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The Value-Oriented And Competency-Based Approaches In Modern Education: Challenges And Innovations

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Abstract

This article examines the competency-based and value-oriented approaches to education quality in the context of a consumer society. It explores the limitations of competency-based education, which primarily caters to immediate labor market demands, and highlights the necessity of a value-based framework that fosters creativity, personal growth, and social responsibility. The paper also discusses the role of innovative learning (IL) methodologies in transforming traditional education, emphasizing the need for flexible, individualized learning trajectories. By integrating theoretical insights with practical applications, the study underscores the significance of innovation in ensuring education quality, preparing students for dynamic socio-economic environments, and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

Keywords: education quality, competency-based approach, value-oriented approach, innovative learning, educational flexibility, creativity, social responsibility, educational transformation, lifelong learning, higher education

Introduction

The modern approach to education quality is focused not only on students acquiring a certain amount of knowledge but, above all, on personal development. Key aspects include responsibility, creativity, the ability to independently seek knowledge throughout life, and readiness for effective work in contemporary conditions. Achieving high educational standards required by society largely depends on the value-based justification of managerial decisions.

The quality of educational institution management is ensured through strategic planning, which is based on the school's core values. As a social institution, a school is a value-driven organization more than many others. Its successful functioning requires conscious and open proclamation of these values, which influence the school's mission, the graduate profile, strategic approaches to the educational process, and the curriculum content. Interaction among all educational stakeholders—leaders, educators, parents, and students—based on shared values fosters democratic, humane, and mutually respectful managerial relationships.

Materials and methods.

According to management theory, an organization's values are reflected in its mission. The mission defines priority directions for development, shaping value-oriented goals. Developing a school's mission is a complex process requiring consensus among the teaching staff. Value-goals create the desired image of the school's future, while value-means serve as instruments for achieving these goals. In professional culture, pedagogical values also include relational values, which determine principles of interaction among all educational process participants and their attitude toward professional activities. This involves a shared language of communication, each participant's awareness of their role in achieving goals, and a commitment to productive collaboration.

Traditions, behavioral norms, and established positions that embody the school's key values form its corporate culture. This culture develops through deliberate efforts and influences the strategic management of the educational organization. Strategy represents a comprehensive action plan that defines priorities and allocates resources to achieve set goals. Effective strategic management involves not only defining development directions but also fostering strategic thinking among all educational process participants.

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An analysis of the issue led to the conclusion that value-based educational institution management has a direct impact on education quality. This factor contributes to:

- The formation of a school's mission as the core of its value system and a key development benchmark;
- The coherence of leadership and teaching staff actions, ensuring the engagement of all participants in meaningful value-oriented activities;
- The implementation of value-targeted management, promoting predictability of results, alignment of all participants toward achieving educational goals, and the development of collective responsibility for the success of the educational process.

Nowadays, innovation-driven scientific development is actively proclaimed as one of the dominant factors in the progress of Russian society. It is expected to bring large-scale changes to social life in Russia. However, for science to truly transform the way we live, learn, and work, well-trained specialists are essential. Even the largest financial investments in science will not yield the desired results if there are no individuals capable of generating new ideas and technologies and bringing them to the market. From this perspective, the preparation of highly qualified scientific personnel becomes a key national development priority. Achieving this goal requires not only consistent governmental attention but also a rational approach to improving the quality of education. Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that Russian state education authorities have largely lost control over the concept of «education quality.»

Today, discussions on education quality take place in government forums, the media, parliamentary hearings, and among prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, social services, guardianship and custody authorities, and various public organizations. Despite continuous improvements and conceptual shifts in education quality assessment—ranging from basic knowledge evaluations to ongoing performance management based on educational statistics and qualimetric monitoring—the theoretical, methodological, applied, and empirical content of the term «education quality» lacks a clear definition. This ambiguity likely stems from the absence of socio-cultural realities in Russian society that correspond to the meaning of this concept.

