wartime education must consider the needs of vulnerable student groups, such as refugees, students with disabilities, and those in difficult social situations. These students face challenges like access to education, psychological pressure, and financial difficulties. Ukrainian universities actively support refugee students by providing access to educational materials, scholarships, and psychological support. Programs for students with special needs include online learning, individual consultations, and the creation of supportive educational communities.

The Erasmus+ project "Promoting professional education and students engagement through comprehensive mentoring and tutoring system at HEIs " (PROMENT - 101082696) is conducted in PMBSNU [4]. The university's Tutoring & Mentoring (T&M) system will integrate methods, algorithms, and IT platforms with university structures, trained personnel, and senior student involvement. This comprehensive approach will embed T&M within the educational process, enhancing students' hard and soft skills and civic engagement. Project activities include creating tutoring and mentoring frameworks, establishing T&M centers, developing learning resources, training staff, students, and industry mentors. It also fosters collaboration among participating HEIs through international expertise exchange and strengthens their ties with the broader socio-economic environment.

Role of Government and International Organizations in Supporting Educational Projects. Government support and international organizations play a critical role in the success of educational projects during war. Collaboration with international partners and leveraging their resources is vital for implementing educational programs in war-affected countries.

In 2022, an initiative supported by the UN aimed to restore education for youth during the war in Ukraine. The project included the development of remote learning courses and psychological support programs for students and faculty. Thanks to international funding and coordination, the project successfully provided education to thousands of students across the country.

Project management in international educational projects during war requires flexibility, innovation, and the ability to adapt quickly to changing conditions. The implementation of digital technologies, hybrid learning models, and new financing methods enables the continuation of educational processes despite challenges. International cooperation, support for vulnerable student groups, and long-term strategic planning are essential for the successful realization of educational projects during wartime. Applying best project management practices ensures the resilience and sustainability of these projects despite crisis situations.

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УПРАВЛІННЯ МІЖНАРОДНИМИ ОСВІТНІМИ ПРОЄКТАМИ ПІД ЧАС КРИТИЧНИХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЙ

Тези досліджують управління міжнародними освітніми проектами в умовах війни, зокрема адаптацію проектного менеджменту до ситуацій нестабільності. Особлива увага приділяється змінам в організації освітніх процесів та ролі міжнародної співпраці в підтримці освітніх ініціатив. Через аналіз реальних кейсів, розглядаються способи адаптації стратегій та інфраструктури університетів для забезпечення безперервності навчального процесу під час війни.

Ключові слова: *проектний менеджмент, міжнародні освітні проекти, адаптація, виклики, можливості, стратегія, освіта.*

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