



### *Original Contribution*

## **EDUCATION WITH A FOCUS ON THE PERSONALITY: THE COMPETENCY APPROACH IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**PURPOSE:** Modern school education increasingly emphasizes the holistic development of the learner's personality, along with academic achievements. The competency approach is a pedagogical framework that integrates knowledge, skills and values, allowing learners to apply the results of learning in real-life contexts. This training aims to provide a modern educational environment that guarantees a unified approach to the implementation of key competencies in the field of education. The article explores the theoretical foundations and practical application of personality-oriented education through the competency-based approach at the school level. Modern education seeks not only to inform, but also to form individuals who are able to adapt, think critically and act effectively in different life situations. It is here that the competency-based approach appears - an innovative pedagogical paradigm that focuses on the development of the learner's personal potential. **METHODS:** Particular attention is paid to teaching methods, assessment practices and the evolving role of teachers in promoting key competencies and personal development among students. In pedagogical practice, priority is given to methods that develop autonomy, critical thinking skills and social activity. Teaching methods can be defined as ways of joint activity of the teacher and students, through which pedagogically adapted social experience is mastered. **RESULTS:** The student's personal potential is a set of internal resources that include cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, motivation, value system, attitudes and social skills. This is the foundation on which the student's ability to develop, adapt and successfully realize himself in various life and professional situations is built. The project-based model does not simply engage the student in productive activity, but places him in an authentic social situation in which he must mobilize knowledge and skills in order to achieve a specific result. The topic of the student's personality is key in the context of the competency approach, because it is through it that individual abilities, motivation and value orientation are developed. **CONCLUSION:** Education with a focus on personality, implemented through the competency approach, is a sustainable and future-oriented model for school education. It combines academic training with personal development, social responsibility and applicability in real life. In conclusion, the opportunities facing the education system in implementing the competency model are outlined.

**Keywords:** personality-oriented education, competency approach, school education, key competencies, learner-centered learning

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid social, technological, and cultural changes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have significantly transformed the goals and functions of school education. Traditional models focused

primarily on the transmission of factual knowledge are increasingly being replaced by educational paradigms that prioritize the development of the learner's personality. In this context, the competency approach has emerged as a key strategy for aligning school education with the demands of contemporary society.

Education focused on the personality aims to support the intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development of students. At school level, this approach is particularly important, as it

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coincides with critical stages of cognitive growth, identity formation, and value development. The competency-based approach provides a structured yet flexible framework for translating personality-oriented educational goals into measurable learning outcomes. Modern education is increasingly oriented towards the personality of the learner in the centre of the learning process. This approach reflects the need for education to meet not only the academic, but also the social, emotional and professional needs of the individual. In this context, the competency approach is established as an effective model for integrating knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in the process of personal development.

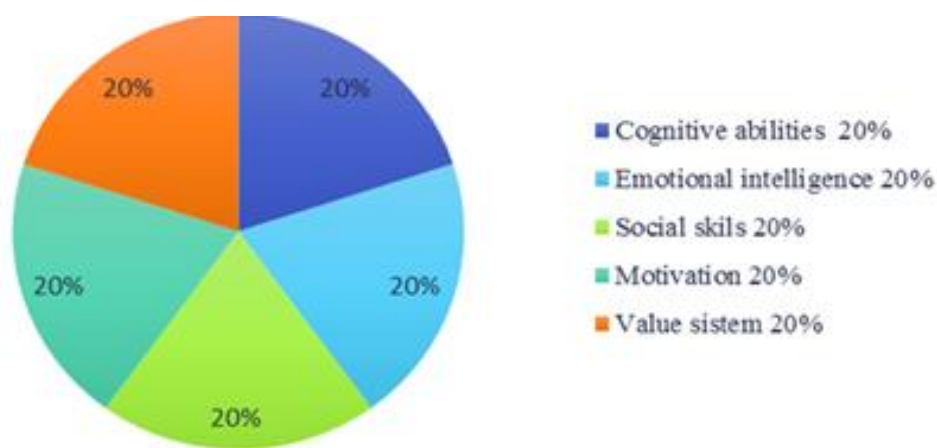
In this paper, we examine the competency approach as a modern pedagogical paradigm that is aimed at developing the student's personal potential. The theoretical foundations of the approach, its role in building key skills and attitudes, as well as practical strategies for implementation in the school environment are analysed. The competency approach is based on the idea that education should prepare students for their development in society, by focusing not only on their intellectual potential, but also on their personal qualities. It is the foundation on which the student's ability to grow, adapt and realize themselves successfully in various life and professional situations is built. By integrating knowledge, skills and attitudes, this approach creates conditions for the discovery of individual potential, encouragement of independence, pursuit of development, social engagement, communication, etc.

