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Key Competences in Educating Teachers

1. Key competences, concept, definition

Currently, due to changes in the Slovak Education we increasingly often meet with the concept of competences, key competences. We tend to speak about key competences as a new phenomenon in education. The term originates from the 1970s in economics where it represented a set of specific requirements for the job seeker. It was transferred to the field of education in the late 90s where it serves as a bridge between the requirements imposed by employers in the labour market and the graduate's profile. The term competence is used both in professional and common language; and ability, skill, capability, effectiveness, capacity, desired quality and others are used as synonyms for the group of terms. A person who has abilities and skills, motivation, knowledge, etc. to carry out tasks well in a particular field is considered competent. Competence is usually applied to individuals, social groups and institutions in case they successfully fulfil requirements and achieve goals set by their environment. The theory of key competences has not yet been completely formulated and neither does a comprehensive and widely accepted definition exist. As Turek states in his publication *Key Competences*: „Competence is the behavior (activity or set of activities), which characterizes excellent performance in a specific field. Key competences are the main competences of a set of competences. They are suitable to solve a wide range of mostly unforeseen problems which allow an individual to cope with rapid changes at work, personal and social life".

According to Blaško: „Key competences are a set of interiorized, interconnected group of acquired knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and valuing approaches, which are important for the qualitative personal development of the individual, his/her active participation in society, application in employment and lifelong learning.

Another definition states: „Having competence means having a complex equipment of personality, which allows the individual to successfully address challenges and situations in life, in which one is able to adequately orient, take appropriate actions and take a beneficial attitude. Key competences need to allow the individual to continuously refresh the skills and knowledge applicable in everyday life. For a person in training not all educational activities (cognitive, training, and educative) need to be beneficial, but especially those, which are useful in standard practice, provide quality education and correspond with com-

pany requirements in the labour market. Not only the attended educative process or certificate of the attended educative process are crucial, but also the learning outcomes.

2. Areas of key competences

Education in each field should be directed toward each individual creating the following key competences consistent with their levels and scholastic aptitude (4):

- Informational
- Learning
- Cognitive
- Interpersonal
- Communicative
- Personal

2.1. Informational competences

Information technologies are key elements in building the modern society based on knowledge. Information competences are mainly information literacy and computer literacy.

Information literacy may be explicitly defined as the ability to locate, evaluate and use information in a way that makes a person an independent, lifelong learning individual; as the ability to locate, evaluate, use and communicate information in various forms, such as the integration of written, computer, media and technological literacy, ethics, critical thinking and communication skills.

Computer literacy may be viewed as the ability to address problems, which means to educate and expand the following skills:

- distinguish essential phenomena from non-essential,
- navigate in information and evaluate them,
- provide necessary information,
- choose (evaluate) and use appropriate methods, concatenate or combine various methods to solve problems, or adapt or propose a new method, which solves a professional problem,
- express facts and their phenomena mathematically,
- carry out calculations,
- use outcomes – solve a problem.

Such worded computer literacy, or information literacy is not the content of only a chosen group of subjects, which contain the expressions "computer technology and information technology" in their names, but all the subjects as a whole, the problems of which will be solved, while apart from the mechanics of using computers, the emphasis is on the thinking process, evaluation, decision, optimizing and realization.

The model of securing IT competences – future teachers will have compiled a lesson plan on the basis of test results – as recommendation which modules they should attend, and identify them task to be carried out independently. Test results also determine which thematic areas (teaching units) how many times repeat. The student (future teacher) based on requirements and self-awareness may develop his own, individual study plan. If s/he does not accept this responsibility, the teacher – based on the outcomes of the entry tests – can propose an optimal study plan, which the student can, but does not necessarily have to respect. The tasks are defined in a way that prepares the learner to successfully pass the tests.

2.2. Learning, cognitive and interpersonal competences

The development of learning competences mainly supports the knowledge of learning styles, which sum up preferred practices of teaching and learning in a particular period of life of an individual, who develops, changes and improves from basics individually. Learning competences involve readiness to learn as well as to teach, motivation, deep approach of learning, and the whole process of learning.

Cognitive competences involve critical and creative thinking, problem solving. Problem solving is closely linked to the ability of critical and creative thinking. As a result we can avoid many and more unnecessary errors while thinking.

Interpersonal competence means the effective coexistence and cooperation, where you need:

- ability to work in a team (group) – cooperation (joint responsibility of planning, organizing, operating and evaluating a team; development of leadership and management skills),
- empathy (empathizing with the emotional state and situation of other people)
- solving conflicts through peaceful means – assertiveness to enforce the rights, needs and interests (not being a passive and manipulative object),
- creating and maintaining harmonic and progressive interpersonal relationships (respecting the ethics of proper manners, responsibility and morality in terms of good relations with other people, mutual understanding and helping others),
- creating intercultural systems based on constructive negotiations, compromises, tolerance and pluralism (acceptance and recognition of the difference in human views, opinions, values, faith, ethnic origins, various cultures, different areas of expertise, and thus the ability to live in an alien environment – as a manifestation of ethical conduct),
- developing the democratic civil system, respecting human rights and basic freedom, peacekeeping (effort not to fight and rule over others), keeping a healthy environment.

2.3. Communicative and personal competences

The basis of communicative competences is expressing adequately to the situation in writing and speech, listen carefully, and read with comprehension. The EU requires everyone, who lives in the countries of the European Union the knowledge of two foreign languages.

Personal qualities of individuals should promote the effective functioning of the society by coexistence and cooperation, develop authentic personal and work life. Personal competences involve self-awareness, self-control, as well as self-motivation and commitment.

3. Teachers' competences

There are several different views on the classification of key competences. These competences have been dealt with by many authors, like: Belz-Siegrist, Helz, Turek...

Apart from the already mentioned key competences Turek states the following competences of teachers:

- Professional: the teacher as guarantor of scientific bases, subjects of his/her own approbation,
- Psycho didactic: the teacher as an individual, creating pleasant conditions for learning,
- Communicative: the teacher as an individual, using an appropriate level of verbal and non-verbal communication with students, parents and colleagues,
- Diagnostic: the teacher is able to diagnose problems of students,
- Planning and organizational: the teacher is able to plan his/her actions,
- Advisory and consultative: the teacher is able to help and advise the parents of his/her own students,
- Self-reflexive: the teacher is able to evaluate and modify his/her own educational activity.

Apart from the mentioned competences some countries also develop cultural awareness, labour and business competences, and health education. Due to their small representation in studied foreign systems, these systems are not dealt with any closer in this paper.

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Summary

Knowledge is only the base of preferred key competences of an individual; they are not necessarily sufficiently beneficial, even if they were connected with other competence components. Acquiring key competences is a life-long process. In order to develop these competences qualitatively, we need to achieve a quality educational system. We must not forget that kindergartens are also a part of this system, which develop children's abilities from the roots. The basics of key competences should be acquired by the end of compulsory schooling and be the basis of further education as a part of lifelong learning.

Abstract

The aim of this work is to show the importance of the expansion of teacher's key competences, while also pointing out those other competences which are unavoidable in the pedagogical work.

If one wants to meet the exigencies of time: vehement changes in science, technology, economy, the changing character of work, one has to learn during all his lifetime. To fulfil the personal and social interests, to improve the quality of one's life: the life-long education of the individuals is very important – from maternal schools, through scholastic education, education in different institutions and in business, until the education as pensioners.

Keywords: key competences, education, teachers competences, information literacy.