

The conceptual denotation of competence as educational research challenge

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Abstract. The article deals with the most relevant aspects of building educational competence-centered paradigm. It concentrates on some problems and contradictions, which are critically important while building competence. The paper highlights the need to bring the competence-oriented model in line with the national and cultural, social and economic environment of Ukraine. There are outlined the prospect for the effective development of competence-based education.

Keywords: *concept, competence-based approach, linguistic competence, foreign linguistic competence.*

Introduction. The competence-centered educational ideologeme sets the trends and prospects for developing education. The academic interest in this poly-paradigm construct in Ukraine emerged somewhat later than that in Western Europe and America. However, since the 90s of the last century the national linguistics and language education have paid much attention to searching new technologies and teaching methods. Due to the numerous studies, scientific and methodical experiments and experiences there arisen perception of necessity to choose and protect by law the dominant educational ideology. As such, the scientific and expert community accepted a competency-based approach. In this regard, there occurred a need for an expert analysis of the genesis of building competence, as well as for identifying the competency-based educational concept sphere.

A brief review of publications on the subject. The issues of interpreting the conceptual scope of the notion of competence are presented in the works of M. Golovan, O. Grishnov, V. Kalinin, O. Kuchay, N. Nagorna, L. Lichman, V. Lozovetska, N. Perevoznyuk, B. Plohiy, G. Rudenko and others.

Currently, the researchers pay increasingly greater attention to the concept of social competence (N. Kalinina, L. Lepikhova, A. Mudryk and others), communicative competence (T. Gonchar, N. Zavynychenko, T. Kobzar, S. Makarenko, O. Neshcheret, L. Petrovska, O. Popova, L. Fedorova, M. Shatskaya and others), linguistic competence (M. Mukanov, V. Pavlov, O. Shakhnarovich, Zh. Lendel and others), verbal competence (G. Bogin, Z. Rumyantseva and others).

The issues of building foreign linguistic competence are in the area of expertise of G. Bakayev, O. Borysenko, I. Zuyenok, V. Ivanishcheva, O. Tarnopolsky, T. Trukhanov, O. Galchenko and others.

The hallmark of the national competence-oriented scientific discourse is a terminological polymorphism, this fact greatly complicates the process of implementing a new educational paradigm into the practice of teaching foreign languages.

The **goal** of this study is to determine some of the most critical aspects in the competence-centered educational concept, implemented in the Ukrainian post-secondary education.

Material and methods. The research methodology is stipulated by a competency-based terminological framework, which is among the most pressing educational research challenges. Consequently, there built up a set of methods for the present study: system, terminological, comparative and historical approaches.

Results and discussion. Transcontinental financial and economic shifts, the globalization of social systems, large-scale demographic changes, the crystallization of cultural and ethnic traditions, the expansion of emigration space, religious, trade, geopolitical conflicts and clashes, boundary changes, regime changes, state collapse, the remaking of world order and the threat of mutual annihilation in the all-out megaton warfare – all this constitutes the modern global landscape. Such a radically new historical configuration, which has emerged over the past few decades, significantly transforms the national and supranational institutions, provokes the processes of the implementation, incorporation, diffusion of basic institutional framework and concepts. This is particularly true for education, wherein the scientific and pedagogical, humanitarian pundit quarters are seeking to formulate and develop approaches which largely could meet the demands, challenges and realities of the era. Obviously, there is an emerging establishment of educational paradigms to be the base for framing the strategy aimed at upbringing, learning and developing personality in the 21st century.

The semantic dominant idea, ideological core of the new educational paradigm, especially within the European civilization, is a competency-based approach. The fact that the position of competency-based education is centered towards the other, in some way fringe, educational areas and schools, is well-founded. First, competency-based knowledge space is integrative as it consists of cross-integrated, interdependent innovative and traditional tools and organizational pedagogical attitudes and mechanisms, aimed at meeting specific challenges, put forward by any given social and economic system. In this case, the purpose and the derivative tasks simulate selecting adequate strategies and resource, set the amplitude of pedagogical research. Second, the base ideologeme of competency-based education is dichotomic: its mainstay is formed by principles, quite polar in many ways: on the one hand, creating psychological conditions for the comfortable self-realization of an individual, on the other hand, ensuring the individual's pragmatic interests, public status and willingness to meet the needs of the age. Therefore, third, a competency-based educational doctrine is dialectical; it provides for the openness of competency-based knowledge space, that makes it possible to naturally implement educational innovations caused and correlated by socio-economic and many other processes: a common educational environment refers to the open society mythologem.

