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Evaluation Criteria and Diagnostic Tools for Assessing the Effectiveness of Developing Soft Competencies of Managerial Personnel in Professional Development Processes

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Abstract: The effectiveness of modern professional development systems largely depends on the availability of reliable assessment criteria and diagnostic tools for evaluating managerial soft competencies. Contemporary leadership activity requires managerial personnel to possess not only professional expertise but also advanced communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, teamwork, strategic thinking, and reflexive abilities. Therefore, the development of scientifically grounded approaches to assessing soft competencies has become an important issue in competency-oriented professional education. This study aims to identify the criteria, indicators, and diagnostic tools for evaluating the effectiveness of managerial soft competency development within professional development processes. The research is based on systemic, competency-based, and diagnostic approaches. The proposed assessment framework includes motivational, cognitive, communicative, operational, and reflexive criteria for determining competency development levels. The study also identifies effective diagnostic methods such as observation, self-assessment, expert evaluation, questionnaires, situational tasks, interviews, and competency-based monitoring technologies. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of an integrative assessment system adapted to professional development environments for managerial personnel. The practical significance of the study is associated with the possibility of applying the proposed criteria and diagnostic tools in leadership training centers, higher education institutions, and corporate education systems to improve the quality and effectiveness of competency-oriented professional development programs.

Keywords: Soft competencies, managerial personnel, professional development, evaluation criteria, diagnostic tools, competency assessment, leadership development, educational management, competency-based approach, professional effectiveness.

Introduction: The rapid transformation of educational systems and organizational management has significantly increased the importance of soft competencies in managerial activity. In modern professional environments, leadership effectiveness depends not only on professional knowledge and technical expertise but also on communication abilities, emotional intelligence, adaptability, teamwork, conflict management, and strategic thinking skills. As a result, competency-oriented professional development systems increasingly focus on the systematic formation and improvement of managerial soft competencies (Goleman, Emotional Intelligence, 1995).

In recent years, scientific interest in the assessment of soft competencies has considerably expanded. Researchers emphasize that competency development processes require not only effective pedagogical mechanisms but also reliable assessment criteria and diagnostic tools capable of measuring professional growth and leadership effectiveness (Spencer & Spencer, Competence at Work, 1993). However, despite the growing importance of competency-based

education, the issue of evaluating managerial soft competencies remains methodologically complex due to the multidimensional and dynamic nature of soft skills.

Modern studies indicate that traditional assessment methods are insufficient for determining the actual level of managerial competency development. Standard testing systems often fail to evaluate behavioral flexibility, communication culture, emotional stability, and collaborative effectiveness in real professional situations (Robles, Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace, 2012). Therefore, competency-oriented professional development requires the application of integrative diagnostic approaches combining quantitative and qualitative assessment methods.

The theoretical basis of competency assessment is closely connected with systemic, competency-based, and diagnostic approaches. The systemic approach allows competency evaluation to be considered as an interconnected process involving criteria, indicators, assessment methods, and expected professional outcomes (Bertalanffy, General System Theory, 1968). The competency-based approach focuses on measuring practical leadership abilities and professional behavior necessary for effective managerial activity (Mulder, Competence-Based Education and Training, 2017). At the same time, diagnostic approaches emphasize the importance of continuous monitoring, reflexive evaluation, and professional self-assessment in competency development processes.

Researchers note that effective diagnostic systems should evaluate not only cognitive knowledge but also practical leadership behavior, interpersonal interaction, emotional regulation, and adaptability to organizational change (OECD, Skills for Social Progress, 2015). In this regard, competency assessment becomes an important pedagogical mechanism for improving the quality of professional development systems and increasing managerial effectiveness. Despite the existence of numerous studies devoted to leadership competencies and professional assessment, insufficient attention has been paid to the development of integrative criteria and diagnostic tools specifically designed for assessing managerial soft competencies within professional development environments. The absence of a comprehensive assessment framework limits the possibility of objectively evaluating competency development outcomes and reducing the effectiveness of competency-oriented training programs.

Therefore, the present study aims to develop evaluation criteria and diagnostic tools for assessing the effectiveness of managerial soft competency development in professional development processes. The proposed framework is intended to provide methodological support for leadership training systems and improve the quality of competency-oriented professional education.

