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# 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).



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# *'Skills for a Modern Ukraine'* World Bank Group, 2015.

## ■ **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- Ad hoc and uneven nature of policy reforms in Ukraine has led to outdated education, training, and labor market systems.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.



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# Work Package 4 – Soft Skills



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# 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>
- 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



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# 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



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# 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!*



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# However, through determination ...

- Module resources:
  - Web site
    - <https://www.impress-eu.com/>
  - eBook
  - Assessment yet to come...



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# 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.



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# Final workshop and Opportunities

- A 'new' way of teaching in Ukraine
- Attitude of students
- Staff / Student expectations



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# '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.”*

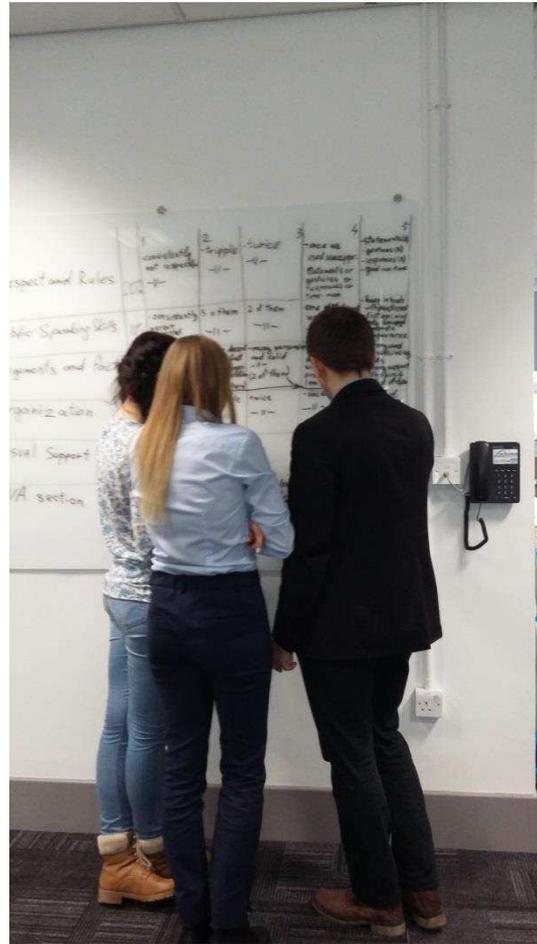
Jacob Bronowski, (1973) *The Ascent of Man*. BBC.



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# Assessment criteria?!?!



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# Flipped!



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# 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.”*



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# 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



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