Ethical Values of Education in Wartime: the Ukrainian Context

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Abstract
During wartime, education is confronted with both institutional disruptions and deep ethical dilemmas, as it seeks to uphold and transmit moral values in the midst of instability, trauma, and social disintegration. This study explores the ethical values of education during the war in Ukraine, aiming to understand how educational spaces can foster dignity, responsibility, and solidarity under crisis conditions. Using a three-stage hermeneutical approach – normative theorisation, qualitative analysis through student questionnaires, and critical reflection – the study examines both the ideals and lived realities of ethical education in wartime. The findings highlight a deepened ethical consciousness among students, with values such as empathy, justice, and civic responsibility becoming central to their educational experience; however, structural and psychological barriers often impede ethical integration. The results suggest that education in wartime transforms into a moral practice of resistance and recovery, offering not only stability and social cohesion, but also laying a foundation for post-crisis democratic renewal.

Keywords: ethical values, wartime education, moral resilience, civic responsibility, solidarity, empathy, human dignity, critical pedagogy

Introduction

Contemporary global society is experiencing a period of profound transformation, precipitated by large-scale wars and accompanied by significant political, social, economic and humanitarian challenges. War poses a threat not only to the physical existence of people, but also has a significant impact on the values of citizens, thereby challenging the established notions of justice, dignity, solidarity, freedom and responsibility. In this context, education,[1] as one of the key social institutions, finds itself at the centre of value turbulence, as it is called upon not only to transmit knowledge but also to form the ethical capacity of the individual to act in the face of uncertainty, threat and social disruption.

1 In this article, the focus is placed on the university context, as higher education represents both a formative environment for civic and ethical development and a space where the challenges of wartime are acutely experienced by young adults.

The erosion of trust in institutions, intensifying social fragmentation, growing polarisation,[2] the devaluation of human life and the breakdown of basic forms of coexistence, all underscore the urgent need to reconsider the role of education as a space for ethical communication. In the context of pan-European discussions about the crisis of democracy,[3] it is expected that the field of education will not only maintain functionality, but also actively participate in the creation of a sustainable social order through the cultivation of values that can unite even in times of war. This standpoint renders democracy not as an entrenched system of governance, but rather as a malleable and pragmatic modus vivendi, one that is in constant need of reevaluation and dissemination in order to be effectively implemented within the shifting historical and cultural contexts.[4] In this sense, the study of the ethical values of education[5] in wartime is of particular pertinence, as it enables not only the documentation of moral challenges, but also the exploration of methodologies for the cultivation of ethically conscious citizenship – a cornerstone of sustainable democracy.

Research on education in contexts of armed conflict and crisis has demonstrated that schools and universities often serve as crucial spaces for resilience, moral orientation, and the preservation of social cohesion (e.g., studies on the former Yugoslavia and Syria).[6] Against this background, the local study of the educational process in the context of war in Ukraine is an important contribution to the global understanding of the role of ethical values of education during crisis transformations. The Ukrainian experience[7] reveals not only the specifics of the educational environment's response to extreme challenges, but also highlights universal mechanisms for preserving humanity and democratic guidelines. This context demonstrates that even amid war, education can remain a space of moral reflection and consolidation, forming value models relevant to the broader international ethical and educational discourse.

Methodology

The proposed study offers a comprehensive approach to the analysis of the issue, encompassing three primary stages of consideration. Thus, theoretical, empirical and reflective parts ensure the integrity, depth and validity of the data analysis. The suggested hermeneutical framework aligns with the principle of 'understanding through interpretation',[8] which involves the interpretation of

2 'Do Ukrainians Trust Democratic Institutions? Institutional Confidence and Democracy Amid the War in Ukraine,' VoxUkraine, accessed 27th June 2025, https://voxukraine.org/en/do-ukrainians-trust-democratic-institutions-institutional-confidence-and-democracy-amid-the-war-in-ukraine.

3 'Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment,' OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results, accessed 27th June 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results_9a20554b-en.html.

4 Cf. Arno Widmann, 'Philosoph Oskar Negt gestorben: Mut und Eigensinn,' *Frankfurter Rundschau*, accessed 27th June 2025, https://www.fr.de/kultur/gesellschaft/philosoph-oskar-negt-gestorben-mut-und-eigensinn-92811886.html.

5 In this article, 'ethical values in education' are understood as a broad category that includes universal principles (dignity, justice, respect), civic virtues (responsibility, solidarity, empathy), as well as values shaped by Ukraine's specific cultural and wartime context.

6 Cf. Lynn Davies, *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Julia Paulson, ed., *Education and Reconciliation: Exploring Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011); Sarah Dryden-Peterson, 'Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization,' *Educational Researcher* 45, no. 9 (2016): 473–482; James Meernik et al., 'Truth, Justice, and Education: Towards Reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia,' *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16, no. 3 (2016): 413–43; Ahmed Tlili et al., 'How to Maintain Education during Wars? An Integrative Approach to Ensure the Right to Education,' *Open Praxis* 16, no. 2 (2024): 160–179.

7 The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion in 2022, has engendered unprecedented challenges for the education sector, obliging it to adapt, demonstrate flexibility, and cultivate humanistic meanings.

8 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 295. Originally published 1960.

theoretical concepts through the lens of personal experience. The feedback loop between theory and practice serves to refine and enrich the understanding of these theories.

The first part ('to-be state') sets an ethical horizon, i.e., an imaginary ideal of an educational environment built on universal, philosophical values, thereby creating a normative basis for understanding the 'ethical quality' of education. This segment establishes the conceptual foundation upon which the subsequent sections of the study are to be built.

The second part ('as-is state') focuses on the local reality, on the experience of Ukrainian students studying in the context of war. The responses given by the subjects are indicative of their subjective vision, whilst also demonstrating specific areas of tension between the values and challenges of the present. This section presents a qualitative study based on a questionnaire survey of students at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, one of the leading universities in Western Ukraine and reflects the diverse experiences of students in wartime conditions (volunteering, forced displacement, studying in dangerous conditions, etc.). This ensures the depth and diversity of the data obtained. The results can be partially generalised for the broader Ukrainian educational context, although the study is qualitative in nature and does not claim to be fully representative.