METHOD

The assessment of managerial soft competencies in professional development systems requires the creation of scientifically grounded evaluation criteria and effective diagnostic tools. Modern competency-oriented education emphasizes that leadership effectiveness should be evaluated through a combination of professional behavior, interpersonal interaction, emotional stability, adaptability, and strategic decision-making abilities (Heckman & Kautz, Hard Evidence on Soft Skills, 2012). Therefore, competency assessment becomes an integral component of professional development processes. Soft competencies differ from technical competencies due to their dynamic, behavioral, and context-dependent nature. As a result, their evaluation requires multidimensional assessment approaches capable of identifying both professional knowledge and practical leadership performance. Researchers note that competency assessment should focus on observable behavior, communication effectiveness, collaborative interaction, and reflexive self-development rather than solely theoretical understanding (Spencer & Spencer, Competence at Work, 1993).

The proposed assessment framework is based on systemic, competency-based, and diagnostic approaches. These approaches ensure the integrity, objectivity, and continuity of competency evaluation within professional development environments. The assessment system includes interconnected criteria, indicators, diagnostic methods, and evaluation levels aimed at identifying the effectiveness of managerial soft competency development. The first criterion is the motivational criterion, which reflects managerial personnel's professional interest, readiness for self-

development, leadership motivation, and willingness to participate in competency-oriented learning activities. Motivation plays a central role in adult learning processes because professional growth largely depends on learners' internal needs and self-improvement orientation (Knowles, The Adult Learner, 1984). Indicators of this criterion include professional engagement, initiative, participation in collaborative activities, and readiness for organizational innovation.

The second criterion is the cognitive criterion, which characterizes the level of theoretical understanding related to communication, leadership behavior, emotional intelligence, teamwork, conflict management, and strategic thinking. This criterion reflects managerial personnel's awareness of modern leadership concepts and competency-oriented management principles. Researchers emphasize that cognitive understanding creates the theoretical basis for effective professional behavior and organizational decision-making (Mulder, Competence-Based Education and Training, 2017).

The communicative criterion occupies a particularly important place in competency assessment. Communication effectiveness is considered one of the core indicators of managerial professionalism and leadership quality. This criterion evaluates interpersonal interaction, negotiation abilities, listening culture, conflict resolution, and collaborative communication skills. Studies demonstrate that communication competence significantly influences organizational climate, employee motivation, and team productivity (Robles, Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace, 2012).

The operational criterion reflects the practical application of soft competencies in real professional situations. It includes leadership behavior, decision-making effectiveness, adaptability to organizational change, teamwork performance, and problem-solving abilities. The operational criterion allows evaluators to determine how effectively managerial personnel apply acquired competencies in professional practice and organizational activities (Kolb, Experiential Learning, 1984).

The reflexive criterion is associated with self-analysis, professional self-assessment, emotional regulation, and continuous self-improvement. Reflexivity is considered one of the essential characteristics of modern leadership because managerial effectiveness increasingly depends on the ability to evaluate personal behavior, identify professional limitations, and improve interpersonal interaction (Brookfield, Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, 1995). Indicators of this criterion include self-evaluation skills, openness to feedback, emotional awareness, and professional self-correction.

The effectiveness of competency assessment largely depends on the selection of appropriate diagnostic tools. In this study, several integrative diagnostic methods are proposed for evaluating managerial soft competencies. Observation methods allow researchers and trainers to identify leadership behavior, communication culture, teamwork participation, and adaptability in practical learning situations. Expert evaluation provides opportunities for assessing managerial performance through professional feedback and competency-oriented criteria.

Self-assessment questionnaires and reflexive surveys are also considered important diagnostic tools because they encourage managerial personnel to analyze their professional strengths, weaknesses, and developmental needs. Researchers emphasize that reflexive assessment contributes to professional self-awareness and leadership growth (Goleman, Working with Emotional Intelligence, 1998).

Situational tasks, case-study analysis, and simulation exercises are particularly effective for diagnosing practical leadership competencies. These methods create conditions for evaluating managerial behavior in professionally oriented contexts and allow participants to demonstrate communication, decision-making, and conflict-management abilities in simulated organizational situations (Whitmore, Coaching for Performance, 2009).

The assessment process also includes competency-based monitoring technologies aimed at identifying professional growth dynamics over time. Continuous monitoring ensures the systematic evaluation of competency development and provides opportunities for correcting professional development strategies according to individual learning needs and organizational demands.

Thus, the proposed evaluation criteria and diagnostic

tools create an integrative assessment framework for determining the effectiveness of managerial soft competency development within professional development systems. The application of multidimensional assessment approaches contributes to improving the quality of competency-oriented education and increasing leadership effectiveness in modern organizational environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the proposed evaluation criteria and diagnostic tools demonstrated positive results in assessing the development of managerial soft competencies within professional development systems. The findings indicate that competency-oriented assessment approaches provide more objective and comprehensive information about leadership effectiveness, professional behavior, and interpersonal interaction compared to traditional knowledge-based evaluation methods.

