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COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH AND SOFT SKILLS IN MODERN EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM

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The article presents the results of the search for optimal forms of cooperation between teachers and students in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning. New realities require teachers to react quickly, make extraordinary decisions and take adequate action for the proper functioning of the education system. The expediency of using the competence approach and interactive teaching methods in the distance educational process is substantial. The dynamics of the use of e-learning elements in Ukrainian higher education institutions is trace in the dynamics, the advantages and disadvantages of this form of education are noted.

Modern education should ensure the formation and comprehensive development of a spiritually rich person who not only has a holistic system of scientific and practical knowledge, but also able to realize themselves according to their own aspirations and abilities, able to navigate the rapid flow of information, has a high culture of thought, social relations and communications. Therefore, one of the important tasks of education is the formation of soft skills. They help to achieve success in life, to find a reasonable balance between academic knowledge and practical skills. The peculiarities of soft skills formation during distance learning are clarify.

It is proposed to involve not only teachers, but also all stakeholders, first of all – students, from whom a lot of good advice can be heard. An example of a modern vision of the role of a teacher and a set of his/her qualities necessary for the successful organization of the educational process from the point of view of the student is presented. Such qualities include high level of knowledge, involvement in professional communities, ability to learn throughout life, use of the latest technologies, participation in social networks, stress resistance, ability to recover from stress, love of the profession and a certain sacrifice.

Key words: *information and communications technologies (ICTs), competency, competency-based approach, educational process, soft skills, e-learning.*

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КОМПЕТЕНТІСНИЙ ПІДХІД І SOFT SKILLS У СУЧАСНІЙ ОСВІТНІЙ ПАРАДИГМІ

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У статті представлено результати пошуку оптимальних форм співпраці викладачів і студентів в умовах пандемії COVID-19 та дистанційного навчання. Нові реалії вимагають педагогів швидкої реакції, неординарних рішень та адекватних дій для належного функціонування системи освіти. Обґрунтовано доцільність використання компетентнісного підходу й інтерактивних методів навчання в дистанційному освітньому процесі. У динаміці простежено використання елементів е-навчання в українських закладах вищої освіти, відзначено переваги й недоліки цієї форми навчання.

Сучасна освіта повинна забезпечити становлення й усебічний розвиток духовно багатой особистості, яка не лише володіє цілісною системою науково-практичних знань, а й спроможна реалізувати себе відповідно до власних прагнень і здібностей, уміє орієнтуватися в бурхливому інформаційному потоці, володіє високою культурою думки, суспільних взаємин і комунікації. Тому одним із важливих завдань освіти є формування soft skills. Саме вони допомагають досягти успіху в житті, віднайти розумний баланс між академічними знаннями й практичними вміннями. З'ясовано особливості формування soft skills під час дистанційного навчання.

До вирішення загальних освітніх проблем запропоновано залучати не лише педагогів, а й усіх стейкхолдерів, насамперед – здобувачів освіти, від яких можна почути багато слушних порад. Продемонстровано приклад сучасного бачення ролі педагога та сукупності його якостей, необхідних для успішної організації освітнього процесу, з погляду здобувача освіти. Серед таких якостей названо: високий рівень знань, залучення до професійних співтовариств, здатність до навчання упродовж життя, використання новітніх технологій, участь у соцмережах, стресостійкість, здатність до відновлення після стресу, любов до професії й певна жертвовність.

Ключові слова: інформаційно-комунікаційні технології (ІКТ), компетентність, компетентнісний підхід, освітній процес, soft skills, дистанційне навчання.

Introduction of the issue. Over a long period of time educational systems of the post-Soviet countries and Ukraine in particular functioned in the mode of searching the development route among the diversity of professional training paradigms. The traditional approaches (knowledge-centered, activity-based, complex, systemic) were replaced by new ones (learner-centered, personal and activity based, informational, ergonomic-contextual, situational etc.). The latter group contains a competency-based approach, which is defined as the object the research. Numerous studies carried out by T. Volobueva, D. Elkonin, I. Zymnia, T. Kovaliova, O. Pometun, A. Khutorskyi and many other scientists and practical educationalists, are devoted to its study and implementation. In the modern conditions the use of the competency-based approach in the

training of students, regardless of sphere of knowledge or education level, is being implemented, and makes possible to master an ability to solve complicated specialized tasks and practical problems, as well as to obtain skills, which enable an individual to use the acquired theoretical knowledge and methods in the conditions of uncertainty, using the information and communications capabilities to the full extent.

