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Army Leader Behavioral Competencies Identification at Future Officers Professional Training in the Higher Military Institutes

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Abstract

Based on a modern scientific sources and military specialists training experience during armed Russian aggression, the essence of behavioral competencies of future officer of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was revealed as a subject of professional training of a military leader in higher military educational institutions in the aspect of competence approach.

As a result of the analysis, a set of basic competencies (knowledgeable, cognitive, behavioral) were identified. They serve as guidelines for building the content of professional training programs for officer cadres as military leaders.

Keywords: competency, competence, competence approach, behavioral competencies, servicemen as leaders

Armed Forces of Ukraine combat experience against Russian aggression should result in dynamic changes in the professional training of military specialists, in particular, at the higher military educational institutions. However, to refresh and implement the content, methodology and technology of future officers training in the light of gained combat experience is possible only in case they are scientifically justified.

The Ukrainian military-pedagogical science studies various aspects of the competence approach in education: understanding of the concept of “professional competence” as a complex multidimensional phenomenon, defining the main types of professional competence (Gryaznov, Neschadym, Yagupov, etc.).

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to identify the Armed Forces of Ukraine future officers behavioral competency as a subject of army leader training in higher military educational institutions in terms of competence approach.

The scientific task of our research is to analyze the conceptual and categorical apparatus of the competence approach and to identify the behavioral competence of future officer as a military leader, formed in higher military educational institutions in our study on this basis.

Despite of such wide range of researches on the issue of competence and competency based approach in education, there is now a mixed understanding of their content and semantic field in pedagogical theory and practice, is noted by Yagupov.

As an example of this there are the following reviews of scientists: competence approach is being compared with the mastery of a person with a set of competences; competence approach requires a set of skills of a person to solve certain problems; competence is the ability of a person to perform practical tasks at work, etc. (Yagupov, 2012, p. 53).

Of course, when these concepts are freely used by leading experts in the field of competence approach in education, the majority of scholars and subjects of the educational process also have different meaningful and semantic understanding and perception.

We agree with the opinion of Kalashnikova – the introduction of competence approach in education is one of the most effective ways of its reforming and quality improving. Application of a competence approach in the development and implementation of training programs for managers and leaders is considered as an efficient way to increase its effectiveness (Kalashnikova, 2010, p. 83).

She emphasizes that there is an issue of developing a coherent position on understanding the basic concepts of a competence approach (among which – competency, competence), and the algorithm of the application of this approach in practice: “New demands of modern society lead to the formation of the content of education on a competent basis, what, accordingly, necessitates the development of technology for assessing the level of competences and competencies” (Ovcharuk, 2004, p. 26).

We can find the following definitions in the dictionaries: “Competence – credibility, experience. Competent – Qualified. Competence – 1) quality; 2) terms of reference” (Lugovyj, 2009, p. 10).

Ukrainian scientists Yagupov and Svystun offer the following definition of “competence”: “Competence is readiness(theoretical, practical, personal, psychological, etc.) for the implementation of a certain professional activity and the presence of professionally important qualities of a specialist who contributes to this activity” (Yagupov, Svystun, 2007, p. 6).

The understanding of the interdependence between the concepts of “competence” and “competency” is important for theoretical analysis and practical application, and it is as follows: “Competence is the result of acquiring competencies” (Ovcharuk, 2004, p. 20).

We believe that the competencies are the components of competence that are defined as follows: they are the key characteristics of the person that are important for the effective performance of functions at the corresponding position and which can be measured by observing the behavior.

In this case – the officer leadership manifestation in different situations of professional activity. That is, leadership competency determines (prompts, displays) the behavior of a military leader.

Consequently, competency can determine the behavior of a specialist, including the military, in certain professional (educational, service, combat) situations.

However, this is not a reduction of behavior only to the totality of motor responses in response to external actions incentives. Ignoring the social nature of human being and the presence of his/her consciousness did not allow behaviorists to disclose the nature and features of human behavior.

It is not a simply automatic reaction to an active stimulus, but is regulated by his/her consciousness on the basis of the assessment of the situation and socially established norms (Stepanov, 2006, p. 254–255).

The competences are personal human characteristics that determine his/her behavior and affect the level of a particular (including professional) activity. Thus, competence is the result of the acquisition of competencies, and competencies – competence components.

Note that the basis of our logic in categorical approaches is “cluster of competencies” (competence containing 2–5 competencies) – “competency” – “behavioral indicators” (3–6 for each competency).

Behavioral indicators are defined as the smallest units used to monitor competencies. Identifying indicators are the basis of competencies that indicate the presence or absence of the behavioral competency and its level. In this respect we use the association with behavioral indicators that are similar to “atom”; competencies are similar to “elements” described by several behavioral indicators; clusters of competencies correspond to so-called “macromolecules”, to illustrate the correlation between the basic concepts of competence approach.

Upwards, we can get a competence oriented approach chain: indicator – indicators – competency – competencies – competence – competences.

In many scientific sources that are devoted to a competence approach, much attention is being paid to identifying existing competences (the plurality of “competence”) and their types.

