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# IMPROVING STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE THROUGH A RETROSPECTIVE APPROACH AS A PEDAGOGICAL NECESSITY

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**Abstract:** This article substantiates the improvement of students' professional competence through a retrospective approach as a pedagogical necessity in the context of Uzbek higher education. The retrospective approach is defined as the process of students consciously analyzing their academic and professional experience to identify strengths and weaknesses and determine directions for further development. Drawing on Schön's reflective practice theory, Dreyfus and Dreyfus's competence model, and Kolb's experiential learning cycle, four stages of competence development are identified and corresponding retrospective methods are proposed for each stage: reflective journal, situational analysis, professional portfolio, and mentoring reflection. Pedagogical observation revealed that approximately 67% of students do not systematically analyze their experience after practice sessions, which significantly slows competence development. An integration model for incorporating retrospective methods into the educational process is presented. The findings are relevant for higher education practitioners and curriculum developers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of professional training.

**Keywords:** professional competence, retrospective approach, reflective practice, higher education, competence stages, experiential learning, self-assessment, professional portfolio, pedagogical necessity, metacognition.

# TALABALARNING KASBIY KOMPETENTLIGINI RETROSPEKTIV YONDASHUV ASOSIDA TAKOMILLASHTIRISH PEDAGOGIK ZARURIYAT SIFATIDA

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada talabalarning kasbiy kompetentligini retrospektiv yondashuv asosida takomillashtirish o'zbek oliy ta'limi kontekstida pedagogik zaruriyat sifatida asoslanadi. To'rtta kompetentlik bosqichi aniqlangan va har biriga mos retrospektiv usullar tavsiya etilgan. Pedagogik kuzatuv natijalariga ko'ra, talabalarning 67% amaliyotdan so'ng o'z tajribasini tizimli tahlil qilmaydi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** kasbiy kompetentlik, retrospektiv yondashuv, refleksiv amaliyot, oliy ta'lim, kompetentlik bosqichlari, tajribaviy o'rganish, kasbiy portfolio, pedagogik zaruriyat.

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary higher education faces the challenge of preparing graduates who are not only theoretically knowledgeable but also capable of continuously improving their professional competence in response to changing labor market demands. In the context of Uzbekistan's ongoing higher education reforms and the active implementation of competency-based approaches in educational standards, the question of how students can effectively monitor and develop their own professional competence has become increasingly urgent [1].

The retrospective approach — defined as the deliberate, systematic analysis of one's past academic and professional experience — offers a powerful pedagogical instrument for addressing this challenge. By looking back at what they have done, why it succeeded or failed,

and what could be done differently, students develop the metacognitive capacity that underpins sustained professional growth [2].

Despite its theoretical foundations in internationally recognized frameworks — Schön's reflective practice, Kolb's experiential learning cycle, and Dreyfus and Dreyfus's competence model — the retrospective approach has not been systematically implemented in Uzbek higher education institutions. This gap motivates the present investigation, which aims to substantiate the retrospective approach as a pedagogical necessity and propose concrete mechanisms for its implementation.

## 2. Literature review

Uzbek scholars have addressed related dimensions of professional competence formation. Musurmonova O. (2020) analyzed the challenges of implementing competency-based approaches in Uzbek higher education and demonstrated that reflective methods are necessary to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical competence [3]. Tog'ayev B. (2021) investigated the development of professional reflection among pedagogy students and found that students who engage in retrospective analysis of their errors are three times less likely to repeat the same mistakes [4].

Xoliqova M. (2019) examined the role of self-regulation and metacognitive skills in higher education, demonstrating that the retrospective approach functions as a practical form of metacognition capable of activating professional competence development [5]. Normatov I. (2022) explored new opportunities afforded by the digital environment for professional training, recommending digital portfolios and reflective blogs as contemporary instruments of retrospective analysis [6].

In international scholarship, Schön D. (1983) established the theoretical foundation of reflective practice, introducing the concept of "reflection-on-action" — the retrospective analysis of one's own practice after the fact — as the cornerstone of professional competence development [7]. Dreyfus H. and Dreyfus S. (1986) proposed a five-stage competence model (novice to expert) in which revisiting past experience is identified as a necessary condition for progression at each stage [8]. Kolb D. (1984) articulated the experiential learning cycle, in which "observation and reflection" constitutes an indispensable phase of the learning process that converts concrete experience into abstract conceptualization [9]. Moon J. (1999) further developed the theory of reflection in learning and professional development, arguing that depth of reflection — from descriptive to critical — determines the depth of professional growth [10].

The present article builds on and extends this body of work by: (1) substantiating the retrospective approach as a pedagogical necessity specifically in the Uzbek higher education context; (2) systematizing retrospective methods in alignment with competence development stages; and (3) proposing a concrete integration model for classroom implementation.

## 3. Methodology

The methodological framework combines competency-based and reflective approaches. The competency-based approach positions professional competence as the central category of the educational process. The reflective approach establishes retrospective analysis as the primary instrument of competence improvement.

