The OSCAR PUBLISHING Services
International Journal of Pedagogics

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue11 2025
PAGE NO. 277-280
DOI 10.37547/ijp/Volume05Issue11-65

Competence-Based Approach In Specialized Education

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Received: 27 September 2025; **Accepted:** 19 October 2025; **Published:** 24 November 2025

Abstract: The article explores the competence-based approach in specialized (profile) education, emphasizing its role in differentiating and individualizing the learning process. It examines the historical development of profile-based education, including Soviet-era experiments and their limitations, and highlights the evolution of pedagogical thought towards competency-oriented training. The study defines key concepts such as competence, competency, and professional qualification, and distinguishes between professionally significant and professionally important qualities. It argues that specialized education should focus on forming both general and profile-specific competencies, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical skills to prepare students for professional and personal development. The competence-based approach ensures that students acquire the necessary abilities, knowledge, and attitudes to succeed in a dynamic labor market and adapt to changing professional requirements.

Keywords: Competence-based approach, specialized education, profile-based learning, professional competencies, competency, qualification, professional skills, professional development, student-centered learning, educational innovation.

Introduction: Profile-based education, as outlined in the Concept, is a means of differentiating and individualizing learning, allowing for a fuller consideration of students' interests, inclinations, and abilities, and creating conditions for education aligned with their professional interests and future educational intentions. To understand the essence of this goal, it is first necessary to examine the history of the issue, the search for implementation methods, and the opportunities emerging in the new educational context.

The problem of differentiated education became particularly acute in the Soviet school system during the transition to universal secondary education. The so-called "general secondary education" itself stratified students according to academic performance; in senior classes, both those mastering the curriculum and those lagging behind from previous years studied together. Although rarely spoken of, this was the reality. The situation required both organizational and didactic solutions. Three main options were proposed:

- First, the establishment of specialized profile schools or classes within general education schools;
- Second, allocation of extracurricular hours for optional classes, allowing students to pursue their profile interests;
- Third, vocational training for senior students was moved from schools to specialized educational-production complexes, where, according to contemporary pedagogical thought, students could form and then realize their professional interests.

Unfortunately, theoretical predictions were only partially realized. Specialized schools and classes often differentiated children based on social background (enrolling children of Soviet, party, or administrative workers). In general education schools, extracurricular hours were used as additional teaching loads for regular teachers and were not focused on deepening knowledge, but rather served as remedial sessions for underperforming students. The production complexes were staffed formally, often by lottery. The effectiveness of forming students' professional intentions in these complexes was practically nonexistent.

A brief historical overview allows us to note the following: the paradigm of prioritizing public over

personal interests did not justify itself at least for two reasons:

1. The psychophysiological structure of a person develops individually and often does not match a formally and forcibly assigned profile. As an adult, a person may realize that it is not their chosen profession;

2. Educational-production complexes generally provided training in mass professions in demand, whereas each young person aspires to realize their abilities in a unique professional activity. The era of national economic recovery, when public enthusiasm flourished, had passed. The senseless long-term exploitation of enthusiasm, especially of youth, was fundamentally problematic and led to social crises, as occurred in the Soviet Union.

By the late 1990s, new types of educational institutions (colleges, gymnasiums, lyceums) were legally established in the country, and educational program variability was somewhat institutionalized. Core subjects, mandatory across all profiles, and profile subjects, which logically should be taught by experts in the given field rather than schoolteachers, were defined. This was when the term "competence-based approach" entered the pedagogical lexicon.

To understand the essence of this new concept, we can refer to the Law "On Education," which defines the main goal of profile-based education as the development of personality, and in subsequent professional education, the formation of a specialist's personality. The Concept of Education Modernization clearly defines the goal of professional education as preparing a qualified worker of the appropriate level and profile, competitive in the labor market, competent, responsible, proficient in their profession, aware of related fields, capable of performing at world-standard levels, and ready for continuous growth, social and professional mobility.

Such goal-setting necessitates a theoretical grounding for the didactic conditions of educational processes in profile schools based on the competence-based approach. Didactic conditions dictate the need for refinement and development of educational objectives, content, principles, and methods. Setting educational objectives within this approach requires distinguishing the concepts of "competence," "competency," and "qualification" and demonstrating the relationships among them.

In pedagogy, these terms appeared indirectly and were used ambiguously, even though the educational process is inherently directed toward practice, production, technology, and mastering labor techniques. Hence, interpretations varied, although the "principle of subordinating knowledge to skill and practical need" emerged during the XVI–XVII centuries when scientific applications in industrial technologies became necessary. This principle played a decisive role in the development of modern pedagogical thought. In this sense, the principle of J.A. Comenius should be understood as: "…everything should be done through theory, practice, and application."

According to I. Ozhegov's dictionary, a "competent" person is knowledgeable, informed, authoritative in a certain field, possessing competence. Competence is the range of issues in which someone is well-informed. Therefore, competency encompasses multiple competencies.

