



A TRAUMA-FOCUSED APPROACH TO TEACHER EDUCATION AMIDST GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Relevance The contemporary educational landscape operates within a "traumatic epidemic" precipitated by warfare, migration crises, and global social turbulence. Traditional pedagogical methodologies are losing efficacy due to the widespread psychological impact on learners, necessitating a transformation of the educator's role from a mere transmitter of knowledge into a "resource leader." The demand for professionals capable of supporting learners through crisis experiences underscores the need for a scientific substantiation of the trauma-focused approach as a nascent philosophy for higher education.

Aim. This study aims to theoretically substantiate and elucidate the essence of the trauma-focused approach in teacher education, develop a three-level implementation model, and delineate the methodological foundations for its integration into the higher education process.

Methods. The research employs an analysis of scientific literature in the fields of trauma neuropsychology and humanistic pedagogy; a reflexive analysis of the author's managerial experience at the Ukrainian Free University; a modeling method to design the professional training structure; and theoretical synthesis to formulate the "guild training" methodology and transgenerational continuity.

Results. The study elucidates the substance of the trauma-focused approach, which prioritizes psychological safety and the concept of "vector competence." It identifies several foundational principles for training, including "Love and Boundaries," horizontal communication ("I'm OK – You're OK"), the prevention of retraumatization, and fundamentality. The analysis substantiates a three-level implementation model comprising a foundation (axiology and ethics), a process (the "Love and Boundaries" model), and an existential dimension (the cultivation of self-efficacy and a life-affirming outlook). Furthermore, the paper delineates an implementation methodology that incorporates stages of decompression, the delegation of responsibility, the construction of a transgenerational bridge, and existential reflection. Finally, the results demonstrate that while artificial intelligence serves as an auxiliary tool, it cannot replicate the "containment" effect or the depth of authentic human relationships.

Conclusions. The trauma-focused approach enables the preparation of professionals capable of transforming traumatic experiences into post-traumatic growth. The proposed model facilitates the development of competitive educators who integrate technological literacy with profound empathy and ethical responsibility. Ultimately, implementing this methodology in Ukraine establishes the prerequisites for formulating new global standards in humanistic and resilient pedagogy.

Keywords: *trauma-focused approach, educator, resource leader, post-traumatic growth, model, self-efficacy.*

Introduction. The contemporary architecture of global education is undergoing a profound transformation, precipitated not only by digitalisation and technological leaps but also by an unprecedented surge in psychotraumatic factors. Warfare, social instability, and global crises shape a

new reality in which the educator ceases to be a mere transmitter of knowledge. Within vocational and higher education institutions, there is an urgent demand for specialists capable of operating under conditions of "high psychological tension." This necessitates the implementation of a trauma-focused

approach that integrates psychological advancements into pedagogical practice, thereby creating a safe and supportive educational environment.

Traditional teacher education models often focus on didactic methods, frequently ignoring the emotional state of both the lecturer and the student. However, the disconnect between psychology and pedagogy leads to the emergence of "pseudo-competence" – a situation where the specialist possesses the toolkit but lacks the internal resource for an ethical and empathetic relationship with the world. The problem lies in the absence of systemic methodologies that would allow the educator to combine "Love and Boundaries" (educational limits) when working with traumatised communities while maintaining their own professional resilience.

Developing a trauma-focused approach is directly linked to the strategic tasks of modernising vocational education in Ukraine. This includes: fostering resource leadership; ensuring psychological support within the educational process; and preparing future specialists for work in post-war recovery conditions.

The experience of the Ukrainian Free University (Munich) (hereafter: UFU), which combines European democratic traditions with a deep understanding of the Ukrainian socio-cultural context, offers a unique model of "resource leadership" where professional training is grounded in the principles of tolerance for the "otherness of the other" and a democratic relationship with the world.

