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## SAFE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT – A BENCHMARK FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

**Abstract.** The article specifies the author's vision of the components of creating a safe educational environment during cross-cultural communication of participants in the educational process at the university. **Purpose:** to specify the components of creating a safe educational environment during cross-cultural communication of participants in the educational process at the university, to identify key aspects of developing appropriate communicative interaction strategies. **Research methodology:** systemic integrated approach. The author details the logical connections of the components of a safe educational environment for cross-cultural communication at universities: physical safety (compliance with the law on the absence of physical threats, safety of living and communication outside of school hours, regulation of behavior and communication), socio-psychological safety (educational atmosphere, ensuring equality and preventing any discrimination, emotional comfort and a culture of support during the adaptation to learning of representatives of other cultures), academic safety (transparency of the article also identifies key aspects of developing appropriate communication strategies for interaction). **The scientific novelty.** The author includes the block "Development of cross-cultural competencies", which has a kind of trigger mechanism for the other two blocks: the policy of equality and non-discrimination at the university, which ensures physical, socio-psychological, academic security, programs to support teachers and staff in strategies for a safe educational environment for the success of cross-cultural communication at the university, which should be aimed at preparing for work with a multinational student population. **Conclusions.** The prospect of further development of the problem stated in the title of the article is the search for ways to constructively fill in practical cases of a safe educational environment for cross-cultural communication at universities on the basis of pedagogical, cultural, and educational partnerships.

**Key words:** quality of education, safety, educational environment, university, cross-cultural communication, non-discrimination, academic mobility, psychological comfort, adaptation to learning.

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## БЕЗПЕЧНЕ ОСВІТНЄ СЕРЕДОВИЩЕ – ОРІЄНТИР КРОСКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТІ

**Анотація.** У статті конкретизовано авторське бачення компонентів творення безпечного освітнього середовища під час міжкультурної комунікації учасників освітнього процесу в університеті. **Мета:** конкретизувати компоненти творення безпечного освітнього середовища під час кроскультурної комунікації учасників освітнього процесу в університеті, визначити ключові аспекти розроблення відповідних комунікативних стратегій взаємодії. **Методологія дослідження:** системний комплексний підхід. Автором деталізовано логічні зв'язки компонентів безпечного освітнього середовища кроскультурних комунікацій в університетах: фізична безпека (дотримання законодавства щодо відсутності фізичних загроз, безпека проживання і спілкування в позанавчальний час, регламентування поведінки і комунікацій), соціопсихологічна безпека (навчальна атмосфера, забезпечення рівності й попередження проявів будь-якої дискримінації, емоційний комфорт і культура підтримки під час адаптації до навчання представників інших культур), академічна безпека (прозорість і справедливість

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політик університету, об'єктивність контролю та оцінювання, академічна підтримка під час адаптації до нових умов навчання). **Наукова новизна:** у статті визначено ключові аспекти розроблення відповідних комунікативних стратегій взаємодії. До них автор відносить блок «Розвиток кроскультурних компетентностей», який володіє своєрідним запусковим механізмом для двох інших блоків: політики рівності й недискримінації в університеті, що забезпечує фізичну, соціопсихологічну, академічну безпеку, програми підтримки викладачів і персоналу у стратегіях безпечного освітнього середовища для успіху кроскультурної комунікації в університеті, що мають спрямовуватися на підготовку до роботи з багатовісним студентським контингентом.

**Висновки.** Перспективою подальшого розроблення заявленої в назві статті проблеми визначено пошук способів конструктивного наповнення практичних кейсів безпечного освітнього середовища кроскультурної комунікації в університетах на основі педагогічного, культурного, освітнього партнерства.

**Ключові слова:** якість освіти, безпека, освітнє середовище, університет, кроскультурна комунікація, недискримінація, академічна мобільність, психологічний комфорт, адаптація до навчання.

