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Case Study: The View of Educators on the Implementation of Competence-Based Education in Latvia ¹

Summary

The transition to competence-based education (CBE) in Latvian schools and higher educational institutions was supposed to be completed by October 17, 2021. It was already in 2016 when The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia initiated the transitioning process by implementing the pilot project with 100 Latvian schools. The purpose of the Latvian government was a gradual and careful introduction of CBE in Latvian educational institutions to prepare the students for operation in the modern, rapidly changing world by having the ability to not only acquire and apply knowledge but also to generate the wish for lifelong learning. The present research aimed to investigate the understanding, perception and experience of the randomly selected schoolteachers and university educators with the introduction of CBE in Latvia. The research areas were the surveyed instructors' understanding and perceptions of competences and CBE, the educators' experience with the implementation of CBE, and the possible lack of training in CBE. The results of this research indicate that the transition to CBE has not yet been fully completed, as some Latvian educators still lack the knowledge of the concept of competences and CBE, as well as the understanding of how to develop and implement the competence-based curriculum.

Keywords: competence-based education, competence-based curriculum, content-based curriculum, schoolteachers, university educators.

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2023

[https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.37384/SM.2023.15.096)

[10.37384/](https://doi.org/10.37384/SM.2023.15.096)

[SM.2023.15.096](https://doi.org/10.37384/SM.2023.15.096)

¹ This work has been supported by the European Social Fund within the Project No 8.2.2.0/20/1/008 "Strengthening of PhD students and academic personnel of Riga Technical University and BA School of Business and Finance in the strategic fields of specialization" of the Specific Objective 8.2.2 "To Strengthen Academic Staff of Higher Education Institutions in Strategic Specialization Areas" of the Operational Programme "Growth and Employment".

GADĪJUMA IZPĒTE: PEDAGOGU SKATĪJUMS UZ KOMPETENCĒS BALSTĪTAS IZGLĪTĪBAS IEVIEŠANU LATVIJĀ

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Kopsavilkums

Pāreju uz kompetencēs balstītu izglītību (KBI) Latvijas skolās un augstskolās bija paredzēts pabeigt līdz 2021. gada 17. oktobrim. LR Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija pārejas procesu uzsāka jau 2016. gadā, īstenojot pilotprojektu ar 100 Latvijas skolām. Latvijas valdības mērķis bija pakāpeniski ieviest kompetencēs balstītu izglītību Latvijas izglītības iestādēs, lai sagatavotu skolēnus un studentus darbībai mūsdienu strauji mainīgajā pasaulē, lai viņi spētu ne tikai apgūt un izmantot zināšanas, bet arī vēlētos mācīties visu mūžu. Šī pētījuma mērķis bija noskaidrot nejauši izvēlētu skolu skolotāju un augstskolu pedagogu izpratni, uztveri un pieredzi par KBI ieviešanu Latvijā. Pētījuma jomas bija aptaujāto pasniedzēju izpratne un uztvere par kompetencēm un KBI, pedagogu pieredze ar KBI ieviešanu un iespējama apmācības trūkums KBI jomā. Pētījuma rezultāti liecina, ka pāreja uz KBI vēl nav pilnībā pabeigta, jo daļai Latvijas pedagogu joprojām trūkst zināšanu par kompetenču un KBI jēdzienu, kā arī izpratnes par to, kā izstrādāt un īstenot kompetencēs balstītu mācību programmu.

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Raksturvārdi: kompetencēs balstīta izglītības sistēma, kompetencēs balstīta mācību programma, mācību saturā balstīta mācību programma, skolotāji, augstskolu pedagogi.

Introduction

Educational institutions aim to raise individuals who can successfully operate in a work-related environment, applying the skills, knowledge, and behaviour acquired throughout their education. Nowadays, students should be able to adapt to the rapid changes in the modern world and strive for the development of society as a whole. As noted by Schleicher (n. d., cited by Lopez et al. 2017):

Today, schools need to prepare students for more rapid economic and social change than ever before, for jobs that have not yet been created, to use technologies that have not yet been invented, and to solve social problems that we do not yet know will arise.

As it was highlighted by Kazin (n. d., as cited in Mkonongwa 2018), because of the inconsistency between the final grades the graduates receive and the competences they possess, employers are currently more interested in the competences of the potential employee rather than the diploma. Competence-based education (CBE) was developed because students need to prepare for operations in real life, especially in work-related environments.

