



Learning in a bomb shelter, or how teachers in Ukraine interact with their students in times of war: A series of interviews

Good morning, dear colleagues! First and foremost, I would like to express my immense gratitude to the organisers of **TASA Social Sciences Week**. I'm delighted to be able to take part in this unique event. If you don't mind, I'll briefly introduce myself. My name is *Olha Maksymenko*, and I'm representing the *Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*. Our institute is a leading research institution in this field within this country. I work there as part of the editorial team of a quarterly titled "Sociology: Theory, Methods, Marketing". Additionally, I do some research into the environmental attitudes of primary, secondary and high school students from Ukrainian schools, write scenarios for games on environmental issues and participate in various environmental activities such as tree planting or park clean-ups. Furthermore, I'm engaged in social work. And finally, I work as an extracurricular teacher. I give classes in Ukrainian language and literature, history, psychology and sometimes drawing, which brings me great pleasure. That's why my presentation will be focused on the educational process in Ukrainian schools, especially during the war waged by Russia against our people. Besides, I'll show you some of the drawings made by Ukrainian pupils for the contest "War through the eyes of children".

I think I'll get started.

The day after Russian troops invaded our land, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine recommended stopping the educational process in institutions of all levels and sending students and educators on a two-week vacation. During that time, parts of Ukraine's territory found themselves under temporary occupation while a number of cities and towns (Mariupol, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Bucha, Irpin, etc.) became the scene of active hostilities. Over 10 million people were forced to flee from their homes, with 3.9 million leaving the country. Most of these people were women and children. According to UNICEF, more than half of Ukrainian children — 4.3 million out of 7.5 — were forced to leave their homes because of the war. As of 28 March 2022, due to hostilities, 144 children were killed and about 220 were injured; 659 educational institutions suffered from bombings and shelling while 74 were completely destroyed.

From March 14, the educational process began to resume in the regions where the security situation allowed it. Decisions on where to conduct classes and how to interact with students were made by local governments and educational institutions. Students who left their homes were able to return to their studies in places of their temporary stay, both in Ukraine and abroad. Provided that they were able to work, educators were permitted to do so from anywhere within or outside the country.

In areas that hosted internally displaced persons (those who had fled the war-damaged areas), preschools and secondary schools served as shelters for people in need of temporary housing. These people were accommodated in the dormitories of vocational/technical schools and higher education institutions. Schools and kindergartens collected, sorted and distributed humanitarian aid.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, non-governmental organisations, educational companies, schools, universities, colleges, kindergartens and extracurricular institutions, as well as concerned citizens, made great efforts to ensure that the educational process was not interrupted. A number of distance learning tools have been implemented; furthermore, both teachers and students, as well as their parents, could receive informational support and psychological help.

Here are just a few examples of such educational initiatives.

- On 14 March, the “Learning without borders” project for 5–11 grade students, created jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Ministry of Culture, supported by Ukrainian TV channels and online platforms, was launched. As part of this project, video lessons are broadcast, with a particular subject scheduled for each day. The project has been implemented according to the Ukrainian national curriculum for students of all ages, and the recordings of the online lessons are also available.

– Besides, March 14 saw the start of another project, “Kindergarten online”, created by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Science. It offers educational video lessons for children aged 3 to 6.

– As early as the first days of the war, “Vseosvita”, a nationwide educational company, published an appeal to teachers (“Educators, you have a special gift!”), held a series of webinars from leading Ukrainian educators, methodologists, psychologists and lawyers, initiated a drawing competition titled “War through the eyes of children”, and offered a series of patriotic instructional materials (classroom posters such as “Our heroes”, “Good evening, we are from Ukraine”, “Unbreakable people of the bravest country”, etc.).

– Distance learning schools (“Optima”, “Liko Education Online”, etc.) provided free access to their educational resources.

– The “Yakaboo” bookstore provided free access to books via their mobile application.

- The “All-Ukrainian online school” platform, launched in December 2020, continued to work. This is a resource for distance and blended learning of secondary and high school students. The resource contains lessons, teaching aids and instructional materials that comply with the national curriculum. The educational content of the platform includes lessons in 18 basic subjects: Ukrainian language and literature, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, world history, mathematics, English, etc. By the end of March, users from more than 130 countries had joined the all-Ukrainian online school.
- The “Smart Osvita” NGO launched the “Informative online meetings for children and teenagers” project. Note that these meetings are conducted by teachers from both Ukraine and other countries such as Canada, Italy, Romania, Portugal, India and Japan. The languages of the event are Ukrainian and English.
- The National Ecological and Naturalistic Centre for Student Youth announced the all-Ukrainian competition of inventive and innovative environmental projects, as well as the online all-Ukrainian olympiad of research initiatives for high school students. The first event took place in May 2022, and the second one was scheduled for June. In addition, there are distance learning courses such as “Mathematics in nature”, “Natural sciences”, “Lectures for young chemists”. The selection round for the Ukrainian team for the final of the “Infomatrix” international computer science project competition was also held.

