

# POLYCULTURAL COMPETENCE CLUSTERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CREATING AN OUTCOMES-BASED COMPETENCE PROFILE

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Nowadays clusters are recognized as an important instrument for promoting industrial development, innovation, competitiveness and growth. Although primarily driven by the efforts made by private companies and individuals, clusters are influenced by governments and other public institutions at national and regional levels.

An educational cluster is a set of interrelated vocational education institutions of various levels that are united by industry with each other and are connected by partnership with industry enterprises. The principles of the functioning of the educational cluster is a single educational, scientific and innovation process in conjunction with the economy and the social sphere; the continuity of the educational process and the relationship of educational programs at various levels; organizational, educational and methodical, scientific and informational interaction between all subjects of the cluster.

This article attempts to develop and describe a cluster of polycultural competences of university students by means of creating an applied profile of competences. The purpose of this study is to describe polycultural competences and to define the profile of applied competences in form of a cluster of polycultural competencies (PCC). The authors consider clusters of polycultural competences as an integral part of the educational campus within the concept framework of Shadrinsk State Pedagogical University.

To determine the essence of the concept of a cluster of polycultural competences, theoretical, empirical, observational, and diagnostic methods were implemented, such as: a review of scientific literature, a compilation of best practices, observation, statistical methods, etc. As a result, a cluster of polycultural competences was defined as a set of competences.

The authors analyzed the programs of partner universities and organized international webinars and internships for bachelors and masters abroad and developed online courses “foreign language for undergraduate students and masters”. Experimental data obtained during the implementation of cluster training show the effectiveness of the formation of students' polycultural competencies.

*Keywords: polycultural competence clusters, creating an outcomes-based competence profile, the PCC foreign language technology.*

## Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the polycultural competence clusters (PCC) of the European universities and to present a polycultural competence cluster of the Shadrinsk state pedagogical university, namely the PCC foreign language technology. The authors developed online courses “foreign language for undergraduate students and masters” (<https://eos.shspu.ru/>) on the platform of MOODLE learning environment which can be easily integrated into classroom activities. The purpose of the courses is to implement such effective learning methods as intensive practice through tasks, real-life lesson models and situations, cross-cultural interaction training, research projects, group discussions,

interactive tasks for the development of students' polycultural competences. The developed courses were successfully implemented in the educational process. The results of placement and final tests show a significant improvement in the development of students' professional competences.

### 1. Literature review

Educational clusters and new technologies in the polycultural education highlight the importance of generating qualified human resources. Their contribution to the creation of outcomes-based competence profiles is the subject of research of both Russian and foreign scientists such as S.S. Espaev [7], G.F. McAllister, J.J. Irwing [15], A.V. Torkhova [23] and others. Based on specific characteristics of economic clusters de-

finied by Porter A. Makulova, G. Alimzhanova, Z. Bekturganova, Z. Umirzakova, L. Makulova, K. Karymbayeva [14] study the competence based approach in education and define the model of professional competence. Competence model of the graduate must guarantee getting a qualification corresponding to his future career. It is expected that competences acquired by the student in high school, will manifest themselves in different everyday life and professional situations.

The model of educational cluster developed by the scientist E.I. Sokolova [19] is of great importance for our research. The essence of the concept of educational clusters is to unite the leading industrial university institutions and primary and secondary vocational educational institutions, specialized schools, basic enterprises, main customers and consumer specialists.

Modeling polycultural competence clusters (PCC) is based on research carried out by A. Galante [8], J. Diller, J. Moule [6], D.W. Sue, P. Arrendondo, R.J. McDavis [20]. Based on the above mentioned research the essence of the concept “polycultural competence of the personality” can be defined as polycultural tolerance and sociocultural identity.

### 2. Methodology

Competence is an integrated concept that indicates the ability of the individual to use independently various elements of knowledge, skills and attitudes in everyday and new situations [1, 6, 8]. Polycultural competence is considered as the combination of cultural tolerance and sociocultural identity. Polycultural competence is also viewed as an integrative quality that is reflected in a person’s awareness of the content and means of interaction with the polycultural world and realized in a person’s ability to function in a polycultural world [12, 25].

A cluster of educational competences as a planned result of polycultural education is currently being formed under the influence of interaction, though formalized, appropriate structures and labour market segments [7, pp. 159–162].

We can list some key points and strategies that should be the basis of the polycultural competence formation:

*“Lifelong learning”.*

This approach presupposes the creation of conditions for formation the competencies at the university and then in the profession.

*Student-centered approach.*

This approach means taking into account

the priority of interests, desires, motivations of students to participate in educational programs.

*Practice-oriented approach (work-based learning).*

This approach means the development of the scientific and innovative potential of students and the formation of their linguistic and cultural competences.

*The approach of “open education”.*

This approach is aimed at providing open access for students to recognized foreign knowledge centers.