A more detailed definition is provided in S.M. Vishnyakova's Professional Education Dictionary: "Competency (from Latin competens – appropriate, capable) is a measure of the correspondence of knowledge, skills, and experience of individuals of a certain professional status to the actual complexity of tasks and problems they face. Unlike the term 'qualification,' competence includes not only professional knowledge and skills that define qualifications but also qualities such as initiative, collaboration, teamwork ability, communication skills, learning ability, logical thinking, information selection, and application."

During the Soviet period of industrial development, a qualification-based approach to specialist training predominated due to a shortage of skilled workers and engineers and the lack of product competition in the domestic market. As V.D. Shadrikov noted, "the task of the educational system was to train specialists for mass, stable production with unchanging technology and a constant product range." V.I. Baydenko further explains that qualification reflects the predominance of framed activity in stable professional fields and algorithms. The qualification-based approach links professional education to objects of labor but does not indicate which abilities, readiness, knowledge, and attitudes optimally relate to effective human activity in multiple contexts.

In a market economy, the situation changed fundamentally: technologies continuously evolve, production responds to market demands, and specialists are required who can adequately meet these demands and actively improve production. Therefore, as noted by F.T. Shageeva, V.G. Ivanov, and L.L. Nikitina, professional competence, rather than mere qualification, became a more realistic measure for designing professional education. It requires a higher level of professional preparation and includes "components of qualification: knowledge, skills,

abilities, professionally important qualities," while competencies address "fluid" professional boundaries, the dynamics of professions, their globalization, and the breakdown of professional isolation.

These perspectives reflect the essence of the competence-based approach to training future specialists: the objective of training becomes the formation of competencies and overall competency. The necessity of the competence-based approach in profile education is clear, but its interpretation in pedagogy is still not fully standardized. Many didacticians interpret both the terms and the approach differently. F.V. Frolov and D.A. Makhotin note that competency is an integrated characteristic of a person's qualities, reflecting the graduate's readiness to perform activities in specific areas. It manifests as preparedness to carry out professional tasks in concrete situations, including problem-based ones.

F.T. Shageeva, V.G. Ivanov, and L.L. Nikitina define these concepts more concretely, allowing assessment during specialist training. They consider professional competence as the characteristic of a specialist, expressed in the unity of theoretical knowledge and practical preparation, enabling graduates to perform all types of professional activities defined by standards in their field. Professional competence, seen as an integrative system of cognitive and activity components, is more than individual qualities, knowledge, skills, or abilities. It reflects potential and allows professional success. Competencies serve as components of professional competence, enabling its practical realization.

Thus, following these authors' positions, profile-based education is intended to form specific profile competencies. In school, it is necessary to develop not only professional but also socio-personal and general (key, basic, universal, interdisciplinary, metaprofessional, transferable, supraprofessional, core, academic, etc.) competencies. Any educational process develops a full range of human qualities, but different educational institutions emphasize the development of profile-specific qualities, skills, and abilities, which ultimately manifest as profile competencies.

Professional competence encompasses both ability and readiness. Ability refers to the skill to perform actions or individual predisposition to activity, while readiness involves the process-oriented aspect—being prepared to act, including willingness and motivation. Success in professional activity depends on both ability and readiness, which express the professionally important qualities of a specialist.

According to V.I. Andreev, any competency begins with the word "to be able," as skill forms its foundation. Competency is an integral measure of personal readiness, including motivation, knowledge, skills, abilities, and creative experience, which manifests, develops, and is realized in educational, professional, and other tasks.

Therefore, the goals of profile-based education are the formation and development of competencies most characteristic of a given professional field. The model of a specialist, as V.P. Bespalko notes, is a description of the essential qualities, properties, and abilities of a person relative to future conditions. In profile schools, learning objectives can be represented as a competence-based model of a potential specialist. Competencies of each student must be identified and their development facilitated.

Profile competencies, expressed through knowledge, skills, and experience, depend on personal qualities, abilities, and professional practice associated with specific industrial production. Professional and personally significant qualities are differentiated: the former are inherent and developed consciously, forming the professional self-concept; the latter emerge during practical, profile-oriented educational activity.

Professional qualities, studied in numerous works, are often associated with professions exhibiting these traits most prominently (astronauts, pilots, strategic military officers, ship captains, teachers, economists, managers, and tourism specialists). For technical and engineering specialists, essential qualities include decision-making, problem formulation, analytical thinking, independence, communication, and creativity in design, rationalization, and invention. Volitional traits, such as purposefulness and initiative, are also vital.

Thus, professionally important qualities of a given profile determine the direction for identifying, forming, and developing professionally significant personal qualities through practice-based profile education. These qualities form the basis for the development of profile competencies, which will later evolve into professional competencies. In essence, the self-development of a student is an evolutionary process from personal qualities to professional competencies.

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