



Review & Analytical Articles

ECOLOGIZATION AS A SYSTEMIC PRINCIPLE OF ORGANIZING THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE OF A MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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Abstract

Relevance. The article examines the contradictory dynamics of transformations in the higher education system, which is manifested in the gap between traditional forms of organizing education and the requirements of modern social, cultural and technological development. Particular attention is paid to the transition from a teacher-centered to a student-centered paradigm, which is accompanied by significant risks, in particular the psychological unpreparedness of participants in the educational process for productive interaction?. The purpose of the article: based on theoretical analysis, to determine the current state of the problem of ecologization as a systemic principle of the formation of the modern educational space of higher education institutions.

Methodology. Systemic and functional analysis of existing methodological (teacher- and student-centered) approaches, source base, regulatory documents, and empirical base of research of the educational space of modern HEIs, modeling of resources for improving the institutional sustainability of Ukrainian universities.

Results. Based on the analysis, it was established that the greening of the educational space can be considered as a promising approach to overcoming the gaps between participants and elements of the educational system. The article describes the functional structure of the university educational space, identifies key changes that have occurred in Ukrainian realities, in particular, the strengthening of the role of external regulators (MES, NAZAVO) and the shift in focus to the student, institutional difficulties of teachers and deans. It is shown that the increase in the complexity of the positional structure of the educational space leads to a decrease in its environmental friendliness, increased uncertainty and communication gaps.

Conclusions. The modern educational space of the university has undergone processes of de-ecologization, which have led to the complication of organizational conditions and the deterioration of the quality of interaction between educational subjects. At the same time, the very formulation of the problem of ecologization opens up prospects for the development of new approaches aimed at harmonizing educational interaction, developing the subjectivity of participants in the educational process and improving the institutional sustainability of universities.

Keywords: educational space, the principle of environmental friendliness, student-centered learning, teacher-centered learning, higher education, university, subjects of the educational process, transformation of education, institutional interaction.

Relevance

Problem statement. Higher education in modern conditions of social, cultural, economic and technological development is increasingly faced with gaps: between real competencies and formal qualifications of participants in the educational process, between the needs of the economy and the content of programs, between established forms and technological innovations. Ideally, universities should be the basis of the country's social and cultural development. In practice, their progressive development is hampered by the "inflation" of diplomas, underfunding, the outflow of teachers and students, and the inertia of management procedures. For a young person, the university is primarily seen as a space for growth, but it often turns into a matter of credits and certificates, "podcasts" and compulsion. And today, a situation is quite relevant in which the issue of professional self-determination, especially in the scientific and research field, either does not appear or loses its meaning.

The problem formulated above is primarily based on the process of changing the basic paradigm of organizing education from teacher-centered to student-centered. This process, which began in the European educational space several decades ago, is still far from being completed in economically developed countries of the world. It can also be argued that in Ukrainian national realities, it is just really beginning. Although at the formal level, its main components appeared more than 20 years ago (from 05/19/2005). One of the roots of the problem lies precisely in the psychological plane: the unreadiness of the participants of the educational process themselves for change.

Theoretical background

A significant number of publications in recent years, both in Ukraine and in the world, have been devoted to the understanding and development of various aspects of the student-centered approach, its comparison with the teacher-centered system. In general, it is argued that they are two main pedagogical approaches in higher education, which have fundamentally different philosophical, worldview and conceptual foundations (Armstrong, 2012; Jones & Brown, 2019; Smith, 2021).

Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) (Teacher-Centred Learning, TCL) is a classical (traditional) approach to education, where the teacher is the main source of knowledge and responsibility. In this approach, the teacher largely determines what is to be learned and helps students follow the unified trajectories they have already developed. Students usually play a passive role, while the teacher's role is compared to that of a "sage on the stage" (Weimer, 2002).