The questionnaire consisted of nine open-ended questions structured across three content areas: personal (educational experience and attitudes), socio-cultural (the role of education in society), and prognostic (visions of future changes and needs in the education system). This format was chosen to enable participants to articulate their perspectives in depth and to elicit meaningful, personally infused responses that would help recreate a 'live' social reality.[9] To ensure content validity, the questions were preliminarily discussed in a small focus group of students and reviewed by academic colleagues. The Grounded Theory approach[10] was employed, a method that involves the formulation of theoretical conclusions based on the analysis of data. The collected material was analysed using the method of categorical analysis with the use of MaxQDA software, according to the 10-stage data analysis model.[11] The respondents' anonymity was preserved throughout the study. The answers were coded according to the themes that naturally emerged in the students' responses.

The survey was conducted using the online tool Google Forms[12] and was anonymous, which ensured the protection of personal data. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The sample comprised 50 students of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, representing different years of study and academic fields, with an age range of 18-23.[13] The sample size was deliberately limited in accordance with the methodology of value analysis, which emphasises the depth and interpretative richness of responses rather than quantitative representativeness. Particular attention was paid to ethical considerations: anonymity and confidentiality were fully guaranteed, and the questions were carefully formulated to minimise psychological distress and avoid retraumatisation in the wartime context.

The third part of the study ('on-going state') presents an analytical summary, which, by critically comparing the normative ethical ideal of education ('to-be state') with its empirical reality ('as-is

9 Siegfried Lamnek, *Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 5th ed. (Weinheim: Beltz, 2010), 272, 318-319.

10 Werner Meineheld, 'Hypothesen und Vorwissen in der qualitativen Sozialforschung,' in *Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, 10th ed., ed. Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff, and Ines Steinke (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2013), 268.

11 Udo Kuckartz, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung*, 2nd rev. ed. (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2014), 79.

12 Link to the survey: https://forms.gle/TPjbAUJXF52hZCCP8.

13 Participants were recruited among students of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University through internal university communication channels and class group announcements. The selection was not limited to a single faculty, but included students from different academic fields and years of study in order to reflect a diversity of wartime experiences.

state'), reveals key contradictions, ethical tensions and value dilemmas that have been exacerbated by the war. Such a reflective approach not only identifies structural gaps, but also outlines vectors for the transformation of educational practice, reveals the potential for the formation of an ethical space of education, and lays the foundation for further interdisciplinary research in the field of peace education and educational policy.

Results

To-be-state

Education as a Practice of Freedom. In times of social upheaval, education inevitably faces the question of whether it should adapt to external pressures or preserve its emancipatory role. Global thinkers have different answers to the question of what education means in times of severe social upheaval. However, they are united by the conviction that in wartime education becomes not less but more of a moral act. Back in the 1970s, Paulo Freire, one of the founders of critical pedagogy, described a key dilemma that becomes particularly acute in times of crisis. According to him, education either functions as a tool for integrating young people into the existing system, fostering conformity, or it becomes a practice of freedom – a means by which people critically and creatively comprehend reality.[14] In the context of war, this alternative is particularly evident: education either adapts to the logic of trauma, discipline and survival, or resists dehumanisation, opening up space for ethical thinking, dialogue and moral self-assertion.

Human Dignity. War profoundly affects an individual's ability to feel emotionally secure, develop imagination, express themselves freely and trust the world. Therefore, education can play the role of a mechanism of ethical recovery. It is able not only to compensate for violations in the educational process, but also to build internal resilience and enhance dignity. Martha Nussbaum, in her theory of basic human capacities, proposes to consider the ethical basis of society not through rights or resources as such, but through the real possibilities of a person to be a human being in the full sense of the word.[15] Education, according to Nussbaum, should support fundamental 'capabilities': critical thinking, empathy, imagination, and the ability to interact socially. During a military conflict, these capacities are narrowed or blocked, so their support and restoration become a key moral task of education.

Right to Education and Equality of Access. The right to education in wartime becomes both a legal guarantee and a moral responsibility of society. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26),[16] everyone has the right to education, and this right is a cornerstone of an open and democratic society that recognises the dignity of all. The right to access education becomes an indicator of the quality of a democratic system, especially in the context of armed conflict when traditional educational institutions are destroyed. New innovative technologies not only ensure the educational process, but also contribute to the institutionalisation of a new ethical culture based on equality of access, learner autonomy and protection of the right to intellectual development even in extraordinary circumstances. This also represents the basic human need for learning as a condition of freedom. In the globalised world, there is an unprecedented level of

14 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 48.

15 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 17–23.

16 'Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,' accessed 27th June 2025, https://www.humanrights.com/course/lesson/articles-26-30/read-article-26.html.

access to educational resources: open online courses, digital libraries, and interactive platforms provide information support for the academic environment. However, the number of available materials does not guarantee their meaningful assimilation, let alone the development of ethical reflection. That is why the key question remains: how to preserve humanity in the context of intellectual growth under the pressure of destructive circumstances?