The formation of basic competencies is realized in educational institutions through purposeful

work in a specialized educational environment. This is the reason why key educational competencies are specified at the levels of educational areas and studied subjects (1). Each component of personal development emphasizes its equal importance: *professional intelligence, communication, critical thinking, teamwork*. "Personal development in modern education is inextricably linked to the formation of competencies that build active, thinking and socially engaged individuals" (2).

Two approaches are outlined in the interpretation of intercultural pedagogical competence: as a key pedagogical competence and as an integrative and interdisciplinary complex of knowledge, skills and attitudes in the structure of each of the key pedagogical competences – communicative, technological, cognitive, etc. (3). The application of the competency approach contributes to the establishment of a school culture oriented toward holistic personality development. This is achieved through pedagogical practices that emphasize reflection, continuous support, and individualized learning pathways. Such an environment encourages learners to become more self-aware, responsible, and confident in their own learning capabilities. Certain authors claim that "personally oriented learning, based on a synergistic model, creates conditions for the development of transferable key competencies that activate the student's personal potential" (4).

Each component in **Figure 1** is evenly visualized, which emphasizes their equal importance for the person's personal potential. The figure presents the five main components for building 100% personal potential.

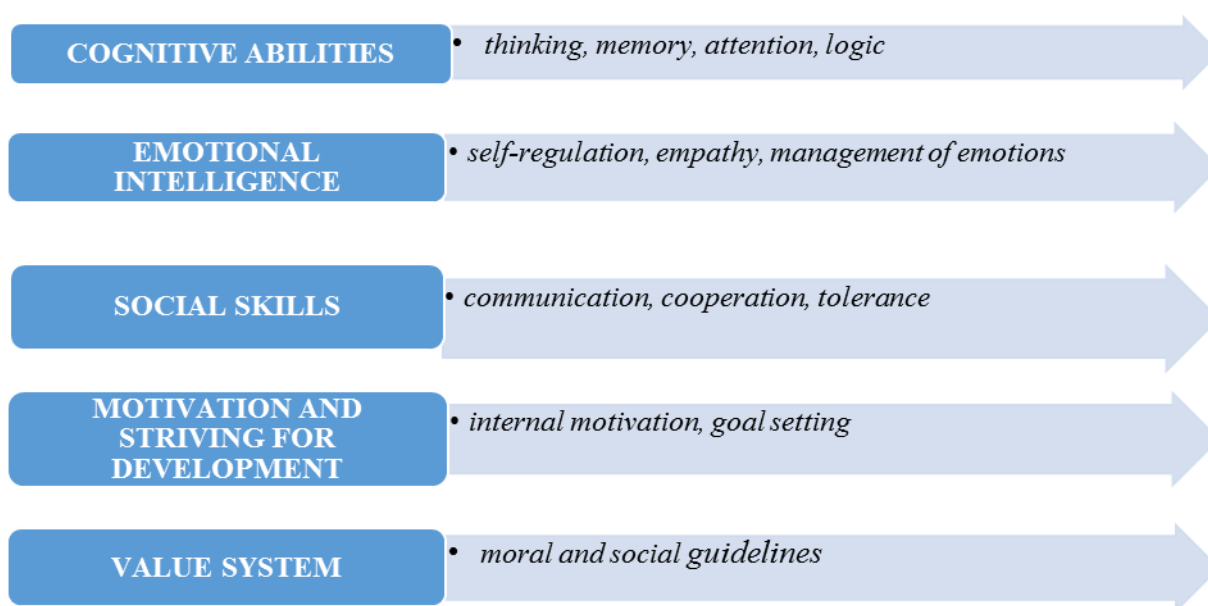


**Figure 1.** Main components of personal potential

The greatest achievement of education is helping individuals discover their own capacity. Every person carries within them more possibilities than circumstances can reveal, but personal potential grows when knowledge is guided by purpose. Pedagogical practice gains value when it places the learner's potential at the centre of the educational process. The true mission of education is to recognize, develop, and sustain the personal potential of every learner. Education reveals and nurtures the learner's potential by transforming ability into

purposeful competence, a view aligned with humanistic and constructivist educational theories (5,6), some of which highlight the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through experience, reflection, and social interaction. During their school years, students ought to receive education adapted to their developmental characteristics, learning styles, and personality.

**Figure 2** presents the essence and dimensions of personal potential:



**Figure 2.** Essence and dimensions of personal potential

## MATERIALS & METHODS

The goal of acquiring modern key competencies is to develop the personal potential of the child/student, provide conditions for satisfying his/her individual needs and early detection of his/her aptitudes and talents. The emphasis in training will be shifted from reproducing ready-made knowledge to developing modern skills and practical applicability of the studied educational content, as well as on the social and emotional intelligence of children and students. To achieve the goals of the policy, effective partnership will be established with parents and other stakeholders.

*Training oriented towards the formation and development of key competencies and skills for life and work in the 21st century.*