Sources. A qualitative analysis of contemporary scientific literature indicates that preparing educators for work amidst global challenges requires a fundamental revision of environmental and substantive factors of learning. The author's concept is based on the integration of several key scientific directions. One of these is the ecological approach to the educational environment (Priestley et al., 2015), according to which pedagogical efficacy is determined not only by the educator's individual qualities but by the "ecology" of the environment – a dynamic set of structural and cultural resources. In the context of the Ukrainian Free University (UFU) experience, this allows for treating the university as an ecosystem where a democratic relationship with the world serves as a

resource for overcoming professional burnout and pseudo-competence.

Trauma-focused educational strategies (Trauma-Informed Practices) constitute an essential theoretical foundation for this study. Certain works (Brunzell et al., 2016; Carello, & Butler, 2015) emphasize that in crisis conditions, traditional didactics must be reinforced by emotional regulation strategies. Substantiating the need for "learning to be happy" as a cognitive skill correlates with the idea of the inextricable link between psychology and pedagogy. This aspect is further deepened through the study of professional resilience and the prevention of secondary traumatisation of the educator (Crosby, 2015; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

H. Romanova (2025b) systematically analysed the educational design of UFU pedagogical studies, proving the significance of the university's experience for the development of Ukrainian pedagogy amidst European integration and multiculturalism. In turn, another article by the same author, dedicated to teacher agency, focuses on the preparation of self-efficacious educators capable of career counselling and psycho-pedagogical support under wartime conditions.

Issues of ethical responsibility and the humanistic values of the educator are examined through the lens of the "pedagogy of care" (Noddings, 2013) and the theory of social-emotional learning (Zins et al., 2004). Utilising interdisciplinary approaches to trauma-focused pedagogy (Stephens, 2016) allows for expanding the educator's toolkit beyond classical methodology. Despite this thorough foundation, questions remain regarding the direct integration of trauma-focused approaches into the methodology of teaching specialized disciplines within the system of higher pedagogical education. The problem of maintaining "live" ethical contact amidst digital transformation and the mechanism for transforming collective trauma into a resource for professional growth still requires resolution.

Aim. The aim of this article is to theoretically substantiate and elucidate the conceptual foundations of the trauma-focused approach in teacher education based on the experience of the Ukrainian Free University; it also analyzes the interconnection between professional competence, ethical responsibility, and the

educator's "resourcefulness" amidst global transformations.

Methods. The study utilizes the following methods: examining scientific sources, policy, and educational-methodological documents of the Ukrainian Free University, as well as professional publications in trauma-focused psychology and vocational pedagogy – to theoretically substantiate the "resource leadership" concept and identify the state of professional competence in crisis conditions. Reflexive analysis and interpretation of the author's university management, teaching, and psychotherapeutic practice – to conceptualise the models of "democratic relationship" and "Love and Boundaries" within the educational process. Theoretical analysis, synthesis, and generalization – to determine the key characteristics of UFU pedagogical studies and formulate conclusions regarding the implementation of trauma-focused approaches into the vocational education system of Ukraine.

Results and Discussion. The contemporary educational landscape in Ukraine and globally exists in a state of "traumatic epidemic." As the eminent surgeon M. Pirogov once noted, war is not only a physical injury but also a massive psychological affliction affecting all layers of the population. Under these conditions, teacher education is transformed: the educator ceases to be a mere transmitter of knowledge and becomes a "resource leader" capable of supporting learners through the experiences of crisis, migration, and loss. A trauma-focused approach in higher education is a response to the challenges of our time, where the synergy between psychology and pedagogy becomes the foundation for national survival and development.

The essence of the trauma-focused approach in education lies in recognizing the priority of psychological safety and emotional resilience as a prerequisite for any cognitive process. We view trauma not as a clinical pathology but as an extreme life experience requiring integration into the holistic structure of the personality. The approach is grounded in the concept of "vector competence," where pedagogical mastery is inseparable from deep psychological knowledge. This enables the specialist to differentiate between a state of "traumatic regression" – when an individual, under the influence of destructive events, returns to archaic

defense mechanisms and a sense of helplessness regarding mortality (Yalom, 1980) – and a state of "post-traumatic growth." The latter concept proves that, with appropriate support, overcoming a crisis can make an individual qualitatively stronger, expanding their range of values and resources (Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 2004).

