

CORE COMPETENCIES OF CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY TUTOR IN UKRAINE, USA AND EU COUNTRIES WITHIN DIGITAL EDUCATIONAL REALM

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Abstract: The article has analyzed the problems of teaching and learning at a higher educational institution, reveals the specifics of the teacher's professional activities, the components of his or her teaching skills and deals with the issue on the necessary competencies of the teacher with regard to providing a favorable and successful learning environment for diverse students. The emphasis has been made on the specifics of teaching, research, and professional development of the teaching staff. Also, the importance of creating the appropriate conditions for the full realization of the creative potential of teachers, ensuring their professional development, has also been emphasized. In particular, during the research, we have come up with the outcomes that the main provisions is an active involvement of everyone in the activity, interpersonal communication, stimulation of activity, support of the initiative. The comfortable environment is provided when there is the lack of coercion, pressure, and bias, but the presence of a positive setting, providing opportunities for free consideration, expressing own opinions, self-affirmation, respect for the person, recognition of the value of everyone, their views, achievements, and the absence of criticism, abuses, convictions. In frames of our research, the main competencies needed for university tutors working in modern conditions of university education with digital tool application were defined. The results of the pedagogical survey concluded that it is very important for the Ukrainian higher educational institutions to take on the best practices of the EU countries regarding the successful organization of the system of work with the teaching staff. The high level of democracy, supporting of a wide range of academic freedoms, and favorable working conditions enable university tutors to fully realize their creative potential, identify initiative and achieve the high level of academic and scientific activities. Moreover, the successful experience of the American centers of pedagogical skill has been described in order to borrow it by the higher education system of Ukraine to ensure the development of the professional and creative potential of the teaching staff of universities.

Keywords: Digital education, EU countries, Professional competencies, Modern university tutor, Professional development, Professional profile components, International vocational upgrading.

1 Introduction

The priority task of education in the 21st century involves focusing on the interests of the individual, which would correspond to the modern trends of social development, creation of prerequisites for the enhancement of people's creative abilities, formation of the ability to adapt to changes occurring in society [5; 9; 10]. Such tasks require the transformation of stereotypes regarding the formation of professional competencies, changes in value orientations, and the emergence of new abilities of educators. But no matter what reforms take place in the education system, usually in the end they come down to a specific performer – the teacher.

Competence is understood as a range of issues in which a person manifests appropriate understanding not only during the study of the subject, but also in frames of non-formal education, as a result of the influence of the environment. The main documents on education refer to the training of a new generation teacher within the framework of the competence approach [28; 30].

In particular, in the new law of Ukraine "On Education", competence is declared as a dynamic combination of knowledge, abilities, skills, ways of thinking, views, values, and other personal qualities, which determines a person's ability to successfully socialize, conduct professional and/or further educational activities.

Professional competence is a basic characteristic of a specialist's activity; it includes both substantive (knowledge) and procedural (skills) components and has essential features, namely mobility of knowledge, flexibility of methods of professional activity and critical thinking. Based on this, the following below-mentioned understanding of professional and pedagogical competence is proposed.

The professional and pedagogical competence of a teacher is a complex, multi-level stable structure of his mental traits, which are formed as a result of the integration of experience, theoretical knowledge, practical skills, strong personal qualities and define essential features: mobility, flexibility, and creativity of thinking [7; 35; 39].

The competence approach in education arose as a special direction in the late 1960s – early 1970s. In 1965, the American linguist N. Chomsky introduced the term "competence" into the conceptual apparatus of linguistics in the context of the problems of generative grammar [14; 19; 22].

Pedagogical competence is the unity of a teacher's theoretical and practical readiness to carry out pedagogical activities. Many scientists were interested in the problem of pedagogical competence. A competent teacher is seen as a specialist who has thorough knowledge of any subject of the school curriculum; his pedagogical activity is considered as a creative process [8; 20].

The purpose of the article is to study core competencies required for modern university tutors in Ukraine and EU countries (as well as the USA), on the governmental and legal levels, which are aimed at formation of individual professional readiness for effective cross-cultural interaction. In particular, the main tasks of the ongoing study are to highlight top priority professional university tutor profile components sufficient for successful teaching activity in the digital space [15; 18; 22].

2 Method

In the initial factual material description, it is worth mentioning the set of theoretical methods applied in current research. We actively used the "concretization method", that meant the mental research process involved giving the subject concrete expression. During concretization, pedagogical concepts are enriched with new features, since this method is aimed at highlighting the development of the subject as a whole system. To be more precise, the description of digital tools was followed with a set of practical online tasks for students to be performed.