Meanwhile, as each innovative trend, competency-based

learning has major shortcomings that generates a lot of questions. These questions are quite natural and explicable: the era of the intensive formation of a relatively new educational ideology poses a multitude of problems.

In this connection, it is necessary to solve a number of challenges, including:

- identifying the complex of strategically valuable contradictions and problems relevant to a competency-based approach;
- finding proto-competence sources presented in a historiographical retrospective review;
- defining a concept of "human competence" as a fundamental dominant for teaching and learning activities;
- presenting a universal competency-based knowledge model, based on the principle of authenticity;
- designating the effective parameters of competence-centered foreign language learning in the Ukrainian post-secondary education.

In this context, the scientific inquiry is determined not so much by the need to generalize the most problematic segments in a competency-based approach as by the necessity to develop a new paradigm for competency-based learning, that would have no key paradoxes and inconsistencies.

Most likely, on a mid-term horizon (perhaps, during 20-30 years) the need for cultivating a competency-based knowledge ideology in Western countries and Ukraine is unlikely to be revised, as the strategy for arranging humanitarian, economic and social processes involves increasing the capabilities of competence-oriented education.

Since Ukraine has become a sovereign state, there emerged a requirement for updating all the institutional structures in order to bring them into line with European standards. Therefore, since the beginning of the 1990s the intensive development of educational model that would meet the new requirements has been under heavy development. The period from 1991 to the early 21st century was determined by the formation of stable interest to the innovations in education, among the other things, to the Western European concept of competence. During those years the awareness of the need to choose the most optimal pedagogical paradigm was developed. The scientific and expert findings resulted in the fact that the competency-based education seemed to be the best option for the rapprochement of Ukraine with the European Union. Thus, by the close of the twentieth century the prospect for the reorientation of the educational system of Ukraine had been drawn up. However, soon it turned out that the process of implementing the competency-based learning ideas in Ukraine would be rather difficult, primarily due to the unstable scientific and theoretical background and contradictory experience. It emerged that the competence-oriented approach relevant to the western educational environment was conceptually polymorphic as well: the declarative attitudes of the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the other European authorities induced mixed interpretations throughout the world. All this seems to be in conflict with the concept of global peace and is not answerable to the model of the Common Education Space.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in Ukraine, which actualized the competence-based ideology in education later than the other European countries did, there

significantly sharpened the complex of "innate" features, peculiar to this approach:

– **The absence of a dominant competency-based constant.** Such a pedagogy, which is based on the common and very contradictory ideas of the competency-based strategy of upbringing, training and developing a personality, is out of structural rigor, defined by the principle of logocentrism, that is the existence of the center (nucleus) and the periphery. Therefore, there observed a competency-based knowledge polymorphism in the modern pedagogy. Its main feature is in the theoretical and practical prevalence of diverse concepts combined by the notion of competency / competence. The analysis of the competency-oriented of education in Europe and America has shown significant differences in the interpretation and practical implementation of the idea of competency-based learning. Currently, in order to standardize definitions and their interpretations, pedagogical ideologies, tools and techniques one should find out a central competency-based knowledge constant, which could be the conceptual core of education construct.

– **The discontinuity of conceptual framework.** The second contradiction issue from the first one, it means that the competency-based learning theory is polycentric, that's why there is no conceptual dominant in it. After all, the original idea of the competence-based learning model being conditioned by the idea of developing an active, pragmatically motivated and, in the broad sense, goal-oriented personality is unsubstantiated, it casts some doubt, and therefore, it hardly can be taken as an ideological constant. In addition, the activity pragmatic approach is nothing new. The various civilizations took the triad of education – knowledge – activity, a priori, as a major educational platform.

Nowadays the polymorphism of interpreting a competency-based model primarily correlates to the different social aspects. The remarkable thing is that the socio-economic organization of the countries of Western and Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, is polar in many respects. Each country works out the requirements, organically being in keeping with the national interests. Within this framework, the point at issue is about an international and, therefore heterogeneous, competence superconcept. In the other words, it should be assumed that the competence superconcept contains a great many subconcepts, often opposite in their content. The contradiction lies in the fact that creating a unified educational competency-based educational model is quite questionable: civilizations and people actualize their own vision of education development options. Then again, the tendency towards creating a consistent competency-based learning framework in the Union is illustrative. Therefore, the synergy of theoretical research, practical efforts, traditions and trends may form the competence educational core of Europe in the nearest future. Currently, the national education system needs for some adjustment concerning the competence-based approach conformity with the national-cultural and socio-economic peculiarities of Ukraine, the psycho-mental characteristics of people and society.