The trauma-focused approach is based on modern neurobiological data regarding brain neuroplasticity, which allows the nervous system to recover even after severe experiences (DoIDGE, 2007). However, trauma creates specific "disruptions" in the cognitive perception of the world. When working under martial law, the educator must realize they are interacting with "people in the fire," whose experiences often exceed their internal resources. In this context, the essence of the approach shifts from classical didactics to the ethics of responsibility and containment (Bion, 1962). The educator's authority over the audience must be balanced by a readiness to accept and process students' anxiety, creating a "secure base" (Bowlby, 1988) that restores faith in the safety of the world.

Implementing the trauma-focused approach in teacher education is grounded in several foundational principles that ensure the integrity of the educational process in crisis conditions. Primarily, the "Love and Boundaries" principle involves a harmonious combination of unconditional support for the learner with clear boundaries of responsibility, where the Boundary is viewed not as a tool for personal suppression but as a necessary guarantor of social and psychological safety. An essential component is the principle of a democratic horizontal relationship, which entails moving away from rigid vertical hierarchies in favour of a humanistic "I'm OK – You're OK" position, stimulating tolerance for the "otherness of the other" and a deep respect for each individual's right to their identity.

Special attention is required for the principle of preventing retraumatisation, which demands a deep understanding of contextual sensitivity from the educator and an awareness that phrases common in peacetime can become painful triggers for a child or student with experience of loss (for example, the innocuous peacetime phrase "ask your father" may trigger a child who has lost family members).

This system concludes with the principle of fundamentality, aimed at building innovative teaching methods upon a solid humanitarian foundation of morality, ethics, and tradition, which serves as a reliable safeguard against the formation of "pseudo-competence" in future specialists.

The model for implementing the trauma-focused approach in teacher education is structured as a three-level system:

1. The Fundamental Level – internalising ethical norms and "traditional" pedagogy (basic concepts of good, evil, and responsibility).

2. The Processual Level – implementing the "Love and Boundaries" model through horizontal communication.

3. The Existential Level – cultivating self-efficacy as the ability to be happy despite circumstances ("It is never too late to have a happy childhood").

The model constitutes a holistic architecture, where each subsequent stage is logically built upon the strength of the previous one. The first and foundational stage of this system is the fundamental level, responsible for forming the individual's axiological basis. In times of global social fractures, when trauma disrupts usual semantic connections, education must return to the study of fundamental ethical categories. This involves internalising basic concepts of good, evil, and personal responsibility. This is the "humanitarian concrete" that prevents a specialist from turning into a mere function or falling victim to pseudo-competence. At this level, we appeal to traditional pedagogy as a resource for stability, where the educator acts as a bearer of enduring values that help the student regain a sense of predictability and moral support in a destructive world.

The second level of the model is defined as processual and focuses on the methodology of live interaction. Its core is the "Love and Boundaries" formula, realized through horizontal communication. Love in this context is interpreted as creating a secure base and a psychological container for the student's anxiety (Bion, 1962). The educator demonstrates unconditional respect for the experience of the other, providing emotional acceptance according to J. Bowlby's (1988) methodology, without which no intellectual activity is possible following experienced stress. Meanwhile, the Boundary serves as a tool for structuring and delegating responsibility. It creates a

safe perimeter with clear rules and requirements that prevent the chaos of permissiveness. This approach is based on an egalitarian relationship where the pedagogue recognizes the student's autonomy, avoiding vertical pressure or superiority, which is critical for preventing retraumatisation within the educational process.