The "generalization method" was used as well. By its essence, it is a logical operation, as a result of which there is a transition from a singular to a general, from a less general to a more general judgment, knowledge, assessment; in particular, we studied various modern approaches and digital tools, after which we presented the most effective ones.

The "abstraction method" was applied as well, which is resorted to if it is necessary to single out the subject of research from the set of signs and properties of the phenomenon. That is, abstraction is a process of mental distraction of the researcher from any signs, qualities of the pedagogical phenomenon, from the phenomenon itself in order to study it more deeply. Abstraction method helped us to single out the main advantages and disadvantages of distance education and digital instruments.

"Competence" in translation from Latin means a range of issues in which a person is well-versed, has knowledge and experience [3; 7]. The question arises: What qualities are necessary for a person in any professional activity? Some authors cite the opinion of J. Raven, the author of the book "Competence in Modern Society", who, based on his research, answers this question as follows [10; 13; 22]:

- The ability to work independently without constant guidance;
- The ability to take responsibility on own initiative;
- The ability to take the initiative without asking others whether it should be done;
- Willingness to notice problems and look for ways to solve them;
- The ability to analyze new situations and apply existing knowledge for such analysis;
- The ability to get along with others;
- The ability to acquire any knowledge on own initiative;
- The ability to make decisions based on sound judgment.

A teacher's pedagogical competence is the unity of his theoretical and practical readiness to carry out pedagogical activities. Many scientists were interested in the problem of pedagogical competence (Figure 1).

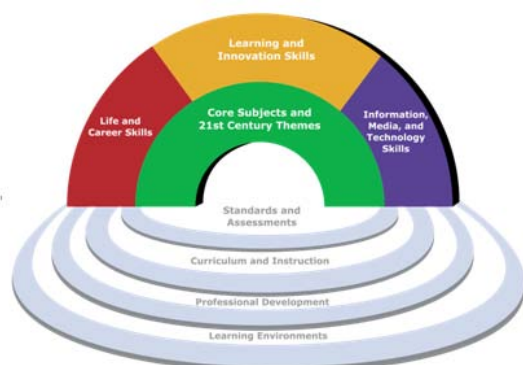


Figure 1. P21 Framework for 21st century learning.

Some researchers believe that a competent teacher organizes pedagogical activity so that it is aimed at obtaining a realized result [11; 15], while others consider competence as a set of knowledge, abilities, and skills that are needed for the successful performance of functions of education, upbringing, and development of a child's personality [18; 32]. Also, there is an opinion that a professionally competent person is the one who:

- Successfully solves the tasks of education and upbringing, prepares a graduate with psychological qualities desirable for society;
- Satisfied with the profession;
- Achieves the desired results in the development of students' personalities;
- Has and realizes the perspective of own professional development;
- Is open for continuous professional training;
- Enriches professional experience thanks to personal creative contribution;
- Is socially active in society;
- Devoted to the teaching profession, strives to maintain its honor and dignity, professional ethics even in difficult conditions;
- Ready for qualitative and quantitative assessment of own work, knows how to do it [23; 39; 40; 42].

In the theory and practice of a teacher's professional activity, the main components of professional and pedagogical competence are singled out: ethical attitudes of a teacher, a system of psychological and pedagogical knowledge, a system of knowledge in the field of subject, general erudition, means of mental and practical actions, professional and personal qualities [11; 25; 28].

Moreover, it is worth distinguishing between professional training of a specialist and his professional competence. The first is the process of mastering the necessary knowledge and skills, while the second is the result of this process. The professional competence of a teacher is interpreted as the integration of the appropriate level of his professional knowledge, abilities, skills,

and personal qualities that are revealed as a result of his activities [12; 17; 21].

In the opinion of Macaro et al. [22], every teacher can master pedagogical skill, provided that he works purposefully on self-improvement. It is formed on the basis of practical experience.

The analysis of world trends in the field of pedagogical education confirms the growing demands for pedagogical professionalism and personal qualities of the teacher.

According to scientists, the main problems faced by teachers in this millennium are the following [30, 46]:

- Constant complication of the content of education, guaranteeing a high level of educational standards;
- Complication of education problems;
- Continuous mastering of progressive learning and education technologies;
- Solving complex professional and pedagogical problems that require the integration of knowledge, practical abilities and skills on sciences related to pedagogy, such as philosophy, psychology, medicine, economics, cybernetics, etc.;
- Work in a unified information environment, which involves the rational use of information technologies in the educational process.