Moral Autonomy and Responsibility. In wartime, information aggression is actively developed. When the academic space becomes vulnerable to ideological influence, it becomes especially important to understand education as a sphere that should foster moral autonomy. Hannah Arendt, in her work *The Crisis in Education* (1954), insists that education cannot be reduced to a tool for political mobilisation or the training of loyal subordinates.[17] Education is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the adult generation to present the world in its multidimensionality and truth, rather than simplifying it to a certain ideological formula. In the context of the plural and often conflicting moral practices of modern society, this vision allows education to act as a stabiliser: not by unifying opinions, but by creating a space for thinking, judgement and ethical dialogue. In Hannah Arendt's philosophy, education is not a mechanism of socialisation or mobilisation, but a space in which the capacity for freedom, initiative, action and responsibility in a common world is born. Gert Biesta takes a similar position, warning against the reduction of education to the functions of control through 'measurement'. He emphasises that true learning always involves the risk of forming a responsible subject through an encounter with the other.[18] Of practical importance is the concept of autonomy, formed in the educational space not as a formal freedom, but as the ability to moral self-management based on reasonable judgement and not on obedience to authority or the rhetoric of national unity.[19]

The Ethics of Empathy in Education. The obligation to foster respect for human dignity remains paramount. Otfried Höffe emphasises this commitment as a binding principle.[20] The student is not an object of influence, but a subject of thinking and transformation.[21] Otherwise, disrespect for the dignity of the learner becomes a form of violence – even when it has 'good' goals. The ethical task of education in time of war is to preserve the subjectivity, respect, and moral equality of all participants in the educational process. The main message of Kant's deontological ethics *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785) is: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means'.[22] This means that every human being is a value in itself, not a tool.

Here, according to Kant's principle of ethical universalism, empathy plays a key role as the ethical ability to recognise the other as an equal, free and dignified subject. Education should develop the ability to be open, vulnerable and ready to coexist.[23] This point of view is also developed by Martha Nussbaum, who argues that empathy is not an emotional option, but a necessary component of

17 Hannah Arendt, 'The Crisis in Education,' in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Press, 1961), 173–96. Originally published 1954.

18 Cf. Gert J. J. Biesta, 'Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect with the Question of Purpose in Education,' *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 21, no. 1 (2009): 35–37. Cf. Gert J. J. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1–10.

19 Cf. Christopher Winch, 'Strong Autonomy and Education,' *Educational Theory* 52, no. 1 (2002): 27–41. Cf. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 27–50.

20 Bettina Reichmann, 'Die Würde des Menschen – christlich gelesen, religionspädagogisch buchstabiert,' in *Humanität als religionspädagogisches und didaktisches Leitmotiv*, ed. Christian Hild, Sandra Anusiewicz Baer, and Abdel Hafiez Massud, Religion und Kommunikation in Bildung und Gesellschaft, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2023), 201–213. Otfried Goeffe, *Demokratie im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (München: C.H. Beck, 1999), 65.

21 Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 17-18.

22 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 38.

23 Cf. Sharon Todd, *Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), chap. 3, 'Not Just for Myself: Questioning the Subject of Human Rights,' 51–65.

the moral development of the individual and the citizen. Education, as Nussbaum sees it, should cultivate the ability to 'see the world through the eyes of another' as a basic condition for ethical thinking.[24] A similar idea is expressed by Lynn Hunt, who argues that the modern idea of human rights arose from the expansion of the ability to empathise with 'others as an equal', in particular through literature, art and education.[25]

Critical Thinking and Moral Judgement. A further aspect is the development of critical judgement. Hannah Arendt, comprehending the nature of evil in her work *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), introduces the concept of 'banality of evil' – evil that does not arise from radical intent but from the absence of thinking, from the willingness to obey without reflection.[26] Later, in her work *The Life of the Mind* (1978), she interprets thinking as an internal moral dialogue through which a person forms the internal boundaries of what is acceptable.[27] Education also opens up space for the ability to make independent ethical judgements that do not dissolve into collective ideologies. Technical rationality without moral reflection leads to disaster.[28]

Dialogue and Communicative Action. However, education remains a space of rational, non-violent communication that promotes trust and the ability to make ethical decisions. Therefore, communicative action, proposed by Habermas in his work *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (1981), can also be the basis of educational ethics.[29] Communicative action is interaction not primarily focused on success, but on mutual understanding. Ethical education should create a space where learners, teachers and society engage in an open, honest dialogue aimed at understanding rather than control. According to Hans-Richard Reuter, it is important for young people to learn not only to express their opinions, but also to listen carefully, reflect and consider the world from the other's perspective. Mutual understanding is possible on the basis of sincerity, equality and recognition of the other as a rational subject. This means creating conditions for an ethical dialogue in which participants have the opportunity to openly formulate positions, ask questions and reflect on complex social phenomena, including injustice or violence. This is especially important when public communication is polarised or reduced to propaganda.

Education for the Common Good. The moral component is not about giving answers, but about learning to ask the right questions.[30] The formation of ethical thinking through the discussion of morally complex situations where there are no easy answers becomes a part of authentic discourse. Habermas argues that moral norms are legitimate only when all those concerned can agree on them in an honest discourse.[31] After all, ethical values are not imposed from above by a 'top-down principle',[32] but are formed in the process of open discussion.

In the field of education, a collective ethical practice is formed, which is expressed in the ability to act in solidarity and responsibility. It initiates (perhaps secondary to the family institution) the reflection on moral dilemmas, in which individual virtues are transformed into common

24 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 401.Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 178.

25 Cf. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 38–40, 58.

26 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 287–289. Originally published 1963.

27 Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Volume I: Thinking* (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 185.

28 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

29 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 1 (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

30 Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

31 Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 9.

32 Beate Hofmann, *Diakonische Unternehmenskultur: Handbuch für Führungskräfte*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 135.

values. The idea of responsibility emerges as the basis of civic ethics – a duty to the community.[33] Education, therefore, not only promotes personal development, but also forms citizens capable of thinking in terms of the common good. Accordingly, education cannot be viewed as a private service only, but is a public ethical good,[34] for the preservation and development of which all civil society is responsible. This is especially important in times of war, when young people are asking fundamental moral questions: What is just? What does it mean to serve the common good? Michael Sandel rejects the idea of liberal neutrality in education, stressing that it should be an active response to polarisation and moral disorientation.[35]

