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# APPLYING KOTTER'S 8 STEP MODEL OF CHANGE IN THE DISPLACED UNIVERSITY'S MANAGEMENT

*This article explores the strategic relocation of Ukrainian universities during the ongoing war with Russia, focusing on Berdyansk State Pedagogical University (BSPU) as a case study. Historically rooted in the Azov region since 1932, BSPU was compelled to relocate to Zaporizhzhia in April 2022 due to the full-scale Russian invasion. The study examines the multifaceted challenges universities face in conflict zones, emphasizing the necessity of robust strategic planning and adaptive management tools. Among these, scenario planning is identified as a critical methodology for ensuring organizational resilience, enabling universities to anticipate diverse futures, manage uncertainty, and maintain operational continuity.*

*The research adopts a qualitative case study methodology to assess BSPU's relocation, revealing that wartime relocation affects not only the physical movement of institutions but also has profound psychological, organizational, and academic implications. A key focus is the importance of scenario planning as a decision-making tool that facilitates proactive thinking, flexible strategies, and institutional preparedness. The article discusses how scenario planning – widely used in business and military sectors – can be successfully adapted to higher education, particularly in situations of displacement, crisis, and uncertainty.*

*The case of BSPU highlights critical components for successful adaptation: maintaining human capital, transitioning to digital learning environments, developing strategic partnerships, implementing financial resilience strategies, and ensuring academic competitiveness. The research also incorporates a modified version of Kotter's 8-Step Change Management Model, enhanced with a new step – Resource Assessment and Support – to reflect the unique needs of universities during wartime. This adapted model provides a structured framework for managing large-scale organizational change under crisis conditions.*

*The study argues that Ukrainian universities must become not only survivors of the current conflict but also strategic actors in post-war national reconstruction. By aligning academic programs with societal needs and strengthening internal and external support networks, displaced universities can reposition themselves as innovative, forward-thinking institutions. The BSPU case illustrates how comprehensive planning, flexible leadership, and community engagement are essential for academic continuity and long-term sustainability in times of profound uncertainty.*

*Keywords: changes, war, relocated university, management, Kotter's model*

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# ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ 8-КРОКОВОЇ МОДЕЛІ ЗМІН КОТТЕРА В УПРАВЛІННІ ПЕРЕМІЩЕНИМ УНІВЕРСИТЕТОМ

*У статті досліджується стратегічне переміщення українських університетів у період триваючої війни з Росією на прикладі Бердянського державного педагогічного університету (БДПУ). Заснований у 1932 році на узбережжі Азовського моря, БДПУ був змушений у квітні 2022 року переміститися до Запоріжжя через повномасштабне вторгнення Росії. Дослідження висвітлює багатовимірні виклики, з якими стикаються університети в умовах збройного конфлікту, підкреслюючи необхідність ефективного стратегічного планування та застосування адаптивних інструментів управління. Одним із ключових методів виступає сценарне планування, що дозволяє організаціям передбачати різні варіанти розвитку подій, управляти невизначеністю та забезпечувати безперервність діяльності.*

*У роботі застосовано якісну методологію кейс-стаді для аналізу досвіду переміщення БДПУ, що дозволило виявити*

*як організаційні, так і психологічні та академічні аспекти адаптації у воєнний час. Особлива увага приділяється сценарному плануванню як ключовому інструменту стратегічного управління, який забезпечує гнучкість, проактивність та готовність до змін. Сценарне планування, широко застосовуване у бізнесі та військовій сфері, демонструє високу ефективність і в освітньому секторі, особливо в умовах переміщення та кризових ситуацій.*

*Приклад БДПУ дозволяє окреслити критично важливі аспекти успішної адаптації: збереження людського капіталу, перехід до цифрового навчання, розвиток стратегічних партнерств, впровадження фінансової стійкості та підтримка академічної конкурентоспроможності. У статті також запропоновано модифіковану модель змін Коттера, доповнену новим етапом – оцінка ресурсів та підтримка, – що враховує специфіку управління в умовах війни.*

*Дослідження підкреслює необхідність перетворення українських університетів із об'єктів кризи на активних суб'єктів відбудови. Завдяки адаптації академічних програм до актуальних потреб суспільства, розвитку внутрішніх та зовнішніх мереж підтримки, переміщені університети можуть відігравати ключову роль у відновленні країни. Досвід БДПУ демонструє, що комплексне планування, гнучке керівництво та згуртованість спільноти є вирішальними чинниками для забезпечення стабільності й сталого розвитку освіти в умовах глибокої невизначеності.*