All this can be done only by a teacher with high professional competence, developed creative abilities, a high level of intelligence, erudition, and the ability for continuous education.

3 Results

The teacher is a key player in the learning process, whose mission is to provide a supportive and effective learning environment for students' successful adaptation and training in the university. The professional role of teachers was investigated by Selvi (2010), Nimi (2006), Seeberg (2012), Mansilla & Jackson (2011), Sperandio (2010), and others. The importance of the teacher's intercultural competence in a multicultural environment was considered by Stewart (2007), Sperandio (2007), Villegas & Lucas (2002). Teaching problems in diverse groups were the subject of the study of Vergheese (2010), Lyon, Bond & Scudamore (2010), Seeberg (2012), and others. Despite a large number of scientific studies on the problems of pedagogy and psychology of higher education (G. Ball, S. Vitvytska, N. Guziy, M. Yevtukh, A. Aleksyuk, A. Hluzman, S. Smirnov, P. Pidkasystyi), in which the authors analyzed the problems of teaching at a higher educational institution, revealed the specifics of the teachers' professional activities, the components of their pedagogical skills, in our opinion, in modern scientific literature the issue of the necessary competencies of the teacher to provide a favorable and successful training process in the diverse environment for all students of different cultural backgrounds is not enough examined [23; 33; 39; 41].

Knowledge of the peculiarities of preparation, formation, professional and pedagogical activity of teachers contributes to the implementation of positive experience of teaching and learning in democratic environment in Ukrainian universities [45]. Our goal is to reveal the main competencies of an advanced teacher of the university to emphasize the specifics of his educational, scientific activity and professional growth, etc. According to such Ukrainian researchers, as G. Ball, T. Koshmanova, M. Krasovytskyi, A. Sbruyeva, and others, the American model of education, which is characterized by openness, flexibility, democracy and innovation, is effective, efficient, and competitive in the context of contemporary educational challenges. The proper quality of the providing educational services in the university education system of the USA is enabled, first of all, by creating the appropriate conditions for the full realization of creative potential by the teachers, ensuring their professional development, etc. Academic freedom provides teachers with wider opportunities for developing new programs, for example, offering new courses in the curriculum, opening new laboratories or teaching and

research departments that help to create trustingly demanding relationships between students and teachers with an emphasis on their mutual responsibility for learning outcomes and adherence to pedagogical ethics [4; 16; 30; 34].

By analyzing the works of scientists, the following key components of professional competence can be determined.

1. Information competence, which involves the possession of information technologies, the ability to process various types of information. Among them, there are the skills and abilities to work with printed sources, the ability to obtain information from other sources, to process it in accordance with the goals and objectives of the pedagogical process.
2. Communicative competence is the ability to engage in communication, to be understood, to carry out communication without restrictions. These skills help to understand others (students, teachers, parents).
3. Productive competence is the ability to work, get results, make decisions and be responsible for them. The majority of scientists put productive competence in the first place among the key competencies of a teacher.
4. Autonomy for competence is the ability for self-development, creativity, self-determination, self-education, competitiveness. After all, a teacher first of all learns himself, he is an eternal student.
5. Moral competence is the willingness, ability, and need to live according to traditional moral standards [15; 19; 24; 45].
6. Psychological competence is the ability to use psychological means of learning in the organization of interaction in educational activities.
7. Subject competence, the content of which includes the possession of certain means of learning in the field of the educational process (specialty). This is a set of abilities and skills necessary to stimulate the activity of both individual students and the team as a whole. It includes the ability to choose the right style and tone in communication, manage students' attention and pace of activity [15; 19; 24].
8. Social competence is the ability to live and work with others.
9. Mathematical competence is the ability to work with numbers and numerical information.
10. Personal qualities of a teacher (this is also one of the most important components of professional competence) – benevolence, sensitivity, balance, sophistication, tolerance, reflection, humanity [15; 19; 24].

Therefore, the concepts of “competencies” are much broader than the concepts of “knowledge, abilities, skills”, because they include the following important elements:

- Personality' orientation (motivation);
- The personality's ability to overcome stereotypes, sense of problem, manifestation of principles, flexibility of thinking;
- Character of the individual - independence, purposefulness, willpower [7; 19; 28].

It should be noted that modern scientists are able to consider the professional competence of a teacher as a set of three constituent components – subject-technological, psychological-pedagogical, and general cultural (Figure 2).

