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Methodological Framework for Developing Technological-Research Competence of Future Educators Within the Digital Education Ecosystem

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Abstract: This article presents the design of a methodological framework aimed at fostering technological and research-oriented competence among prospective teachers within the context of a digital education ecosystem. The effectiveness of the proposed framework was evaluated through experimental implementation. The study involved a comprehensive analysis of both international and national scholarly sources and introduced an integrative model specifically focused on competence development. The findings demonstrate that the application of the methodological system significantly enhanced future educators' digital literacy, research capabilities, and readiness for innovative professional practice.

Keywords: Digital education ecosystem, technological competence, research competence, future educators, methodological framework, digital transformation.

Introduction: In recent years, the processes of digital transformation unfolding at the global level have required a fundamental reconsideration of the content, structure, and methodology of education, alongside other social spheres. Within the context of the digital economy and knowledge-based society, the professional profile of a teacher is evolving from that of a traditional transmitter of knowledge to an innovator, facilitator, and researcher. Consequently, contemporary educators are expected not only to use information and communication technologies effectively but also to integrate them meaningfully into instructional and research activities.

A digital education ecosystem may be understood as an integrated environment that unites technological tools, digital platforms, databases, pedagogical strategies, and educational stakeholders within a single interconnected system. In such an ecosystem, the teacher's role becomes multifaceted: designing learning processes, selecting and adapting digital resources, guiding students toward independent inquiry, and continuously reflecting on professional practice.

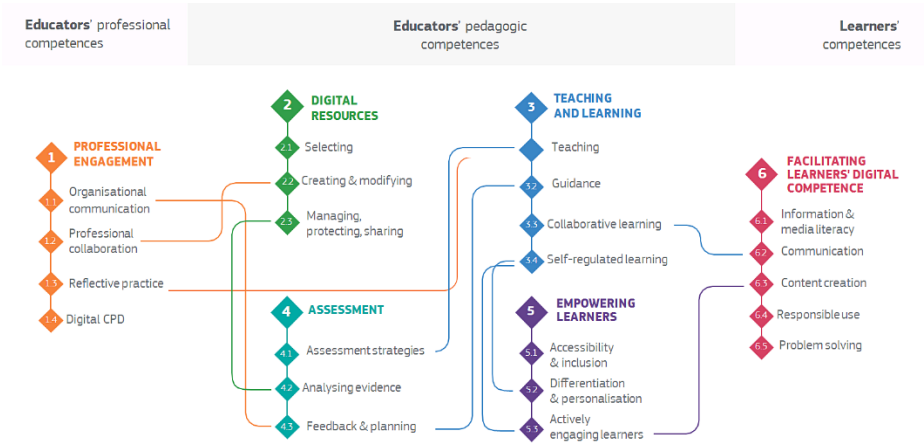

Figure 1. Digital Competence Model for Educators and Learners (DigCompEdu Framework)

The DigCompEdu framework identifies six key domains of professional development for educators: professional engagement, digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, learner empowerment, and facilitating learners' digital competence. This model systematizes teachers' activities within digital environments and enables the progressive formation of competencies through clearly defined levels and indicators.

International research has extensively examined digital pedagogical competence. For example, the TPACK model conceptualizes effective teaching as the integration of Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Content Knowledge (CK). According to this approach, meaningful instruction emerges from the balanced interaction of these three components. It emphasizes that technology should not be treated merely as a technical instrument, but as a pedagogically purposeful tool aligned with didactic objectives. Similarly, the DigCompEdu framework offers measurable criteria for assessing educators' digital competencies [1].

In addition, research competence has become increasingly significant in contemporary pedagogical practice. Research competence encompasses a teacher's ability to identify problem situations, formulate scientific questions, select appropriate methodologies, collect and analyze empirical data, interpret findings in a theoretically grounded manner, and apply results to practice. Digital technologies serve as powerful instruments that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of this process.

National scholarly studies also highlight the digitalization of higher education, the development of innovative capacity among educators, and the strengthening of digital literacy as strategic priorities. However, existing research has predominantly focused on general digital competencies, while an integrated model combining technological and research components remains insufficiently systematized.

The present study aims to address this gap by developing a comprehensive methodological framework for cultivating technological-research competence among future teachers within a digital education ecosystem.

Research Objective. To design a methodological system aimed at developing technological-research competence among prospective educators in a digital education ecosystem and to evaluate its effectiveness through experimental validation.

Research Tasks. To clarify the theoretical foundations and structural composition of technological-research competence;

To systematize the structural components of the digital education ecosystem from a pedagogical perspective;

To design a methodological model intended for future educators;

To implement the proposed framework experimentally and statistically determine its effectiveness.