*Providing a modern educational environment that guarantees a unified approach to the application of key competencies in the field of education.*

*Developing skills in students to use the acquired competencies in performing everyday tasks, to cope with complex and unfamiliar life situations in a changing environment.*

## Methods and strategies for implementing the competency approach

### Practical case study: *Competency learning in a primary classroom*

#### Context and objectives

The case study was conducted with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade pupils in a primary classroom within a mainstream school setting. The objective was to explore how a competency, personality-oriented approach supports both academic learning and personal development.

#### Description of the learning activity

The teacher implemented a project-based learning unit titled *My Community and Me*,

integrating language education, social studies, and art.

Students were tasked with: *identifying key community roles; interviewing family members; creating visual and written presentations; reflecting on their personal contribution to the group.*

The project lasted three weeks and included individual, pair, and group activities.

### **Competencies addressed**

The learning unit targeted multiple competencies: *communication and literacy competence; social and civic competence; learning-to-learn competence; emotional and interpersonal skills.*

Students were encouraged to make choices regarding task distribution, presentation format, and reflection methods.

### **Assessment and reflection**

Assessment was formative and competency-oriented, using: *observation checklists; peer feedback sessions; student self-reflection sheets; individual learning portfolios.*

The teacher reported increased student engagement, improved collaboration, and greater learner confidence. Students demonstrated the ability to articulate not only what they learned, but how they learned and how they contributed to the group.

### **Implementing the competency approach in school practice**

The practical implementation of the competency-based approach in personality-oriented school education requires systematic changes in teaching methods, curriculum design, and assessment strategies.

### **Methods of teaching and learning in primary education (grades 1–4)**

Active and student-centred teaching methods are central to competency development. These include:

#### ***Project-based learning in primary education***

In primary education, project-based learning is implemented through short-term, age-appropriate projects closely related to pupils' immediate social and natural environment. Learning tasks are structured to encourage observation, information gathering, and the presentation of results in accessible forms. At the same time, this approach supports the development of learners' autonomy, sense of

responsibility, and ability to work collaboratively. „Project-based learning is one of the most effective contemporary pedagogical strategies for developing personal potential. It places the student at the centre of the learning process and engages them with real, meaningful problems that require active thinking, collaboration, and creativity“ (7).

#### ***Problem-based learning at the primary stage***

Problem-based learning in Grades 1–4 is grounded in learning situations that correspond to pupils' everyday experiences and cognitive characteristics. By engaging with clear and comprehensible problem scenarios, pupils are encouraged to formulate assumptions, discuss possible solutions, and justify their choices. This process contributes to the gradual development of logical reasoning and early forms of critical thinking.