Justice and Inclusion. The very ethical core of the educational space is formed by civic responsibility. From an initially individual concept, it gradually acquires a public, social and global dimension. In the process of learning, a person develops the ability to see the connection between their own choices and their social, economic and environmental consequences. Responsibility becomes not only a moral category, but also a practice that regulates participation in public life. Hans Jonas in his work *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (1979) adds that in the modern world, ethics should be future-oriented, when an action should be evaluated in terms of its potential impact on the lives of future generations. The author introduces the concept of 'evolutionary responsibility'.[36] On the one side, equal access to education is already a prerequisite for justice as a social principle. But on the other side, this is not enough without ensuring equal opportunities to participate in the educational process, especially in the form of dialogue, discussion and joint decision-making. Justice, as Sandel points out in *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (2009) is not reduced to the observance of neutral rules, but is a moral virtue that is revealed in the active participation of citizens in public life.[37] It is in engaging in moral discussion that values are formed, which become the basis for the ethical development of society. In this context, the educational space should be not only structurally inclusive, but also communicatively open. Creating conditions in which every participant in the educational space has the opportunity to be heard, develop their own opinions and participate in the shaping of collective knowledge is the basis of an ethical approach to justice. According to Nussbaum, participation in dialogue becomes learning about justice through practice.[38]

Cultural Specificity and Eastern European Perspectives. While the theoretical foundations of this study predominantly refer to Western philosophers and educational theorists, it is equally important to recognise the contributions of Eastern European intellectuals, whose reflections on education in times of crisis provide a locally grounded dimension. Ukrainian philosopher Myroslav Popovych stressed that in wartime true resilience cannot be imposed externally but must be cultivated through education as a space of reflection and dialogue, fostering moral fortitude rather than conformity.[39] Myroslav Marynovych, Ukrainian human rights activist, former Soviet dissident, stresses, the war in Ukraine is above all a struggle for freedom, and in this context education

33 Otfried Höffe, 'Verantwortung: Begriff und Prinzip,' in *Verantwortung. Ein Begriff in seiner Aktualität*, ed. Reinhard Kahle and Niels Weidtmann (Paderborn: Brill, 2021), 3–13.

34 Cf. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 14–15.

35 Michael J. Sandel, *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 145–148.

36 Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 35–42. A similar idea is expressed by Martha Nussbaum in her concept of 'education for democratic citizenship': Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, updated ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 4–14.

37 Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 244–270.

38 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 35–37.

39 Cf. Myroslav Popovych, *Narys istorii kultury Ukrainy* (Kyiv: ArtEk, 1998), 237–249, accessed 22th August 2025, http://litopys.org.ua/popovych/narys.htm.

must nurture moral resilience, solidarity, and responsibility as the foundations for democratic renewal.[40] The Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, in his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), introduced the idea of the 'solidarity of the shaken', highlighting how moments of existential crisis generate authentic ethical community.[41] Similarly, the Polish Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz, in *The Captive Mind* (1953), warned that education in the 'people's democracies' had become an instrument of indoctrination, where 'from his first day in school, the young citizen receives an education based on this truth' and every subject was reduced to a rigid materialistic outlook. He cautioned that such a system risks producing 'a new and irretrievable species of mankind', formed by decades of ideological schooling at the expense of moral imagination and intellectual freedom.[42] Thus, although the normative framework of this study is shaped by widely recognised Western theories, the Eastern European tradition enriches it with unique perspectives on education as a source of freedom, dignity, and moral resilience in times of crisis.

As-is-state

At the next stage of the study, a qualitative questionnaire survey with open-ended questions was conducted to identify value orientations, individual experience and perceptions of the prospects for the development of education. The normative framework directly shaped the questionnaire. Key categories such as dignity, responsibility, empathy, solidarity, and justice were translated into specific questions: for example, how education contributes to humanity and solidarity during war, how moral principles have changed since the conflict began, which ethical values should be embedded in the educational process, or what forms of civic responsibility and volunteering are most relevant today. These categories also guided the coding scheme, ensuring coherence between theory and empirical analysis.

1. The first question of the study was aimed at clarifying the respondents' perceptions of the basic ethical values that, in their opinion, should be integrated into the modern educational process. The answers are dominated by the idea that the formation of such values takes place primarily in the student-teacher-student communication triangle, where mutual ethical modelling of behaviour is key. In particular, fairness is mentioned as a transparent assessment that reflects academic honesty. It is emphasised that education functions as an institution of socialisation and civic formation, and ethical guidelines are its structural element.

This is underlined by a number of illustrative statements: students emphasised that '*respect – for teachers, for oneself, for others – is the foundation without which other values do not work*', while '*honesty in learning – not cheating, not looking for shortcuts – shapes responsibility and prepares you for life*'. Others highlighted that '*tolerance is about accepting different views, even if they are not like yours – that's how real dialogue in education begins*'.

The analysis of the responses reveals a core set of values centred around key concepts as respect, honesty, responsibility, justice and tolerance. Respect is seen as a multifaceted notion that encompasses recognition of dignity, acceptance of diverse viewpoints, ethics of interaction and interpersonal tolerance. Honesty is interpreted as the basis of academic integrity, which implies independent work, moral consistency and sincerity. Responsibility and justice are associated with objectivity, fulfilment of obligations and avoidance of favouritism. Some respondents also

40 Cf. 'Myroslav Marynovych: War in Ukraine is 'a fight for freedom'," accessed 22th August 2025, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2023-12/ukraine-war-myroslav-marynovych-catholic-university-lviv.html.

41 Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, edited by James Dodd (illustrated ed.; Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1996).

42 Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage International, 1990), 77, 199.

emphasise mutual respect in difficult organisational situations between students and teachers, such as coordinating the learning process in the face of external challenges.

The importance of such values as empathy, mutual support, humanistic orientation, freedom of thought, objectivity and the development of socio-emotional competences (soft skills) was also noted, which testifies to a deep awareness of the role of the personal dimension in the educational process.

2. The purpose of the second question is to find out how, in the respondents' opinion, education contributes to the development of ethical categories of humanity and solidarity in wartime. The analysis of the answers shows that respondents assign education a significant social and humanitarian mission, seeing it as a tool for maintaining social unity and restoring trust. Respondents' answers demonstrate a high level of ethical reflection on the role of education in shaping the moral qualities of the individual.

