SECTION 4. INNOVATIONS IN CAREER COUNSELING IN THE ERA OF TURBULENCE

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COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH IN CAREER GUIDANCE: NEW DIAGNOSTIC METHODS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL TURBULENCE

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the competency-based approach and innovations in the context of new challenges in the modern world. It examines different approaches to understanding competencies and explores contemporary issues related to the application of the competency-based approach in career counseling. The author introduces the concept of the "competency framework," defining its content and role in the turbulence of the modern world. The article highlights current approaches to competency assessment and outlines trends in the transformation of career counseling.

Keywords: career counseling, competencies, metaprograms, turbulence.

1 Introduction

In recent years, the competency-based approach has gained momentum not only in theoretical developments but also in practical applications in career guidance.

Today, not only career counsellors and HR managers actively use competency-based tools – the term **«competency»** has become one of the most frequently used in the structure of modern educational environments in various countries.

According to the classical definition of S. Whiddett and S. Hollyforde, well-known British researchers of the competency-based approach,

competency is the ability necessary for completing work and obtaining the desired result. However, the term has long become burdened with stereotypes.

The first and most common stereotype is that some career guidance specialists and HR professionals start dividing competencies into «good» and «bad». For example, «communication skills» are usually considered positive, while «meticulousness» or «pickiness» is often seen as a flaw. However, if we are evaluating someone for a controller or inspection position, communication skills might become a weakness, while «meticulousness» would be a very useful trait.

In this sense, the approach proposed by L. Spencer and S. Spencer – working with a person «in context», without preconceived ideas about the qualities needed – appears more productive. Competencies are best described in the context of a specific profession and cultural environment (i.e., what successful entrepreneurs in India actually do, rather than what is considered right from the standpoint of Western psychology or management theory).

The second widespread stereotype is the belief that all competencies must be developed, and that is the main task of a counsellor or coach. In reality, any competency-based system includes two subsystems: an **assessment subsystem** and a **development subsystem**. In today's conditions, the development subsystem has become dominant. Of course, the fact that we now have social institutions responsible for the development of competencies is a major achievement of our time – for example, **WorldSkills' practice-oriented programs**, **soft skills development blocks in business schools**, or training centers.

And indeed, in a turbulent environment, advocates of continuous learning receive additional arguments in their favor.

However, it is very important to remember: competencies differ in nature. Some can be developed more easily, others with great difficulty. If we consider competencies not only as skills but also as **traits, characteristics, and patterns of behavior**, the problem of the competences' development becomes more evident.

For instance:

– The «knowledge of legislation» competency can be developed through traditional education.

– «Using office equipment» – through hands-on learning.

– «Communication skills» can only be partially developed, and even then, through intensive training.

– A competency like «hard working» is more difficult to change and largely depends on **personal motivation**.

Thus, some authors rightly point out that a number of competencies related to leadership potential – such as **«responsibility for the team», «positive attitude toward people» or «moderate desire to dominate»** – cannot be taught but can only be encouraged or cultivated.

Therefore, the first step toward improving the competency-based approach should be the **structuring of competencies**, and more specifically, the **allocation of stable competencies**, which the author of the article calls the **competency framework**.

According to the author's concept, the competency framework includes the **stable competencies** of an individual, based on:

- Metaprograms (partially on accentuated personality types),
- The cognitive structure of the brain,
- Certain physiological indicators,
- And the theory of multiple intelligences.

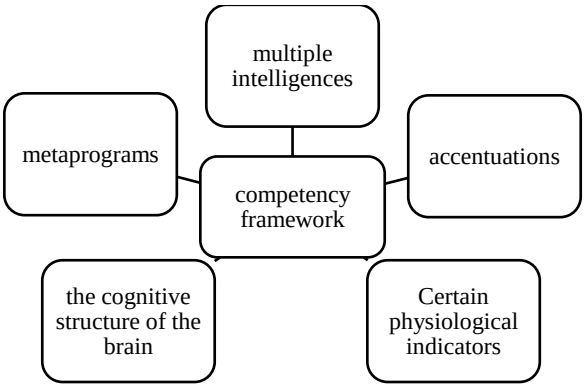

Figure 1. Competency framework

Even though the stability of competencies is never absolute (humans are flexible and capable of development and transformation), identifying the **core, stable set of competencies** can significantly help a person in forming a meaningful development path based on their own strengths.

In a turbulent world, people – especially young people – increasingly need to understand **what their competency framework is**. This allows them to adapt to changes more easily. When a person changes their career, only **some competencies need to be replaced** or updated, while the base remains intact

and is even strengthened. This leads to lower investments in retraining and **higher efficiency in adapting to a changing labor market**.

For example:

If the competency framework includes competencies like “control skills” and “risk avoidance,” and a person previously worked as a security guard and lost their job due to automation (video surveillance), he can retrain in the field of **occupational safety** or **technosphere safety**, keeping his core competencies relevant.

But if he starts training for a career in **sales** or **web design**, his strongest skills will be «lost», and his **adaptive capacity will decrease**.

Thus, the **most critical** element of this approach becomes **the diagnostic**, namely: the **diagnostics of stable competencies**.

Today, counsellors often use self-assessment questionnaires or interviews to assess a client’s competences. Interviews provide more information, but **self-assessment is increasingly becoming unreliable**. Many young people have already encountered such forms and know “what to write” in order to seem right. In addition, linguistic factors come into play – due to the rapid spread of bilingualism and multilingualism.

According to modern research, **40-60% of the world’s population is bilingual**. For example, the educational platform Preply, in a 2025 article, estimates **3.3 billion bilingual people (43% of the global population)**. Similar numbers are found on the websites of Newsdle and NCESC.

Hence, descriptions of behavioral models, personal traits, soft and hard skills in verbal form are becoming **less reliable tools** for assessment.

The good news is: we are approaching the era of **more objective and effective tools** for determining the competency framework.

Seven years ago, the **neurometric method** was introduced – based on Howard Gardner’s theory of **multiple intelligences**. Today, over 100 career guidance specialists in 26 countries already use neurometric tools in their work.

Alongside this, career guidance is increasingly enriched by methods from **psycholinguistics**, **profiling**, and **classic expert evaluation tools**, such as **360-degree assessments**, where a child’s or teenager’s competency profile is built based on the opinions of parents, teachers, and classmates.

The main principle of diagnostics today is not only the **professionalism of the career consultant** but also the **coherence of results** obtained through several different methods.

Conclusion

The development of competency-based career guidance today must be directed toward:

1. **Identifying stable competencies (competency framework)**,

Using new, evidence-based diagnostic methods, especially in a world that is becoming **increasingly complex, unstable, and unpredictable**.

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