Exchanging Practice across Europe: Developing Soft Skills in the Curriculum: Staff and Student Perspectives.

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Background: IMProving the Efficiency of Student Services (IMPRESS) Project

- **Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine:**
  - Ukrainian Association of Students' Self-Government
  - Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
  - V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University
  - Donetsk National University (now located in Vinnytsia)
  - Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

- **EU Partners:**
  - Project Coordinator – Northumbria University (United Kingdom)
  - European Students Union (Belgium)
  - University of Cordoba (Spain)
  - Fundecor (Spain)
  - Tomas Bata University, Zlin (Czech Republic)
  - British-Ukrainian Reach Out Centre (United Kingdom)
  - Shoofly Publishing Co (United Kingdom)

Key Findings
- Ukrainian employers demand advanced cognitive, socio-emotional, and technical skills.
- Existing formal education and training systems have been slow to adapt to new skill demands.
- Ad hoc and uneven nature of policy reforms in Ukraine has led to outdated education, training, and labor market systems.

Policy Agenda
- Build foundational skills for new labor market entrants.
- Enhance the quality of higher education and employment institutions to build advanced skills of the current working-age population and future workers.
- Improve the institutional environment to ease the use of current workforce’s skills.
Work Package 4 – Soft Skills

- Self management
- Peer to peer interaction
- Critical thinking
- Reflection
- Group/Teamwork
- Academic debate
- Communication
Year 1

- Preparation
- Northumbria Team visit to Donetsk National University to meet all partners
  - [https://www.impress-eu.com/#!meet-the-soft-skills-team/xp74n](https://www.impress-eu.com/#!meet-the-soft-skills-team/xp74n)
- 8 staff identified for the collaborative training programme – 2 from each location in Ukraine
- March 2014 – training on campus at Northumbria
  - Google group established as a collaborative workspace.
- ‘New’ approach to L&T
Outcome

- Soft Skills for Professional Development.
- Level 6 / 20 credits, MLO’s:
  - Construct personal strategies for learning and achievement - reflective practice
  - Process information critically in the construction and defence of logical arguments.
  - Communicate clearly and precisely to interested audience in a range of different contexts
  - Reflect on and react to, constructive criticism provided by others in a respectful and professional manner.
  - Work effectively within a team demonstrating an awareness of personal strengths and individual contributions
Year 2

- 2 further members of staff are trained at each home university by the original 8
- Module materials refined and delivered to a pilot group in each university
- Team and students evaluate the pilot
  - Year 2 didn’t go exactly to plan!
However, through determination …

- **Module resources:**
  - Web site
    - [https://www.impress-eu.com/](https://www.impress-eu.com/)
  - eBook
  - Assessment yet to come…
Year 3/4

- Module validated by Northumbria University
- Module integrated into the curriculum where appropriate
  - Offered as a stand alone ‘course’ for additional credits.
- Evaluation of full roll out at each location by staff, students and steering group.
Final workshop and Opportunities

- A ‘new’ way of teaching in Ukraine
- Attitude of students
- Staff / Student expectations
‘Flipping’ the classroom

- 8 Professors
- 8 Students

“It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it.”

Jacob Bronowski, (1973) *The Ascent of Man.* BBC.
Assessment criteria?!?!
Cultural difference

- **Group work…**
  
  “So what if I got 80% for my contribution? If the collective mark was 20% then I deserve 20% too...it’s my responsibility if my team members didn’t contribute.”
Student perceptions

- Difficult to understand *soft skills* out of context
  - Why learn how to cite using Harvard if you don’t have a paper to write and a reference list to prepare?
  - Why study team working when you have no need to work in team?
  - Why study research methods when you have no research to do?
  - Why learn how to communicate if nobody is listening?

- ‘Point of need’ or perceived usefulness
References