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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW IN UKRAINE

Yaremchuk Vitalii

Ph.D. in International Law, Assistant Professor, Department of International Law and Comparative Law, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine

In response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the academic community has faced challenges, notably in teaching international criminal law (ICL), crucial for prosecuting Russian officials. Ukrainian institutions adapt to the crisis and educational reforms, altering curricula to include ICL. The Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University introduces ICL courses, showcasing adaptability. Amid war disruptions, students exhibit resilience, achieving a commendable 90% success rate in a challenging Single State Qualification Exam. Reforms, including ICL addition, reflect a forward-thinking approach to legal education. The 'Workshop Series for Ukrainian Academic Instructors of International Criminal Law and Procedure' program, a collaboration between USAID 'Justice for All' and the Asser Institute, enhances ICL education. This initiative fosters connections, workshops, and guest lectures in English, contributing to global perspectives. The USAID Justice for All Activity, in partnership with the Asser Institute, initiates a transformative series, including 10 workshops for teachers, aiming to fortify expertise until March 2024. Despite adversities, Ukraine's academic community remains committed to nurturing competent legal professionals, emphasizing adaptability, forward-thinking, and resilience in sustaining excellence in legal education.

Keywords: *International criminal law, Ukrainian academic community, Russia's war in Ukraine, Single State Qualification Exam, reform of higher education.*

In light of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the academic community has been confronted with numerous challenges, particularly in the realm of teaching international criminal law (ICL). This discipline serves as a crucial foundation for the prospective prosecution of Russian high-ranking officials involved in the war. As the situation unfolds, academic institutions in Ukraine find themselves adapting to the changing landscape, not only in response to geopolitical events but also due to ongoing reforms in higher education.

One notable shift can be observed in the approach to the development of work programs and disciplines within the Ukrainian education system. The reform of higher education in Ukraine has prompted a reevaluation of curricula, with a specific focus on international criminal law. This has led to diverse teaching traditions within Ukrainian Law Schools. For example, some universities boast a long-standing history of teaching ICL, with programs

spanning over 15 years. In contrast, others, like the Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, have responded to the geopolitical developments by introducing ICL courses in the spring semester of 2024.

The inclusion of international criminal law as a formal legal discipline in the recent educational program changes underscores the recognition of its significance in the current geopolitical context. The discipline serves not only as an academic pursuit but also as a practical tool for addressing the atrocities committed by Russians during the war. It reflects a broader commitment to ensuring that legal education aligns with contemporary challenges and equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage with complex international legal issues.

The decision to integrate ICL into the curriculum at Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University exemplifies the adaptability of academic institutions in response to dynamic geopolitical events. This responsiveness ensures that students are equipped with a comprehensive understanding of international criminal law, preparing them to contribute meaningfully to the discourse surrounding the conflict and its legal implications.

Furthermore, the ongoing war has sparked increased interest and engagement in international law, with students and scholars alike delving into the complexities of the legal framework surrounding armed conflicts and war crimes. This surge in interest has prompted universities to explore innovative teaching methodologies, incorporating real-time case studies and guest lectures from experts actively involved in addressing the legal aspects of the war.

One of the legal amendments implemented in 2023 was the need of completing the Single State Qualifying Exam for receiving a Master’s of Laws degree. The test schedule includes 12 topics, such as Constitutional Law of Ukraine, Administrative Law of Ukraine, Administrative justice in Ukraine, International Law, International Human Rights Law, Civil Law of Ukraine, Civil Procedural Law of Ukraine, Labor Law of Ukraine, International Private Law, Criminal Law of Ukraine; Criminal procedural Law of Ukraine; International Criminal Law (including international cooperation in the field of crime prevention); General ethical requirements of the legal profession. The examination work is made up of a case. There are 120 total exam tasks (questions) and it takes 180 minutes to do the task. This, in our opinion, was a daring move, given the conditions of Russia’s aggression, which has a detrimental impact on the educational process, access to educational materials, disruption of courses by air raid, and other aspects. It is worth mentioning that, prior to the main exam, the Ministry of Education of Ukraine held an approval

test in which the whole assessment system, as well as the capacity to organize a significant number of testing locations across Ukraine, was evaluated.