**Problem Statement.** In the current conditions of transformations in higher education, the idea of a safe educational environment is in high demand. It is due to the importance of creating such an atmosphere of learning, interaction and communication in universities, where all participants in the educational process feel protected, are carriers of different cultures, mental identities and respectfully and professionally demonstrate cooperation and unity in achieving educational goals. At the same time, each participant in the educational process at the university has equal opportunities to achieve success in learning and other university interactions. Despite its axiomatic nature, such an image is extremely complex, multi-component and often contains internal contradictions, which reinforce the need to study this issue.

**Analysis of sources and recent research.** This scientific publication is based on the terminology and fundamental provisions defined in the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, in particular in Article 63 “Duties of Persons Studying in Higher Education Institutions” [9], the recommendations of the State Education Quality Service “A Safe Educational Environment: New Dimensions of Security”, which discloses in detail not only aspects of physical security, but also pays much attention to adaptive measures for speakers of different cultures, students from vulnerable categories of the population, and the features of organizing the educational process using modern communication technologies and digital services [2]. Also in this publication, we used materials and conclusions on creating opportunities to support cross-cultural communication, set out in the scientific works of L. Arasaratnam, M. Doerfel [1], the author’s publications [8]. Valuable considerations on ensuring communication security in

various aspects of implementing educational programs are presented in the materials of the authors: L. Butuzova, O. Lednyova [3], V. Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk [4], O. Dmytrenko [5] T. Tsyuman, N. Boychuk [11], methodological recommendations for educators [10]. At the same time, given the dynamic nature of the phenomenon of a safe educational environment itself, its dependence on the objective conditions of technology development, the need for regular updating of relevant strategies of higher education institutions, this problem requires coverage at the theoretical and practical levels.

**The purpose of the article:** to specify the components of creating a safe educational environment during cross-cultural communication of participants in the educational process at the university, to identify key aspects of developing appropriate communicative interaction strategies.

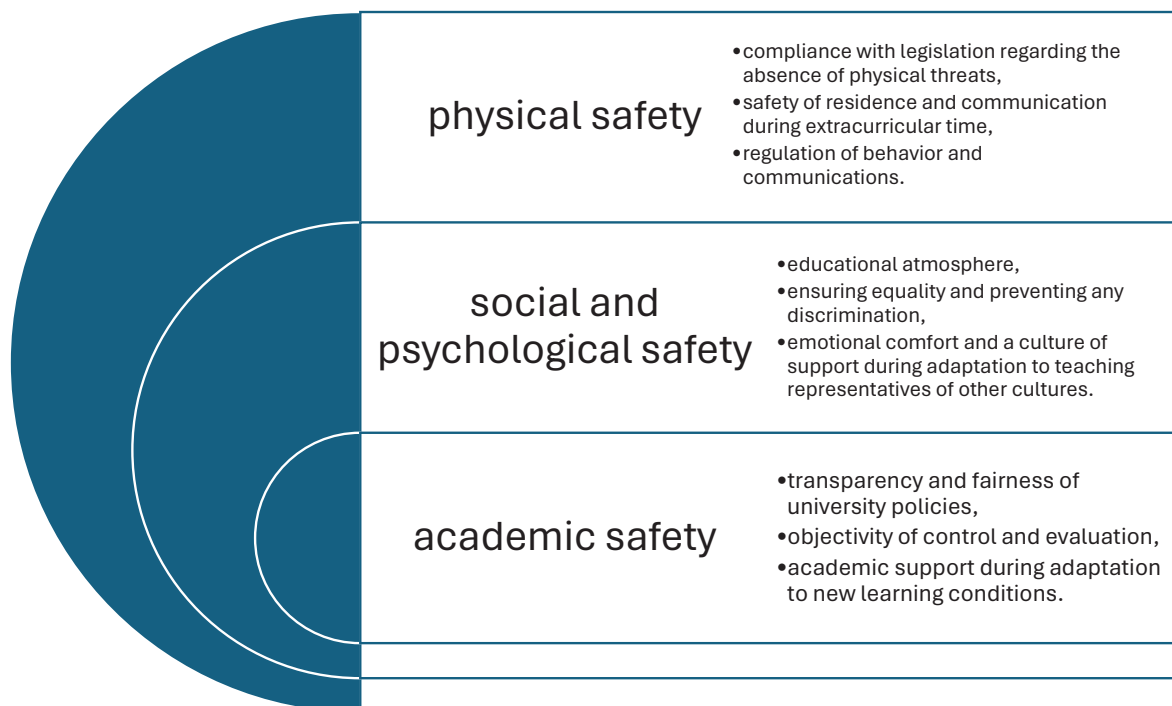
**An overview of the main material.** Of course, consideration of issues of a safe educational environment involves the aspect of physical security. This is emphasized in the current legislation, it is a necessary condition for compliance with the regulations and recommendations of the relevant department to ensure the quality of education [2; 9; 10]. Physical security involves not only protection and the absence of threats to an individual during training, but also provides safe living conditions, movement through the territories of all structures of a higher education institution and during organized events. To achieve a high level of physical security, of course, it is necessary to adhere to previously developed rules, procedures, regulations, and work out algorithms for actions in emergency situations. The latter is especially valuable during martial law, under which the educational process in Ukraine is currently being carried out. The next component is socio-psychological security.