We used such **methods**:

Theoretical methods: a) analysis of normative documents on education was used to justify the urgency of the problem and determine the legal possibilities for its solution – creating an outcomes-based competence profile; b) the theoretical and methodological analysis allowed to formulate the key initial positions of the research – the position of polycultural competence clusters (PCC) in higher education; c) system analysis was the basis for a holistic review of the problem; d) forecasting and long-term planning was used to identify and analyze the factors that caused the emergence of the problem under study, justification of the possibility of its solution – polycultural competence clusters (PCC) in higher education as a variant of the result of outcomes-based competence profile.

Empirical methods: a) generalization and analysis of effective international experience and practice of domestic and foreign higher schools in the creation of clusters of competences – aimed the creating an outcomes-based competence profile; b) the focus group method was used to elucidate students’ attitudes towards the formation of polycultural competences in the cluster.

Observation methods: observation (direct, indirect) was used to determine the potential of students to participate in the program of forming competences in foreign languages – the developing online courses “foreign language for undergraduate students and masters”.

Diagnostic methods: questioning, interviewing, conversation, testing, self-assessment, expert assessments were used to determine the level of the formation of linguistic, polycultural and professional competences of students – for creating of polycultural competence clusters (PCC) in higher education.

### 3. Results

The PCC foreign language technology is focused on the evaluation and transfer of promising

new technologies and methods to the broad field of multicultural communication and foreign language business communication. Polycultural competence cluster contains such competences as communicative, cultural, intercultural, sociocultural and such components as the objectives component, the content component, the operational component and the evaluation-resultative component [2–4].

Various innovative methods of teaching are necessary for the students' polycultural competences development. The authors offer such methods as microteaching, method of group dynamics, methods of training and consulting.

*Microteaching* is the art of teaching, a complex process, which is not limited to transferring of knowledge from one to another. Microteaching is a special teaching practice model or teaching training method. In this teaching context, there are many actions like the use of methods, the usage of media, learning guide, motivation, classroom management, assessment, analyzing and so on.

The concept of microteaching is mainly based on the following points [9, pp. 124–128]:

- Teaching in its real form but with a minimum concept.
- The exercise which is designed focuses mostly on the basic teaching skills with the help of feedback based on the knowledge and information of student learning level.
- The teaching is conducted for students who are from different cultural backgrounds.
- Monitoring the micro teaching exercises conducted in classrooms.
- Enabling the prospective teachers to learn effective teaching skills.
- Helping the students to actively participate in teaching by providing low risk situation.
- It also offers opportunities for retraining at regular time intervals.

*Method of group dynamics.* Group dynamics deals with the attitudes and behavioral patterns of a group. Group dynamics concern how groups are formed, what is their structure and which processes are followed in their functioning. Thus, it is concerned with the interactions and forces operating between groups. We used the method of group dynamics in the formation of students' language competences at the Faculty of Humanities.

*Methods of training and consulting.* Pedagogical consulting is a consultative structuring, related to educational support of developmental

learning processes, as well as activities that allow an independent expert evaluation of the effectiveness of the use of teaching technologies.

In our study, pedagogical consulting is positioned as the activity of a teacher (consultant), aimed at assisting the student in finding a solution to his problem situation related to the study of a different language and linguoculture [10, pp. 1350–1352].

In the mainstream of our research, we identified three types of pedagogical consulting: problem-oriented, aimed at analyzing the essence and external causes of linguistic intercultural problems, and searching for ways to resolve them; Person-centered, centered on the analysis of individual causes of the problem; decision-oriented, centered on identifying resources to solve identified problems.

In order to encourage elementary students to start speaking and provide them with some thought-provoking material we have developed a *Moodle online practice course*, some parts of which are used by students outside the classroom, but some exercises are really good additional practice to work in class [5]. The course consists of nine lessons (units) and extra practice activities. Everything that students learn in the online course is discussed in class. The aim of the online course is to provide students with exciting practice material full of clear and meaningful ideas that cannot leave students indifferent and encourage them to speak using their emotions and experience. Thus, we can say that the online course is designed to help students develop their speaking skills that we use to teach students the other skills and explain the material of the lessons [1, 2, 11]. This two-way process helps students gain near-native competence in the language step by step.

Formation of polycultural competences in the learning process and their evaluation greatly facilitates the description of competences or their clusters in the form of observable signs of manifestation (descriptors or indicators). Such descriptions are useful for three reasons [24, pp. 20–22; 14, pp. 183–192]. First, they provide practical guidelines for the work of teachers in the formation of competencies, since they are usually of a pragmatic nature and link the conceptual formulations of competences with target indicators in the form of real skills to implement practice-oriented and professionally-oriented actions (labor functions) that should be formed by a student. Secondly, these descriptions are necessary in the work of the authors of tasks in the de-

velopment of funds of competence-oriented assessment tools. Thirdly, they are necessary for experts when assessing the results of students' performance in the competence formation process [13].

#### 4. Conclusions

Competence model of the graduate must guarantee getting a qualification corresponding to his future career [15, 16, 18]. It is expected that competences acquired by the student in high school, will manifest themselves in different everyday-life and professional situations.