Moreover, the teachers themselves demonstrate great courage, dedication and creativity. For example, *Liudmyla Tabolina*, Headmistress of School No. 10 in Kharkiv (a big city in the east of Ukraine), set up a bomb shelter (for people who lived in houses without basements), a humanitarian aid centre and a canteen in her school. Ms Tabolina also became a volunteer of the Fund of Free and Caring, helping to evacuate people out of the war-torn areas in Slobozhanshchyna (a historical area in the north-eastern part of Ukraine, which includes the city of Kharkiv and its suburbs). Another educator from Kharkiv, *Lidiia Nasonova*, who teaches Ukrainian language and literature, advises foreign teachers on the adaptation of Ukrainian refugee children and gives a distance learning course in creative writing. *Vladyslav Kachur* (English and German teacher) from Vinnytsia (a city in the south-western part of Ukraine) became one of the coordinators of the evacuation centre opened in his school. Mr Kachur drafts requests from the military, orphanages and hospitals, translates these requests into English and sends them to international organisations. He also involves his students in the translation.

Artur Proidakov, the winner of the Global Teacher Prize Ukraine, organised Ukrainian language courses in Kolomyia (a town in the western part of Ukraine) for internally displaced people. *Oleksandr Chuchaiev*, who teaches history and law in Blahovishchenske (a town in Kirovohrad oblast, the central part of Ukraine) gives lectures in the history of Ukraine to his students while serving in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. He is also planning to deliver a public lecture titled “Ukraine: Beginning of a new life”. *Hanna But*, a civic education teacher from Melitopol, made patriotic posters and went out almost every day with her daughter to protest against the Russian occupation in the city’s main square. Chemist *Hlib Repich* (Kyiv) recorded videos on how to protect yourself from chemical and nuclear threats and posted these videos on his TikTok page while *Pavlo Viktor* (Odesa, a big coastal city in the south of Ukraine) recorded physics lessons and posted them on his YouTube channel.

Oblast is a sub-national entity in Ukraine. It roughly corresponds to province.

Global Teacher Prize Ukraine is an annual national award for teachers who promote changes in education. The award celebrates the teacher’s achievements both in relation to their students and to society; besides, it emphasises the importance of being an educator in Ukraine.

The creative team of “Unique School” (Kyiv) developed a number of engaging presentations about the structure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Among other things, students could learn about the Ground Forces, the Air Forces and the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The school also introduced a course called “Safety superheroes: Instructions for children in wartime”.

The teachers of the “Green Forest” language school launched a free course titled “Wartime English”, music lessons “Make music not war” and a series of conversation clubs. The fees for participation in the clubs are donated to cover the needs of the Ukrainian army.

A group of students from a gymnasium in Poltava oblast (a city in the east of Ukraine) created a video letter to a Ukrainian soldier.

A number of ideas for online lessons were proposed and implemented by the author of this material. These include, in particular, the presentation titled “Customs, traditions and good luck charms of my family”, two web quests (“See, the glory’s born again!” and “This is what we must protect), the “Fearless Ukrainians” flashmob, etc. The participants of this flashmob were supposed to speak briefly in Ukrainian and/or English about the Ukrainians they believed to be courageous and heroic. The list included famous poets, thinkers and human rights activists such as Taras Shevchenko, Lesia Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, Olena Teliha, Lina Kostenko, Vasyl Stus, Oleksa Tykhyi, Valerii Marchenko, heroes of the Revolution of Dignity, Anti-Terrorist Operation/Joint Forces Operation veterans, medics, volunteers, Territorial Defence fighters, and, of course, the Ukrainian army.

Every educator who teaches children during wartime could certainly share their experience and their story. The presentation gives only a tiny glimpse. Thus, the task of our further research will be to conduct interviews with school and kindergarten teachers from different regions of Ukraine.

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“War through the eyes of children”.

This is a drawing competition initiated by “Vseosvita”,
a nationwide educational company (Kyiv, Ukraine).

The competition started on 5 March 2022.

As of 5 September 2022, 7980 drawings have been submitted.



24 February

Presented by *Olha Maksymenko*,
leading sociologist of the Department of Methodology and Methods of Sociology,
Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

Competition web page: <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war>

“The icon”

Made by *Yaroslav Demianchuk*, 14 years old, Khmelnytskyi city (the west of Ukraine)

Submitted by *Svitlana Kutska*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17501>



“Life will beat death, and light will drive out darkness”

“We don’t need any liberators”

Made by *Anna Lopatnichenko*, 13 years old, Dnipropetrovsk oblast (the central and eastern part of Ukraine)

Submitted by *Iryna Kharchenko*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17578>



“Children of Kryvyi Rih are standing for peace”

Submitted by *Anastasiia Budiachenko*, Kryvyi Rih (a big city in central Ukraine)

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17625>



"I want peace!"

Made by *Vadym Shatokhin*, 6 years old, Kharkiv city

Submitted by *Liudmyla Illiuk*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17600>



Made by *Ameliia Roshka*, 10 years old, Mykolaiv oblast (the south of Ukraine)
Submitted by *Inna Kara*
Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17066>



"Ukraine will win!"

