

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Structural-Functional Model for Developing Soft Competencies of Managerial Personnel in Professional Development Processes

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VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue06 2026

PAGE: 43-48

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Abstract

The transformation of modern education and organizational management has increased the need for managerial personnel with well-developed soft competencies. Leadership effectiveness in professional development processes depends not only on professional knowledge but also on communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, teamwork, and strategic thinking skills. This study aims to develop a structural-functional model for improving the soft competencies of managerial personnel in professional development environments. The research is based on systemic, competency-based, and andragogical approaches. The proposed model includes target, methodological, content, organizational-processual, and evaluative-resultative components. The study identifies effective pedagogical mechanisms such as coaching, collaborative learning, mentoring, case-study methods, and reflexive assessment. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of an integrative structural-functional model adapted to professional development systems for managerial personnel. The practical significance of the study is determined by the possibility of implementing the model in leadership training programs, higher education institutions, and corporate education systems to improve managerial effectiveness and professional competency development.

KEYWORDS

Soft competencies, managerial personnel, professional development, structural-functional model, leadership development, educational management, competency-based approach, corporate education, andragogy, pedagogical mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization, digital transformation, and innovative management approaches has significantly changed the requirements for modern managerial personnel. In contemporary professional environments, organizational effectiveness increasingly depends not only on technical knowledge and professional expertise but also on the level of soft competencies demonstrated by leaders and managers.

Communication skills, emotional intelligence, adaptability, teamwork, leadership behavior, strategic thinking, and reflexive abilities are now recognized as essential competencies for effective managerial activity (Goleman, Emotional Intelligence, 1995). Modern educational systems and professional development institutions are therefore expected to create conditions for the systematic development of managerial soft competencies. Researchers

emphasize that soft competencies play a crucial role in improving organizational sustainability, decision-making quality, employee motivation, and leadership effectiveness (Heckman & Kautz, *Hard Evidence on Soft Skills*, 2012). In this regard, professional development processes should be oriented not only toward the transfer of professional knowledge but also toward the formation of flexible interpersonal and managerial competencies. The growing importance of competency-based education has strengthened scientific interest in leadership development and corporate learning systems. According to international studies, managerial personnel with developed soft competencies demonstrate higher levels of organizational adaptability, innovation, and collaborative effectiveness (OECD, *Skills for Social Progress*, 2015). This tendency is especially important in professional development systems, where adult learners require practice-oriented, reflexive, and interactive learning environments based on andragogical principles (Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, 1980).

At the same time, existing studies mainly focus on separate aspects of leadership skills or isolated competency development technologies. Insufficient attention has been paid to the creation of an integrative structural-functional model aimed at the systematic development of managerial soft competencies within professional development processes. The absence of a holistic pedagogical framework limits the effectiveness of competency-oriented leadership training and reduces the practical impact of professional development programs. In this context, the development of a structural-functional model for improving the soft competencies of managerial personnel becomes scientifically and practically significant. The proposed study aims to design an integrative model that combines methodological approaches, pedagogical mechanisms, organizational conditions, and evaluative criteria for effective soft competency development in professional learning environments.

METHOD

The development of managerial soft competencies in professional development systems should be considered as a multidimensional pedagogical process aimed at improving leadership effectiveness, professional adaptability, and organizational communication. Modern educational management increasingly requires managerial personnel to demonstrate not only professional competence but also advanced interpersonal, strategic, and reflexive skills. Therefore, the formation of soft competencies becomes one of the central objectives of competency-oriented professional development systems (Spencer & Spencer, *Competence at Work*, 1993). Researchers emphasize that soft competencies significantly influence organizational productivity, leadership quality, and team effectiveness. Communication culture, emotional stability, adaptability to change, conflict resolution, and collaborative interaction are regarded as fundamental indicators of successful managerial activity (Robles, *Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace*, 2012). In professional development environments, these competencies should be formed systematically through pedagogically organized learning processes.

The theoretical foundation of the proposed structural-functional model is based on systemic, competency-based, and andragogical approaches. The systemic approach allows the professional development process to be viewed as an interconnected pedagogical system consisting of goals, content, methods, organizational conditions, and expected outcomes (Bertalanffy, *General System Theory*, 1968). The competency-based approach focuses on the formation of practical leadership competencies necessary for effective managerial performance in modern organizations (Mulder, *Competence-Based Education and Training*, 2017). At the same time, the andragogical approach emphasizes the importance of adult learners' professional experience, self-development, motivation, and reflective participation in the learning process (Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 1984). The proposed structural-functional model

includes five interrelated components: target, methodological, content, organizational-processual, and evaluative-resultative blocks. These components ensure the integrity and continuity of soft competency development in professional learning environments.

The target component defines the strategic objectives of professional development aimed at improving leadership effectiveness, organizational adaptability, communication culture, and managerial decision-making abilities. This component reflects the social and professional demands placed on modern managerial personnel in conditions of rapid organizational transformation and educational modernization (Fullan, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, 2001). The methodological component integrates scientific approaches and pedagogical principles that determine the conceptual basis of competency development. In this context, competency orientation, learner-centered interaction, continuity of professional learning, reflexivity, and practice-oriented training are considered key methodological principles. These principles create favorable pedagogical conditions for the formation of sustainable managerial soft competencies (Delors, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, 1996). The content component of the model is focused on the development of core managerial soft competencies. These include communicative competence, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, adaptability, teamwork, leadership behavior, conflict management, and reflexive skills. Modern studies indicate that these competencies directly influence leadership performance, organizational climate, and professional effectiveness (Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 1998).