In contrast, in Student-Centred Learning (SCL) the role of the student changes from passive to active, which is why the role of the teacher should change. This approach puts students at the center of the learning process. SCL is based on a constructivist view, according to which students actively construct their own knowledge and development. The main goal of SCL is the development of student autonomy and independence. The teacher



begins to perform facilitation, coaching functions, and his role mostly changes to accompanying students along their individual trajectories ("guide on the side", Jones & Brown, 2019). Students actively participate in the discovery of knowledge, explore, question and solve problems, taking responsibility for their own learning. At the same time, in this approach, the focus is on the actual learning outcomes (outcome-based learning) (Hoidn & Kärkkäinen, 2014). We will not dwell on the advantages of each of the above approaches, but will focus on their risks and problems. The basic problem in the teacher-centered approach has been the inconsistency of the results of higher education training with the demands of a rapidly changing world. This approach, no matter how good it is in its best manifestations, has proven to be poorly capable of flexibility in responding to the global challenges of the present and the near future. In addition to the gaps mentioned above, critics of this approach draw attention to:

- a focus on reproduction, where the student who can best reproduce the material is considered successful (Armstrong, 2012);
- student passivity, which in particular leads to a depreciation of the development of critical thinking (Wright, 2011; Smith, 2021);
- insufficient development of the so-called "soft skills" (Lau, 2020).

The result of this is a general underestimation of the role of the development of the student's subjectivity and the risk of dehumanization of higher education as a whole.

Among the basic problems of implementing student-centered learning in higher education are:

- unpreparedness of students (Hoidn, 2017). At school, students study mostly in a teacher-centered model, so many future students learn this form well and expect appropriate approaches at university;
- unpreparedness of teachers (European Students' Union, 2018). The transition to such a system requires shifts in their thinking and behavior. Because of this, in particular, there is often a fear of losing control over the process, authority, failure to fulfill the planned, etc.;
- weak compliance, and sometimes neglect, of the content, structure or norms of the academic discipline itself (McKenna, 2013);
- the need to change the material infrastructure, which includes re-equipping classrooms for group work (Lau, 2020).

Among the domestic publications of recent years related to the problem under consideration, one can note the study of the developmental potential of the educational environment of higher education institutions (I. Gaba, 2018), the innovative educational environment in the context of the modernization of higher education institutions (Matsuk & Kuzenko & Kuzenko, 2021), the virtual educational space, which is aimed primarily at the development of adult subjectivity (Smulson et al., 2024).

One of the promising aspects of overcoming the indicated gaps is the greening of the educational space of the university, which will allow harmonizing and improving both the

situation with the educational process within it and the integration of university education into modern society. Therefore, the task of building an ecological educational space in universities should become a priority today.

The purpose of the article is to determine the current state of the problem of greening as a systemic principle of the formation of the modern educational space of higher education institutions, based on theoretical analysis.

Methodology

Systemic and functional analysis of the source base: existing methodological approaches (teacher- and student-centered), regulatory documents, empirical studies of the educational space of modern higher education institutions, modeling of resources for improving the institutional sustainability of Ukrainian universities.

Results

We understand the principle of environmental friendliness in education as follows: each position in the structure of the educational space is aimed at supporting and developing the educational capabilities of all other positions. At the same time, the environmental friendliness of the educational space is ensured by all basic participants in the organization of the educational process - teachers, students, support staff - the dean's office, the administration of the educational institution.

Basic participants - are an open and dynamic structure in which personnel rotation, the emergence of new roles and the redistribution of functions between units constantly occur, that is, the participants here constantly change their functionality and personal composition. Changes in each functional position lead to changes in the environmental friendliness of the entire system. For example, the introduction of a new assessment system, and even a new reporting system, affects changes in the motivational and behavioral characteristics of the subjects of the educational process. This, in turn, leads to a change in their positions as an attitude to the next innovation. And each such change is perceived and functions as a change in the conditions of activity for all other subjects of the educational process.