The final and most strategic level is the existential level, the goal of which is to foster the specialist's self-efficacy. This is the individual's ability to be autonomous and find resources for a fulfilling life despite any external circumstances. At this stage, we teach students strategies for transitioning from passive survival to active creation of their own destiny, which correlates with R. Tedeschi and L. Calhoun's (2004) theory of post-traumatic growth. Central here is the idea that the past should not dominate the future, following the principles of I. Yalom's (1980) existential therapy. The concept of happiness as a conscious choice and the assertion that it is never too late to have a happy childhood encourage the adult to independently address their deficits and reframe traumatic experiences. Thus, the model concludes with the preparation of a resource leader who not only possesses professional knowledge but also radiates internal harmony and resilience, becoming a living example of successful trauma integration for their future students.

The methodological foundations for implementing the trauma-focused approach in practical teacher training involve a comprehensive transformation of the content, methods, and organisational forms of learning. The content of professional training is revised in favour of deep interdisciplinarity, allowing for the combination of psychotherapeutic techniques with pedagogical practice. A prime example is the integration of special courses on psychological assistance for PTSD into the curricula not only for psychologists but also for future educators and managers. This ensures the substantive enrichment of education with knowledge of micro-motor skills, developmental psychology, and the laws of social interaction, which serve as a foundation for overcoming stress in professional activities.

The methodological system is based on reflexive practice and the methodology of guild training. In this format, experience is transferred from master to student not through abstract theory, but through the direct resolution of professional cases and

joint volunteer activity. Training forms here depart from rigidly determined academic groups in favour of the Western model of free elective choice. This approach stimulates the development of soft skills and networking, where socio-pedagogical volunteering becomes the key form of learning. Participation in real initiatives, such as the "Grunt" refugee support project (Ukrainian Free University, 2023), allows students to instantly convert theoretical knowledge into an effective tool for assistance.

The technological component of the trauma-focused approach involves a critical assessment of innovations, particularly artificial intelligence. AI is viewed as an effective auxiliary tool for knowledge algorithmisation; however, emphasis is placed on its inability to replace the warm human relationship that is critical in trauma work. Methodologically, this is realized by creating safe zones within the educational process, where future educators have the opportunity to process their own traumatic experiences within the university's therapeutic environment before beginning professional work with others.

The direct methodology for introducing this approach into higher education involves a phased transformation of professional consciousness. At the decompression and initiation stage, the recognition of one's own vulnerability and the path of self-healing through regular supervision take place. The next stage – the delegation of responsibility – rejects the concept of over-protection inherent in pseudo-competent education and implements an initiation methodology by assigning students real, complex tasks requiring volitional effort.

An important methodological element is the construction of a transgenerational bridge, which involves engaging the experience of master craftsmen with many years of tenure. This creates a sense of institutional continuity and safety, based on the principle of the educational institution's historical duration and resilience. The methodology concludes with the stage of existential reflection, during which students form their own resource package – an individual system of resilience strategies that ensures their competitiveness and ability to function effectively amidst global challenges.

Consequently, the trauma-focused approach in teacher education represents a new philosophy of education. It is based on the understanding that the teacher's "authority" is a tool of salvation only when

it is combined with "responsibility." The graduate of such a system is a resource leader who understands that the new is often the well-renewed old, and that true competence is forged by the ability to remain human in superhuman circumstances. Implementing this model allows Ukraine not only to survive in crisis conditions but also to set new global standards for humanistic and resilient pedagogy.

Conclusions. Under the conditions of the modern "traumatic epidemic," the trauma-focused approach emerges not merely as a collection of psychological methods but as a holistic philosophy for the transformation of higher pedagogical education. The essence of this approach lies in changing the fundamental role of the educator, who transforms from a transmitter of knowledge into a resource leader capable of ensuring psychological safety and emotional resilience as a mandatory prerequisite for any cognitive process. At the core of this vision lies the concept of vector competence, where trauma is viewed not as a clinical pathology but as an extreme life experience, the integration of which through professional containment and brain neuroplasticity allows for the achievement of post-traumatic growth.