In conclusion, the study holds both theoretical and practical significance, contributing to the preparation of educators who are capable of functioning effectively within digital environments and conducting scientifically grounded research activities.

METHODS

Research Design. The present study was conducted

using a quasi-experimental research design. This approach made it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention while preserving the natural conditions of the educational process. Although participants were not randomly selected, the groups were balanced in terms of prior knowledge and skill levels based on initial diagnostic assessment results.

- ✓ The research was implemented in two sequential stages:
- ✓ the diagnostic (baseline) stage;
- ✓ the formative (intervention) stage.

During the diagnostic phase, participants' levels of technological-research competence were assessed. In the formative phase, the developed methodological framework was introduced into the experimental group, and its effectiveness was evaluated through comparative analysis with the control group.

Participants. The study involved 120 third - and fourth-year students majoring in pedagogy.

Control group – 60 students who were instructed using a traditional teaching model;

Experimental group – 60 students who received instruction based on the proposed methodological framework.

The groups demonstrated comparable characteristics in terms of age, academic performance, and initial diagnostic indicators, ensuring the reliability and validity of the results.

Research Methods. A comprehensive methodological approach was applied, incorporating the following methods:

Literature analysis – Systematic examination of national and international research on digital pedagogy, competence-based approaches, and research-oriented learning. This stage provided the theoretical foundation for the methodological framework.

Pedagogical modeling – Identification of the structural components of technological-research competence and development of a conceptual model describing its formation mechanism.

Diagnostic testing – Specially designed tests were administered to assess students' knowledge and practical skills. The tasks focused on evaluating the use of digital tools, selection of research methods, and data analysis abilities.

Questionnaire survey – A Likert-scale survey was conducted to examine students' motivation, self-assessment, and attitudes toward innovative professional activity.

Experimental implementation – The developed methodological system was introduced in the experimental group over one academic semester.

Statistical analysis – The obtained data were processed using Student's t-test to determine statistically significant differences between groups. Statistical significance was evaluated at the level of $p < 0.05$.

Model of the Methodological Framework. The proposed methodological system consisted of four interrelated structural and functional components:

1. Target Component. This component focuses on developing technological-research competence among future educators. The competence integrates the following indicators:

- application of digital technologies for didactic purposes;
- identification of scientific problems and development of research plans;
- analysis of empirical data using digital tools;
- formulation of scientifically grounded conclusions.

2. Content Component. The content component provides the scientific and methodological basis of instruction and includes the following modules:

- ✓ Foundations of Digital Pedagogy – modern educational platforms, principles of selecting and adapting digital resources;
- ✓ Research Methodology – formulation of research problems, hypothesis development, and selection of appropriate research methods;
- ✓ Digital Data Analysis – processing empirical data using statistical software (e.g., SPSS, Excel);
- ✓ Academic Writing and Bibliographic Management – structure of scientific articles, citation styles, and use of reference management tools such as Mendeley and Zotero.

This component integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application.

3. Process Component. The process component defines

the organizational mechanisms of learning activities. Interactive and innovative instructional methods were employed, including:

- ✓ Project-based learning – students developed independent research projects;
- ✓ Problem-based learning – inquiry conducted around authentic pedagogical challenges;
- ✓ Case study method – development of decision-making skills through analysis of specific situations;
- ✓ Blended learning model – integration of traditional and online instructional elements;
- ✓ Learning Management System (Moodle) – used for task distribution, monitoring, and feedback provision.
- ✓ This approach stimulated independent, reflective, and research-oriented student engagement.

4. Assessment Component. Technological-research competence was evaluated across three levels:

Low level – fragmented use of digital tools and incorrect selection of research methods;

Intermediate level – purposeful application of technologies, though with analytical inconsistencies;

High level – integrated use of digital tools, independent research implementation, and proposal of innovative solutions.

- ✓ Evaluation criteria included:
- ✓ effective use of digital technologies;
- ✓ scientifically grounded design of research projects;
- ✓ analysis and interpretation of empirical data;
- ✓ development of innovative ideas or methodological proposals.

Comprehensive assessment was conducted through diagnostic tests, practical assignments, project defense presentations, and expert evaluations.

RESULTS

During the diagnostic phase of the study, the levels of technological-research competence among participants in both the experimental and control groups were assessed using a комплекс of diagnostic instruments. The baseline measurement results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups ($p > 0.05$). This finding confirms that, prior to the implementation of the experimental intervention, both groups demonstrated comparable levels of preparedness, thereby establishing a reliable methodological basis for subsequent comparative analysis.