Nowadays, in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the humanity and the world educators have faced new challenges, which require unconventional approaches, quick reaction and reasonable response in order to ensure proper functioning of the educational system and further development of the society. For now, there is no developed algorithm of actions. It is being developed by

everyday interaction of all participants of the educational process. The educators are in constant search of optimal forms of cooperation with the students, they share their achievements and discuss the reasons of failures to avoid them in future.

Current state of the issue. The use of interactive learning, which presupposes the change in the form of interaction in the educational process, thus turning a student into an equal subject of cognitive activity, is also efficient in resolving the task. This aspect of the problem was studied by leading psychologists, didacticians, linguodidacticians (I. Bekh, Ye. Bondarevska, L. Varzatska, V. Kraievskyi, L. Pavlova, S. Podmazin, V. Sierykov, A. Fasolia, A. Khutorskyi, S. Yakymanska and other). Their studies substantiate the prospects of learner-oriented education aiming at establishing a creative atmosphere, natural approach to acquiring the material, introducing "live socializing" situations based on communication, perception, cooperation. Interactive pedagogical cooperation is one of the most perspective in the list allowing to freely choose methods, techniques, forms and means of teaching.

The outline of unresolved issues brought up in the article. The topicality of the research is determined by the fact that nowadays teaching, aimed primarily at developing a holistic, spiritually rich personality, forming his/her key competencies, discovering and realizing creative opportunities with respect to individual requirements of the students, therefore it is given a prominent role in today's market of educational services. Competency-based approach and interactive methods allow to solve the urgent task of education – the formation of soft skills. And to keep up with the time, the use of advances in the sphere of computer technologies must be an obligatory element of the educational

process, as far as a great part of educational process is held online.

Aim of the research is to define the role of competency-based approach and interactive methods of teaching in the educational process and in the formation of soft skills in the conditions of e-learning and systemic usage of the information communications technologies.

The following tasks were set to reach the aim of the research:

- to substantiate the reasonability of using the competency-based approach and interactive methods of teaching in the educational process;
- to define the peculiarities of soft skills formation in the conditions of e-learning;
- to illustrate some aspects of an educationalist's role in the educational process seen from the position of a learner.

The methodological basis of the research is represented by works of I. Bekh, Ye. Bondarevska, L. Varzatska, D. Elkonin, I. Zymnia, V. Kraievsky, L. Pavlova, S. Podmazin, O. Pometun, V. Sierykov, A. Fasolia, A. Khutorskyi, S. Yakymanska et al [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 8; 9].

Research methods. Taking into account the aim and objectives set in the study, the following methods of research were used: search method, theoretical analysis and synthesis, comparative method, definition of causal relationships, systematization, observation, survey.

Results and discussion. As it has been stated before, a competent specialist is a person aware of the latest information and communications technologies and able to consequently implement them in practice in order to ensure optimal resolution of the stated tasks. Thus, to prepare a requested specialist, the Ukrainian higher education establishments, as well as foreign ones, widely implement new information technologies in the educational process while preparing

specialists in different fields. The representatives of technical specialties form the forefront, though the tendency is getting widely involved in the process of training humanities majors. Systemic use of e-learning and latest information and communications technologies in Ukraine have recently encompassed a comparatively small area of the educational sphere. As we assume, despite possible financial and technical difficulties related to their implementation, one of the main reasons for such situation is conservatism as one of characteristic features of Ukrainian mentality, especially of older generation educationalists. The instructors are often difficult to persuade to use e-learning. The determinative counterarguments are inability to control those performing final tests and necessity to master technologies to establish e-learning system (in this case its systemic character is stressed, as far as its elements have been used by most educationalists). However, the things have changed in 2020. The educationalists started to actively implement new programming products and widely use their features in their work.

Understanding the topicality and efficiency of interdisciplinary research, reflected in, for example, introduction of specialties like "Applied Linguistics", is an important aspect of engaging students-philologists in using information and communications technologies. After receiving such an education, graduates may hold positions of computer systems engineer, computer systems constructor and related positions of programming engineer, scientific and technical information engineer, bibliographer, archivist, work in scientific and research institutions and translation organizations, conduct analytical and synthetic text processing, work in mass media agencies etc. [7: 43-44].

Although recently the use of e-learning has been considered an uncommon, but in prospect effective marketing vehicle aimed at maintaining the competitive level of the establishments offering such educational services, nowadays it is a necessity, any educational institution can function without.

The mentioned form of teaching is most widely represented in distant education. Its usage was earlier explained by mutual benefit of representatives of the educational process. The advantages for learners are: an opportunity to get knowledge from the best specialists in the field according to an individual schedule and in a suitable time for both participants, to save money etc. The advantages for educational establishments include: an opportunity to involve highly-qualified staff from other educational establishments, expanding the audience of listeners; to effectively use the achievements of experienced but elderly specialists unable to deliver their knowledge due to their health status; economy of the classroom space and expenses per one student and other discomforts related to human factor (for instance, medical conditions of instructors, necessity to comply with full-time and part-time schedules or coordinate schedules in different faculties). During the quarantine it is the best way to reach access to high-quality education.

