Chapter 24

Invariable Structure of Research Competence of Adult Learners in Skill Building Programs:
Situational and Contextual Approach

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ABSTRACT

Skill building programs are a necessary means of updating and building new competences in adult learning. Research competence is one of key components in the competence model of an adult graduate of skill building programs. It encompasses a number of elements: motivational, value-an-semantic, instrumental, individual-and-psychological and conative. Every invariant is presented as description of certain skills and abilities that are to be formed or developed while mastering a skill building program. It is necessary to note that a competence model whose integral part is research competence is an obligatory element of a particular skill building program, particularly its aim and result. That is why the author focused on analyzing the structure of research competence prior to developing the contents of the program itself.

INTRODUCTION

Research competence is one of key components in the competence model of an adult learner in skill building programs. It encompasses a number of elements, if we are driven with situational-and-context approach in forming a competence. According to this approach, a competence has an invariable structure. It is a complex of five components: motivational, value-and-semantic, instrumental, individual-and-psychological and conative. Every invariant is presented as description of certain skills and abilities that are to be formed or developed while mastering a skill building program.

It is necessary to note that a competence model whose integral part is research competence is an obligatory element of a skill building program, particularly its aim and result. That is why it is crucial to analyze the structure of research competence prior to developing the contents of the program

itself. There is a certain strategy of doing this which is called job description technology. This method comprises studying legal acts, descriptions of professions in reference books, survey of executives and psychological study of successful and unsuccessful professionals. Hence the author was driven with the following objectives:

- Analyze the structure of competence of a graduate of skill-building programs;
- Determine the place of research competence in the model of a graduate of skill-building programs;
- Define the strategy of gathering necessary data for building the model of a graduate of skill-building programs;
- Design invariable structure of research competence of a graduate of skill-building programs based on multi-subject approach to setting the aims of such programs.

BACKGROUND, METHODS AND APPROACHES

Adult learning issues are broadly described in scholarly works of A.A. Verbitsky, P. Jarvis, J. Johnston, S.I. Zmeev, A.I. Kukuyev, M. Knowles, F. Peggeler, D. Savichevich, B. Samolovchev, R.M. Smith, L. Turos, P. Furter and others (Iliazova, 2011). Despite significant progress in defining practice-oriented strategies of lifelong learning, there are no uniform principles for constructing a competence-based model for a graduate of skill building programs. These principles should take into account requirements and expectations of employers and at the same time be based on professional standards. Such a model will serve as a conceptual link between practice-based education of specialists and the ability to perform certain types of work. In modern psychological and pedagogical science, the questions of designing a professional model of a specialist are explored by V.E. Anisimov, E.M. Ivanova, N.F. Talyzina, A.V. Karpov, A.K. Markova, O. Melnichuk, N.S. Pantin, V.G. Pishchulin, E.E. Smirnova, V.D. Shadrikov, A. Yakovleva and many others (Iliazova, 2011). It should be noted that for today there is no single definition of competence-based model of the graduate of skill-building programs. At the same time, a wealth of experience has been accumulated in the methodology of developing competence models for graduates of higher professional education programs. This problem has been highlighted in the research of A.L. Andreev, V.I. Baidenko, A.A. Verbitsky, I.A. Zimnyaya, M.D. Ilyazova, Yu.G. Tatur, V.D. Shadrikov, N.V. Yakovlev and others (Iliazova, 2011). Mastering skill-building programs is both an adult's own need, and an external provision brought about by economic and social development, legislative acts and orders. The requirements for the development and maintenance of adult vocational programs are legislatively fixed. The competence model is stated in these requirements as result and target component. In order to develop such a model, the following sources are recommended for study: a unified qualifying directory of positions of managers, specialists and employees; professional standards and federal state educational standards. However, these sources do not describe the strategy for developing such a model for adult vocational training, because this model, unlike designed for students, should take into account psychological characteristics of adults who are the target audience of such programs, as well as their prior experience, which serves as a motivating factor for participation in adult learning and a source of information for solving educational and professional problems. These factors determine the specifics of adult learner training in skill-building programs.

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