Thus, the phenomena which are defined by the concepts of “competence”, “competency” and “competence approach in education”, cannot exist separately in themselves, since each of these concepts is a semantic continuation of another: competence as a scientific phenomenon – competence as integral quality, which characterizes the readiness of a specific specialist for the resolution of certain competencies a competence approach as the realization of this integral professionally important quality in the practical activities of a specific military specialist, including leadership (Yagupov, Svistun, 2007).

Let's focus on the main types of existing competencies of the military leader. We identify five competencies of the military leader:

1. Motives. The thoughts of military leader or his/her desires, something which causes action. Motives target and direct the behavior of the military leader to certain actions.

2. Psychophysiological features (or properties). Mental and physical characteristics and relevant reactions of the military leader to the situation or information.

3. "Self-concept". Mindsets, values or "Human self" image of the military leader.

4. Ability. The ability of a military leader to perform a particular physical and mental task.

5. Knowledge. Information held by the military leader in certain areas of content.

Note that proposed types of military leader competencies are clearly correlated with the well-known competence model of Leclerc Zh. and a four-stage model for the development of the military specialist competence (Kalashnikova, 2010, p. 92).

Thus, in accordance with certain levels, there were identified three main types of competence: knowledge – in the form of existing knowledge; skills – in the form of existing skills; behavioral (motives, features, values, traits, attitudes) – in the form of available motifs, psychophysiological qualities, values, attitudes.

Knowledge and skill competences are the surface characteristics of a person and are visible, while behavioral (motives, psycho-physiological qualities and "Self-concept") are hidden, deeper as they are located in the core of personal identity.

The key objective of a competence approach for the insurance of the training and development of future officers is the identification of the behavioral competencies of the military leaders.

That is why it is important to observe the certain requirements in determining the above competencies. In particular, the behavioral competencies of a military leader should: be associated with the strategic goals of the military organization at all levels of military command and control; cover all behavioral repertoire needed to solve (execute) key employment, education, military, etc. tasks (functions); differentiate high and low qualification of officers (functional) responsibilities and level of leadership; have clear and precise definition (common terminology and understanding of the processes and procedures leadership); be measurable quantitatively (in time, quantitative indicators); be independent of each other; display language, terminology and corporate culture of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, etc.

We agree with the opinion of Kalashnikova that, when introducing a competence oriented approach, the individual behavioral competencies were not only recognized and became equal with knowledge and skills, but the recognition of behavioral competencies is essential to ensure the efficient use of acquired knowledge and skills (Kalashnikova, 2010, p. 93).

This fact brings us to the importance of an integrated approach to military specialist education, recognition of the personality primacy of every future officer regarding all components of the educational process at higher military educational institutions, recognition and understanding of military education as the basis for personality life creation of a military specialist, ensuring his/her effective life and leadership. The success of life is determined by the behavior of the individual. Therefore, the minimum unit of competence approach is behavioral indicator (Kalashnikova, 2010, p. 93–94).

Behavioral indicators are a measure that allows to set the level of measured competency. The identification of behavioral competencies and their indicators is a rather new direction in military education compared to the experience gained in evaluating the knowledge and skills of military experts. Therefore, we consider that it is necessary to dwell on this aspect a little more.

For example, we would like to present several behavioral competencies definitions, relevant to some military leader, such as:

1. Creativity – the process of producing new images.
2. Broad-mindedness– involves purposefulness and search of the optimal variant.
3. Independence – provides independent formulation of the task and its solution.
4. Proactivity – the behavior of a person, who consciously assumes responsibility for his/her actions and decisions, affects the circumstances and conditions based on his/her in-depth values.
5. Critical thinking – involves the adoption of carefully thought out and independent decisions based on awareness and self-improvement.

As noted, the assessment of behavioral competencies of the military leader is based on identifying indicators that demonstrate the presence or absence of competency and its level.

The definition and description of the basic concepts of a competence approach in the training of military specialists allows us to proceed to a description of the mechanism for its use in the training of future officers as military leaders.

We emphasize that the officer, competent in leadership, applies in his/her activity all classes of tasks and service functions in a complex and systematic way, does not lay emphasis on any of them, for example, managerial or administrative one.

In our opinion, the significant disadvantage of existing approaches is that the leadership of a future officer (sergeant) is perceived by scientific-pedagogical staff of the higher military educational institutions, as well as his/her own cadets (listeners) only in terms of managerial or organizational functions, but not behavioral ones.

In the perspective of competence approach, these functions were analyzed in terms of their effective implementation, and basic competencies, which underlie effective execution of certain tasks and professional activities (service) functions, were identified.

The final point of application of such a functional-competent analysis is the so-called “profile” or “passport” position. This profile is used as a tool for selecting candidates for a post. It is a benchmark for assessing existing competencies and the basis for creating professional development programs for officers, in particular, for them as military leaders. However, behavioral competencies are not usually described in such profiles, which is their main disadvantage.

The introduction of a competence approach in the system of military education leads to the changes in the procedure for developing and formatting the content of educational programs: the transformation of the content of education in accordance with the competence approach is primarily determined by fundamentally different principles for its selection and structuring aimed at the final result of the educational process – acquisition of competencies.

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