It involves such an educational atmosphere of comfort that excludes any discrimination or inequality. This is extremely important for cross-cultural communications of participants in the educational process, because socio-psychological communication safety allows the applicant to be open, to be understood and to be accepted even in situations of differences in cultural, linguistic and other identities in different communities, student self-government, creative teams and informal professionally oriented groups. A logical component of psychological safety is emotional safety, although this component is not identical to psychological safety. Emotional safety is a rather complex component, as it involves reliance on a variety of culturally, mentally conditioned features of emotional reactions, traditions of non-verbal means of communication. Emotional safety involves the ability of each participant in the educational process to freely express their emotions, receive support and be understood. Emotional safety is especially important at the stage of adaptation to new learning conditions for first-year students, during the implementation of academic mobility programs, to overcome language barriers.

**The system-forming component is academic security.** This component provides for

transparency and fairness of university policies regarding the organization of the educational process, control, objective assessment, realization of the right to academic support for applicants with different cultural and educational needs, support during adaptation to the conditions of study and educational communications. Diagram 1 visualizes the logical connections of the described components of a safe educational environment of cross-cultural communications in universities.

Creating a safe educational environment for the success of cross-cultural communication is necessary for the development of the university. Therefore, the policies of the higher education institution in this direction are important. The “Code of a Safe Educational Environment” [6] has been developed and implemented at the H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. This orientation of the university’s policies contributes to the quality of education, allows for the effective use of cultural diversity to achieve learning goals, enrichment and personal growth of all participants in the educational process. The complexity of the safe educational environment for cross-cultural communication at the H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University stimulates educational



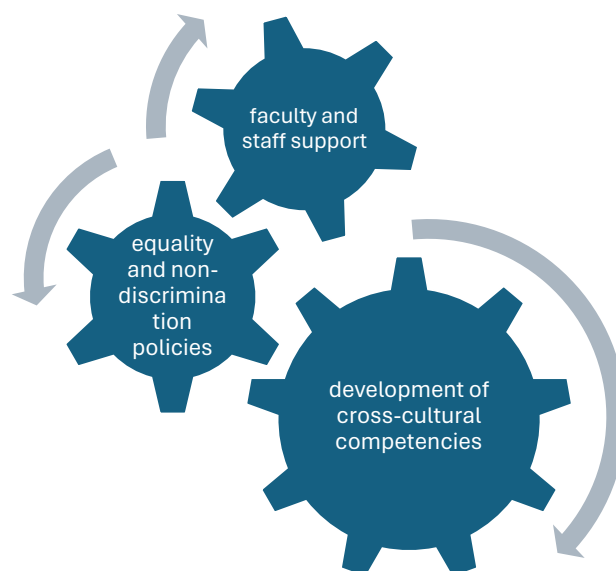
**Diagram 1. Logical connections of the described components of a safe educational environment for cross-cultural communications in universities**