A change in the functionality of a certain organizational component becomes a condition for changes and own position of the participant of the educational process. That is, when there are changes, for example, in the structure of the dean's office of the faculty, the teacher finds himself in conditions that also require his positional change.

Finally, the more complex the positional structure of the educational space becomes, the less stable the ecological situation in it becomes. This can be explained, in particular, by the increase in the degree of uncertainty of environmental conditions, by the disruption of communication, the increase in risks, etc.

It should be noted that there is a certain theoretical contradiction here, because in biology it is rightly believed that in any ecosystem, biodiversity is an indicator of its positive



state, and a decrease in this indicator is evidence of the degradation of the system. However, ecosystems are regulated by natural mechanisms built on the principles of feedback, maintaining balance and excess production of bio-material. Unlike any natural ecosystem, the educational space is an artificial system, that is, a system that is built and regulated through a conscious target model and requires constant support, external support and regulation. When one of the four components changes, as a rule, a deficiency in functioning occurs, the growth of organizational and managerial infrastructure occurs, which ultimately leads to a violation of the environmental friendliness of the entire system and the need for its adjustment.

Let us consider in this approach the classical model of the educational space of the university.

The initial ecosystem unit of the educational process in it is the interaction of "teacher - student", where the teacher's activity determines the prospects for the student's development, and the student's activity is the main one in maintaining the relevance of the teacher's scientific and research interests.

In fact, such a system is teacher-centered. However, such a system becomes effective under two conditions: first, when the teacher's activity is essentially research-based, and only "at the output" is pedagogical, and second, when students have the opportunity and motivation to join professorial research programs. The implementation of the first condition leads to the fact that the educational material is constantly changing and filled with new content, which reflects the dynamics of scientific research in all its methodological, methodological and organizational and technological components. It is essential that various educational and methodological materials – textbooks, manuals, etc. – perform an exclusively auxiliary function in the development of established educational material. The implementation of the second condition leads to the fact that students get the opportunity to join real research projects and programs, where space opens up for their independent thinking and educational and professional activities. It should be noted that it was this construction that formed the basis of what is now called the "competence approach".

An additional "bonus" of this system is that students literally "vote with their feet" for certain research projects – in some they see the meaning and perspective and go there, and in others – not, although it is clear that the degree of objectivity of such attitudes is very low. But, despite the high level of subjectivity, it is the possibility of choice that creates a feedback mechanism, which, in fact, makes the entire system stable, dynamic and potentially developing for all participants in the educational process, that is, according to the introduced definition, ecological.

In this dyadic system, the dean's office performs the function of ensuring the research and pedagogical activities of the professor (teacher).

The university administration solves fundamentally different tasks – it deals with the economic, social, cultural and personnel policy of the organization, that is, it sets and

moderates certain frameworks – the conditions in which the educational process takes place.

Therefore, the main internal organizational functions at the university are performed by teachers, students and the dean's office. While for the administration the only internal function is the selection, attraction and retention of the teaching staff. Its other functions are exclusively external. The model of the organization of the educational space in a classical university is shown in Fig. 1.