– **Interpretation crisis.** The polycentrism and discontinuity of a competence educational model can hardly be regarded as irresistible contradictions. It is more

likely referred to the mode containing potentially both a positive and negative scenario. On the one hand, the benefit is the openness of the system, reckoning the synchronous articulation of various educational subconcepts, or conceptual centers, wherein the explicit or implicit dialogical relations are sporadically established. After all, this or that relatively completed theoretical idea is a kind of scientifically represented research subject focus, that is no more than a certain point of view (who speaks, when, where, what for? etc). The dialogue between the "centers of vision" naturally produces the creation of new, original competence subconcepts. It promotes the expansion and deepening of the competency framework. However, on the other hand, polycentrism in the comprehension, perception and the use of the competency-based approach is the very stumbling block which leads the academic and pedagogical, psychological and philosophical thought to the infinite sense-making in the concept of competence. For this very reason the idea of competency-based learning, as an exclusive educational paradigm, becomes obsolete. The manifold and multi-level scientific discourse makes for intelligible amorphousness, wherein the constantly increasing and ever-growing abstract speculative thought loses touch with the most important things – the holistic view of the world and the demands of society. As a result building the competence pedagogy becomes sporadic, as it is randomized and uncertain. Therefore, the massively increased range of interpretations, scientifically developed definitions, psychological excursions and philosophical digressions distractions becomes critical, reluctant to interpretation crisis.

In fact, there is no definite interpretation of the concepts of competency and competence in the modern pedagogical science; among other things, it is proved by the analysis of reference materials, dictionaries, which summarize the common approaches to the interpretation of the key terms: "*Competence* ... is awareness, literacy, credibility. *Competency* ... is the range of powers of any organization, institution or entity; the range of issues in which a person has certain powers, knowledge and experience" [4, p. 282].

According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language: "Competent – 1. Who has sufficient knowledge in any field; well informed, intelligent; qualified. 2. Who has certain powers; fully legitimate, sovereign. Competency – 1. Familiarity. 2. The range of powers of any organization, institution or entity [1, p. 445].

Meanwhile, M. Golovan notes, that "competency" is used in English language references as synonymous with "competence" [2, p. 225].

I. Sekret considers the ambiguity in definitions to cause the unreasonable use of the term "competence" instead of the term "competency" by the national scientists [3, p. 254].

It can be said that in the domestic research practice using any fundamental terms is arbitrary. In this context, the most superficial analysis is enough to find out not only the conflict, but considerably the crisis of interpretations. Indeed, the various interpretations of basic concepts demonstrate the substantial range of differences: some authors come from a pragmatic approach, others proceed from the psychological one, and still others prefer the historical and philosophical approach with the elements of psychology; there are those who liken the traditional theory of building "skills, competence, expertise" (SCE) to the theory of competency-based education as well as those who classify open access information deducing an abstract postulate.

Conclusions and prospects. Hence, two aspects, showing the fundamental essence of the terminological, inherently epistemological, inconsistencies, should be emphasized: a) the contradictory interpretation of the basic concepts of "competency" and "competence"; b) the contradictory interpretation of "key" competencies – communicative, foreign linguistic, cross-cultural, socio-cultural, professional, noospheric, legal etc.

In the future, the concept of foreign linguistic competence should be consistently deduced from the global structure: a) human competence as the super-concept of competency-based education; b) the authentically-cognitive structure of an individual as the reflection of the innate competence; c) the system of competencies; d) foreign linguistic competence as the component of competency-based social continuum.

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Концептуальный объем понятия «компетентность» как научно-педагогическая проблема

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Аннотация. В статье анализируются наиболее актуальные аспекты формирования образовательной компетентностно-центричной парадигмы. Отмечаются некоторые проблемы и противоречия, критически значимые при формировании компетентностей. Акцентируется внимание на необходимости приведения компетентностно-ориентированной модели в соответствие с национально-культурными и социально-экономическими условиями Украины. Определяется перспектива эффективного развития компетентностно-направленной педагогики.

Ключевые слова: концепция, компетентностный подход, языковая компетентность, иноязычная компетентность.