In this case, there are two groups of competences: versatile (universal, over objective) and specific (objective-specific, objective-specialized). Flexibility to move from competences into new types of activities, which manifests itself in the ability to use the existing knowledge and experience in new conditions and less rigid attachment to the objects and labor tools, is one of their main characteristics.

Special competences reflect the professional qualification [17, pp. 10–13]. They differ for different disciplines (directions, special training). Despite the existence of two types of competences, the description of both versatile and specific competences is possible only with a sufficiently high degree of generalization and “transpersonal” nature of their content.

Competency-based model of a specialist is not a model of a graduate, because competency is inextricably linked with the experience of a successful activity, which the student can acquire in the proper amount during the course of training in the university. Therefore, in the development of the competency-based model of the graduate, as the goal of higher education we should reduce the competency-based model of the specialist, beforehand reducing the requirements that are related to professional experience.

On the other hand, it is necessary in the educational program to increase all learning activities (various educational practices, project works, teaching and research work of students, business, role-playing, simulation games, etc.). Competency-based approach, as we can say – is an association of the interests of the employer's, the graduate, the teachers and professionals in order to realize the professional activities in the best way. Therefore, in order to assess the current existing requirements of professional competence in high school, we should be guided by the views of employers [20–22].

Clustering of competences is an extremely

necessary work, which should be carried out in two ways: first, experts work, and then the factor analysis device in the approbation process to measure the students' level of competence development.

Thus, the cluster of competences is a set of closely related competencies, united according to certain criteria. Inside clusters, hierarchical levels can be distinguished, or simply lists of competences [19, p. 153; 23, p. 517]. The connection between clusters, taking into account their hierarchy, is accomplished by constructing structurally-descriptive models. Modeling is used to identify the main factors of success in the process of forming competences for a specific OT or training direction, so the relationship between clusters, as well as the hierarchy between them and within them, is specific.

Thus, it is possible to formulate a certain sequence of actions for constructing a competence model for training a specialist for a particular vocational training or training direction:

- supplement the tasks of professional activity by developing a part of the tasks taking into account the specifics of the region in which the university is located and the profile orientation of the OP for the preparation of a bachelor's or master's degree;
- to develop a set of professional-specialized competencies for the OP taking into account its profile orientation and to combine them with the professional competencies of the GEF in the relevant area of training;
- structuring competences on clusters;
- to introduce a hierarchy into a set of competence clusters (professional and professionally-specialized) for the OP taking into account its profile orientation;
- to build a competence model for the bachelor's (master's) degree training.

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## КЛАСТЕРЫ ПОЛИКУЛЬТУРНЫХ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЙ В СИСТЕМЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ: СОЗДАНИЕ ОРИЕНТИРОВАННОГО НА РЕЗУЛЬТАТ ПРОФИЛЯ

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На современном этапе кластеры признаются в качестве важного инструмента, способствующего промышленному развитию, инновациям, конкуренции и общественному развитию. Хотя первоначально кластеры продвигались усилиями частных компаний и частного сектора, сейчас на их формирование влияют правительства и другие общественные организации на национальном и региональном уровнях.

Образовательный кластер представляет собой совокупность взаимосвязанных учреждений профессионального образования разного уровня, которые объединены и связаны партнерскими отношениями с промышленными предприятиями. Принципы функционирования образовательного кластера – это слияние образовательного, научного и инновационного процессов и взаимосвязи образовательных программ различных уровней; организационное, учебно-методическое, научное и информационное взаимодействие между всеми субъектами кластера. Кроме того, кластер рассматривается и как комплексная модель какого-либо объекта.

В статье предпринята попытка создания и описания кластера поликультурных компетенций студентов университета посредством описания прикладных компетенций профиля. Цель исследования – поиск эффективных способов описания кластера и формирования поликультурных компетенций студентов университета, одним из которых является создание ориентированного на результат профиля данных компетенций. Авторы рассматривают кластеры поликультурных компетенций в качестве необходимого компонента образовательного кампуса концепции ШГПУ.

Чтобы определить суть кластера поликультурных компетенций, были использованы теоретические, эмпирические методы, а также методы наблюдения и диагностики: обзор научной литературы, компиляция положительного опыта, наблюдение, статистическая обработка и т. д. В результате, кластер поликультурных компетенций был определен как набор компетенций, формирование которых обеспечивается путем кластерного обучения.

Авторами проанализированы программы вузов-партнеров и проведены вебинары и обучение в интернатуре для студентов, обучающихся по программам бакалавриата и магистратуры за границей, а также разработаны онлайн-курсы «Иностранный язык для бакалавров и магистров». Экспериментальные данные, полученные в ходе внедрения кластерного обучения, показывают эффективность формирования поликультурных компетенций студентов.

*Ключевые слова:* кластеры поликультурных компетенций; создание ориентированного на результат профиля; технология формирования кластеров поликультурных компетенций в иностранном языке.

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