The efficacy of implementing this approach is grounded in principles that define the ethical and professional contours of the educator's activity. Crucial here is the "Love and Boundaries" principle, where unconditional support for the student is combined with clear boundaries of responsibility, creating a secure base for development. This is supplemented by the principle of a democratic horizontal relationship based on the "I'm OK – You're OK" model, the prevention of retraumatisation through sensitivity to triggers, and the principle of fundamentality. The latter involves building innovations upon a solid humanitarian foundation of ethics and tradition, which acts as the primary safeguard against pseudo-competence and allows for combining technological literacy, including the use of artificial intelligence, with authentic humanity.

The aforementioned principles are embodied in a three-level model for implementing the trauma-focused approach, which constitutes a holistic architecture for professional training. The model's fundamental level ensures the formation of an axiological basis through the internalisation of ethical norms; the processual level is responsible for

the methodology of live interaction and secure relationships; and the existential level is aimed at fostering self-efficacy and the ability to be happy despite external circumstances. Each stage of this model logically reinforces the next, transforming the educational process into a space for restoring agency and life-affirmation.

The methodological foundations for implementing this model in practice involve deep interdisciplinarity of content, the introduction of reflexive guild training practices, and the development of socio-pedagogical volunteering.

The methodology for introducing the approach into higher education is phased: from the decompression and self-healing of the educator through supervision to the construction of a transgenerational bridge between experienced masters and students. The final result of such training is the formation of an individual resource package of resilience, allowing the graduate not only to survive in crisis conditions but also to set new standards for humanistic pedagogy, where the teacher's authority is inextricably linked to their ethical responsibility and capacity for empathy.

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ТРАВМОФОКУСНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ПІДГОТОВКИ ПЕДАГОГІВ В УМОВАХ ГЛОБАЛЬНИХ ВИКЛИКІВ

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Реферат:

Актуальність. Сучасний освітній простір функціонує в умовах «травматичної епідемії», спричиненої війною, міграційними кризами та глобальною соціальною турбулентністю. Традиційні педагогічні методи втрачають ефективність через масове психологічне ураження суб'єктів навчання, що вимагає трансформації ролі педагога з ретранслятора знань у «ресурсного лідера». Потреба у фахівцях, здатних супроводжувати здобувачів через досвід кризи, зумовлює необхідність наукового обґрунтування травмофокусного підходу як нової філософії вищої освіти.

Мета: теоретично обґрунтувати та розкрити сутність травмофокусного підходу у підготовці педагогів, розробити трирівневу модель його реалізації та описати методичні засади її впровадження в освітній процес вищої школи.

Методи: аналіз наукових джерел у галузі нейропсихології травми та гуманістичної педагогіки; рефлексивний аналіз авторського досвіду управління Українським вільним університетом; метод моделювання – для розробки структури підготовки фахівців; теоретичний синтез – для формування методики «цехового навчання» та трансгенераційної наступності.

Результати: розкрито зміст травмофокусного підходу, що базується на пріоритеті психологічної безпеки та концепції «векторної компетентності»; визначено засадничі принципи підготовки: «Любові та Рамки», горизонтальної комунікації («Я – окей, Ти – окей»), превенції ретравматизації та фундаментальності; обґрунтовано трирівневу модель реалізації підходу: фундамент (аксіологія та етика), процес (модель «Любов і Рамка») та екзистенція (формування самозарадності й життєствердності); описано методику впровадження, що включає етапи декомпресії, делегування відповідальності, побудови трансгенераційного мосту та екзистенційної рефлексії; доведено, що використання штучного інтелекту є допоміжним інструментом, який не може замінити ефект «контейнування» та живий людський стосунок.

Висновки: травмофокусний підхід дозволяє готувати фахівців, здатних трансформувати травматичний досвід у посттравматичне зростання; запропонована модель забезпечує підготовку конкурентоспроможного педагога, який поєднує технологічну грамотність із глибокою емпатією та етичною відповідальністю; реалізація цієї методики в Україні створює передумови для формування нових світових стандартів гуманістичної та життєстійкої педагогіки.

Ключові слова: травмофокусний підхід, педагог, ресурсний лідер, посттравматичне зростання, модель, самозарадність.

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