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Accelerating Ukrainian Academic Teachers' Professional Digital Competence in Times of War

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Accelerating Ukrainian Academic Teachers' Professional Digital Competence in Times of War

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In February 2022, hostilities broke out in Ukraine, when the world just started recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and returning to physical presence at workplaces and schools. The war has had a tremendous impact on Ukrainian Higher Education, resulting in the displacement of students and staff, evacuations and relocations of institutions, infrastructural losses and damages. The Ukrainian universities had to resume the online mode to ensure the safety of their students and staff. At this moment, research on the impact of war on the Ukrainian higher education is scarce. While the pandemic has contributed to the rapid development of digital competence of Ukrainian academic staff (Ovcharuk and Ivaniuk 2021), the development of the Ukrainian teachers' professional digital competence in times of war has not yet been investigated. To this end, this study poses the following research question: *How is the digital competence of academic teachers developed during the war?*

The study is guided by Mishra and Koehler's TPACK framework for technology integration in the classrooms (Mishra and Koehler 2006), addressing the development of three aspects of teacher knowledge such as technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), content knowledge (CK) and the integration of these in specific contexts. The preliminary analysis of 31 semi-structured interviews with university management, teachers, and students from 11 Ukrainian universities reveals the acceleration of teachers' professional digital competence from the beginning of the hostilities. In particular, we find the teachers developing their pedagogical knowledge (PK) in terms of becoming more flexible in classroom management, adapting assessment forms to meet the needs of the students who experience hurdles due to lack of internet access, relocations, and bombings. The respondents also comment on teachers showing increased creativity in developing their courses and examinations. Further, formal teaching tools such as MOOCs platforms, Zoom and MS Teams are commonly combined with informal tools, such as mobile apps Telegram, Viber, and WhatsApp, which are used for sharing course materials, informing about potential risks of attacks, and abrupt course changes. The teachers who moved to the European countries mentioned further developing their Technological Knowledge (TK) in terms of learning new technologies in collaboration with European universities. The study offers insight into digital competence development in times of crisis, aiming to contribute to the fields of digital transformation, online education, and crisis management.

References

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