#### ***Cooperative and collaborative learning in primary school***

In the primary school context, cooperative and collaborative learning is applied through structured group activities with clearly defined roles. This method supports the development of social and communication skills, promotes mutual respect, and creates inclusive learning environments that encourage active participation and positive peer interaction.

#### ***Experiential and inquiry-based learning in primary education***

Experiential and inquiry-based learning in the primary grades is realized through hands-on activities, simple experiments, and guided observations adapted to pupils' developmental level. Active involvement in exploratory processes fosters curiosity, the ability to ask meaningful questions, and the capacity to reflect on the relationship between actions and outcomes.

Such methods create opportunities for students to engage with authentic tasks, make decisions, work in teams, and reflect on their learning processes. Through these experiences, students develop both cognitive and socio-emotional competencies.

#### ***Assessment in competency school education***

Assessment plays a formative role in personality-oriented education. Instead of focusing solely on summative testing, competency-based assessment emphasizes:

*continuous feedback; self-assessment and peer assessment; performance-based tasks; reflective portfolios.*

These assessment practices support students' self-awareness, responsibility for learning, and motivation, while providing teachers with meaningful insights into students' progress.

Particular attention is paid to methods that stimulate independence, critical thinking and social engagement. Teaching methods can be defined as ways of joint activity of the teacher and students, through which pedagogically adapted social experience is mastered. The teaching method implies, first of all, a goal of the teacher and a corresponding activity, a system of rules for pedagogical impact, as well as a way of organizing and managing the learning process. The implementation of a research project by students, for example, as a method helps them to form the following qualities: intellectual and moral autonomy; how to seek answers to their own questions; how to use different sources of information, how to assess their relevance and qualities; how to organize information and ideas for their own purposes.

## RESULTS

This article explores how the competency approach contributes to the development of key skills, attitudes and values in students, while supporting their individual development and self-awareness. The theoretical foundations of the approach, its practical application and its impact on the personal growth of the student in the modern educational environment have been examined.

### Grade-specific adaptation of the competency, personality-oriented approach (grades 1–4)

#### Grade 1: Supporting school adaptation and emotional security

In first grade, the primary educational objective is the child's successful transition into formal schooling. At this stage, personality-oriented education focuses on emotional safety, trust-building, and the formation of basic learning routines.

Competency development is expressed through: *emerging communication skills; basic self-regulation (following instructions, task completion); cooperative behaviours (sharing, turn-taking); initial learning-to-learn habits.*

Learning activities are predominantly play-based and experiential, allowing children to explore knowledge through movement, storytelling, and visual representation. Assessment remains descriptive and supportive, emphasizing encouragement rather than performance comparison.

#### Grade 2: Developing learning confidence and social interaction

By second grade, students can demonstrate increased cognitive stability and social awareness. Personality-oriented education at this level aims to strengthen learning confidence and peer interaction.

The competency-based approach supports: *clearer verbal expression; basic problem-solving strategies; collaborative task engagement; growing responsibility for individual work.*

Teaching strategies incorporate short-term projects, guided group work, and reflective discussions adapted to children's expressive abilities. Feedback is formative and focuses on progress rather than outcomes.

#### Grade 3: Encouraging independence and reflective thinking

Grade 3 marks a shift toward greater learner independence. Students begin to demonstrate the capacity for reflection, goal-setting, and sustained attention.

Personality-focused competency development includes: *independent task planning; critical questioning at an age-appropriate level; social responsibility within group activities; emotional awareness and empathy.*

Learning tasks increasingly involve interdisciplinary connections and real-life problem contexts. Assessment practices encourage self-evaluation through structured prompts and learning journals.

#### Grade 4: Preparing for educational transition and self-regulation

In fourth grade, personality-oriented education supports students in preparing for the transition to lower secondary education. The competency-based approach emphasizes autonomy, adaptability, and self-regulated learning.