*Ключові слова: зміни, війна, переміщений університет, управління, модель Коттера*

## INTRODUCTION

As a result of Russia's occupation of eastern and southern Ukraine, numerous universities from these territories faced the daunting necessity of relocation to ensure their survival and continued operation. One such institution is Berdyansk State Pedagogical University (BSPU), which was deeply impacted by the events unfolding in its hometown of Berdyansk. On February 27, 2022, the city of Berdyansk fell under Russian occupation, placing the university and its community in an untenable situation. University employees, much like other city residents, were forced to make difficult decisions, seeking any opportunity to leave the occupied territory in search of safety and stability.

By April 2022, the leadership of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University succeeded in relocating to the city of Zaporizhzhia, a territory under Ukrainian government control [14]. This effort included transferring essential legal documents, a critical step in maintaining the university's legal and operational continuity. However, the relocation came at a significant cost. All the university's equipment, machinery, and archives – vital assets representing decades of academic and institutional history – remained behind in Berdyansk. These resources were subsequently seized by the occupation authorities, leaving the university without its physical and intellectual infrastructure.

This forced displacement marked a new chapter for BSPU, which became one of over 30 Ukrainian universities designated as "relocated institutions." These universities have had to navigate unprecedented challenges, including rebuilding their operations from scratch, transitioning to online and hybrid learning models, and maintaining the cohesion of their academic communities despite geographical and psychological fragmentation. The case of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University is emblematic of the broader crisis facing Ukrainian higher education in the wake of war and occupation. It highlights the resilience required to adapt to such extraordinary circumstances and underscores the importance of strategic planning, international support, and innovation in ensuring the continuity of education in conflict zones. Berdyansk university, which operates online and is a "university without walls", currently employs more than 300 people (fig.1).
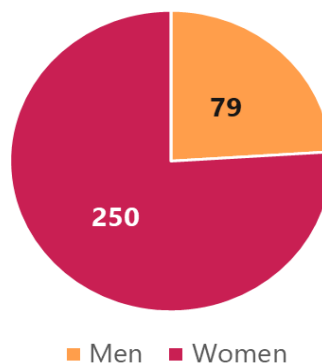


**Fig. 1. Structure of employees at Berdyansk State Pedagogical University [11]**

Most of them are women (76%). 180 employees live in the territory under the control of the Ukrainian government, 50 – like me abroad, 99 – in the occupied territory (fig.2).
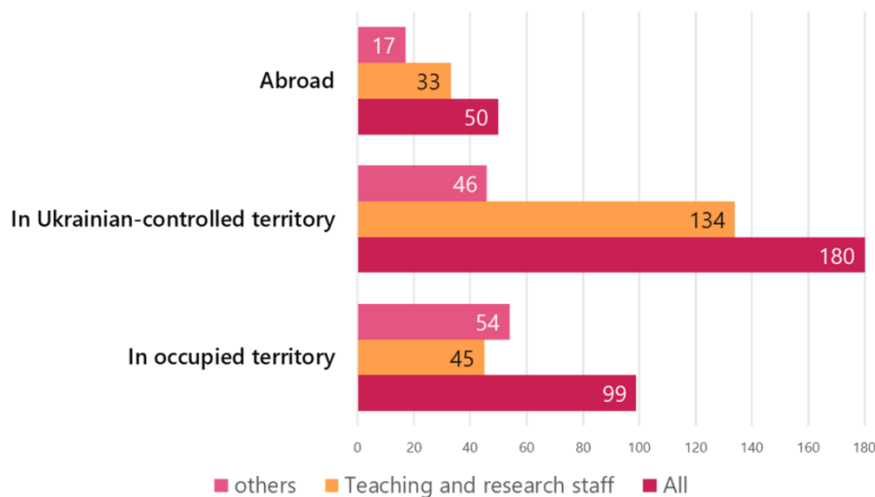
**Fig. 2. Residence of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University employees [11]**

As of today, the buildings of the university have not been destroyed. If the liberation of Berdyansk and the return of the occupied territories to Ukraine takes place by military means, the buildings of the university will most likely be destroyed – as practice shows, the Russians destroy everything they can. And it will take a lot of time and funds to restore the university.