Educational establishments offer different ways of organizing online-learning: real-time virtual classes (the most popular services are Google Classroom, Zoom, Moodle); video content of courses with possibility of receiving online consultations from a specialist instructor; libraries of e-courses for independent learning. And the most popular forms of work are online-classes, video lectures, webinars and web quests. Creation of a forum for e-learning participants, such as in courses within the Prometheus project,

as we consider, is an important consolidating and stimulating element that allows to feel support or get advice from colleagues.

In conditions when the amount of time scheduled for lectures and practical classes in higher educational establishments is steadily decreasing, organization of independent training of students for acquisition of knowledge becomes especially important. The use of ICT and e-learning also greatly contributes to its establishment. Modern education should ensure formation and comprehensive development of a spiritually rich person, possessing a holistic system of scientific and practical knowledge; being able to realize themselves according to their own aspirations and abilities, to navigate the rapid flow of information; having a high culture of thought, social relations and communication. Therefore, despite the significant weight of the remote component in the educational process, one should mind that a person is a social being, living in the world of communications. People spend most of the time on communication, which is a natural human need. To succeed, one must be able to communicate, reach understanding with other members of the society. Sometimes it is not easy at all, because communication is an extremely complex and delicate process. There are often misunderstandings and failures, for example, due to total or partial lack of communication skills to behave in a particular situation, or lack of self-control due to inability to cope with anxiety, aggression, or inability to understand the position or true motives of the interlocutor. Therefore, every person learns to communicate throughout life, gaining experience, which, unfortunately, is often based on mistakes and disappointments. Thus, formation of soft skills is one of important tasks of education. They help to achieve success in life, to establish a reasonable balance between academic

knowledge and practical skills. Not surprisingly, the communicative competency is always treated as one of the major ones. This competence forms the basis of formation of a linguistic persona – a person who is a native speaker, inheriting language from his ancestors or foreign one; possesses linguistic knowledge and a high level of communicative skills and techniques, cares about the beauty and development of his / her own speech; is able to realize intentions and cope with difficulties that inevitably emerge in the process of communication. In order to implement these tasks at Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, the Educational and Research Institute of Foreign Philology offers a course “Communicative Strategies and the Ukrainian Language for Everyday”, aimed at forming a system of knowledge about communication strategies, their effective application, as well as to consolidate the skills to use modern Ukrainian literary language for realization of communicative intentions.

The main objectives of studying the educational component "Communicative Strategies and the Ukrainian Language For Everyday" are: to solidify students' theoretical knowledge in the field of communication and communicative linguistics; to develop an ability to plan and adjust one's speech behavior in different communicative situations; to learn to use different tactics to implement the chosen communication strategy; to competently and appropriately use the Ukrainian literary language to realize one's communicative intentions, including those in professional activities; to outline the peculiarities of constructing a speech; to deepen information about speech etiquette in various spheres of human activity; to learn to effectively establish language contact, break down communicative barriers, solve communicative conflicts with the help of different strategies; to deepen knowledge

about the business letter and scientific styles of the Ukrainian language.

In the process of teaching the course in accordance with the requirements of the educational and professional program the following general competencies are formed: an ability to communicate in the state language orally and in writing; an ability to think abstractly, analyze and synthesize information; skills of using information and communications technologies; an ability to communicate with representatives of other professional groups of different levels (with experts from other fields of knowledge / types of economic activity); an ability to conduct research at an appropriate level; ability to generate new ideas (creativity). The special competencies are: an ability to apply advanced knowledge of the chosen philological specialization to solve professional problems; an ability to freely use special terminology in the chosen field of philological research; an awareness of the role of expressive, emotional, logical language means to obtain the planned pragmatic result; an ability to compress texts of different content and genre in state and foreign languages, highlighting basic information, using different methods of abstracting and annotation; an ability to effectively apply translation transformations (compression, compensation, generalization, concretization, antonymic translation, descriptive translation, logical development etc.) to achieve equivalence in translation of texts of various content and genres in state and foreign languages.

When teaching this and similar courses, it is important to use tasks of varying complexity to determine the degree of competence of a student, which can become indicators for self-analysis of the level of mastering the program material. Fulfillment or non-fulfillment of all tasks suggested for each topic, allows students to independently establish the level of

reflection, thereby confirming or denying the correctness of the previous self-assessment, concerning formation of competence on relevant issues: sufficient (student is able to perform all tasks of normal level of difficulty: to answer theoretical questions, questions for self-control, problem questions, to complete home tasks, exercises, tests, solve linguistic problems, create a presentation), medium (except for tasks of normal level of difficulty, the student is able to perform most of the tasks of a high level of complexity), high (the student was able to perform all the tasks suggested). If the student is not able to complete all the tasks of the normal level of difficulty, the level is considered insufficient.