Key competencies at this stage include: *effective learning strategies; responsibility for learning outcomes; cooperative leadership roles; value-based decision-making.*

Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, strengths, and challenges.

Portfolio assessment becomes a central tool for documenting personal and academic growth.

### **Analytical discussion of the case study**

The case study illustrates that the competency approach, when adapted to primary education, effectively supports personality development. The integration of academic content with social and emotional learning enabled students to experience learning as meaningful and personally relevant.

The teacher's facilitative role proved essential in balancing structure with autonomy. The

learning environment fostered trust, initiative and reflective thinking, confirming the value of personality-oriented education at the primary level.

**Table 1** outlines the relationships between educational objectives, teaching and learning methods, and expected competency-related outcomes, with a particular focus on pupils' holistic development, including motor, social, and personal dimensions. In this way, the table provides a methodological basis for analyzing the effectiveness of competency-oriented within an authentic school context.

*Table 1. Research framework for studying the competency approach in primary education (grades 1–4)*

<b>Research component</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Research focus</b>	Implementation of the competency-based approach in the teaching and learning process in primary school (Grades 1–4).
<b>Research aim</b>	To explore how competency-oriented teaching practices support pupils' learning motivation, skill development, and personal growth in the primary stage of education.
<b>Research questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are competency-based teaching methods applied in grades 1–4?</li> <li>2. What types of competencies are most visibly developed through these methods?</li> <li>3. How do pupils respond to competency-oriented learning activities?</li> </ol>
<b>Target group</b>	Primary school pupils from grades 1 to 4 and their teachers.
<b>Key competencies studied</b>	Learning to learn, communication skills, cooperation, problem-solving, and basic digital competence.
<b>Teaching and learning methods</b>	Project-based learning, problem-based learning, cooperative learning, experiential and inquiry-based activities adapted to pupils' age and developmental level.
<b>Data collection methods</b>	Classroom observations, analysis of pupils' learning products, teacher reflections, and short pupil feedback activities.
<b>Indicators of competency development</b>	Level of pupil engagement, ability to apply knowledge in practical tasks, collaboration in group activities, and reflection on learning experiences.
<b>Data analysis approach</b>	Qualitative thematic analysis combined with descriptive analysis of observed learning outcomes.
<b>Expected outcomes</b>	Increased pupil engagement, improved collaborative skills, enhanced ability to apply learning in real-life contexts, and positive attitudes toward learning.

In addition, **Table 1** clarifies the alignment between research aims, data collection methods, and observable indicators of competency development, ensuring coherence between the conceptual framework and the empirical design of the study. Furthermore, it enhances the transparency and applicability of the research by outlining age-appropriate methods and assessment indicators relevant to primary school contexts.

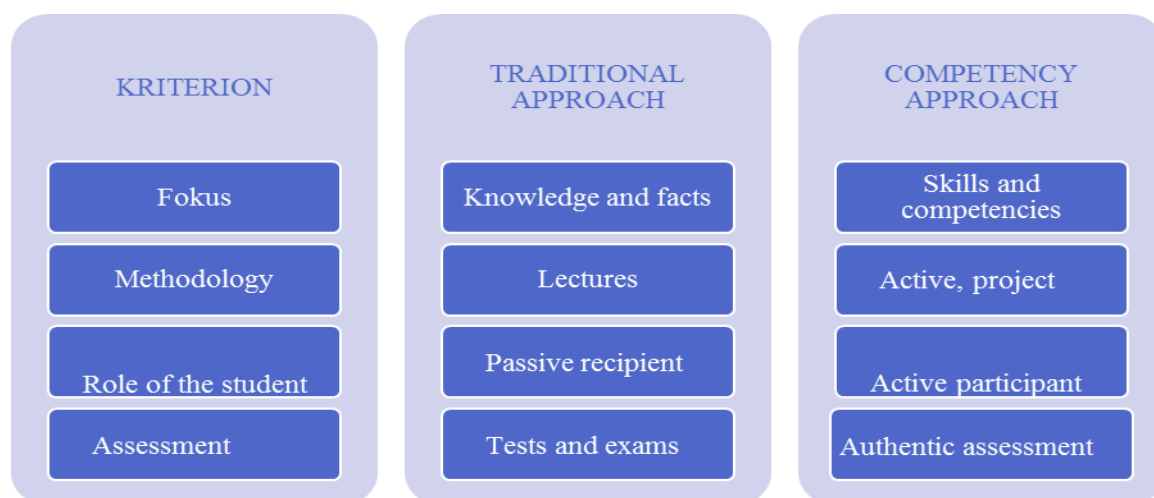
Modern pedagogy brings to the forefront the formation of key competencies, oriented towards thinking and independence, towards the formation of practical skills and an attitude towards lifelong learning (8).