Several student statements illustrate this point: '*Education helps people understand each other better in wartime, when circumstances differ – some fight, some volunteer, others simply survive. It teaches why support is important and how to help responsibly*'. The thought continues thereafter: '*Education teaches critical thinking, helping to resist panic and propaganda, while uniting people through shared learning and support even in wartime. Most importantly, it reminds us why we fight – for a future with knowledge, development, and normal life*'.

Students emphasised that education helps them endure hardship and '*not lose themselves*', as even lessons in basements or online signal care and support. It was described as a space to calm down, recognise others' pain, and find strength for rebuilding both homes and human connections. Education was also seen as a source of unity and resilience, providing a '*peaceful routine*' amid chaos, a branch that still bears the '*flower of humanity*', and a means of nurturing knowledgeable youth capable of supporting solidarity and strengthening national defence.

The key mechanisms through which education implements these functions are mentioned by respondents: group projects, volunteer activities, open discussions of moral and social issues, charitable initiatives, formal and informal psychological support within the learning environment, educational events, lectures and trainings on humanitarian topics.

3. The purpose of the third question was to find out what role, in the respondents' opinion, spiritual and religious values play in shaping the ethical norms of young people. The analysis of attitudes towards these issues allows to better understand the ethical sensitivity of modern youth, as well as to outline the potential of the spiritual dimension in the educational process as a resource for moral development, particularly in times of war and moral instability.

The majority of responses emphasise the positive impact of spiritual and religious guidelines on '*the formation of a moral core of the individual*'. Respondents acknowledge that spiritual values can serve as an '*ethical compass*' for young people, helping them to distinguish between right and wrong, develop empathy, respect for the dignity of others and the capacity for self-sacrifice. Universal moral principles common to different traditions are often mentioned, such as forgiveness, mercy, love of neighbour and non-violence.

This question reveals a deep reflection on life itself: '*Moral values have changed towards the study of religion and the understanding that every day can be the last. And that it is not the number of days we have lived that matters, but what we were like in them*'.

At the same time, some of the responses show a critical attitude to the direct implementation of a religious component in the educational process. Some respondents emphasise the danger of dogmatisation or imposition of faith, especially in a pluralistic society. Instead, it is proposed to

maintain the ideological neutrality of education, leaving spiritual values in the realm of personal choice or general cultural discussion.

There are also critical positions: '*In my opinion, religious and spiritual values should not be allowed to develop ethical norms. After all, any religion is a collection of outdated dogmatic rules and can influence the development of isolation and self-restraint, which leads to moral discomfort*'. This vision is obviously aimed at criticising traditionalist forms of religiosity that do not meet the expectations of young people who are focused on development, autonomy and openness.

4. The purpose of the next question was to find out how the personal perception of moral and humanistic principles in the educational process has changed since the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine. It allows to trace the transformation of ethical sensitivity of young people. Students testify to '*a turning point in their lives and studies*' and that '*humanistic principles have acquired a deeper meaning*'. An analysis of the responses shows that most respondents began to perceive moral and humanistic principles not as theoretical constructs, but as vital guidelines: '*Since the beginning of the war, respect, solidarity, compassion, and responsibility no longer feel abstract but vital. These values now unite even strangers and help me remain human in the face of war*'.

Many responses show a growing ethical awareness, with education seen not just as an academic process but as a space for moral growth, mutual support, and the preservation of humanity. Values once viewed as abstract have become concrete actions – helping others, honesty, and responsibility – demonstrating a shift from theory to practice in students' ethical outlook.

Some respondents emphasised specific examples of humane treatment by teachers and students, which was especially important in the context of personal losses, psychological stress or family circumstances related to the war. In addition, the responses also reflected that the war has highlighted the need for the ability to accept another person with their pain.

It is worth paying attention to a single but meaningful response that represents a nationally oriented approach: '*The importance of forming a national identity among young people has been reinforced*'.

5. The next question was dedicated to the attitude to the educational process in the context of war. The analysis shows that there is a growing awareness of the leading role of education not only as a tool for knowledge transfer, but also as a space for support, stability and personal development. The respondents note the transformation of their own attitude to learning – from a formal obligation to intrinsically motivated participation based on emotional involvement, solidarity and mutual support in the educational environment. Knowledge begins to be perceived as a value, and the educational process as a factor of ethical and psychological strengthening: '*My attitude to learning has changed. With the war, education became something more — not just knowledge, but the feeling that you are not alone*'.

Education in wartime is increasingly seen as therapeutic and stabilising, providing continuity in an unstable world: '*Every lesson, even online, was a sign that life goes on*'. Beyond this, students highlight its role in personal growth, intercultural communication, and the development of ethical motivation. Teachers, in particular, are recognised not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral guides and sources of support: '*I began to perceive learning as a space of safety. During times of anxiety, education helped me to hold on*'.

6. The next question identifies the significant role of participation in socially oriented activities and to explore how this activity in the educational context influences ethical beliefs. The majority of respondents indicated that they had participated in a variety of initiatives, ranging from charity fairs, collecting aid for the Ukrainian armed forces and IDPs, to organising intercultural

seminars, weaving nets, volunteering as translators, helping refugees, and participating in educational events on stress resistance. For many, this participation was not only a way to contribute to a common cause, but also a powerful moral experience that contributed to a deeper understanding of responsibility, the power of collective action and the need to help others. Volunteering was seen as a form of practical implementation of humanistic principles that enhances empathy, tolerance and a sense of community. Some people, while not formally involved, still contributed through donations or assistance outside the university.

The following answers illustrate this point. As one student noted, '*Volunteering has shown me that even a small action can make a big impact on others*'. Another emphasised that such initiatives create a sense of belonging to a greater cause: '*Volunteering makes you feel like you are part of a bigger cause*'.