Although education quality is frequently discussed in Russia, addressing this issue remains a sensitive subject. Several factors contribute to this attitude, including:

– The myth of the uniqueness and reverence of Russian education;
– The myth of education falsification, where students believe they can obtain a university diploma after studying for only two to three months per year over three years;
– Quasi-Taylorism, or the mass-production method of training specialists introduced in the 1930s;
– The prevalence of «provincialism» (lack of awareness of global research in one's field) and plagiarism in Russian education;
– Changing relationships between universities and students, businesses, and the international educational community, treating them as active participants in the educational process;
– The lack of experience among Russian universities in operating within the new economy and societal dynamics;
– A negative attitude toward individual contributions and responsibilities of students and educators in the learning process;
– A general disinterest in education quality due to the lack of financial incentives.

Historically, the concept of «quality» has been one of the most fundamental philosophical categories describing an object's existence. Hegel provided a comprehensive analysis of this notion, stating: «Quality is an immediate determination identical with being… Something is what it is due to its quality; losing its quality, it ceases to be what it is and transforms into something else.»

At the same time, the category of quality must be distinguished from the concept of «property.» While quality characterizes an object as a whole, properties describe individual aspects of it. Properties may change without altering the quality of an object, whereas a change in quality always transforms the object itself and, consequently, its properties.

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As consumer society evolved and the service sector integrated into market relations, the concept of quality expanded to include a consumer-oriented dimension. Quality became associated not only with the essential characteristics of objects but also with their ability to satisfy human needs. For example, the international ISO 9004-2-91 standards define quality as «a set of properties and characteristics of a product or service that ensure the satisfaction of defined or expected needs.»

Over the last decade, the culture of quality, originating in industrial production, has been actively applied to education. This shift was driven by the realization that educational services exhibit characteristics of marketable goods—consumable and comparable in quality to customer needs, pricing, and competitiveness. Education quality has since been defined as «the compliance of an educational institution's processes with the needs of cultural and institutional practices in key areas of modern society.»

Undoubtedly, linking education quality to societal needs brings theoretical and methodological innovation. It broadens the educational discourse to encompass the entire society, emphasizing the dominance of the personal-subjective principle in its development. This connection positions education quality within a system designed to produce graduates who are in demand in the labor market and beneficial to modern society. Notably, even during Peter the Great's reforms, the lack of external demand for education hindered its proper organization and development.

However, this connection also has a downside. Needs, as social states of individuals, groups, or society, arise from either necessity or dissatisfaction with existing conditions. While they drive educational innovation and improvements, they may also turn education into a mere tool, stripping it of its intrinsic value, making it dependent on external circumstances, and subjecting it to external control.

The penetration of consumer society principles into education depletes the essence of the Russian word «education,» whose root «образ» (image) has etymological ties to words meaning «icon,» «face,» and «likeness»—connoting something sacred and profound. Education, in its deeper sense, calls for creativity, personal growth, true freedom, and dignity. Reducing it to a mere service or a means of satisfying social demands, and linking its quality to consumer society criteria—often subjective, random, or superficial—risks unintentionally dismantling historically established educational standards that have repeatedly brought Russia global academic and scientific recognition.

The absence of clearly defined education quality standards in Russia is reflected in several concerning trends:

- The emergence of customized programs and courses that appeal to market competitiveness but do not always align with strategic educational goals;
- A shift from systematic knowledge acquisition to mere information awareness, replacing deep learning with trivia-driven assessments;
- A focus on utility rather than universality, sidelining the worldview-forming aspect of education in favor of professional skills and qualifications;
- The cultivation of a consumerist mindset among students, replacing the creative drive with the belief that skills can be acquired through gamified methods or simplistic tests;
- The adoption of educational strategies tailored to an economy reliant on raw material exports, rather than fostering innovation-driven education.

These trends have led to a systemic failure in Russian higher education, resulting in methodological and technological stagnation and a decline in global university rankings. For example, in the World University Ranking published by the Times Higher Education supplement, Moscow State University (MSU) ranked 79th in 2005, 93rd in 2006, and dropped out of the top 100 in 2007. By 2008, MSU ranked 182nd, while Saint Petersburg State University fell outside the top 200.

