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CREATION OF A SAFE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AS A CONDITION FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

***Summary.** The article examines the theoretical and practical aspects of creating a safe educational environment as a necessary condition for an effective educational process. The importance of psychological safety, trust and support in interaction between participants in the educational process is substantiated. The basic principles of organizing a safe educational space are analysed. Special attention is paid to the role of group rules as a tool for regulating interaction and creating a favourable atmosphere in the educational group. It has been determined that the formation of a learning community is an important outcome of implementing appropriate pedagogical practices and contributes to increased student motivation and involvement.*

***Keywords:** safe educational environment, educational process, pedagogical interaction, learning community, SAFE LEARN project.*

Problem statement. The modern educational space operates in conditions of constant social transformations, accompanied by increased uncertainty and psychological stress for all participants in the educational process. In this regard, the problem of creating a safe educational environment that not only facilitates the transfer of knowledge but also supports students' emotional well-being becomes particularly relevant.

Practice shows that the effectiveness of learning directly depends on how much participants in the educational process feel protected, accepted and involved. That is why it is advisable to consider creating a safe educational environment as a key condition for quality education.

The purpose of the article is to theoretically substantiate the essence of a safe educational environment and to generalize practical experience in conducting training aimed at developing skills for creating a psychologically safe and supportive educational space.

Presentation of the main material. In scientific discourse, a safe educational environment is defined as a multidimensional space within which the physical, psychological and social safety of the individual is ensured. It is not

only about the absence of threats, but also about creating conditions for active participation in the educational process, the development of initiative and self-expression [2, p. 41].

The key characteristic of such an environment is its predictability, which is manifested in the structure of the educational process, clarity of requirements and clarity of expectations. At the same time, open communication is significant, allowing participants to achieve learning goals and feel involved in joint activities [8, p. 288]. The atmosphere of respect, in which the value of each participant is recognized regardless of their experience or views, is also important. In such a context, support and feedback become integral elements of educational interaction [1, p. 315]. Therefore, a safe environment is not a secondary aspect of learning; it serves as its foundation, without which the full assimilation of knowledge and personal development is impossible.

The creation of a safe educational environment is based on a number of interrelated principles that are implemented through daily pedagogical practice. First of all, it is about ensuring a logical, consistent organization of the educational process, which helps reduce anxiety and creates a sense of stability. At the same time, transparency in interaction plays an important role, which involves openness in determining goals, assessment criteria and the content of educational activities.

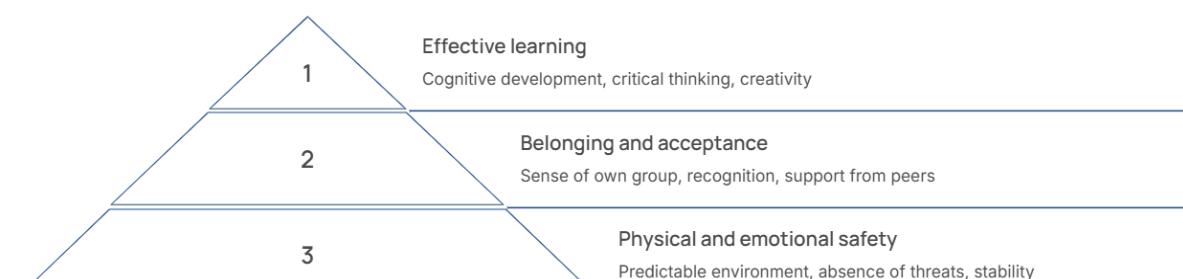
Along with this, it is important to foster a culture of mutual respect, which involves a tolerant attitude towards diverse points of view and experiences. Such an atmosphere fosters trust among participants in the educational process. In turn, systematic feedback allows teachers to take into account the needs of the group and adjust the educational process accordingly, thereby enhancing each participant's sense of involvement and significance (Fig. 1).



СХЕМА 1

Learning foundation: the pyramid of needs in a group

Without a safe environment, the brain cannot learn. Each subsequent level is possible only when the previous one is stable.



Key message: without a safe environment, the brain cannot learn. Safety is not a bonus, it is the foundation.

Fig. 1 The needs of the educational group during the educational process

An important mechanism for creating a safe environment is introducing group rules that regulate participants' interactions. The peculiarity of this process is that the rules are not imposed from the outside but are jointly formed through discussion and agreement [7, p. 480]. This approach contributes to their conscious acceptance and increases the level of responsibility for their observance.

In April 2026, within the framework of the implementation of the Erasmus+ SAFE LEARN project «Supporting Adaptive and Flexible Education for War-Affected Students in Ukraine» (Project ID: 101236049), a series of training sessions of the Training-of-Trainers course (180 hours / 6 ECTS) was held at Dmytro Motornyi Tavria State Agrotechnological University, which was attended by scientific and pedagogical workers from all over Ukraine. During the training sessions, it was found that one of the important aspects of creating a psychologically comfortable environment is a clear lesson structure. Within the training, special attention was paid to the logical structure of the educational process, which included the entry into work stage, the main activity, and the final reflection.

At the initial stage, contact was established between the participants and their emotional state, and expectations were updated. This allowed creating a favourable atmosphere for further interaction. The main part of the lesson was aimed at active work, which included interactive exercises, discussions and joint implementation of tasks [5, p. 232]. The final stage involved reflecting on the experience gained, discussing the results and drawing conclusions. Such a structure provides not only organizational clarity but also psychological safety, as it allows participants to navigate the process and feel its logic (Fig. 2).