CBE was introduced in Latvia in 2016 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2019). The government's aim was its slow introduction by providing training in CBE for teachers, mentors, headmasters, and local governments. The initial goal was to fully introduce the system in Latvian educational institutions by 2022, which was later moved to 2023 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2019). Amongst the other initiatives of the government of the Republic of Latvia, the National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia designed the project School 2030 aimed at the facilitation of the introduction of competence-based curriculum by, for example, offering educational materials and e-learning courses for teachers (School2030 2022). In 2022, the introduction of the modular vocational education programme began, and it was designed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to operate successfully in a work-related environment (National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia 2022). The present research aims to establish the understanding, perception and experience of the randomly selected sample of schoolteachers and university educators with CBE in 2024.

Literature review

First of all, the definition of competence should be established, which is considered to be problematic because numerous definitions of the concept exist, and no consensus has been reached regarding the proper definition of the term.

For instance, Rychen and Salganik (2003: 43) defined competence as “the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilization of psychosocial prerequisites (including both cognitive and noncognitive aspects)”. The definition that can be ascribed to the school setting has been proposed by Tilya and Mafumiko (2010: 40): “Competence generally refers to the ability to do a particular activity to a prescribed standard. It is the ability of students to accomplish tasks adequately, to find solutions and apply them in a classroom or work situation”. The researchers then elaborate on that, in more general terms, competence is viewed as a mix of abilities required to solve specific problems. They distinguish between trainable competences (i.e., knowledge and skills) and more complicated ones (i.e., attitudes and beliefs). This description refers competences to proficiency performance development. Mkonongwa (2018) suggests that competence can be described as the evaluation of proven skills and proven

knowledge. He distinguishes between “behavioral competence (soft skills) – how something is done and functional competences – the ability to perform some technical tasks like operating machinery, making a dress, etc.” (ibid.: 2).

Kouwenhoven (2003) has compiled the definitions of competence proposed by various authors and has divided those into seven groups, which are aimed at portraying the various dimensions of the concept:

1. *Competence as common intelligence* – it involves general intelligence (IQ) and field-related knowledge (e.g., communicative, numerical). Competence is one's psychological, natural ability.

2. *Competence as performance-directed intelligence* – it involves cognitive abilities, skills, knowledge, and strategies required for a particular performance.

3. *Competence as motivation* – the self-concept, the necessity to experience competence by means of exceptional performance, and personal version of success and failure establish a competent performance, accompanied by individual experience and beliefs about learning and performance.

4. *Competence as a complex of cognitive abilities and motivation leading to output* – it is the ability to reach goals, requirements, and tasks required in a specific environment (e.g., a job).

5. *Competence as a complex of main competences* – main competences are the ones that are required for achieving adequate performance in various situations.

6. *Competence as a complex of 'metacompetences'* refers to understanding, motivational attributes, and deliberate skills that help to use cognitive resources more effectively to complete various tasks in various settings and for various purposes.

7. *Competence as a fragment of complete human resources* – required for economic, institutional, and human growth.

In general, competence-based teaching and learning involves the practice of teaching, assessment, evaluation, and reporting, which depend on learners showing that they have acquired the skills and knowledge they are expected to possess in the course of their learning (Mkonongwa 2018). Savage (1993) refers to a competence-based curriculum as the functional method because it accentuates life skills and assesses the proficiency of the skills required for a human to perform successfully in a specific environment. Mosha (2012) emphasises that a competence-based curriculum aims to promote learning, understanding, and mastery of one's learning,

develop the skills to perform life tasks and assist in learning how to collaborate. Rutayuga (2014) points out that assessment in the competence-based curriculum should focus on learning results instead of complex learning content. Wood and Bennett (2001) accentuate that shifting from a content-based to a competence-based curriculum requires student-centred teaching and learning. Harris et al. (1995) view a competence-based curriculum as a solution to the execution of education in the complicated modern world.

Mkonongwa (2018) has compiled a list of differences between competence-based and content-based curricula and presented it in a table.

Later, Mkonongwa (2018) provides a list of the key characteristic features of competence-based learning and teaching:

1. *It is learner-oriented* – the teaching materials, methods, and assessments are established depending on the needs and learning styles of the specific group of learners.

2. *It is results-oriented* – in order to proceed to the next level of learning, receive a diploma or certificate, or complete a course, a learner should demonstrate proficiency in all the demanded competences.

3. *Consists of various systems of assessment to establish competence* – seat time and course taking are not enough to be assigned credit points; instead, there are other ways (e.g., internships, projects).