At the initial stage, most students demonstrated competence at an intermediate level. Although the majority possessed general skills in using digital tools, their ability to apply these technologies systematically and in a methodologically grounded manner for research purposes remained insufficiently developed. Difficulties were also identified in selecting appropriate research methods and in performing statistical data processing..

Final Results

Level	Control Group (%)	Experimental Group (%)
High	35	67
Intermediate	40	25
Low	25	8

The proportion of students achieving a high level of competence in the experimental group increased to 67%, demonstrating the effectiveness of the proposed methodological framework. At the same time, the percentage of students at the low level decreased to 8%. In contrast, changes in the control group were comparatively moderate and progressed at a slower rate.

Figure 2. Results of the Student's t-test confirming statistical significance at the level of p < 0.05

Statistical Analysis. The collected data were analyzed using Student's t-test in order to determine the statistical significance of differences observed between the experimental and control groups. The calculations demonstrated significance at the level of $p < 0.05$, confirming the reliability of the findings.

These results indicate that the changes identified in the experimental group were not random fluctuations but were directly associated with the implemented pedagogical intervention. Therefore, the developed methodological framework produced a measurable and statistically substantiated effect on the development of technological-research competence.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate conceptual alignment with leading theoretical approaches in the field of digital pedagogy. In particular, the empirical evidence confirms that the integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge constitutes a fundamental determinant of effective professional practice. Within the framework of the TPACK model proposed by Koehler and Mishra (2009) [1], technology is not treated as an isolated element, but rather as a systemic component inherently interconnected with pedagogical objectives and subject content. The results of the present research indicate that precisely this integrative perspective contributed to the significant growth of competence indicators observed in the experimental group. These outcomes reaffirm that technology should not be incorporated into the learning process mechanically; instead, it must be harmonized with didactic strategies to achieve meaningful educational impact.

Furthermore, the study highlights that teachers' professional development within digital environments represents a continuous and systematic process. According to the DigCompEdu framework (Redecker, 2017) [2], educators' digital competence encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from professional collaboration to the facilitation of students' digital literacy. The methodological framework developed in this research operationalized this multidimensional approach in practice. The increased autonomy demonstrated by the experimental group in selecting, adapting, and evaluating digital resources directly corresponds to the "professional engagement" and "teaching and learning" domains defined within the DigCompEdu structure.

A distinctive contribution of this study lies in the explicit inclusion of research competence as a separate structural component. While international models primarily emphasize digital pedagogical practice, the proposed methodological system systematically developed skills related to conducting scientific inquiry, analyzing empirical data, and substantiating conclusions through evidence-based reasoning. This approach enables the conceptualization of the teacher not merely as an organizer of the instructional process,

but as a reflective practitioner capable of critically analyzing and scientifically improving professional practice.

The methodological system was designed with consideration of the local educational context, including available digital infrastructure, curriculum requirements, and students' initial levels of preparedness. In this respect, the findings not only validate theoretical assumptions but also demonstrate the feasibility of adapting these frameworks within the national education system. Notably, the integration of project-based learning and blended learning models fostered students' independent research engagement and contributed to the development of reflective and innovative thinking.

Overall, the results are consistent with the TPACK model advanced by Koehler and Mishra (2009) [2], confirming that the meaningful integration of technology and pedagogy enhances professional competence. The outcomes of this research provide a methodological foundation for further scholarly investigations aimed at improving the preparation of future educators within digital education ecosystems [3].

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study scientifically substantiate the strategic importance of developing technological-research competence in improving the preparation of future educators within a digital education ecosystem. Theoretical analysis combined with experimental implementation demonstrated that this competence should not be regarded as a simple aggregation of separate skills. Rather, it represents a complex professional quality formed through the integration of technological literacy, pedagogical expertise, and research-oriented activity. Consequently, its development requires a systematic methodological approach rather than fragmented instructional interventions.

The methodological framework designed during the research was tested as a comprehensive model that harmoniously integrates digital pedagogy, research methodology, and innovative educational technologies. Statistical analysis ($p < 0.05$) confirmed that the positive changes observed in the experimental group were not incidental but were directly attributable to the implemented methodological intervention. This provides empirical evidence that purposefully designed pedagogical mechanisms within a digital education ecosystem can significantly enhance professional competence.

Overall, the results of the study establish a scientific and methodological foundation for modernizing teacher education systems in the context of digital transformation. The proposed approach creates conditions for advancing higher education institutions toward a new stage of preparing innovative, research-oriented, and digitally competent educators.

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