

FOUNDATIONS OF A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*Sh. Mamatkulova*¹

Abstract:

The article discusses the competency-based approach in higher education, focusing on aligning learning outcomes with practical skills. It emphasizes the development of competencies essential for professional success, integrating theory with practice.

Key words: Competency-based approach, higher education, learning outcomes, professional skills, competencies, educational quality, practical application, teaching strategies, knowledge integration, skill development.

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The word "competence" comes from the Latin *competentia*, which refers to a person having good knowledge and experience in a number of areas. In this field, the person has the relevant abilities that allow them to make reasonable judgments and act accordingly.

Educational competencies are associated with a personal approach to education and are demonstrated and evaluated only in the process of performing specific actions [1, 41]. Competence is a set of already formed personal characteristics. In other words, a qualified specialist is a person who possesses the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience, while competence refers to the personal traits that include the necessary set of competencies.

In competency-based education, the concepts of "competence" and "competency" are used to distinguish between general and individual elements. "Competence" refers to a person's interrelated qualities required to act effectively and efficiently within a given range of objects or processes. "Competency" refers to a person possessing the relevant competence, including their personal attitude toward it and the subject of the activity.

Thus, competencies serve as the goals of the educational process, and as a result, competence operates as a set of personal qualities that define a specialist.

A competency-based approach allows for the creation of a final model of a specialist that harmonizes personal and societal interests and enables the advanced translation of labor market demands and social needs into the field of education. Only by continuously adapting the image of a specialist expressed in competencies and translating this adjustment into a set of criteria for the education system's goals can educational structures be trained for constant renewal, improvement, and self-management. This process should be implemented through the system of state educational standards.

Experts note that in the context of increasing globalization and mobility of professional qualifications, it is not professional skills but rather core and social competencies that come to the forefront. The ability of a person to independently build their life path in a contradictory, multipolar, and constantly changing world becomes the most crucial skill.

A competency-based approach in education involves selecting new educational strategies and includes understanding and implementing the close relationship between the educational process, content, and outcomes.

Competencies are generalized methods of action that ensure the effective performance of professional activities. It is the ability of a person to apply their qualifications in practice.

¹ Mamatkulova Shoxsanam Akmalovna, Teacher of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

A competent person is someone who possesses sufficient skills, knowledge, and capabilities in a particular field.

Competence is an open system of procedural, value-semantic, and declarative knowledge, which includes interacting components (related to perception, personal, and social factors). These components are renewed and enriched through activities as real-life problems arise that the person holding the competence encounters.

Competency is a situational category, as it is expressed in the readiness to perform any activity in specific professional (problematic) situations. Competency characterizes a person's (specialist's) ability to realize their human potential for professional activities.

Competency refers to the holistic characteristics of a person's traits and is understood as the result of preparing a university graduate to perform activities in certain areas (competencies).

Educational abilities, skills, and methods of activity are grouped into blocks of personal qualities that are formed for the implementation of these competencies:

1. Cognitive (critical) qualities – the ability to ask questions, find the causes of events, recognize misunderstandings of a problem, and more;
2. Creative (innovative) qualities – inspiration, sensitivity to contradictions and fantasies, openness to ideas and emotions, the ability to predict, critical thinking, the ability to generate ideas, and more;
3. Organizational activity (methodological) qualities – the ability to study and explain activities, set goals and achieve them, create rules, reflective thinking, self-esteem, and more;
4. Communicative qualities – the need to interact with other people, objects of the surrounding world, and information; the ability to find, modify, and transfer information; fulfill different social roles in a group or team; and use telecommunication technologies (email, the Internet);
5. Worldview qualities – emotional and value-based traits that define a person's ability for self-awareness and action, finding their place and role in the world, family, and community; alignment with national and universal aspirations; patriotism, and more.

Managing the quality of education in relation to students is a separate process aimed at managing the quality of the educational process and ensuring the formation of competencies in students and university graduates. The UNESCO dictionary includes the term "competency-based education," which refers to the formation of skills based on competencies [3, 8]. This means "education is based on learning, demonstrating, and acquiring the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary for any particular role, profession, or career." The core of this concept is a competency-based approach.