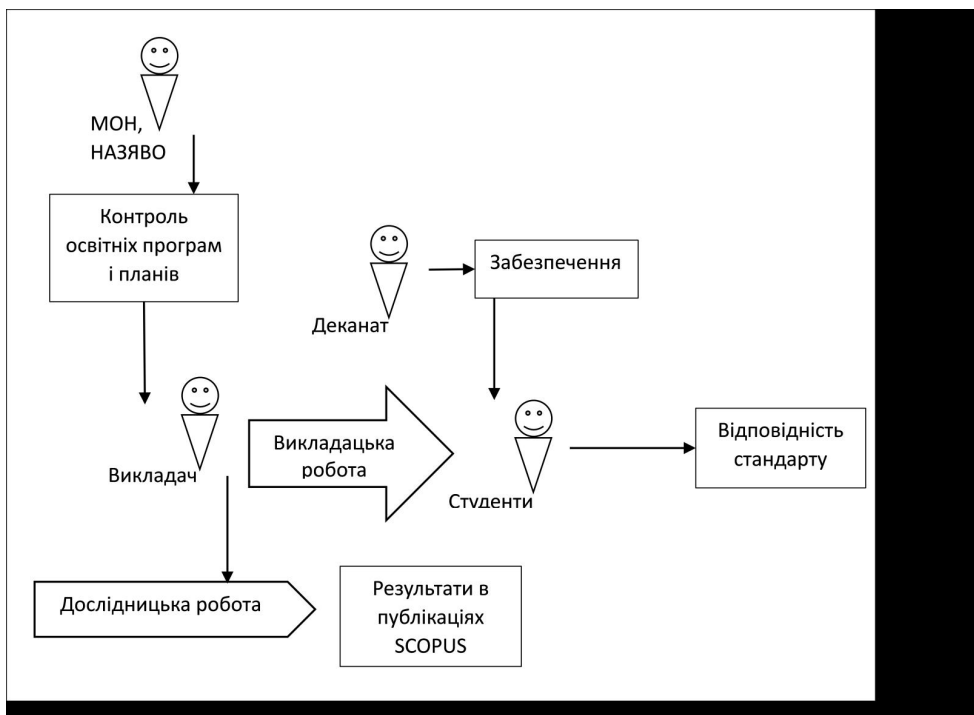


Fig. 1. Model of the educational space of a classical university

In modern conditions in Ukraine, significant transformational changes have already taken place (and continue to take place) in the organization of the university educational space.

First of all, we note a change in the general positional structure. The Ministry of Education and Science and its instrument, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, are becoming the leading participants in the educational process in a modern Ukrainian university. It is they who began to set both the form and structure of the educational process.

Secondly, the focus has shifted from the teacher (as in a teacher-centered system) to the student, that is, education at the university becomes student-centered. In this type of



system, the teacher begins to perform mainly the functions of facilitation and support. The teacher's scientific and research activities cease to be system-forming. One of his main tasks is to create conditions for self-development, partnership interaction and reflection of the student. There is an orientation not on the acquisition of knowledge, but on the achievement of competencies necessary for professional and social self-realization.

In the European educational space, the student-centered approach is successfully implemented through the Bologna process, the ECTS credit system, and modular and competency-based learning, which provides academic mobility and flexibility of educational trajectories. However, it should be understood that the Bologna system creates new global opportunities for students, and the interaction "teacher - student" remains fundamentally the same as in the teacher-centered system.

In American higher education, the principles of liberal education dominate, where the main attention is focused on the development of critical thinking, interdisciplinarity, and practical orientation of learning. That is, this system is actually a manifestation and construction of a new global educational policy. At the same time, it is worth understanding that in Ukraine, despite the similarity to the European educational paradigm, the situation is significantly different. First, the basic function of the teacher is to ensure the educational process at the level of a specific educational situation. Secondly, the teacher is put in the position of "executor of plans and programs", but not of creative implementation of the educational process: there must be compliance and feasibility of the plan, because its failure to implement it entails problems in future accreditation. The content and quality of teaching itself fades into the background.

Thirdly, in the current conditions of development of the national higher education, the student has received the privilege of participating in the educational process in any form, even in an "invisible" form in the form of a "black rectangle" on the monitor. The consequence of the implementation of such a privilege is the exclusively formal inclusion of some students in the educational process.

Fourthly, we state that the administration of the higher education institution, including the dean's office, in every way supports the specified changes. At the same time, one can not even discuss the motivation for such support, it is so transparent and obvious. This is summarized in the diagram in Fig. 2.

Therefore, the teacher in this interaction falls into the format of constraint in relation to the formal and often internally contradictory conditions and orders of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. He has to navigate between the requirements of the university administration and his own understanding of the real higher professional education that he has and wants to provide to students, and his scientific research actually falls out of the educational space and does not affect the educational content. At the same time, the dean's office finds itself in an unpleasant ecological situation of the actual impossibility of full support for either teachers or students. And the students themselves lose the benchmarks of learning outcomes,

because educational standards, at least in the form they have today, cannot serve as such a benchmark.

