

Oksana Yakymchuk¹
Department of Psychosomatics and Psychology of Health
Dragomanov Ukrainian State University

Challenges to the Loss of Educational Capital in Ukraine through the Lens of Identity Threats

[Wyzwania związane z utratą kapitału edukacyjnego na Ukrainie przez pryzmat zagrożeń tożsamości]

Streszczenie: Wizja przyszłości nie jest jasna dla Ukraińców. Jednak pomimo wyzwań nie należy tracić rozwagi w odniesieniu do perspektyw, które zafunkcjonują w powojennym świecie. Wojna wywołała wiele problemów, do których należy także zaliczyć utratę kapitału ludzkiego i edukacyjnego z powodu masowych wyjazdów obywateli Ukrainy za granicę. Na większą uwagę zasługuje kategoria edukacyjna migrantów, w skład której wchodzi uczniowie, studenci, nauczyciele, naukowcy itp. Ta kategoria obywateli Ukrainy jest istotna dla dalszego istnienia tożsamości ukraińskiej. Jest ona także wyrazem narodu, gwarancją jego dalszego dobrobytu. Ukraina obecnie traci kapitał edukacyjny nie tylko z powodu okoliczności zewnętrznych, ale także z powodu desynchronizacji wartości obywateli oraz formalizmu działań instytucji państwowych. Patetyczne deklaracje i apele odwołujące się do zrozumienia zaistniałej sytuacji nie są wystarczającym argumentem, zwłaszcza gdy weźmie się pod uwagę naturalną skłonność człowieka do poszukiwań bardziej zoptymalizowanego i komfortowego środowiska dla realizacji swoich celów życiowych. Dlatego też należy zwrócić uwagę na tę kwestię nie tylko w kontekście jej badania na poziomie teoretycznym (filozoficznym), ale także z perspektywy wypracowania praktycznych działań, które mogą zmienić sytuację, aby zabezpieczyć przyszłość przed rozproszeniem i utratą tożsamości ukraińskiej.

Summary: The vision of the future is not clear for Ukrainians. However, despite the challenges, we should not lose our prudence regarding the prospects that await us in the post-war world. The war provoked many problems, not the least of which was the loss of human and educational capital due to the mass departure of Ukrainians abroad. The educational category of migrants deserves more careful attention, namely schoolchildren, students, teachers, scientists, etc. This category of citizens of Ukraine is significant for the further existence of Ukrainian identity. This category is an expression of the nation, a guarantee of its further prosperity. Ukraine is currently

¹ Oksana Yakymchuk, Department of Psychosomatics and Psychology of Health, Dragomanov Ukrainian State University, 20 Virskogo str., 04111 Kyiv, Ukraine, yakimchyk1409@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9729-8389>.

losing educational capital, not only due to external circumstances but also due to the desynchronization of citizens' values and the formality of the actions of state institutions. No matter how many pompous and pathetic appeals to treat with understanding and take into account the circumstances, a person, being inclined to find a comfortable environment for the realization of his values, begin to look even more actively for a better environment where they are acceptable. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to this issue, not only as a study of it at the theoretical (philosophical) level but also from the perspective of developing practical actions that can change the situation in order to secure the future from dispersion and loss of Ukrainian identity.

Słowa kluczowe: kapitał edukacyjny, tożsamość, filozofia edukacji, doxologia, habitus, odbudowa powojenna, edukacja ukraińska.

Keywords: educational capital, identity, philosophy of education, doxology, habitus, post-war recovery, Ukrainian education.

Introduction

Currently, Ukrainian society is going through challenging times. This is especially evident in the functioning of various social systems, which are experiencing crises individually and simultaneously in their interconnection. Thus, the education system is experiencing a catastrophic crisis because many children (of preschool and school or student age) and other subject of education process have left and are still leaving Ukraine. Migration is also strengthened by the fact that many parents were forced to leave their homes due to their destruction, lack of jobs in one or another area, etc. Here we can add the crisis in the economic system, which is currently apparent and tangible. The recalculation can be continued, but that is not our goal.

