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DELIVERING AN INTERACTIVE UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM DURING RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

Background: To mitigate the educational consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine, an interactive online curriculum was devised for the winter term (12 Sep – 5 Dec 2022) for psychology students at the Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv (henceforth: TSUK). The guiding principle of this educational approach is expressed by Six core values. **Methods:** TSUK sent out an expression of interest form to the students (92 students applied). The author then gathered feedback about their course expectations for the theory component (31/92 respondents) as well as the practical component (48/92 respondents), which was implemented. **Results:** The result is an interactive course curriculum, which is available in its final form via a pdf. with hyperlinks to the Google Drive learning and assessments platform. **Conclusion:** A pioneering interactive curriculum was developed collaboratively with Ukrainian students, which is an original educational solution to the effects of the War in Ukraine. Resources should be designated to thoroughly research this approach as students' minds are a key defence and post-war recovery national asset.

Keywords: War in Ukraine, Defence, Education, Curriculum, Students.

Background: During Russia's illegal war against Ukraine, young people's minds came under the attack of the enemy's propaganda, disinformation and ultimately shelling as well as other forms of violence [6]. Yet, they are not viewed as a key defensive asset against the aggressor in the classical sense. Despite this, prospective young minds always have much more to worry about than war. Their life does not stop because a full-scale Russian invasion has started. Instead, brilliant young Ukrainians continue to go to university, some serve with the armed forces, others keep multiple part-time jobs whilst juggling family life. A significant portion of them have been involuntarily displaced either within Ukraine or have had to seek

Delivering an interactive university curriculum during Russia's invasion of Ukraine places of refuge among the international community all the while worrying about those they were forced to leave behind [6].

The author combined his mental health expertise with research and pedagogical skills to devise an educational method, which would account for the variable circumstances of Ukrainian students wanting to continue their studies in psychology during the War in Ukraine. What follows are six core values that informed the **Methods** of this work.

Six core values: **I. Empowerment:** Students in war thrive when they are empowered to make choices about those areas in life over which they have retained control[7]. **II. Honesty:** Students in war thrive when they are engaging with a lecturer who practices appropriate self-disclosure [4]. **III. Equality:** Students in war thrive in an environment of equals [3]. **IV. Inclusivity:** Students in war thrive in an environment where they feel included and accepted based on their individuality [2]. **V. Boundaries:** Students in war thrive when they know what to expect from a consistent lecturer [1]. **VI. Human-centred technology:** Students in war thrive when the learning and assessments platform navigation is intuitive and cybersecurity measures unintrusive [5].

Methods: **Eligibility:** Students of psychology and related disciplines with English at a level B2 and beyond were eligible to join. **Expression of interest:** Subsequently, TSUK sent out a Google form for students to indicate their interest (92 students applied). **Collaborative design:** Following the expression of interest, the author surveyed the respondents' views and preferences for their education to guide design in the spirit of the **Six core values**.

Theoretical component questions: A total of 35/92 respondents provided their answers to questions concerning technological access, obstacles to learning, enjoyable subject areas, and undesirable subject areas. **Practical component questions:** A total of 48/92 provided their answers to questions concerning the preferred mode of delivery stating their preferences for group presentations (39/48) vs. group discussions (32/48). **Implementation:** The responses were thematically organised and implemented into a pdf. document with effective hyperlinks to a

Delivering an interactive university curriculum during Russia's invasion of Ukraine Google Drive learning and assessments platform. The entire curriculum was developed over a period of 4 weeks prior to its inception.

Results: The pdf. document is entitled “**Clinical Psychology (2ECTS) Ukraine’s war for independence curriculum.**” The title denotes the subject area, course credits and the historical circumstances which inspired this form of education. This is the key document that supplies the rationale, guidance on communication, explanation of the three learning outcomes (i.e., Critical thinking, Personal development, and Specialist development) and forms of assessment (i.e., Practical participation, Short reflection essays, Personal development reflection and Final oral assessment). Students receive speedy feedback for their written assessments via e-mail, which allows them to apply it into future work. Here is a student’s experience of feedback in her own words: *“I got the feedback very fast and it was brief and clear. Additionally, the feedback was encouraging and motivated me for future work within the course.”* Moreover, the pdf. contains the course syllabus alongside trigger warnings as well as the Bibliography for further reading. The Appendix of the pdf. houses all the hyperlinks to the Google Drive learning and assessments platform where students can view presentation slides, watch lecture recordings, practice mindfulness, access additional reading and submit written assessments.

Conclusion: The current approach viewed the student as the main stakeholder who co-authored their own interactive curriculum, which is currently being delivered. Finally, students should be treated as a key asset for national defence and post-war recovery with dedicated resources being allocated to researching innovative learning strategies for both extreme adversity and beyond.

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