Together with them, as of today, many Ukrainian universities have already been destroyed or significantly damaged. In general, in Ukraine, due to Russian aggression, 3,798 educational institutions suffered from bombings and shelling. 365 of them were destroyed. The number of destroyed or damaged universities is approaching 100 [16]. Only a couple of small examples. In March 2024, Kyiv was bombarded with ballistic missiles. As a result of Russian shelling at the Boychuk Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design in Kyiv, artistic funds of graduation work collected for 80 years were lost. The Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture was destroyed because of shelling by the Russian occupiers. In September of this year, because of an attack on Kharkiv, one of the buildings of Kharkiv National University was damaged.

All this testifies to the dangers Ukrainian universities face today. The situation on the front lines is deteriorating, and universities in eastern Ukraine are confronted with a difficult choice: how to proceed to ensure they can continue their activities.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Currently, there exist several methodological approaches using scientific analysis for predicting the development of situations, including war. Until recently, in domestic science literature, only historical, socio-cultural, political, and other approaches have been used for predictions about war, even though understanding the essence of such events would provide an opportunity to influence the situation and accelerate the process of solving such extremely dangerous problems. In these studies, the methods developed by scientists were not traditionally utilized compared to the approach presented in this text. In many of these recent studies, one can notice features of crisis phenomena that preceded military conflicts in their content.

The main problem of contemporary universities' strategic planning is a long-term horizon. Strategic management theory generally refers to a relatively vague concept of long-term planning, which is at present of too little use in practice. The concept of scenario planning is a new approach to strategic planning and is being discovered step by step, recognized, and learned by contemporary managers all over the world. For reorienting strategic decisions on possible changes and future events, it is important that, in order to avoid the barriers to innovation, scenarios of alternative futures need to be created, and the possibilities for different options are to be considered. Scenarios are a thinking practice that creates common understanding, receptiveness to future changes, and awakened creative power. Therefore, the goal of the future manager is not to guess and predict an uncertain future but to play with different options, to prepare for alternative possibilities, and to act as an active producer rather than as a passive consumer. It also encourages managers to become eager promoters of change. In situations where the organization needs to foster anticipation of important developments and restructuring of the staff and must prepare for the future, scenario planning could become one of the priority management decision-making tools.

In October 1932, the foundation for advanced teacher education on the Azov coast was laid with the establishment of a Teachers' Institute, which evolved from the existing Teachers' Technical College. This transformation marked a significant step in the development of higher pedagogical education, eventually leading to the creation of a fully-fledged in Berdyansk Pedagogical Institute, dedicated to training educators and advancing teaching methodologies. For almost 90 years, BSPU has been one of the leading institutions of higher education in the on the Azov coast, preparing not only future teachers for Ukraine, but also specialists in other sectors of the

economy. In April 2022, Berdyansk State Pedagogical University was relocated to the territory controlled by Ukrainian Authorities – to Zaporizhzhia.

The relocation of BSPU to Zaporizhzhia amidst the ongoing conflict underscores the critical need for strategic approaches to navigating uncertainty and ensuring organizational resilience. In this context, scenario planning emerges as a vital tool for institutions like BSPU to address unpredictable challenges and prepare for diverse future possibilities, supporting their mission and continuity even in times of crisis. Scenario planning is widely utilized by various types of organizations, including companies, institutions, and non-profits, as an integral part of strategic planning. This approach is particularly valuable for managing the uncertainty of future developments. By constructing multiple plausible scenarios, organizations can explore a range of potential outcomes and devise strategies to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. Scenario planning enables decision-makers to anticipate changes, adapt to dynamic environments, and foster resilience, ensuring that their organizations remain agile and prepared for diverse future possibilities.

The application of scenario planning in the context of relocated universities has become a critical aspect of strategic management, particularly under conditions of uncertainty such as those caused by military conflicts. As universities, such as Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, have been forced to relocate due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, they face unique challenges that require adaptive and proactive strategies to ensure sustainability and growth. Scenario planning offers a structured approach to anticipate potential future developments and to prepare for diverse scenarios, which is particularly valuable for institutions operating in uncertain environments [1, 9].