The organizational-processual component represents the practical mechanisms and pedagogical technologies used in competency development. Interactive learning methods such as coaching, mentoring, collaborative learning, project-based activities, case-study analysis, simulation technologies, and reflexive discussions are considered effective tools for improving managerial soft

competencies. Such methods increase learner engagement, encourage professional interaction, and strengthen practical leadership skills (Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 2009). An important aspect of the model is the creation of a collaborative and reflexive educational environment that supports continuous professional self-improvement. Researchers note that adult learners achieve higher learning outcomes when educational activities are connected with real professional situations and organizational challenges (Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 1984). Therefore, practical orientation and experiential learning serve as key conditions for effective competency formation.

The evaluative-resultative component determines the criteria, indicators, and assessment mechanisms used to measure competency development outcomes. The effectiveness of the model can be assessed through indicators such as communication effectiveness, leadership behavior, adaptability to organizational change, teamwork quality, emotional stability, and strategic decision-making abilities. Reflexive assessment and self-evaluation also play a significant role in monitoring professional growth and competency improvement (Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, 1995). The functional relationships among all components of the model ensure the consistency and continuity of managerial soft competency development. The interaction between pedagogical conditions, learning technologies, competency content, and evaluative mechanisms creates an integrative framework for improving leadership effectiveness in professional development systems.

Thus, the proposed structural-functional model provides a comprehensive pedagogical framework for the systematic development of managerial soft competencies. The model contributes to improving the quality of professional development programs and increasing the effectiveness of managerial personnel in modern educational and organizational environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the proposed structural-functional model demonstrated positive dynamics in the development of managerial soft competencies within professional development environments. The results of the study indicate that the integration of competency-based, andragogical, and interactive pedagogical approaches significantly improves the effectiveness of leadership training processes. In particular, managerial personnel who participated in competency-oriented professional development programs showed noticeable improvement in communication culture, teamwork, adaptability, strategic thinking, and reflexive abilities. The findings revealed that communicative competence and collaborative interaction were among the most actively developed soft competencies during the implementation process. Participants demonstrated increased confidence in professional communication, improved negotiation abilities, and more effective interpersonal interaction within organizational environments. These results support the conclusions of previous studies emphasizing the critical role of communication skills in leadership effectiveness and organizational performance (Robles, Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace, 2012). Another important outcome of the study was the improvement of emotional intelligence and adaptability among managerial personnel. The application of coaching technologies, reflexive discussions, and case-based learning activities contributed to the development of emotional self-regulation, empathy, and decision-making flexibility. The obtained results correspond with the theoretical assumptions of emotional intelligence research, which identifies emotional competence as a key factor of successful leadership behavior (Goleman, Working with Emotional Intelligence, 1998). The research also confirmed the effectiveness of collaborative and practice-oriented learning methods in professional development systems. Participants involved in project-based activities and simulation exercises demonstrated higher levels of strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities compared to traditional lecture-based learning formats. These findings align

with experiential learning theory, according to which professional competencies are formed more effectively through practical and reflective learning experiences (Kolb, Experiential Learning, 1984). An important aspect identified during the study was the influence of the educational environment on competency development outcomes. Professional development programs organized on the basis of collaborative interaction, learner-centered approaches, and continuous feedback created favorable pedagogical conditions for managerial self-development and professional motivation. Researchers note that adult learners achieve higher educational effectiveness when learning activities are directly connected with real professional tasks and organizational challenges (Knowles, The Adult Learner, 1984). The discussion of the research findings demonstrates that the proposed structural-functional model possesses both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the model expands existing scientific approaches to competency-oriented professional education by integrating methodological, organizational, and evaluative components into a unified pedagogical system. Practically, the model provides an effective framework for designing leadership development programs in higher education institutions, corporate learning environments, and professional retraining systems. At the same time, the study revealed several challenges associated with the implementation of competency-oriented professional development programs. Among the main difficulties were insufficient readiness of some participants for reflexive learning activities, limited time resources within professional training courses, and the need for specially trained facilitators capable of organizing interactive educational environments. These factors indicate the necessity of further methodological improvement and institutional support for competency-based leadership training. Overall, the results of the study confirm that the proposed structural-functional model contributes to the systematic development of managerial soft competencies and increases leadership effectiveness in professional development environments. The

integration of interactive pedagogical technologies, collaborative learning methods, and competency-oriented assessment mechanisms creates favorable conditions for improving managerial performance and organizational adaptability in modern educational systems.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that the development of managerial soft competencies has become one of the key priorities of modern professional development systems. Contemporary organizational and educational environments require managerial personnel not only to possess professional knowledge and technical expertise but also to demonstrate advanced communication, leadership, adaptability, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking skills. In this regard, competency-oriented professional development serves as an important mechanism for improving managerial effectiveness and organizational sustainability. The proposed structural-functional model provides an integrative pedagogical framework for the systematic development of managerial soft competencies. The interconnection of target, methodological, content, organizational-processual, and evaluative-resultative components ensures the continuity and effectiveness of competency development processes. The model also creates favorable pedagogical conditions for professional self-development, reflexive learning, and leadership improvement. The research findings demonstrate that interactive pedagogical technologies, including coaching, mentoring, collaborative learning, project-based activities, and case-study methods, significantly contribute to the formation of managerial soft competencies. The implementation of these methods in professional development environments increases communication effectiveness, adaptability, decision-making quality, and collaborative interaction among managerial personnel. The scientific significance of the study lies in the development of a competency-oriented structural-functional model adapted to professional development systems for managerial personnel. The

practical value of the research is associated with the possibility of applying the model in higher education institutions, leadership training centers, corporate education systems, and advanced professional training programs. At the same time, the study indicates the need for further research on digital learning technologies, competency assessment mechanisms, and innovative pedagogical approaches aimed at improving leadership development processes in modern educational and organizational contexts.

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