7. An analysis of the answers to the question 'What ethical guidelines do you think are the most important for young people in Ukraine today?' reveals a wide range of values that young people consider to be a priority in the face of current challenges. Despite the diversity of formulations, there is a clear dominance of a number of key ethical categories that also appeared in the answers to the previous questions, including respect, responsibility, dignity, justice and honesty. These categories reflect stable moral guidelines, while the emergence of new ones, actualised by the context of war, is also emphasised.

A significant number of responses (18 out of 50) mention patriotism, civic consciousness, responsibility for the country, love for the homeland, commitment to the national values and the idea of building a strong state. These guidelines are of particular importance in the context of military aggression, becoming an ethical response to the challenges of the times. The notion of independence is interpreted in this context not only as a state category, but also as a personal attitude that promotes independent thinking and action. Some answers point to the need to restore the balance between collective responsibility and the right to personal fulfilment: '*I think we need to listen to our "I want", especially in Ukraine. After all, many young people feel guilty for not doing enough, ignoring their own aspirations*'. This indicates a tendency to rethink the personal contribution to the public good and a desire to harmonise individual and social values.

8. An analysis of the answers to the question 'What barriers does the educational environment face in implementing ethical values during a military conflict?' reveals a significant range of difficulties that hinder the realisation of moral upbringing in the context of war. The answers most often mention psychological factors: stress, emotional exhaustion, anxiety and general instability that affect both students and teachers. These conditions complicate not only the educational process in general, but also the possibility of addressing deeper ethical topics ('*lack of time for deep conversations*'), which require internal resources and emotional openness.

Significant barriers include the destruction of a safe environment, unequal access to education, including displacement, loss of homes, power outages and the threat of shelling. Under these conditions, even the best educational initiatives may not achieve their goals due to external circumstances that absorb the attention and energy of the participants in the educational process. The respondents also noted polarisation in views, language disputes and gaps between the experiences of IDPs and those who stayed home, which can lead to the conflicts in groups, reducing tolerance and trust.

Many point to a lack of time, resources and support from the system, which reduces moral education to declarations rather than lived experience. At the same time, some of the responses also indicate social fatigue, indifference and burnout, which are a reaction to the ongoing crisis, and

this is what poses the greatest threat to the implementation of democratic ethical values: '*Similarly, all the values that we would like to see are at risk of disappearing due to anxiety, disappointing news from the frontline and world politics*'.

9. An analysis of the answers to the question 'What do you think education should change or improve to better meet the needs of young people in times of crisis?' shows a clear demand for the transformation of education towards flexibility, emotional support, practicality and humanity. Most often, respondents point to the need for flexibility – both in learning formats (including online and offline) and in approaches to students: individualisation, adaptation to personal circumstances, reduction of bureaucracy and excessive pressure of deadlines. At the same time, rigidity and formalism are perceived as an inadequate response to real challenges in a crisis: '*Education should be more flexible. Sometimes deadlines and bureaucracy only increase stress instead of helping us learn*'. Another noted, '*We need teachers to understand our personal circumstances during the war and not demand everything as if life were normal*'.

Emotional support is another key request. Young people expect educational institutions to provide psychological protection, a safe space where they can not only gain knowledge but also share their experiences and receive support from teachers and groupmates. In this context, there are proposals to strengthen the role of school and university psychologists, create a dialogue, and teach emotional intelligence and stress-resistance skills.

In addition, there is a requirement for teachers to demonstrate a clear value position, including avoiding rhetoric that could be perceived as loyal to the aggressor: '*Avoid loyal mention of the enemy*'. At the same time, expectations for civic education, including the formation of national and cultural identity, are growing.

In particular, it identifies a new professional task for teachers – mastering the skills of recognising and responding appropriately to the manifestations of stress, anxiety or the consequences of students' traumatic experiences. The educational environment, therefore, should not be stable and centralised, but dynamic, capable of responding to the changing challenges of war and the individual needs of participants in the educational process. There is a growing demand for the integration of psychological support into education, which involves deepening interpersonal relationships between teachers and students based on trust, while respecting the limits of personal autonomy. At the same time, there is a need to increase teachers' psychological awareness of the specific context of each student's life.

The overview below summarises the key thematic categories identified through Grounded Theory and coded in MaxQDA. The table brings together the normative framework and the empirical categories derived from student responses, thereby illustrating the continuity between theoretical values and the lived educational experiences during wartime.

Table: Value Categories: Theoretical and Empirical Dimensions

Value Categories	Responses	Key Aspects
Theoretical Categories		
Autonomy & Freedom	R2, R5, R6, R16, R24, R33, R36, R45	freedom of thought, self-respect and independence, freedom linked with equality, autonomy through equality, freedom in diversity

Human Dignity	R6, R10, R13, R27, R29...	respect for human dignity, dignity linked with respect and honesty, universal dignity of every person, dignity as universal value, dignity and solidarity, dignity in education, dignity and justice
Right to Education and Equality of Access	R19, R33, R36, R41, R46	universal right to education, equal access to education, equality of opportunity, digital access as equality tool, justice and equality in education
Responsibility	R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R10, R13, R15...	personal responsibility, shared responsibility, responsibility linked with justice and freedom, responsibility for the future, responsibility in education, civic responsibility, national responsibility
Empathy & Solidarity	R1, R2, R5, R6, R10, R13, R15, R18...	education fostering empathy, mutual help through empathy, solidarity through education, empathy as personal growth, empathy linked with respect and unity, solidarity as survival value
Justice & Fairness	R2, R5, R6, R10, R11, R13, R19...	responsibility and freedom, fairness through dignity, honesty and respect, youth value, human dignity, fundamental principle
Critical Thinking	R1, R6, R10, R13, R21, R27...	education fostering critical thinking, critical thinking in education, analytical skill, discernment, linked with empathy and responsibility, youth value
Dialogue and Communicative Action	R6, R10, R21, R25, R33, R42, R47, R49, R50	group work, strengthening bonds, fostering empathy, mutual understanding, openness
Education for the Common Good	R20, R36, R49	orientation toward common good, education serving society, responsibility for common good
Inclusion	R42, R49	tolerance and respect, equality and dignity
Cultural Specificity	R4, R6, R10, R13, R32, R33, R45	respect for cultural diversity, culture as community building, cultural pluralism, recognition of cultural diversity
Empirical Categories		
Spiritual & Religious Values	R4, R10, R12, R19, R24, R41, R43, R45, R47, R48, R50...	religion as moral foundation, spiritual values as moral framework, religious teachings as ethical guidelines, faith as source of resilience, religion as source of responsibility and solidarity, faith preserving humanity, tolerance towards different faiths
Volunteering & Civic Engagement	R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R10, R12, R14...	social support, joy and meaning, humanitarian aid, support for refugees, solidarity building, resilience practice, patriotic action
Education as Support	R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6...	emotional support, safe space, sense of security, anchor in crisis, hope through education
Patriotism & National Identity	R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R9...	patriotism as core value, love of homeland, unity through patriotism, responsibility for the nation's future, civic consciousness, active national identity
Tolerance & Pluralism	R35, R36, R42, R43, R49...	tolerance as key value, pluralism and equality, respect for other opinions, cooperation through tolerance, tolerance in education