Scenario planning is a widely recognized method for managing uncertainty, and it has been applied across various sectors, including education. Relocated universities must integrate scenario planning into their strategic frameworks to maintain operations and align with the evolving demands of students and society. The need for flexibility is particularly crucial when universities must manage their resources while operating under the constraints imposed by war, such as the relocation of personnel and resources [2]. By creating plausible future scenarios, universities can better assess risks and make informed decisions that balance their short-term needs with long-term goals.

Bezzubko & Ponomarova highlight that displaced higher education institutions in Ukraine face new challenges and prospects, emphasizing the role of strategic management tools like scenario planning in navigating these difficulties [3]. These universities must account for political, economic, and social uncertainties, as well as changes in the educational landscape. Furthermore, scenario planning can provide insights into future institutional strategies, enabling universities to identify potential risks and opportunities in times of displacement.

Scenario planning can be particularly useful in navigating the uncertainty caused by external factors such as geopolitical instability, economic crises, and societal changes. T. Nestorenko notes that in addition to economic factors, universities must also address issues such as maintaining academic quality and supporting their communities through the disruption of traditional academic activities [15]. Scenario planning allows for the creation of flexible strategies that can be adjusted in response to changing circumstances, ensuring that the university can continue to provide high-quality education and research, even under challenging conditions.

The effectiveness of scenario planning in managing uncertainty extends beyond the higher education sector. For instance, financial companies in North Macedonia have applied scenario planning to adapt to economic turbulence [4]. Although the contexts differ, the core principle of anticipating a range of future possibilities remains relevant for universities facing disruptions. The flexibility in scenario planning allows institutions to explore alternative pathways, whether they are focused on recovery, growth, or maintaining stability. Moreover, Finch and Ramirez discuss the use of scenario planning in public libraries, which, like universities, must adapt to the shifting needs of their communities [5, 10]. The application of such a strategy in higher education institutions, particularly those forced to relocate, can help university leaders make decisions that ensure the continuity of education and research despite external challenges. Similarly, the strategic planning insights shared by Meijers and Gaston Moonen [7] outline how scenario planning helps organizations proactively engage with future possibilities and craft adaptive strategies that ensure organizational resilience.

In the context of Ukraine's ongoing conflict, the significance of scenario planning is even more pronounced. The research [8] explores the concept of displaced universities and the challenges they face in adapting to new realities. The ability to anticipate potential challenges and prepare for multiple outcomes is essential for the continued operation of relocated institutions [13]. As some researchers suggest, effective management during wartime and post-war recovery requires the integration of scenario planning into broader strategic planning, ensuring that universities remain resilient amid political and economic upheaval [12].

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The primary objective of this research is to examine the relocation process of Ukrainian universities in response to the full-scale war initiated by Russia, with a specific focus on Berdyansk State Pedagogical University. This study aims to explore strategies for organizational adaptation and resilience-building in the context of conflict.

This research adopts a qualitative case study methodology to provide an in-depth analysis of BSPU's relocation experience and adaptive strategies during wartime. The case study approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and dynamic responses specific to universities in conflict zones.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ongoing full-scale war initiated by Russia against Ukraine has forced numerous Ukrainian universities to relocate from temporarily occupied territories, including Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions. Relocation presents a complex and multifaceted challenge involving organizational, administrative, bureaucratic, social, emotional, and psychological dimensions. This chapter explores the case of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, which relocated from the occupied city of Berdyansk to Zaporizhzhia. By examining BSPU's adaptation process, the chapter identifies the critical challenges, needs, and strategies required for effective university relocation and management during crises.

In the face of unprecedented challenges brought on by the Russian-Ukrainian war, universities in Ukraine are compelled to adopt innovative approaches to strategic planning. We propose implementing scenario planning as a crucial tool for universities navigating the turbulent landscape of conflict and uncertainty. By preparing for multiple potential outcomes, universities can enhance their resilience and adaptability, ensuring the continuity of education and research even in the most challenging circumstances.

This comprehensive analysis delves into various aspects of university management during crisis, from preserving human capital to leveraging technology for distance learning. We also examine the critical role of international partnerships and the importance of effective communication strategies. Ultimately, our research aims to provide a roadmap for Ukrainian universities to not only survive the current crisis but to emerge as key players in the country's post-war reconstruction and development.