What is more significant for us is the fact that the loss and outflow of educational capital has become noticeable in Ukraine: schoolchildren, students, teachers, scientists, etc., who were forced, for one reason or another, to leave the territory of Ukraine and are currently abroad is quite a threat in the face of erasure and dispersion of Ukrainian identity. Thus, with the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians had to review their identity, rediscover it, return to it, recognize it. As noted by the authors of the work „What is war like?” (Poludyonnyi I. and Livin M., 2024), no matter how much a person tries to be strong and no matter how much he shows endurance, the instinct of self-preservation pushes him to any actions, to any places that will be a guarantee of safety, shelter, and therefore stability. The extreme is an essential factor for the „mental restraint” of a person. However, being temporarily hopeless, we still have to understand that we do not have the right to lose what is given due to pain, losses, and tragedies. In our paper, we want to discover the risks and perspectives of the loss of educational capital in Ukraine using the methodological optics of identity.

The Educational Capital Framework of Research

Our investigation should begin with the fact that in the philosophical tradition, starting from Antiquity, there was a conscious understanding of the complexity of the cognitive process. It actually exists even today, but progress and development distract people from these eternal questions, switching attention to the flow of everyday life. When a person separates himself from nature and begins to learn about the world on his own, one acquires cultural and scientific fields through one's activity, thereby creating a social existence. Moreover, the extreme depends on the efforts made during the activity. Thus, even in the Aristotelian philosophical concept, we can find the idea that gradually gaining knowledge about the world, the role of human activity in it, an understanding emerges that for progressive development, it is necessary for there to be a „mediator” between the one who knows and the world, who provides a basis for understanding objective reality and will also explain the methodology of how a person function in his relationship with social reality. Following the Aristotelian logic of thought, the modern Swedish philosopher Mats Rosengren draws attention to the fact that with the development and transformation of social forms, the „community of scientists”, scientists, the academic community is formed and develops (Rosengren M., 2008). He is entrusted with the role of a mediator, acting as a mediator between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge, the world.

Like Aristotle in his time, Mats Rosengren gives a significant place to rhetoric, as the art of finding ways of persuasion regarding the understanding of appropriate constants of knowledge about the world, about each individual subject, and thus selects arguments regarding the possibilities of further knowledge. Persuasion, argumentation, and proof, which Aristotle once talked about in his „Rhetoric” are far from an exhaustive list of tools that a mediator possesses. However, it is the basis that the academic, educational environment can teach and give impetus to further searches of each individuality, which is sub-object of knowledge. In the concept of Mats Rosengren, we find the justification that, at least for a basic understanding and knowledge of the world, a person needs those who will convey at least some verifiable objective knowledge. Furthermore, ideally, it will form a stable habit of knowledge, searches, activities, etc. In society, this principle can manifest itself at the level of a robust educational system and specialists who can transfer (to each individuality) educational capital, which lays heuristic potential in social life. Rosengren's theory of knowledge, which he calls „doxology”, is based on the conviction that the prudence of every social being, almost on an a priori level, should contain the conviction of

the need for a community of scientists, intellectuals who can convey facts and truths, as well as explain how to apply them. Actually, from school, every person is taught the knowledge that the Earth revolves around the Sun, substantiating it as a fact and truth, and in the future, each subject of knowledge opens up a palette of perspectives on what to do with this knowledge (or not to do). If there were no such mediators to transfer knowledge, then each person would be forced to rediscover this world on his own. However, with such an approach, no social form would have been formed. Doxa and logos, which form the basis of knowledge, have an anthropomorphic nature: not metaphysical, immanent. Everything we know about the world results from the persuasiveness and argumentation of the knowledge passed on to us by our teachers. Thanks to them, each person forms the educational capital that will further influence the process of his knowledge and activity and cause progress in social life.

This approach is well understood by Pierre Bourdieu, who, in his research on the theory of practical action, derives a certain kind of formula of „educational capital” and claims that it is formed thanks to a combination of cultural, social, and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu P., 2013). Despite a critical view of modern educational strategies, for example, the same „university doxa” or the crisis in the academic environment, the intellectual recognizes the value of the formation of educational capital, because it is the key to the further incorporation of knowledge into social life and acts in its favor.