Honesty & Integrity	R29, R30, R31, R33, R35, R36...	honesty as moral base, academic integrity, honesty and respect combined, integrity as unifying value, honesty and openness
Peace & Non-violence	R4, R19, R24	peace as supreme value, importance of peace in wartime, peace as ethical guideline, non-violence principle
Psychological Resilience	R1, R2, R4, R6, R9, R10...	psychological support systems, inner strength, support in crisis, resilience in education, confidence under pressure, hope-based resilience
Community & Belonging	R4, R6, R9, R13, R19, R20, R22	sense of community, shared belonging, education fostering unity, anchor of belonging, unity through patriotism
Future-oriented Responsibility	R5, R21, R37	responsibility for future generations, responsibility for nation's future, responsibility in decision-making
Hope & Meaning	R1, R12, R13, R19, R21, R29, R36, R37, R41	search for meaning in morality, meaning through humanistic values, hope through solidarity, education preserving meaning, anchor of meaning, hope through education
Additional Values		
Humour & Optimism	R9	optimism in adversity, positive change through challenges, resilience and hope, positivity through volunteering, psychological support
Gratitude	R22, R36	personal gratitude, appreciation for learning opportunities, gratitude as ethical guideline, gratitude within community
Forgiveness & Reconciliation	R9, R13, R22, R31, R36, R43	tolerance and respect, mutual understanding, conflict resolution, reconciliation through cooperation, respect for other opinions
Sacrifice / Selflessness	R29, R37	sacrifice through volunteering, altruistic help, empathy-driven selflessness, sacrifice in crisis
Patience & Endurance	R4, R21, R31, R33, R36, R45	resilience, moral steadfastness, psychological endurance, commitment and perseverance
Adaptability & Flexibility	R1, R2, R19, R22, R24, R16	flexible learning formats (online/offline), individualised approaches, avoidance of formalism, dynamic response to wartime challenges, psychological adaptability
Faith in the Future	R5, R21, R34, R36, R37, R47	belief in the future, hope for a better tomorrow, education as source of hope, responsibility for generations, resilience through hope
Trust	R4, R25, R45, R47, R49	fundamental value, mutual respect, justice in community, freedom of thought, basis for cooperation
Joy / Happiness	R2, R3	joy of supportive learning, happiness through family and love, joy as relief from anxiety, happiness as life orientation
Hope in Adversity	R5, R6, R18, R22, R41, R47	hope through education, hope despite crisis, hope as coping strategy, hope rooted in dignity, hope in adversity as youth value

Empowerment	R4, R23, R28, R33, R41, R42, R46	empowerment through responsibility and commitment, active engagement, community support, resilience, national identity, self-realisation
Friendship	R2, R25, R28	mutual help, emotional support, community bonds, anchor in crisis

The comparison of theoretical categories with empirical findings demonstrates a strong continuity between normative ideals and students' lived experiences. Core values such as dignity, responsibility, empathy, solidarity, justice, and civic responsibility were not only affirmed in principle but vividly reflected in practice through fairness in assessment, mutual support, and engagement in volunteering and community initiatives. At the same time, additional values identified in the responses – adaptability, psychological resilience, hope, and patriotism – extend the theoretical framework by capturing the specific conditions of wartime education. Certain categories, including autonomy, cultural specificity, and critical thinking, appeared less explicitly, indicating that while they remain relevant as ideals, their practical realisation is limited. This alignment, enrichment, and partial tension together illustrate how education in crisis functions simultaneously as a moral framework and an existential practice.

On-going-state

The forward-looking dimension of ethical education in wartime is inseparable from the concrete needs voiced by students. Their responses reveal a demand for flexibility, care, and psychological support, as well as for a stronger ethical and civic orientation of education. These lived experiences underscore that moral norms and values are not stable and fixed categories, but are in a continuous process of interpretation and rethinking, especially in times of social instability and crises.[43] This dynamic nature of moral concepts places new demands on the educational space, which is also a complex and changing social phenomenon. During these periods of crisis, education needs to respond adequately to rapidly changing socio-cultural and political challenges, while supporting critical thinking and moral reflection among participants in the educational process.[44] At the same time, it is important to highlight the key risks that are present both globally and locally, including insufficient attention to the ethical component in the formation of civic consciousness.

The first issue concerns the philosophy of education in a post-traumatic society. Education in times of war should not be limited to survival or patriotic issues, but should serve as a foundation for building sustainable peace and responsible citizenship. Immanuel Kant, in his work *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795), emphasises the need for humanity's moral progress, considering education as a key preparation for citizenship and peace, where respect for the rights of others is a central value of the political and educational system.[45] In post-traumatic societies, philosophical reflection acquires a new role: it supports the processing of collective trauma and lays the groundwork for an educational paradigm aimed at social recovery and responsible citizenship.[46]

A second major concern is the marginalisation of humanitarian education in times of crisis. War often fosters nationalistic narratives, which leads to reductionism and the erosion of plural moral

43 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 27–31.