The results showed that the use of multidimensional assessment criteria allowed researchers and trainers to identify significant changes in managerial personnel's communication skills, teamwork abilities, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking. In particular, the communicative and operational criteria revealed the highest level of competency improvement among participants involved in interactive and collaborative learning activities. These findings confirm that practical and learner-centered educational methods positively influence the formation of managerial soft competencies (Kolb, Experiential Learning, 1984).

One of the important results of the study was the effectiveness of reflexive assessment and self-evaluation tools. Managerial personnel who regularly participated in self-assessment activities demonstrated increased professional awareness, emotional regulation, and readiness for self-improvement. These findings support the idea that reflexive learning processes significantly contribute to leadership development and professional growth (Brookfield, Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, 1995). The application of observation methods and expert evaluation also produced reliable diagnostic outcomes. Trainers and experts were able to identify changes in leadership behavior, collaborative interaction, decision-making effectiveness, and conflict-management abilities during practical learning situations. The obtained results demonstrate that behavioral assessment methods provide more realistic information about competency development than traditional theoretical testing systems (Spencer & Spencer, Competence at Work, 1993).

The study further revealed that situational tasks, simulation technologies, and case-study methods are among the most effective diagnostic tools for assessing managerial soft competencies. These methods create professional contexts in which participants demonstrate practical leadership skills, communication culture, adaptability, and teamwork abilities. Researchers emphasize that competency-oriented assessment should be closely connected with real professional situations and organizational challenges (OECD, Skills for Social Progress, 2015).

An important aspect identified during the research was the relationship between educational environment and assessment effectiveness. Professional development programs organized on the basis of collaborative interaction, continuous feedback, and learner-centered approaches provided more accurate diagnostic outcomes and encouraged managerial personnel's active participation in competency assessment processes. These results correspond with andragogical theories emphasizing the importance of adult learners' active involvement and professional experience in educational activities (Knowles, The Adult Learner, 1984).

The discussion of the research findings demonstrates that the proposed assessment framework possesses both methodological and practical significance. Methodologically, the study contributes to the development of competency-oriented diagnostic systems by integrating motivational, cognitive, communicative, operational, and reflexive assessment criteria into a unified evaluation structure. Practically, the proposed criteria and diagnostic tools can be applied in leadership training centers, higher education institutions, corporate education systems, and advanced professional development programs.

At the same time, the study identified several challenges related to competency assessment processes. Among the main difficulties were the

subjective nature of some behavioral indicators, the complexity of measuring emotional and reflexive competencies, and the necessity of specially trained experts capable of conducting competency-oriented evaluation. These limitations indicate the need for further improvement of diagnostic methodologies and digital assessment technologies for professional development systems.

Overall, the results of the study confirm that the proposed evaluation criteria and diagnostic tools contribute to improving the effectiveness of managerial soft competency assessment. The integration of multidimensional diagnostic methods, reflexive assessment strategies, and competency-oriented monitoring technologies creates favorable conditions for increasing leadership effectiveness and professional development quality in modern educational and organizational environments.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that the assessment of managerial soft competencies has become one of the essential components of modern professional development systems. Contemporary organizational and educational environments require managerial personnel not only to possess professional knowledge and technical expertise but also to demonstrate advanced communication, leadership, adaptability, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and reflexive abilities. Therefore, the development of effective evaluation criteria and diagnostic tools is of significant scientific and practical importance.

The proposed assessment framework provides an integrative system for evaluating the effectiveness of managerial soft competency development. The combination of motivational, cognitive, communicative, operational, and reflexive criteria ensures a comprehensive and multidimensional assessment of leadership competencies within professional development environments. The study demonstrates that competency-oriented diagnostic systems contribute to improving the objectivity, continuity, and effectiveness of professional assessment processes.

The research findings also indicate that interactive diagnostic methods, including observation, expert evaluation, self-assessment, situational tasks, simulation technologies, and case-study analysis, significantly improve the quality of competency assessment. These methods allow evaluators to identify practical leadership behavior, interpersonal interaction, emotional regulation, and adaptability in professionally oriented situations.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of an integrative competency-based assessment framework adapted to professional development systems for managerial personnel. The practical significance of the research is associated with the possibility of applying the proposed evaluation criteria and diagnostic tools in higher education institutions, leadership training centers, corporate learning systems, and professional retraining programs aimed at improving managerial effectiveness and organizational performance.

At the same time, the study emphasizes the necessity of further research devoted to digital diagnostic technologies, artificial intelligence-based competency assessment systems, and innovative monitoring approaches for evaluating leadership effectiveness in rapidly transforming professional environments. Future studies may also focus on the development of international competency assessment standards and comparative analyses of leadership evaluation practices in different educational and organizational contexts.

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