Educational capital is sometimes described as a part of intellectual capital. We agree with the following definition of intellectual capital: „Intellectual capital is the leveraging of knowledge, experience, competencies, and intellectual assets to boost the field positioning of individuals or of the group or institution that they belong to” (Hall J. and others, 2020, p. 319). When acquiring educational capital, a person/humanity receives a whole series of those components, thanks to which it identifies itself in the future. This is how a cultural code is acquired. Although the concept of code in relation to culture is a rather conventional unit of measure, because coding itself corresponds more to statics and certainty, and culture has a more dynamic structure, specific markers in it are relatively stable. With this code, a person receives legitimate knowledge and skills that allow him to exist within the limits of a given society and that contribute to the recognition of himself as a part of this environment. The knowledge gained and the experience gained in this way enable the further creation and multiplication of the cultural or scientific community, mobilize forces, and implement efforts. The result of such activity is reflected in the social structure. Therefore, as social practices prove to us and what Pierre Bourdieu claims,

investing in laying down a code in a person who belongs to society is an advance that will later justify the value of such a policy.

Along the lines of Mats Rosengren's doxology, it is worth noting some kinship of thoughts with Pierre Bourdieu: educational capital is largely formed thanks to individuals' authority, expertise, and leadership qualities. Of course, those who know how to convince and convey the truth. Of course, Bourdieuan skepticism will be appropriate here because authority can be obtained in different ways, etc. Erving Goffman also emphasizes authoritative figures in „The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” (Goffman E., 1956). Leaders are able to convince, thanks to the skills acquired and developed with experience, and they are able to express their views honestly and clarify the situation directly. They may or may not become authorities. It is not essential (Bourdieu P. and Passeron J.-C., 1977, p. 121). The central understanding is that they should be in the education and science system. After all, in their absence, the social orientation is lost.

Essential aspects that should be taken from the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu is also the idea that the educational space, the scientific/academic environment, is always a field of struggle. According to his approach, the intellectual, educational environment should contain heterogeneous forces and different competing groups in order to increase the thirst for movement and development. Therefore, this struggle can strengthen the educational capital of a particular society. We know that a person's definition of the social world and one's activity in it depend on the habitus, tendencies, and dispositions formed in the process of socialization. Knowledge of these principles gradually affects the formation of social fields, which are endowed with their own rules and values. Therefore, the transfer of knowledge about one field to another can have contradictory consequences: both progress and extreme lack of efficiency.

By the way, it should be mentioned that both habitus can be a separate part of identity formation, and identity can express habitus. Thus, being a set of tools for interpreting the world and interacting with it, habitus forms a person's idea of who he is, what social group he belongs to, and what values he shares. Here, habitus can be considered the foundation of identity. From another perspective, a person's actions, choices, and statements are a reflection of his habitus. When a person demonstrates his belonging to a particular social group or society as a whole, he expresses what is characteristic of this group or community. Habitus is not static. It can change depending on new social conditions and acquired experience. Under „natural” conditions, changes in habit occur gradually because they always meet resistance from the human side, which also depends on many factors. For example, the older a person is, the more difficult it is for him to adapt

to changes and vice versa. There are claims that identity, which also has a somewhat unstable structure, can be transformed together with habitus. Nevertheless, here we are faced with an extraordinary problem quite pronounced in our present.

On the Issue of Loss of Ukrainian Educational Capital

According to the data we find on the official website of the educational ombudsman of Ukraine Serhiy Gorbachev, with references to thorough informational data of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are currently more than 500 thousand children abroad who are schoolchildren or students (Official website of the Educational Ombudsman of Ukraine, 2024). Accordingly, we must understand that this figure does not include children of preschool age and parents. The data was obtained from 26 EU countries, but many other countries were not taken into account, as well as no reliable data on children from temporarily occupied territories or those who were forcibly taken to the territory of the aggressor country. As the educational ombudsman of Ukraine notes, children who are studying abroad mainly study in the schools of the country where they are located. Of course, thanks to non-governmental organizations abroad or Ukrainian schools, which allow distance learning in the Ukrainian language and with Ukrainian teachers (education in so-called integration classes), Others have to study according to the countries' educational programs that gave shelter. Students currently studying abroad must integrate into the educational systems of the countries where they are. Therefore, they should adopt the culture, succumb to trends, etc. The next issue is a learning disruption: „During the war, children experience a disruption of schooling from being stranded in war-affected areas, from being displaced – either internally or to other countries, or from disruptions to schooling without displacement. A long-standing literature documents that even small disruptions to schooling have large negative effects on learning” (Gorodnichenko Y. and others, 2022).

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, analyzing the educational systems of different countries, pay attention to the fact that the „subsequent biography” of the pupil/student depends on education and the choice of educational environment (Bourdieu P. and Passeron J.-C., 1977). The authors claim that the school is not an institution with a neutral indicator of evaluation definition but acts as a space for transmitting the dominant culture and consolidating existing social norms. The educational system is not just a place of knowledge transfer but forms a separate type of

personality that meets the requirements of the dominant identification markers in society.