44 Cf. Michalinos Zembylas, 'Mobilizing 'Implicit Activisms' in Schools through Practices of Critical Emotional Reflexivity,' *Teaching Education* 24, no. 1 (2013): 84–96.

45 Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, trans. Mary Campbell Smith (London: G. Allen & Unwin; New York: Macmillan, 1917), 161–172.

46 Cf. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), 1–5.

perspectives.[47] In this context, Martha Nussbaum emphasises the critical role of humanitarian education (philosophy, literature, art) as a space for the formation of civic virtues, including empathy for the 'other', ethical reflection, responsibility, and civic courage.[48] According to Nusbaum, humanitarian education is an indispensable means of upholding democratic values and preventing the simplification of moral concepts in times of crisis.

A serious mistake of the modern educational process in times of war is the marginalisation of peace as a sustainable dimension, not just as a temporary cessation of violence. Education in times of crisis should not be limited to the functional support of the system, but should become a space for fostering a culture of peace, dignity and non-violent communication. Wolfgang Reuter and Johan Galtung emphasise that peace must be understood not merely as the absence of war ('negative peace'), but as an internal task of education directed toward 'positive peace' – the cultivation of fair relations, dignity, empathy, and non-violent dialogue.[49] The educational process in the context of war should develop emotional competence and a culture of non-violent expression, which is a prerequisite for long-term humane coexistence.

The fourth critical challenge is the delayed focus on the post-crisis period and the related lack of understanding of the ethical aspects of education in post-crisis contexts. The concepts of 'post-crisis ethics in education' and 'ethical sustainability' are relevant, focusing on the need for value-based rehabilitation of communities through education. Such education becomes crucial to restoring trust, overcoming trauma and countering social aggression.[50] Trauma is emerging as a new educational context that raises numerous challenges: How to learn and teach in a state of loss, pain and uncertainty? What should be the 'ethics of caring' in post-traumatic educational spaces?[51] Questions of memory and forgiveness remain central for overcoming the psychological consequences of conflict.[52]

Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that in times of war, education is especially transformed from a tool for transmitting knowledge to a space for ethical affirmation. It performs the functions of maintaining psychological stability, shaping moral orientation and developing solidarity among young people, as well as stabilisation in the context of collective traumatic experience. Students perceive the educational process not only as an academic activity, but also as a sphere in which they make daily moral choices. The educational space, especially in crisis contexts, proves to be an important prerequisite for social recovery, as it allows not only to reflect on losses but also to re-build value orientations.

The analysis of respondents' answers indicates that in times of war, young people perceive education as a space of moral self-determination and responsibility. The key values for students are dignity,

47 Cf. Harris Mylonas and Maya Tudor, 'Nationalism: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know,' *Annual Review of Political Science* 24 (2021): 109–32, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-101841.

48 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, updated ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 62.

49 Cf. Werner Wintersteiner, 'Friedenspädagogik als transformative Bildung,' *Friedenspädagogik* 85, no. 3 (2010): 11–28; Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 3, 30–31, 105.

50 Cf. Hilary Cremin, Hogai Aryoubi, Basma Hajir, Nomisha Kurian, and Hiba Salem, 'Post-Abyssal Ethics in Education Research in Settings of Conflict and Crisis: Stories from the Field,' *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 4 (August 2021): 1102–19, https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3712.

51 Cf. Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 79–90.

52 Cf. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

honesty, justice, responsibility, respect and empathy, not as abstract concepts, but as internal regulators of behaviour in a situation of uncertainty, fear and loss. The educational process, in their view, should not only provide access to knowledge, but also develop the capacity for moral judgement, mutual understanding and cooperation. Students' expectations point toward an education based on engagement, dialogue, and the practical implementation of ethical principles through social initiatives. Participation in volunteer work and social initiatives emerges as especially meaningful, providing a way for students to embody moral principles through action. In this context, education acquires a performative dimension: it not only transmits values but also creates conditions for their implementation in the real experience of communities, becoming a tool for civic formation and strengthening ethical responsibility in society. Practical implications also emerge: educational policy should embed ethical reflection in curricula, integrate trauma-informed approaches into teacher training, and support hybrid models that combine formal learning with informal and supportive practices such as volunteering, peer dialogue, and community initiatives.

The study also highlights a number of obstacles to the realisation of the ethical potential of education: emotional exhaustion, the loss of safe spaces, restrictions on access to resources, and formalisation of discussions of moral issues. Under conditions of martial law, educational initiatives often fail to achieve full implementation due to external circumstances. At the same time, a significant number of young people express a demand for flexible educational practices, inclusive education that can respond to individual needs while also maintaining ethical cohesion in communities. According to the approaches of socio-ethical analysis and the concept of bottom-up models, it is local initiatives that can identify the specific needs of communities and transform universal ethical principles into practical, viable forms of coexistence.

In a situation of general destruction, it is education that can support critical thinking, communicative openness and solidarity. The theoretical foundations of humanistic pedagogy (Freire, Nussbaum, Arendt, Habermas, Höffe) confirm that education is a space for the formation of a morally autonomous subject capable of resisting dehumanisation. The ability of young people to ask moral questions, listen to others, and recognise the value of human life more deeply indicates that the internal potential of democratic development is preserved, even in the most acute historical moments. At the same time, education in wartime appears as a meeting point of universal and local dimensions of ethics. Values such as dignity, justice, and respect retain their normative force, yet are interpreted through specific socio-cultural realities. The findings of this study therefore carry relevance beyond Ukraine: in other crisis and post-conflict contexts (such as the Balkans, the Middle East, or Sub-Saharan Africa) similar dynamics may be observed. Local testimonies, when compared across different societies, can not only affirm universal ethical categories but also generate new, globally significant ones. In this sense, the Ukrainian case provides a framework that may inspire further comparative research and guide educational practices in other regions facing conflict and recovery.

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