Intriguingly, data from the State institution 'Scientific and Methodological Center of Higher and Vocational Pre-Higher Education' reveals a commendable success rate of almost 90% among students-graduates of the Faculty of Law at Chernivtsi National University in successfully completing the Single State Qualification Exam. This statistic underscores the dedication and resilience of students and faculty members alike, who persistently navigate the challenges posed by the ongoing war and its impact on the educational landscape. The high success rate is a testament to the adaptability of the academic community, demonstrating their ability to maintain rigorous standards despite the adversities brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It reflects the commitment of both students and academic staff to uphold the quality of legal education, showcasing a determination to ensure that graduates are well-equipped to face the complexities of the legal field in the aftermath of the war.

This performance also sheds light on a certain efficiency of the educational reforms implemented in response to the evolving geopolitical situation. The addition of international criminal law as a legal discipline, coupled with the comprehensive Single State Qualification Exam covering a spectrum of legal topics, showcases a forward-thinking approach in preparing future legal professionals. It emphasizes not only a broad understanding of domestic legal frameworks but also a nuanced comprehension of international legal dimensions a crucial skill set in the context of the conflict and its potential legal ramifications. Furthermore, the success rate highlights the resilience of the education system in providing stability and support to students amid the challenging circumstances. It indicates that, despite disruptions in access to educational materials and the occasional interruption of courses due to security concerns, the academic community remains steadfast in its commitment to nurturing the next generation of legal minds.

Beyond governmental initiatives, there exist proactive endeavors originating from professional circles. The 'Workshop Series for Ukrainian Academic Instructors of International Criminal Law and Procedure' program stands out as a pivotal initiative in fortifying the capabilities of Ukrainian law schools. Collaboratively organized by USAID 'Justice for All' and the Asser Institute (The Hague, The Netherlands), this program is strategically designed to enhance the quality of international criminal law education. A primary objective is to foster meaningful connections between Ukrainian educators and seasoned experts in the realm of international criminal law. An integral facet of

this initiative involves orchestrating joint activities such as workshops and guest lectures, all conducted in English. This linguistic dimension not only aligns with the global nature of the subject matter but also facilitates the establishment of professional networks among Ukrainian teachers and international experts. By creating a platform for shared knowledge and experiences, the program aims to elevate the overall competence of Ukrainian educators, ultimately benefiting the students they instruct. One noteworthy aspect of the project is the development of methodological recommendations tailored for teachers of international criminal law in Ukraine. These recommendations serve as a comprehensive guide, providing insights into effective teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and best practices. By tailoring these guidelines to the unique context of Ukrainian law schools, the program ensures that educators have the necessary tools to impart a thorough understanding of international criminal law to their students.

In essence, the ‘Workshop Series for Ukrainian Academic Instructors of International Criminal Law and Procedure’ program represents a multifaceted approach to enhancing the educational landscape. Beyond the immediate impact on educators, the ripple effect extends to the students, who stand to benefit from a more nuanced and globally informed perspective on international criminal law. This collaborative effort, with its emphasis on professional development and resource creation, contributes significantly to the broader goal of strengthening legal education in Ukraine and fostering a community of scholars well-versed in international criminal law.

Embarking on an ambitious initiative, the USAID Justice for All Activity, in collaboration with the Asser Institute, initiated a transformative series of events commencing in November 2023. This comprehensive initiative, slated to span until March 2024, encompasses a diverse array of activities designed to fortify the expertise of educators and students alike. The multifaceted program unfolds with 10 workshops meticulously crafted for teachers, providing a platform for in-depth exploration and discussion of various facets of international criminal law. These workshops not only facilitate the exchange of knowledge but also foster a collaborative environment where participants can engage with the latest developments and best practices in the field. The dynamic nature of these workshops ensures a comprehensive grasp of international criminal law concepts, enriching the teaching methodologies employed in Ukrainian law schools.

In conclusion, amid the formidable challenges presented by Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, our academic community stands resilient,

demonstrating unwavering determination to maintain educational standards. The success of students in the face of adversity, coupled with proactive educational reforms and international collaborations, exemplifies a commitment to nurturing a well-prepared generation of legal professionals capable of navigating the complexities of a post-war legal landscape. Despite disruptions, the educational system remains steadfast, underscoring the significance of adaptability and forward-thinking in ensuring the sustained excellence of legal education in Ukraine. The commitment to preparing students for the intricacies of the legal field in the aftermath of conflict bodes well for the future resilience and effectiveness of Ukraine's legal system.