The competency-based approach focuses on learning outcomes, which implies achieving high precision in determining how the educational process concludes for each student. This way of formulating the question shifts attention from the teacher's intentions and tasks to the actual achievements of students [2, 75]. Learning outcomes refer to the knowledge acquired and the competencies mastered.

The process of forming competencies for future English language teachers is connected to the educational process and involves the combined use of various forms of teaching and assessment, including:

- Theoretical preparation;
- Practical activities (practical and laboratory sessions, practical work in the field of the subject – all types of internships);
- Scientific and research activities;
- Independent work;
- Intermediate and final assessments.

At each stage of education, competence identifiers and their corresponding qualimetric scales are used to assess students' competencies. Competence identifiers may include: knowledge, abilities, skills, as well as personal qualities (such as compassion, teamwork ability, decision-making ability, independent learning and productivity skills, etc.).

From the above, it follows that the criteria for assessing educational outcomes need to be significantly adjusted by including students' personal qualities in the general criterion for evaluating competencies.

Competency is the "mold" in which a specialist's competence is formed. Renowned experts in the field of education quality, N.A. Seleznev and V.I. Baidenko, argue that "we should move from designing theoretical and empirical knowledge in terms of volume, level, and content to designing learning outcomes in the form of competencies" [1, 35]. It is impossible to separate competencies from the content of education, just as one cannot expect competencies to be acquired only through the content of education. The point is that neither individual subjects nor the entire curriculum can be solely "responsible" for the formation of certain competencies. Competencies are also the result of educational technologies, methods, organizational forms, the learning environment, and so on. The results of education and competencies are the foundation for forming indicators of qualification levels.

Competencies must be defined using scientifically correct procedures and their development must be measurable.

Competencies and educational outcomes are considered the main objectives in implementing the new generation of educational standards, integrating them into the "model" of the graduate. The competency model of a graduate, on the one hand, includes qualifications that connect future activities with the subjects and objects of labor, and on the other hand, reflects interdisciplinary requirements for the outcomes of the educational process. The analysis of numerous sources allows us to propose a classification of competencies as shown in the diagram. Let's first consider these competencies from the perspective of education. After defining the concept of educational competencies, they should be incorporated into a three-level hierarchy of competencies:

1. Core competencies;
2. General academic competencies - relevant to a certain range of disciplines and educational directions;
3. Subject-specific competencies - more specific than the previous two, with the potential to shape the educational disciplines.

These competencies are divided into different levels and types. Social-personal, economic, and organizational-management competencies serve as the foundation for graduates' mobility in the professional labor market and their readiness to continue education in the field of additional and postgraduate studies. Special competencies (professionally oriented knowledge and skills) reflect the objective and substantive direction of education and are essential for working with certain objects and subjects of labor.

Professional competence is the skills, abilities, and experience that allow an employee to effectively perform their professional duties. This applies to specialists in all categories, including managers in the field of management, and involves having skills, abilities, and experience supported by tangible evidence in certain tasks.

Educational-methodological competence first involves understanding and knowledge of the fundamental theories of professional activity. Second, it involves awareness and understanding of theoretical and methodological advances in the field of professional activity and an independently formed logical relationship with them. Furthermore, for specialists, educational-methodological competence may also include knowledge of technologies and fields of activity indirectly related to their professional work.

Educational competencies model the student's activity for their future life. For example, a school student may not yet realize a certain competence until a specific age, but

this does not mean that this competence should not be formed through educational competencies.

There is no single list of core competencies, as competencies are primarily a societal order for preparing citizens. Such a list is determined largely by the agreed position of society in a specific country or region. Achieving such agreement is not always possible.

The competency-based approach essentially enhances educational practice by individualizing students' education, including their involvement in independent educational activities and personal responsibility for their outcomes (individual planning, self-assessment, self-organization, self-development, individual monitoring). There is every reason to state that the competency-based approach to learning outcomes in higher education is the core of modern educational reforms, and the implementation of this approach is considered the main direction for improving the quality of higher education.

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