In our opinion, in conditions of cardinal external negative events - COVID, war, mass migration, etc. - the domestic education system has gone the way of excessive formalization and standardization, which leads to negative consequences in its functioning. Awareness of this fact can become the basis for the development of long-term programs for the restoration of the environmental friendliness of the educational space of Ukraine.

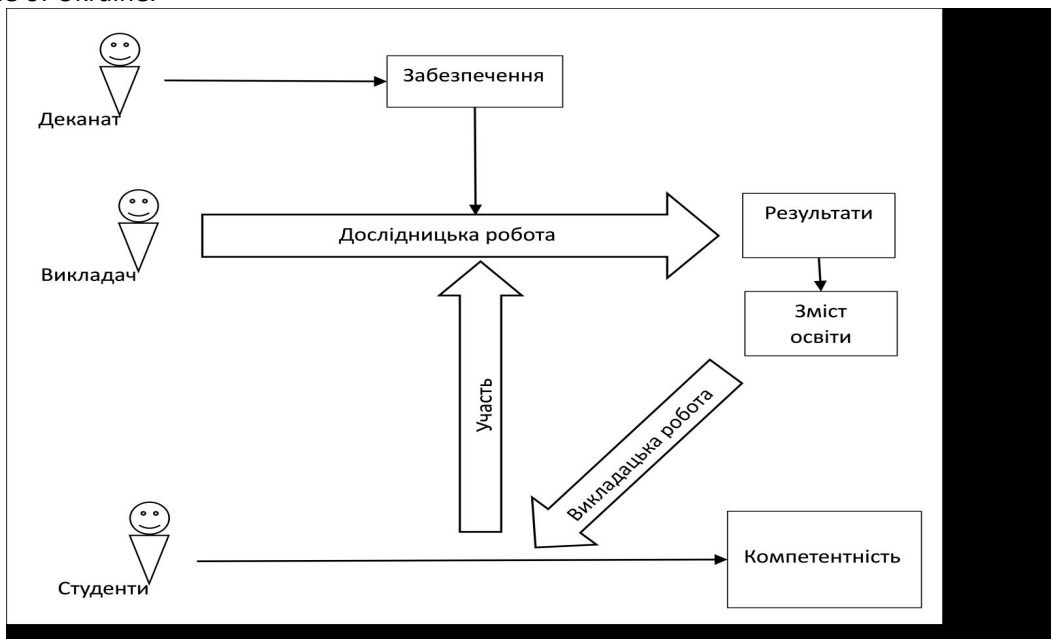


Fig. 2. Model of the educational space of a modern Ukrainian university

Conclusions

The general conclusion regarding the ecological atmosphere of the modern educational space of the country's university is not very optimistic. The active introduction of new subjects into it, and, most importantly, the change in the leading direction of the educational process and educational interaction have already led to a significant deterioration in the ecological state of the educational space.

At the same time, we have a significant remark. Such changes categorically cannot be imagined in the form of such metaphors as “changing players on the field”, “changing the rules of the game”. The game metaphor is inappropriate here in principle, since real changes are irreversible. The greening of the educational space should provide additional opportunities for expansion and growth for its subjects, while de-greening leads to the degradation of the entire system. And in this situation, it is impossible to start a “new half” or a “new game” “after the whistle”.



However, despite the negative trends mentioned, it is worth emphasizing that the very raising of the issue of environmental friendliness of the educational space of the Higher Education Institution and the organization of the educational process in it actualizes the tasks that need to be solved. At the same time, the forms and methods of their solution can be developed for a long time. Their absence at the current stage does not negate the search for effective solutions. In particular, one of the main criteria for assessing the current perspective development plan of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv has already been introduced: environmental friendliness of the educational space.

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