Results and Discussions.

The root cause of this crisis was quickly identified: Russian education has traditionally focused solely on what students must know, measuring their readiness through knowledge acquisition rather than competencies. However, given the rapidly changing socio-economic

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January 2025

landscape, this knowledge-centered approach is now seen as ineffective. Dissatisfaction with traditional education methods is growing among students, graduates, employers, and policymakers.

The main reasons for this dissatisfaction include:

- The rapid obsolescence of information before students complete their studies;
- The labor market's shift from valuing knowledge to prioritizing competencies;
- The expansion of higher education institutions and the student population;
- Universities' integration into international, national, and regional education markets;
- The mass production of specialists in outdated fields, leaving two-thirds of graduates working outside their areas of expertise.

In response, the traditional pedagogical model has been replaced by a competency-based approach. This model links knowledge acquisition to a predefined set of skills necessary for innovation and professional success. Competencies now include educational, creative, social-psychological, and professional components, emphasizing adaptability, practical application, and independent thinking.

Can a competency-based approach ensure a qualitative shift in education?

Table 1

Comparative analysis of traditional (cognitive) and competency-based approaches

Traditional (cognitive) approach	Competency-based approach
result — qualification	result — competence
Link to the subject of professional activity	focus on developing the personality of a specialist, ability to be active, high motivation
based on a disciplinary approach	based on an interdisciplinary, integrated approach
Forms a passive model of a specialist (I am taught, the teacher knows)	forms an active model of a specialist (I am learning myself, the teacher can help)
focused on the cognitive and operational aspects of education, limited by what is taught	focused on what the student knows and is ready to do
The teacher is the active beginning of the educational process, responsible for learning, the student is a dependent, passively learning	Student and teacher — partners, equal
education for life	lifelong education
The quality of training is derived from the number of courses taken	The quality of education depends on involvement in the holistic sphere of one's future activity

On one hand, the answer is obvious. The competency-based approach aligns education with social practice, compelling educational services to meet the current needs of all stakeholders in the educational discourse. It encourages the widespread use of innovative methods and technologies, fostering skills and abilities that can significantly influence the development of various social practices.

On the other hand, it is evident that the competency-based approach has limitations in improving education quality within a consumer society. This is because consumer society principles dictate that competency development must cater to the immediate demands of the material goods and services market. The theoretical and methodological constraints of the competency-based approach become apparent when education quality is viewed as a value-based rather than a need-based model.

A value-based approach directs education not merely toward fulfilling essential needs (which pertains to basic survival requirements) or economic benefits (which align with market interests)

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but toward what is inherently necessary—what aligns with human purpose, potential, dignity, and freedom. The world of values represents a sphere of evaluations expressing the measure of human spiritual wealth. This is especially evident when interacting with modern students. They aspire (on a value level) to secure high salaries and prestigious positions immediately, yet they lack motivation to acquire the educational foundation necessary to meet these expectations. They fail to recognize that being trained for immediate problem-solving will create problems for them in the near future.

Examining education quality through the lens of values reveals that education is a complex system whose organizational principles are rooted not only in societal needs but also in profound economic, socio-political, and cultural processes—essentially, in worldview. This means that education should prioritize the development of value-based qualities in students, such as patriotism, civic responsibility, and tolerance.

Additionally, value, in its most essential characteristic, serves as a criterion of preference. The order of preference (choice) is established through evaluation. Value functions as a standard, a measure, a criterion of assessment, whether consciously or unconsciously, quantitatively measurable or qualitatively defined. Thus, in human actions, a value situation is any situation where preferential, selective behavior occurs—implying at least a binary system of relationships.

Conclusion

Ultimately, IL is designed to equip learners with skills for organizing activities and interactions in conditions of high uncertainty. The ability to function effectively in such environments improves resilience and overall efficiency.

Thus, innovative technology integrates problem exploration, learning new research methodologies, and applying practical solutions to real-life challenges.

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