

Education Policy and Democratic Consolidation: The case of Post-Euromaidan Ukraine

Introduction: The Euromaidan Revolution of 2013-2014 occurred in Ukraine as a result of the pro-Russian president Yanukovich failing to sign the European Union Association Agreement (EUAA). Millions of Ukrainians joined the movement to call for the ousting of Yanukovich and ending corruption, human rights violations, and abuse of power. This event signified Ukraine's commitment to the path of European values and democratic governance, and, ultimately, integration with the European Union (EU). However, before Ukraine may begin the process of accession, it must complete the process of democratization. Education plays an essential role in democracy through the promotion of democratic values, skills, and behaviour since these do not emerge by themselves and need to be nurtured. Therefore, it is important to analyze how Ukraine may be using education reforms as a method of democratic consolidation.

Literature Review/Research Question: There has been a number of important literature written about the correlation between education and democratic development of a country (Dewey 1966; Friedman 1962; Coleman 1965). Education can empower youth and equip them with the necessary tools to become democratic citizens. While Ukraine ranks fourth in the world in the number of people with higher education and it has a high literacy rate (99.7%), its education system does not reflect democratic values (Export, 2019). Rather, Ukraine's education system carries negative legacies from the Soviet Union, such as centralized structures and overdependence on lecturing (Fimyar, 2008). Kutsyuruba notes that Ukraine has had some democratic education reforms in the period of post-independence transitions (2011). However, multiple studies indicate that these reforms were not successful due to factors such as the adverse effect of economic and social crises and other phenomena of the transitive period (Lunyachek, 2011). Euromaidan instigated a new wave of reforms, which promised to democratize the education system (Shandra, 2017). While several scholars studied the process of modernization of postsecondary institutions in Ukraine after the Euromaidan Revolution, a research gap remains when it comes to the results of the education reforms at the secondary school level. To explore this area, I propose the following research question: How is Ukraine reforming its secondary education system in the post-Euromaidan period? The following sub-questions will guide the study: How successfully are the reforms being implemented on the ground? Do these reforms reflect Euromaidan's goal of democratization and Europeanization? How do these reforms affect the Ukrainian national identity?

Methodology: This study will use qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured individual interviews and government document analysis. My goal is to conduct interviews with approximately twenty secondary school teachers and ten government officials. The interviews will focus on curriculum transformation in secondary schools and how reforms are being implemented on the ground. This research aims to identify the challenges and effects of modernizing secondary education in Ukraine. The results will be useful to study for other countries that are undergoing democratization. The interviews will be conducted in Ukrainian and Russian and will take place in the capital city, Kiev, between June and July of 2019. I want to note that I am familiar with Carleton University's process of research ethics clearance, and I acknowledge the fact that my interviews will need to be done in a responsible, safe, and transparent manner. Subjects will be chosen on a voluntary basis, and each will be signing a letter of consent, which outlines the details of the study and their right to stay anonymous. The preliminary timeline of the project goes as follows: April, May 2019 - research development in assistance with Dr. Chandler; June, July 2019 - travel to Kiev to conduct interviews; August – create a synthesis report