The main indicators of a teacher's pedagogical competence are, first of all:

- Personal qualities, especially transformative and psychological;
- Awareness of the teacher's role in educating a citizen, a patriot;
- Continuous improvement of general and professional culture;
- Search activity of the teacher;
- Mastery of pedagogical research methods;
- Construction of own pedagogical experience;
- Effectiveness of the educational process;

- Active pedagogical activity aimed at transforming the personality of the student and teacher [26; 30; 33].

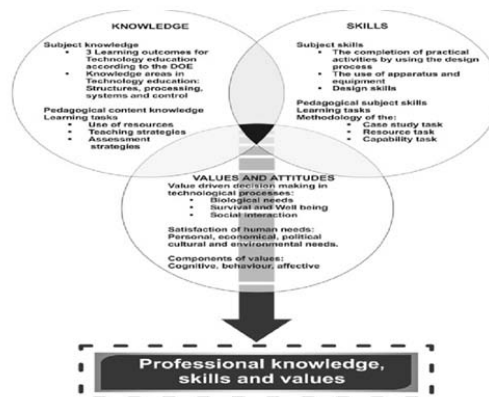


Figure 2. Components of the University Tutor Professional Profile.

Investigating the experience of EU countries regarding enhancing modern university tutors professional profile, we also have found that the experience of the American Centers for Pedagogical Excellence and Centers for teaching and learning have developed a lot of programs concentrated on improving pedagogical skills and professional development of teaching staff at universities. They are very valuable for implementation in Ukrainian higher education establishments. Among their main functions, there are: consultations of teachers, departments, administrators on problems of methodological support, organization of educational process, relations between teachers and students, between administrators and teachers, etc.; introduction of new educational technologies, technical support for the educational process; organization of courses of pedagogical skill and support of young teachers; conducting scientific and methodical conferences; development of methodical documentation to help teachers. The Centers also hold annual grants contests for support of the development of the methodological and educational process, the introduction of advanced technologies and training of teachers [39; 40].

4 Discussion

In view of the above, it can be argued that the professional competence of a teacher should be understood as the search activity, when based on the knowledge base, abilities, skills, and conscious understanding of his role in society, continuous self-improvement and self-development of the individual, providing the optimal option for organizing the educational process with the aim of forming a creative personality [1; 7; 8].

The main task of the teaching staff is to help the student to achieve success in the adaptive and academic process. The main attention, first of all, is paid to the fact that the teacher is obliged to know his or her subject well, transfer the gained knowledge, skills, and experience to others, to carry out individual and group studies for students to improve their general development, evaluate learning outcomes, manage and control the learning process, to determine the objectives of educational programs and analyze them, to do the analysis of own activities, as well as to promote and contribute to effective work of the institution [3; 11].

Qualitative educational services in the United States, primarily being provided by qualitative training of teachers, the insurance of appropriate conditions for the full realization of their creative potential in the system of university education, are characterized by openness, democracy, innovation, and constructivism (Figure 3). [3; 4; 22].

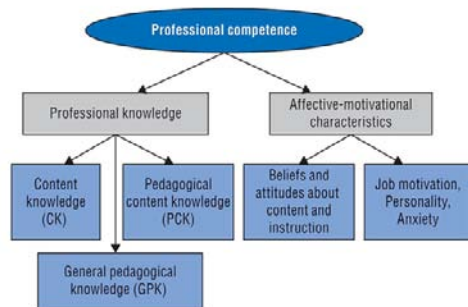


Figure 3. Professional Competences of the Modern University Tutor.

Mostly teachers (instructors) are responsible for the organizing an educational process, ensuring a productive educational environment and effective teaching, therefore, they must have a high level of professional competence. Competence is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and experience needed by a person to be successful in a career [9; 17].

The general understanding of the teacher's competences covers three areas: competence in a particular field, pedagogical competencies, and multicultural competencies. Among them, as the main components of the teacher's competence, the following ones are named: scientific field competence, competence in the research work, competence in the development and implementation of training programs, competence in lifelong learning, multicultural competence, socio-cultural competence, emotional competence, communicative competence, competence in information and communication technologies, managerial competence, and ecological competence [17; 26].

Some competencies are very important for a modern teacher, such as: competence in a certain area of knowledge, competence in research, preparation and implementation of programs, life-long learning, socio-cultural and multicultural competencies, emotional, communicative, information and communication technologies (ICT) competence, managerial and ecological competences (Figure 4). These competences influence on values, behavior, communication, goals and practices, academic process, and professional development support [34; 41].

