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## **EDUCATIONAL SPACE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE OF POLISH-UKRAINIAN DOUBLE DIPLOMA IN ENGLISH PHILOLOGY**

In the following discussion we shall try to present the concept of educational space as applied to higher education and the way it functions as exemplified by the double diploma project in English philology run between the University of Occupational Safety Management in Katowice (Poland) and the Alfred Nobel University in Dnipro (Ukraine).

In the widest sense educational space is the space in which educational processes take place (Surina, 2012). This definition, however, does not reflect its full essence. Thus, it should be extended by adding that educational space is a relatively homogeneous construction of ordering of social life. Hence, educational space is an element of social relationships (Surina, 2012).

Educational space is constantly changing but it has its own structure which is created, on the one hand, by state requirements and, on the other hand, by social needs and expectations. It includes educational infrastructure, institutions covering all levels of education, educational systems, education as a social institution, standards of education, social groups participating in educational activities, educational market (Surina, 2012).

Taking into consideration the essence of educational space it can be characterized by the following features:

- multidimensionality (it includes many factors determining its existence),
- heterogeneity (combining various elements in the same spatial-temporal spheres),
- temporariness (resulting from space organization in time),
- relative continuity (conditioned by the existence of various elements in the specific period),
- lengthiness (manifesting itself in the number of educational institutions),
- saturation (conditioned by many ordered in space and time events connected with education),
- asymmetry (lack of two symmetric subspaces),
- assimilation (the minority adopts the values and the norms of the majority),
- complexity (the occurrence of the large number of elements and corresponding types of social behavior),
- openness (the occurrence of mobile temporal boundaries),
- non-linearity (conditioned by feedback),
- sensitivity (refers to social changes),
- educational conformity (obligatory subordination to the norms),
- instability (the result of the self-organizational and self-regulatory processes),
- integrity (reflected in combining social life with agents' activities),
- multidimensional character (resulting from different levels of educational organization),
- navigability (conditioned by the mechanism of directing-manipulating consciousness (Surina, 2012).

Educational space has its subspaces. In this discussion we shall concentrate on the subspace of higher education. The processes of globalization as well as European integration set boundaries for educational activities, their possibilities, expectations and social requirements. They are clearly defined in the assumptions of the Bologna process and the Bologna Declaration. The official date of starting the process is 19 June 1999 when during the conference in Bologna the ministers of education of 29 countries signed the so-called Bologna Declaration ([www.nauka.gov.pl/szkolnictwowyzsze/sprawy-miedzynarodowe/proces-bolonski](http://www.nauka.gov.pl/szkolnictwowyzsze/sprawy-miedzynarodowe/proces-bolonski)). Its main objectives were to:

- introduce the diploma supplement enabling comparing the grades of the graduates and, thus, making it easier for the citizens of Europe to find the job,
- introduce the 2-cycle system of education based on the idea of 3+2, where the first three years led to obtaining the BA degree and the following two years to MA degree,
- introduce the European Credit Transfer System as a means of supporting student mobility,
- support student and staff member mobility
- support international cooperation ensuring quality of education,
- support European higher education in preparing joint research, joint studies and widely understood cooperation between institutions of higher learning.

Following the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration in 2014 the University of Occupational Safety Management in Katowice (hence WSZOP) signed the agreement with the Alfred Nobel University in Dnipro (hence DUAN) enabling the graduates of English from DUAN obtaining the BA diploma in business English from WSZOP. The project is known as the dual diploma project. The first thing that had to be done was to compare the curriculum covered by the students of DUAN with the one covered by the students of WSZOP. Following the Ukrainian higher educational system the BA course in DUAN lasted 4 years (8 semesters). The BA course in WSZOP lasted 3 years (6 semesters). The comparison of the curricula allowed us to make a list of subject incompatibilities, i. e. these subjects which were included in the WSZOP curriculum but were not covered by the students from DUAN. These subjects were then divided into two categories: the ones which can be taught by DUAN staff members in Dnipro and the ones which cannot be taught in DUAN due to lack of specialists. Thus, it was decided that the latter subjects will be taught by Polish specialists in WSZOP. Another problem that had to be taken care of was writing the diploma work by DUAN students following the requirements of WSZOP diploma works. It was a big challenge for DUAN students because it was to be the first diploma work ever written by them. The supervisor of the diploma works was a staff member from DUAN and the students were writing them in Dnipro during their 8<sup>th</sup> semester of studies. After graduating from DUAN the students came for two weeks to Katowice. It was usually the last week of June and the first week of July. During this period they were taught these subjects which resulted from the list of incompatibilities and additionally they were preparing the final versions of their diploma works. It was a very intensive period and it required a lot of effort from the students. The final part of the project was the oral diploma examination. It followed the same pattern as for the Polish students. First the student was to discuss the PowerPoint presentation concerning his diploma work. Then, what followed, was the presentation of the reviews of the diploma work by the supervisor and the reviewer (the reviewer was from WSZOP). Finally, the student had to answer three questions. Two of them were related to the diploma work and were asked by the supervisor and the reviewer. The last one was drawn by the student from over 30 questions covering the whole course of studies. The students had access to the last series of questions so they could prepare the answers to these questions earlier.

The project has proved to be very successful and there is big interest in obtaining the WSZOP diploma among DUAN students of English. In June and July 2016 we received the third group of DUAN students.

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