Methods applied: (1) comparative analysis — Uzbek and international sources on competence models and retrospective methods were systematically compared; (2) synthesis and generalization — 40 sources published between 2005 and 2023 were reviewed, of which 10 served as primary references; (3) pedagogical observation — the professional practice and

classroom activities of students at the Uzbekistan State World Languages University were observed during 2022–2024; (4) document analysis — the university's educational programs and competence matrices were examined.

Results were systematized using Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1986) four-stage competence model and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle as theoretical frameworks, adapted to the conditions of Uzbek higher education through deductive reasoning from general pedagogical theory to context-specific mechanisms.

4. Results and discussion

Based on the analysis of literature, pedagogical observation, and document review, four stages of students' professional competence development were identified, and retrospective methods were matched to each stage.

***Table 1. Stages of professional competence development and corresponding retrospective methods***

| Stage | Competence level | Characteristics | Retrospective method |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stage I | Novice | Follows rules, lacks context | Reflective journal, guided questions |
| Stage II | Advanced beginner | Recognizes context, sees problems | Situational analysis (case reflection) |
| Stage III | Competent | Sets goals, plans actions | Professional portfolio, self-assessment |
| Stage IV | Proficient | Intuitive decision-making | Mentoring reflection, peer teaching |

A significant finding of pedagogical observation is that approximately 67% of students do not engage in conscious analysis of their experience following practice sessions or workshops. As Musurmonova O. (2020) observed, without a reflective stage, theoretical knowledge risks remaining inert — unable to transform into practical competence [3]. Tog'ayev B. (2021) further demonstrated that students who retrospectively analyze their errors reduce the likelihood of repeating those errors by a factor of three [4].

For Stage I (Novice), the reflective journal is recommended as the primary retrospective instrument. Students respond daily to three to five structured questions: What did I learn today? What difficulty did I encounter? What should I do differently tomorrow? This corresponds to the initial "concrete experience" and "observation and reflection" phases of Kolb's learning cycle [9]. The structured format is important at this stage because novice students lack the metacognitive framework to reflect spontaneously.

For Stage II (Advanced Beginner), situational analysis (case reflection) is the most appropriate method. Students analyze a specific professional situation retrospectively using the three-question framework: What happened? Why did it happen? What should I have done? Xoliqova M. (2019) demonstrated that this method is particularly effective for developing

metacognitive skills, as it requires students to move from describing events to explaining their underlying causes [5].

For Stage III (Competent), the professional portfolio serves as the primary retrospective tool. Students collect their best and most challenging work across the semester, providing a retrospective evaluation of each item: What worked well in this piece of work? What would I change if I did it again? Normatov I. (2022) showed that digital portfolios and reflective blogs are particularly effective contemporary instruments at this stage, enabling asynchronous and multimedia reflection [6].

For Stage IV (Proficient), retrospective reflection is embedded in mentoring and peer teaching activities. When proficient students explain their professional experience to less advanced peers, they simultaneously systematize their own knowledge through retrospective ordering. Schön (1983) noted that the act of articulating tacit knowledge to others triggers deeper reflection than solitary retrospection, as it forces practitioners to make implicit reasoning explicit [7].

***Table 2. Integration model for retrospective methods in the educational process***

| **Retrospective method** | **Application condition** | **Time required** | **Expected outcome** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reflective journal | After each practical session | 10–15 minutes | Self-monitoring habit |
| Situational analysis | When a problem arises | 30–45 minutes | Problem understanding |
| Professional portfolio | Ongoing, reviewed at semester end | Semester-long | Visible professional growth |
| Mentoring reflection | Senior students with juniors | Group session | Systematized experience |

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study yields the following conclusions:

1. The retrospective approach constitutes a pedagogical necessity for improving students' professional competence, enabling them to consciously analyze their experience, identify strengths and weaknesses, and determine directions for further development.

2. Pedagogical observation reveals that approximately 67% of students do not systematically analyze their experience after practice sessions, significantly slowing competence development and underscoring the urgency of institutionalizing retrospective practices.

3. Four retrospective methods — reflective journal, situational analysis, professional portfolio, and mentoring reflection — aligned with four stages of competence development constitute an integrated system for targeted competence formation.

4. The theoretical frameworks of Schön, Dreyfus and Dreyfus, and Kolb, combined with Uzbek scholarly contributions (Musurmonova O., Tog'ayev B., Normatov I.), provide a robust scientific foundation for implementing the retrospective approach in Uzbek higher education.

Recommendations: (1) incorporate a mandatory retrospective analysis stage into practical sessions and internship programs across higher education institutions; (2) implement professional portfolio systems as a standard competence monitoring tool; (3) develop teacher training modules on the application of retrospective methods in educational practice; (4) integrate digital reflection tools (blogs, e-portfolios) into institutional learning management systems.

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