Other authors note that for educators, individualization requires more commitment in terms of “teacher preparation time, related to the need to develop a larger number of activities and materials” to be used later for the purposes of the learning process (9). Individualization implies thinking about both the possible methods to be used when working with individual students and the content used,

including taking into account differences in the pace of its acquisition.

The competency approach is a modern pedagogical concept that focuses on the development of practical skills, critical thinking and the ability to adapt to changing life and work conditions. Unlike the traditional model that emphasizes memorizing facts, this approach encourages students to apply their knowledge in real situations, thus building sustainable and transferable skills. In the conditions of a dynamically changing world and increasing demands on education, the traditional approach, focused primarily on the acquisition of knowledge, is no longer sufficient.

In fact, the concept of personalized learning is a modern version of the classical didactic principle of the individual approach in training, well known to all those who are professionally engaged in pedagogical activity (10). In **Figure 3** we observe a comparison between the traditional and competency approaches on four key criteria.



**Figure 3.** Comparison between traditional and competency approach

### Essence of the competency approach in education

In competency-based education, learning outcomes are framed as integrated capabilities that combine knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, allowing learners to apply what they have learned effectively in real-life contexts (11).

At school level, the key educational competencies include: *communication in the*

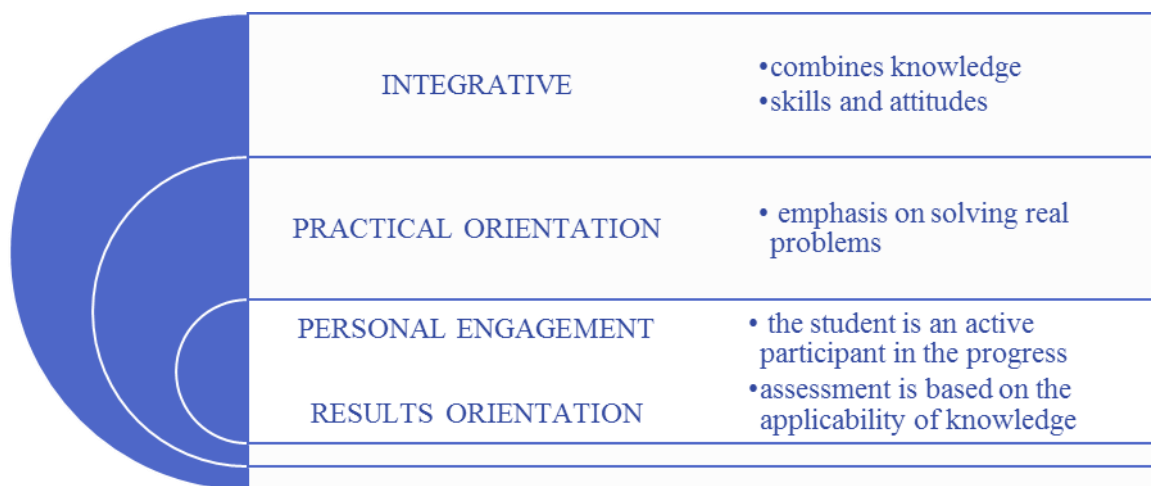
*mother tongue and foreign languages; mathematical, scientific, and digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competence; initiative and entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression.*

Unlike traditional content-based curricula, competency-based education emphasizes transferability and applicability of learning. Students are expected not only to know but also to understand, apply, analyse, and reflect on their learning experiences.