Scenario planning, a strategic foresight tool originally developed for military and business applications, has found increasing relevance in the higher education sector, particularly in times of crisis. This approach involves creating multiple plausible future scenarios and developing strategies to address each one, allowing universities to remain agile and responsive to rapidly changing circumstances.

In the context of Ukrainian universities facing the threat of Russian aggression, scenario planning takes on critical importance. It enables institutions to prepare for a range of possibilities, from continued operation under heightened security threats to full-scale evacuation and relocation.

One of the most critical challenges facing Ukrainian universities in turbulent times is the preservation and support of their human capital. Faculty, researchers, and administrative staff are the lifeblood of any academic institution, and their well-being and retention are paramount to the university's survival and future success.

To address this challenge, universities must develop comprehensive support mechanisms that go beyond traditional HR practices. These may include psychological support services, flexible work arrangements, and professional development opportunities tailored to crisis conditions.

In times of crisis, partnerships become more crucial than ever for universities. Collaborations with institutions in safer regions of Ukraine and international partners can provide vital support for maintaining educational continuity and research output. These partnerships can take various forms, from joint degree programs to shared online learning platforms and collaborative research initiatives.

Moreover, international partnerships can provide much-needed financial support, access to resources, and opportunities for faculty and student exchanges. They can also play a crucial role in maintaining the global visibility and relevance of Ukrainian higher education during turbulent times.

The rapid shift to online learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic has paved the way for a more comprehensive digital transformation in higher education. In the context of Ukrainian universities facing security threats, this digital pivot becomes not just an innovation but a necessity for ensuring educational continuity.

Universities must invest in robust digital infrastructure, including learning management systems, virtual laboratories, and online assessment tools. Faculty need to be trained in effective online pedagogy and the use of digital tools. Additionally, universities should explore the potential of emerging technologies such as virtual and augmented reality to enhance the online learning experience.

In the face of potential territorial threats, Ukrainian universities must be prepared for the possibility of relocation. This complex process involves not only the physical move of assets but also the logistical challenges of maintaining operational continuity in a new location.

Universities should develop detailed relocation plans that address various scenarios, from temporary displacement to permanent relocation. These plans should cover the movement of essential equipment, preservation of critical research materials, and strategies for quickly re-establishing operational capabilities in a new setting.

Maintaining financial stability during turbulent times is crucial for the survival and continued operation of universities. The uncertainties brought about by conflict and potential relocation necessitate a reevaluation of traditional funding models and the exploration of innovative financial strategies.

Universities must diversify their funding sources, optimize resource allocation, and develop contingency funds to weather potential disruptions. This may involve seeking international grants, exploring new revenue streams through online programs, and implementing cost-saving measures without compromising educational quality.

Maintaining and enhancing academic competitiveness during times of crisis is crucial for Ukrainian universities to ensure their long-term viability and relevance. This involves not only preserving existing strengths but also identifying new opportunities for innovation and differentiation in the higher education landscape. Universities should focus on developing unique, crisis-resistant programs that leverage their specific strengths and address

emerging needs in society. This might include specialized courses in crisis management, post-conflict reconstruction, or innovative online degree programs that cater to a global audience.

In times of crisis, effective communication becomes paramount for universities. A well-crafted communication strategy can help maintain trust, prevent panic, and ensure that all stakeholders - students, staff, partners, and the wider community - remain informed and engaged. This is particularly crucial in the context of potential security threats and relocation scenarios.

Universities must develop multi-channel communication plans that can rapidly disseminate accurate information, counter misinformation, and provide clear guidance in emergency situations. This involves not only traditional media but also leveraging social media platforms and mobile technologies for real-time updates.

While addressing immediate challenges is crucial, Ukrainian universities must also look ahead to their role in the post-war reconstruction and development of the country. This forward-thinking approach not only provides hope and direction during difficult times but also ensures that universities are prepared to play a pivotal role in shaping Ukraine's future.

Universities should position themselves as centers of innovation, research, and human capital development essential for national recovery. This involves aligning academic programs with anticipated post-war needs, fostering entrepreneurship, and contributing to policy formulation for rebuilding various sectors of society and the economy.

Universities in conflict zones face profound disruptions, including loss of infrastructure, displacement of faculty and students, and the need to adapt to new operational realities. BSPU exemplifies these challenges. Following its relocation to Zaporizhzhia, the university was compelled to leave behind its property, including equipment, archives, and campus facilities, which were seized by occupying forces. This displacement fragmented the university community, scattering students, faculty, and staff across Ukraine and abroad. Additionally, the ongoing energy crisis, triggered by the destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, has further complicated BSPU's transition to an online-only operational model.