initiatives, personal and professional growth of all participants in the educational process. Each participant in the educational process can openly share achievements, exchange knowledge and methodological developments. The opportunity to present one's experience to others determines the prospects for growth – personal and professional. An example of such a space is the educational hub operating at the H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University [7]. This hub provides opportunities for multifunctional communication interaction. Thanks to such interaction, conditions are created for the formation of specialists in the field of educational sciences and other fields of knowledge, ready to implement professional strategies in multicultural communities, specialists who demonstrate a high level of global thinking. For the adaptation of participants in the educational process – carriers of different cultures, languages – the hub creates conditions for adaptive content. This contributes to the reduction of barriers. People feel safe during open communication, partner communications, where experience is formed in overcoming language, communicative, cultural and other barriers. The result of participation in the work of the educational hub at the H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University is the development of empathy, understanding of other cultures, and other components of socio-psychological safety [7]. Educational, cognitive, and developmental communications help avoid conflicts based on cultural and linguistic differences.

The aim of this publication was to identify key aspects of developing appropriate communicative interaction strategies in the context of the research objective. In our view, such strategies encompass three blocks (diagram 2).

The trigger mechanism is characterized by the block “Development of cross-cultural competencies”. This block may include regular cross-cultural communication training on cultural sensitivity and intercultural empathy; overcoming cultural and linguistic stereotypes, unconscious prejudices, including in the context of technological support of communications; resolving conflicts and misunderstandings of intercultural content; forming linguistic and non-linguistic etiquette; filling the content of educational programs with elements of cross-

cultural communication using the example of interdisciplinary and cross-subject approaches; encouraging the study of foreign languages, cultural exchange during leisure and the implementation of an individual educational trajectory; stimulating language exchange, the activities of multilingual clubs, student communities, joint cultural events (cultural, culinary, language festivals, language clubs, methodological collaboration platforms) and professional events, cross-cultural mentoring and support for foreign students to facilitate their adaptation to learning, supporting student participation in events of intercultural inclusive interaction through the style of learning, accessibility of leisure areas, comfort during the interaction of participants in the educational process – representatives of different ethnicities, religions, cultures, and other identities.



**Diagram 2. Safe Educational Environment Strategies for Successful Cross-Cultural Communication at University**

The development of cross-cultural competencies of participants in the educational process for a safe educational environment is logically accompanied by clear policies of equality and non-discrimination at the university, which ensures all components of safety (physical, socio-psychological, academic). Clear codes, regulations, rules should contain components of inadmissibility and prohibition of any discrimination based on ethnicity, language, religion, gender, other identities, mechanisms



for submitting and considering complaints (anonymously, to a “hotline”, etc.), and holding them accountable. It is valuable to create separate structures at the university that will provide support (academic, psychological, social, cultural, etc.) for foreign students and applicants who implement academic mobility programs. The work of such structures should be regularly monitored through focus groups, surveys, and independent expert reviews of existing requests. Programs to support faculty and staff in strategies for a safe educational environment for the success of cross-cultural communication at the university should be aimed at preparing them to work with a multinational student contingent, recognizing, preventing, and resolving conflicts on an intercultural basis, creating resources of information and advisory materials, cases of best practices in cross-cultural communication, and

opportunities for international mobility of faculty to exchange experience with colleagues from other countries.

**Conclusions.** Thus, a safe educational environment as a basis for cross-cultural communication of participants in the educational process can include components of physical, socio-psychological and academic safety. Systematic comprehensive work should be aimed at implementing. In universities, relevant strategies in the unity of programs for the development of cross-cultural communications, policies of equality and non-discrimination, support for teachers and staff based on openness and readiness for change. The prospect of further development of the stated problem is seen as the search for ways to constructively fill practical cases of a safe educational environment of cross-cultural communication in universities.

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