We will remind that educational capital is acquired through a combination of cultural, symbolic, and other types of capital. Thus, the knowledge, skills, values, and tastes learned in the family are refined at school and further affect learning in the public space. Based on this, a habit is formed in the future, which will determine how a person perceives the world and interacts with other people. The critical aspect is not the last place in the theory of Bourdieu-Passron. They draw attention to the fact that an element of „symbolic violence” is always present in any education system. Using their approach, we must understand that norms and values are imposed on all students of education at any of the levels, which may be alien to their experience or way of life. However, they are essential to the system itself and dominate as guidelines in society. Therefore, no matter how much we talk about the fact that children who are abroad can study in integrated classes or can study remotely in Ukrainian schools, they still contribute most of the cultural values from the environment in which they are.

Moreover, we must recognize the fact that every educational system has implicit and explicit aspects of pedagogy. It is implied that there are clearly defined and established ways of transmitting formalized principles of being. It is about the rules of conduct, the specifics of the rules of spelling, or anything that is approved by the curriculum. This is an explicit component. However, the last place is not occupied by the implicit side of pedagogy. According to this, several rules unconsciously impose norms and values. Pierre Bourdieu observed that this hidden component is more dangerous than the obvious one because it is more powerful and effective.

One of the equally essential markers that reveals the content of the danger of losing human and educational capital is the instability of identity itself. The justification for this is expressed by the postmodern philosophical tradition, which indicates that the human „I” is a somewhat unstable construct. For example, in the same Derridian approach, the specificity of human identity is not natural and fixed but fluid, rewritten, and redefined. Being in a state of constant construction, identity is formed at the expense of culture and language. And the greater the influence of these factors, the smaller will be the level of fluctuations that can be felt in the structure of a person’s „I”.

In the same postmodern theory, we can also see such a concept as „dissemination”, which, acting as a process of dispersion and multiplication, indicates the constant postponement of a stable meaning. Decimation in the key of identity formation indicates that the extreme is far from a single,

fixed value and predetermines the slippage of identification centers in the direction of constant decentering. Thus, a tendency towards identity stability can be formed only under the acquired ability to „distinguish”/différance, or distinguish oneself from others. When stable and stable markers of difference have not acquired their certainty, self-identification is constantly postponed. Moreover, as postmodernists tell us, it may never acquire its final definition under such conditions.

Of course, in a postmodern sense, such a person's path is only „one-way”, because it exposes the fallacy of the modern approach of „assembly”, which is always conventionally constructed. Furthermore, decimation makes it possible to understand the absence of any stable „metaphysics of presence”. However, in the course of our reflections, we can conclude that with such an approach, we can completely lose any signs of identification. Even culture and language, which are recognized by postmodernists as being able to provide, albeit conventional but stable, determinants of the human „I” are now unattainable for many. We see that in the global dimension, such fixed categories as nationality, race, and gender become dynamic, multifaceted, and constantly changing. So, what can be expected when a person is thrown out even from his cultural and linguistic environment?

Conclusions

Looking for a solid theoretical justification for the hypothesis of our intelligence, we come to understand that the intellectuals of the 20th-21st centuries, who understand the potential threats of this era, are trying to find optimal ways to solve the ripe problems. The problematic nature of this issue is further aggravated by the fact that schoolchildren and students tend to adapt more quickly to new conditions: they more quickly adopt the values of another cultural field and, therefore, acquire signs of other identities. They master the environment of other countries and learn to live in a different society. Therefore, the big question is whether they will have the desire to return to Ukraine in the post-war period. The same applies to teachers and scientists who adapt to living conditions in other countries and thereby adapt to the conditions in which they are.

The loss of educational capital is not just a statistic; it is another mark. It is a real loss of opportunities for the further development of a person and the prosperity of the entire society. Therefore, all possible means should be taken to preserve and restore it. Military conflicts, economic crises, social upheavals, or technological changes are far from an exhaustive list of challenges that can cause loss. However, whether we can minimize these

losses is a huge question. At the moment, we can only record the level of destruction, forced migration, political instability, and everything else that does not add vitality to the future prospects. After all, we consciously understand that if this trend develops, Ukrainians will face the loss of their identity.

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