The peculiarity of learning in the new conditions is that it brings the latest ICT, involving students in various activities (communication, problem solving, discussions etc.), to the fore. To improve the effectiveness of the learning process, one should implement case technology (a set of cases – text, audiovisual and multimedia teaching materials), and ideally – taking into account the requirements of adaptive learning, when the program is based on the optimal level of complexity for each user.

There has been no answer how to optimally organize the process of online learning with minimal losses and maximum benefits yet. The whole world is in the process of searching. In our opinion, the most important point here is to involve not only educationalists, but also all stakeholders, and above all – students, who can give useful advice as to how resolve the problem. To this end, various questionnaires, interviews and surveys are conducted in Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University. At the level of the university and institutes, questionnaires on the degree of satisfaction with the quality of online education are held; in our case – an essay-survey on the topic: “I want my instructor to know” is suggested. A student may address an instructor

teaching a particular discipline, or instructors in general to express his/her vision of the situation, even to share personal experiences. Here is an example of such an answer-advice delivered by a student of the group 13Md-Fang (date of the survey 12/07/2020): "Everyone chooses his/her own way in life. One of the most difficult ways is that every day is planned by a Teacher".

In order to be a modern and requested professional in the field of education, a true educationalist should meet many criteria and have a considerable stock of knowledge. How would you describe a modern teacher? Today I want to share some skills and attributes modern teachers, in my opinion, should possess.

To be a member of professional associations. Teachers should consider personal and professional development as a continuous process. One of the best ways to participate in personal and professional development is networking, meaning interacting with other professionals in the field by attending educational conferences and events or joining professional online communities for educationalists. Communicating with other teachers is a great way to share ideas about different ways of teaching and other useful tips.

To keep learning. Being a teacher does not mean you have to stop improving yourself. As in any other profession, if you are a teacher, there is always something to learn. Modern teachers must be inquisitive and active in acquiring new skills and knowledge.

To be able to adapt to new technologies. Modern teachers have to be ready to master new technologies and different ways to improve teaching and learning. Technology is constantly evolving and changing, so teachers have to be flexible, able to adapt and be aware of changes in technologies that are capable of supporting education.

Moreover, most students possess technologies, meaning that interest in

different technologies will undoubtedly help you to interact more actively with students.

To use social networking sites. Engaging social networks in the educational process may be a problem due to lack of knowledge, accessibility and other issues like e-security. However, teachers who use social networks can benefit in different ways. For example, various social networking sites can help make lessons more interactive, as well as continue learning outside the classroom.

Social networks are also useful for interacting with parents and promoting the school's image online. Moreover, participation in various discussions or communication with people working on social networks is a great way to communicate with other professionals in the sphere.

To understand when it is time to have a break. It is very important to maintain a high level of productivity and reduce work-related stress. Modern teachers know when it's time for them and their students to slow down and relax.

In modern realities a Ukrainian teacher must know that his profession is a certain self-sacrifice: lack of funds for education, low level of social security of educationalists, technical and methodological insecurity challenge the professionalism and resilience of these people. Only a person, who is used to sowing good and eternal, makes his choice in favor of this challenge".

Conclusions and research perspectives. It can be generally stated that combination of traditional and modern technologies in teaching academic disciplines provides for reaching the highest results. We admit that although the competency-based approach in its essence is the proper answer to the requirements of the present, it should not deny the academic one. It deepens, completes and expands it: accepting the necessity of formation of expertise, knowledge and skills (which is the only and

primary aim of the academic approach), it is intended for mastering the key competencies, as the modern labor market requires. After all, the availability of the necessary stock of knowledge, unfortunately, is not an indicator of the proper level of training of a professional, who can be completely helpless without the ability to apply them in practice, in real rather than ideal learning conditions, without skills of self-education, knowledge of modern information and communications technologies, constant self-improvement and self-development, soft skills – the defining requirements of today. That is the reason for the competency-based approach in combination with interactive methods to shift the educational emphasis on the desire and ability to learn throughout life, self-determination, self-actualization, socialization and development of the individual.

Further research in the field should be aimed at improving the methodology of e-teaching a discipline, involving the achievements of modern information and communications technology more widely and using the range of possibilities provided by the competency-based approach and interactive methods of teaching to the full extent, holding conferences and panel discussions to solve the problem concerned.

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