Principles of a trauma-sensitive community

There are four fundamental principles on which a safe and supportive learning environment is built.

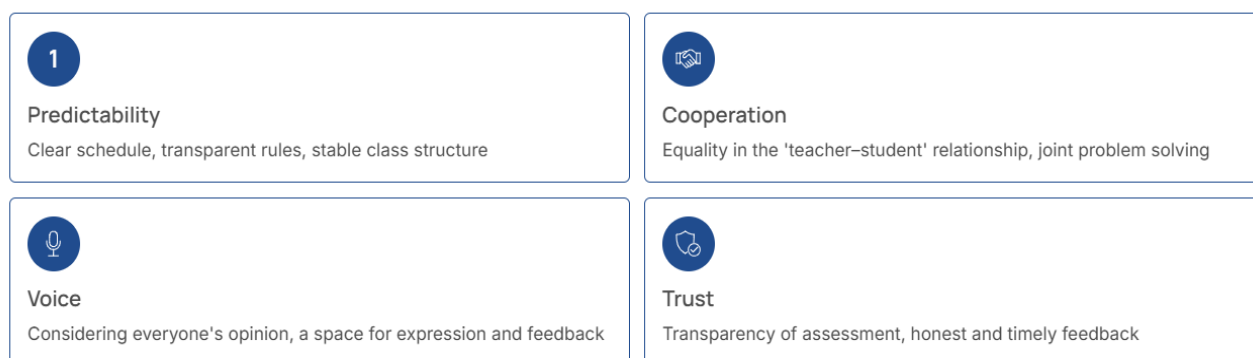


Fig. 2 Principles of a trauma-sensitive community

A special place in the formation of a safe educational environment is occupied by trust, which is a prerequisite for open communication and active participation in learning. It is formed gradually, in the process of interaction, and depends on the sequence of actions of the teacher, their openness and ability to support the participants. Within the training, considerable attention was paid to creating conditions in which each participant could freely express their thoughts without fear of judgment. An important element of this process was recognizing the right to make mistakes as a natural part of learning. This approach helps to reduce psychological barriers and stimulates cognitive activity [4, p. 380].

The effectiveness of the educational process is largely determined by the nature of the interaction between its participants. In this context, support is an important resource that helps to increase motivation and form a positive learning experience. Group interaction is considered not only a means of achieving learning outcomes but also a value in itself that fosters a sense of belonging to a community. The training used methods aimed at enhancing cooperation, in particular group discussions, joint task completion and exchange of experience. This allowed the creation of an environment in which participants could not only gain knowledge but also support each other [3, p. 392].

Modern realities require taking into account the possible traumatic experience of participants in the educational process. In this regard, a trauma-informed approach is important, which involves greater sensitivity to students' emotional states and the adaptation of educational practices to their needs. The training focused on creating conditions that minimize the risk of re-traumatization. This included voluntary participation in activities, the option to refuse certain tasks, and support for one's own boundaries. This approach fosters trust and enhances learning effectiveness [6, p. 105].

One of the important results of creating a safe educational environment is the formation of a learning community. This is a level of interaction at which participants feel involved in joint activities and responsible for their results (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 The cycle of creating a common agreement

During the training, special attention was paid to the development of communication, mutual support and joint understanding of experience. This contributed to the formation of trust, openness and readiness for cooperation. The learning community thus acts not only as an environment for learning but also as a resource for personal development [9, p. 301].

Conclusions. The conducted research and practical experience of the training allow us to state that a safe educational environment is a determining factor in the effectiveness of the educational process. Its formation requires purposeful activity, covering organizational, communicative and psychological aspects. Ensuring predictability, transparency, mutual respect and support creates conditions for the active participation of education seekers in learning. At the same time, the development of trust, the implementation of group rules and the use of a trauma-informed approach contribute to the formation of a comfortable and inclusive educational space.

Thus, the training format has proven its effectiveness as a tool for developing the competencies of scientific and pedagogical workers in creating a safe educational environment and can be recommended for widespread implementation in educational practice. This is exactly the result planned within the SAFE LEARN project (ID: 101236049).

Prospects for further research include expanding the implementation of training formats within the system of professional development for scientific and pedagogical workers, as well as developing methodological recommendations for adapting approaches to creating a safe educational environment across different educational contexts. Further work is required to integrate a trauma-informed approach into educational programmes and develop tools for assessing the effectiveness of creating a safe educational environment. It is also important to study the possibilities of digitalizing such practices and scaling them in blended and distance-learning settings.

Література

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Шаров С., Шарова Т. Створення безпечного освітнього середовища як умова ефективного навчання

Анотація. У статті розглядаються теоретичні та практичні аспекти створення безпечного освітнього середовища як необхідної умови для ефективного навчання. Обґрунтовано важливість психологічної безпеки, довіри та підтримки у взаємодії учасників освітнього процесу. Проаналізовано основні принципи організації безпечного освітнього простору. Особливу увагу приділено ролі групових правил як інструменту регулювання взаємодії та створення сприятливої атмосфери всередині навчальної групи. Визначено, що розбудова навчальної спільноти є важливим результатом упровадження відповідних педагогічних практик і сприяє підвищенню мотивації та залученості здобувачів освіти.

Ключові слова: безпечне освітнє середовище, освітній процес, педагогічна взаємодія, навчальна спільнота, проєкт SAFE LEARN.