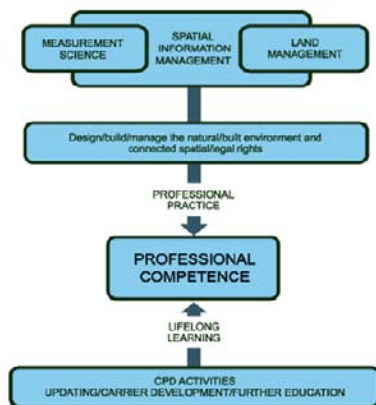


Figure 4. Professional Competence Model.

The scientific field competence is the teacher's main competence, which covers academic knowledge in a particular field of science and ensures the performance of professional duties [11]. The competence in the development and implementation of training programs covers program development and implementation, taking into account its contents, approaches to development, planning of the teaching process and monitoring with evaluation, etc. [23; 28].

Therefore, the main ability of a teacher (an instructor) is to interest students in the subject, motivate them to study hard,

create a favorable environment in the classroom, apply active teaching methods, differentiated learning, communicative approach to learning, taking into account the individual characteristics of each student, to operate with relevant material useful in life and future career, use modern technology during the training sessions. As for the personality characteristics of the teacher, students value most of all openness, kindness, understanding, readiness to help in learning, sense of humor, tolerance, patience, respect, enthusiasm, and multiculturalism [5; 23; 34].

It should be noted that the United States has a great experience in training teachers, which indicates that among all other competencies required for the profession, multicultural competence is one of the most important. This competence requires teachers (instructors, advisors) to be gained in practice, but not traditionally (in classrooms or based on information sources about different cultures of the world). It is important for avoiding prejudices about one or another culture, its customs and values. In this case, computer technologies are usually helpful for conducting international online conferences, video lessons on a common theme (historical or cultural) to get to know the point of view of representatives of different cultural and ethnic groups [13; 17; 24].

The American Council on Education has determined that teachers must have the necessary professional knowledge, multicultural competence, and the ability to open students the global world. According to it, these qualities form judgment while communicating with people of different cultures alive or remotely through IT technology, and not only cognitively from information sources [39; 40; 44].

Universities of the United States have professional development schools, where teachers test different training strategies, techniques, and materials in multicultural student groups under the guidance of university advisors and instructors. The teacher has to be both a formal leader and a leader of a group.

As a rule, the teacher's business leadership is easy to achieve, but it is much more difficult to show emotional leadership depending on how proficient is the teacher in the influencing the group emotionally in order to establish an individual emotional contact with students. Therefore, the appearance of teachers, their behavior and willingness to give modern and actual knowledge to students is very important too.

5 Conclusion

Transformations that occur in almost all spheres of Ukrainian society' life, put forward new requirements for activity of the institutions of higher education, require educators to find new methods and technologies for training competitive specialists, capable of responding appropriately to challenges. Today, implementation of the distance learning system in institutions of higher education made it possible to solve the problem of providing quality education services in modern conditions. The research competence involves knowledge of research methodology, development and conducting researches. It promotes "cooperation with colleagues and other professionals interested in education and training, contributes to the research and development of the teacher himself" [22]. The lifelong learning competence means the teacher's responsibility for continuing professional development (Figure 5) [13].



Figure 5. Professional Development Skills for Modern University Tutor.

To sum up, to support qualitative educational services, among the main tasks of higher education of the 21st century, there are providing of the multicultural competence of students and teachers who work in a diverse environment. Moreover, intercultural competence should be reflected in curriculum programs (knowledge about different cultures and the ability to work in a diverse environment, intercultural experience, conflict solving, based on the plurality of thoughts, which cover different cultures). Teachers are called to educate in students tolerance to different cultures. The multicultural competence outlines knowledge of the sociocultural origin of students, beliefs, values, and traditions of different cultures, democracy and human rights, collective or group work organization, cooperation in the multicultural environment and social studies. The communicative competence covers examples of communication, the interaction between the teacher, students, social environment and educational topics. It is necessary for the usage of the language symbols, gestures, and professional language. The modern world is characterized by high technological development; therefore, for successful teaching and learning in a highly developed information society, modern university tutors need to apply technologies effectively for obtaining and analyzing the information they need, problem-solving and decision-making, communicative skills and collaboration, creativity development.

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Primary Paper Section: A

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