At primary school, the competency-based approach is characterized by an orientation towards age-appropriate learning outcomes that integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The emphasis is placed on the active inclusion of students in the learning process through practical activities, game-based and research-based forms of learning that support the application of what has been learned in familiar and meaningful situations for children.

The approach encourages individual progress, positive motivation and the early development of self-assessment and reflection skills, while using diverse and supportive forms of assessment oriented towards the overall personal development of students.

**Figure 4** presents the main characteristics of the competency approach in primary education (grades 1–4).



**Figure 4.** Main characteristics of the competency approach in primary education (grades 1–4)

This approach is applicable in different educational contexts – from primary school to higher education – and is the basis of European lifelong learning policies. According to UNESCO’s framework for education supporting sustainable development, educational approaches should help learners acquire not only knowledge but also skills, values and attitudes that enable them to act responsibly in diverse contexts, contributing to sustainable and meaningful learning outcomes (12).

**The role of the competency approach in personality development.**

The competency approach plays a key role in building independent, thinking and socially engaged individuals. It does not just transmit knowledge, but creates conditions for: *self-awareness and personal reflection, development of initiative and responsibility, formation of a value system and social sensitivity.*

“The competency approach in the activity of the teacher implies not just teaching, but creating an

environment in which the student develops his abilities through active participation and personal commitment” (13). If the competency-based approach is implemented in a consistent and context-sensitive manner, it has the potential to transform the learning environment into a space that supports motivation, autonomy, and collaboration. By linking learning content to real-world applications, fostering transferable skills, promoting reflective practice, and integrating digital tools, schools can create conditions that support both academic learning and long-term personal development.

**CONCLUSION**

The implementation of the competency approach in the education system is not just a methodological change, but a structural and cultural transformation that requires rethinking the role of the teacher, the learning content, and the student himself as a subject of learning.

**Opportunities arising from the implementation of the competency-based approach**

The implementation of the competency-based approach in school education creates a range of pedagogical opportunities that extend beyond traditional academic achievement. One of the most significant outcomes is the enhancement of students' learning motivation and active engagement. When learning tasks are meaningfully connected to real-life contexts and authentic problem situations, students are more likely to perceive their learning as relevant, purposeful, and personally significant, which in turn increases their active participation in the educational process.

Another important opportunity relates to the systematic development of so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The competency-based approach provides a structured framework for fostering critical thinking, effective communication, creativity, and collaborative skills. These competencies are developed through learning activities that require analysis, dialogue, problem-solving, and joint decision-making, thereby preparing students for complex social and professional environments.

Finally, the competency-based framework offers substantial opportunities for the meaningful integration of digital technologies in education. Digital tools and learning platforms support personalized learning experiences, facilitate differentiated instruction, and enable more effective monitoring of students' progress. When used purposefully, technology enhances both the learning process and the assessment of competency development.

In the context of modern challenges, education should not be just a means of transmitting information, but a space for personal growth, where the student learns to be an active participant in society, to make responsible decisions and to develop his uniqueness. The competency-based approach offers precisely this opportunity - to turn learning into a process of self-discovery and realization that goes beyond the classroom and extends into life. The competencies necessary for the successful integration of the individual into society are mainly related to the application of critical thinking, the development of creativity, the desire to acquire new knowledge and an attitude towards lifelong learning. Therefore, it is necessary for the education system to continue

investing in teacher training, adapting curricula, and creating a supportive environment in which every student has a chance to reach their potential. Only so can we build a society in which knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means to personal and social development. The competency approach to developing the learner's personality is extremely relevant in modern education, because it focuses on the overall personality development, and not just on the acquisition of knowledge. The competency approach in education is not just a methodological alternative, but a philosophy of learning that places the student's personality at the centre of the pedagogical process. Education with a focus on the personality, implemented through the competency approach, represents a sustainable and forward-looking model for all educational levels. As schools continue to respond to global challenges, this approach offers a comprehensive framework for preparing students not only for examinations but for meaningful participation in contemporary society.

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