Submitted by *Oksana Fedyshyn*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/16631>



“A Ukrainian military nymph”

Made by *Olena Osadcha*, 13 years old

Submitted by *Tetiana Osadcha*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17548>



Made by *Vladyslav Horbach*
Submitted by *Yuliia Loshak*
Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17389>



“Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!”

Made by an anonymous author

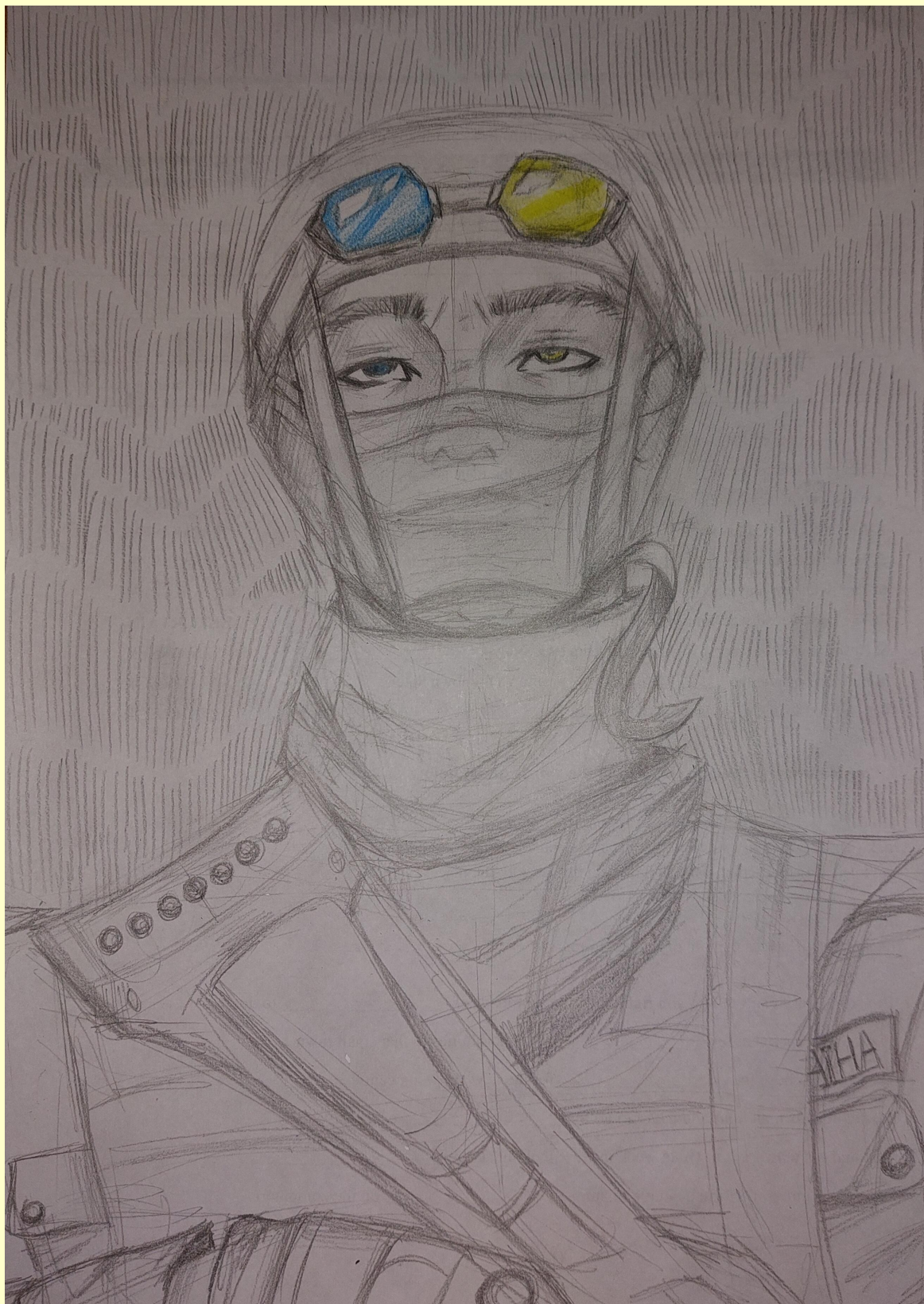
Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17287>



“Through the eyes of a soldier, through the eyes of the country”

Made by an anonymous author

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17431>



"Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes! Thank you!"

Made by *Bohdan*, 4 years old, Ivano-Frankivsk city (the west of Ukraine)

Submitted by *Nataliia Savchuk*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/16326>



A traditional Ukrainian rag doll (motanka), which is believed to bring good luck

Submitted by *Nataliia Pokhyl*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17517>



“Moving towards victory”

Made by *Pylyp Tarasevych*, 10 years old, Kherson city

Submitted by *Nataliia Kravchuk*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/16405>



“Air-raid alert”

Made by *Sofiia Savchuk*, 13 years old, Khmelnytskyi city

Submitted by *Liubov Dzhuhlii*

Available at <https://vseosvita.ua/no-war/17263>