The psychological and organizational toll on university staff includes heightened uncertainty, stress, diminished morale, and concerns over institutional survival. These challenges underscore the urgency of implementing robust strategies to ensure continuity and foster resilience in higher education institutions during wartime.

Organizational changes in a displaced university like BSPU require a structured approach to manage the complexities of relocation and wartime adaptation. John Kotter's "8 Steps for Successful Large-Scale Change" model provides a systematic framework for addressing these challenges [6]. Recognizing the unique circumstances of wartime relocation, the model has been adapted to include an additional step, Resource Assessment and Support, to address the critical need for external resources and support. We propose the next modified Change Management Model for BSPU:

1. Increase Urgency. Urgency is cultivated through transparent communication with students and staff about the challenges facing the university. Meetings and online conferences can highlight specific data on losses and difficulties while sharing personal stories to humanize the crisis.

2. Resource Assessment and Support. This step involves conducting a comprehensive analysis of available resources and actively seeking support from international organizations, donors, and partners to ensure the university's operational sustainability.

3. Build a Guiding Team. A core team comprising students and staff leaders must be identified and trained to lead the change process effectively, ensuring inclusivity and representation.

4. Get the Vision Right. A clear, motivating vision for the university's future is essential. This includes setting achievable goals and developing strategies to rebuild and adapt in alignment with the new circumstances.

5. Communicate for Buy-In. A robust communication strategy ensures stakeholder engagement through diverse channels, including social media, emails, and webinars. The focus is on fostering a shared sense of purpose and unity.

6. Empower Action. Empowering stakeholders involves encouraging participation in planning and implementation, fostering initiative, and providing necessary support for community-driven solutions.

7. Create Short-Term Wins. Demonstrating early successes is critical to maintaining morale and motivation. Highlighting and celebrating achievements reinforces commitment to the long-term goals.

8. Don't Let Up. Continuous reviewing and refining processes ensure sustained progress. Providing ongoing training and development opportunities for staff supports the enduring adaptation to change.

9. Make Change Stick. Institutionalizing the new strategies and creating a culture of adaptability ensure that changes become embedded within the university's operational ethos.

BSPU's experience underscores the need for proactive strategic planning and resource mobilization during relocation. Effective management requires not only technical and logistical coordination but also attention to the psychological and emotional well-being of the university community. Establishing international partnerships and leveraging external support have proven essential in maintaining BSPU's mission continuity under extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, the wartime relocation experience has prompted the university to adapt its academic offerings to align with societal needs, such as courses on crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. This shift highlights the role of universities as critical agents in addressing immediate challenges while contributing to long-term national recovery and development.

## CONCLUSION

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has tested the resilience and adaptability of its higher education institutions, exemplified by the relocation of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University from Berdyansk to Zaporizhzhia. This chapter illuminated the multifaceted challenges involved in such relocation, spanning logistical, psychological, organizational, and financial domains. Despite these obstacles, BSPU's experience demonstrates that strategic planning, community engagement, and leveraging international support are essential for maintaining educational continuity and fostering resilience in times of crisis.

The proposed scenario planning framework provides a robust tool for Ukrainian universities to anticipate and prepare for various future challenges. By employing a structured, proactive approach to crisis management, universities can ensure operational continuity, preserve human capital, and uphold their academic mission even under the most trying circumstances. Furthermore, the adaptation of Kotter's change management model highlights the importance of resource mobilization, transparent communication, and the cultivation of a shared vision for the future.

BSPU's transition underscores the critical role of digital transformation and international partnerships in enabling universities to adapt to new realities. These strategies not only address immediate operational needs but also lay the foundation for long-term growth and relevance in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. Universities can emerge as pivotal agents of change in rebuilding the country by aligning academic programs with societal needs, fostering innovation, and contributing to national recovery efforts.

Ultimately, this analysis offers a roadmap for other universities facing similar crises, illustrating how resilience, adaptability, and strategic foresight can transform even the most challenging circumstances into opportunities for growth and renewal. Ukrainian universities, by overcoming these trials, are poised to strengthen their role as vital contributors to the country's future stability, prosperity, and development.

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