4. *Practice-directed* – having theoretical knowledge is not enough; hands-on skills and tangible results must be demonstrated to achieve competence.

The competence-based curriculum in Latvia and the world

The competence-based curriculum was initially introduced in the United States of America in the early 1970s (Richards, Rogers 2001). It can be described as a type of curriculum that establishes the educational outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and behaviours that students need to have at the end of their learning. In the 1980s, European countries (e.g., the United Kingdom and Germany) implemented the idea (Wolf 2001), which motivated other countries across the world to realise the competence-based curriculum in their educational institutions because of the changes globalisation and technological developments have brought (Mkonongwa 2018).

Table 1.

Differences between competence-based and content-based curricula. Adapted from Mkonongwa (2018)

No.	Content-based curriculum	Competence-based curriculum
1	Its primary focus is a complex of academic results, and it neglects the idea that learners' success is influenced by a variety of foundational skills (e.g., social-emotional), and the implementation of those.	It is aimed at assisting learners in acquiring academic knowledge, the skills required for the mastery of that, and the lifelong learning skills required to be fully equipped for university, job, and life situations.
2	It is age-dependent. Students are organised in groups depending on their age, and students of the same age groups are presented with the same content at the same pace. Notwithstanding the degree of acquired knowledge, students move to the next level after a year of instruction.	It is learning-dependent. Students should demonstrate their proficiency, and educational institutions should follow the progress of the students and provide support to achieve time-bound goals and objectives.
3	The applied assessment system is academic results-based, which may involve misleading evidence about students' actual knowledge by considering a variety of elements, such as behaviour, task fulfilment, and the test results, not the actual learner knowledge.	The assessment system in competence-based education is aimed at demonstrating learner progress in the mastery of academic skills and content, as well as lifelong learning skills.
4	It is based on a bureaucratic, hierarchical system that preserves traditional societal and cultural norms and organisational relationships which do not support inclusivity and cultural awareness.	It is aimed at establishing an empowering, reactive system, the purpose of which is to build trust and confront inequity.
5	It is based on a fixed mindset – the idea that human abilities are inborn and cannot be developed further than one's potential.	It is based on a growth mindset – the idea that everyone can learn given the proper set of challenges and support system.
6	It is based on extrinsic motivation – these are the motivational factors caused by some external factors, such as the pressure from parents to get high grades or the need for a diploma.	The purpose is to activate intrinsic motivation by supplying learners with relevant activities and tasks and various ways of learning to reach high learning standards.
7	The goal is to ensure that all the material has been covered, it does not focus on the scientific theories of how children learn.	The purpose of this system is to recognise the best methods of teaching learners regarding engagement, motivation, and learning.
8	It aims to deliver the materials and evaluate learners' proficiency acquired through memorisation and understanding in contrast to mastery and applied knowledge.	Its purpose is to achieve personalised learning, which aids in the development of higher-order skills involving critical thinking, analytical thinking, and problem-solving.
9	It is characterised by a lack of consistency in educators' evaluation of learners' proficiency.	The aim is to develop educators' ability to evaluate the learners' mastery in consistency with other educators.
10	Ranks students and categorises them as 'winners' and 'losers', maintaining the inequality system in society.	The purpose is to establish the actual various proficiency levels of students and to develop each of them to high university and job-ready standards.

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The competence-based curriculum was introduced in Latvia at the beginning of 2016, with the first schools and preschool educational institutions working toward the students being able to apply the acquired knowledge purposefully and responsibly and have the wish for lifelong learning (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2019a). In October 2017, seminars were held to support teachers of 100 Latvian schools implementing the pilot project. During these seminars, 1,000 teachers were presented with the framework of the new curriculum and the initial versions of the educational programmes. In November and December 2017, seminars on the administration of educational institutions were held for managerial staff, including the headmasters of 100 pilot schools. In November 2017, a set of seminars was held for a group of teachers selected by the local governments to become mentors for other teachers in their area with the aim of educating those who did not participate in the seminars. The aim was to slowly develop a team of professionals in each town or municipality who would instruct other teachers in their area on the implementation of the available materials and information on the new curriculum and promote its implementation and collaboration between the teachers. In December 2017, another set of seminars was carried out for the representatives of the local Latvian municipalities to ensure communication and implementation of the new curriculum, as well as providing support to teachers and schools. It was expected that the new curriculum should be fully introduced in 2023 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2019a)

A project that started on October 17, 2016, and was initially supposed to be completed by December 31, 2023 – School 2030 is an initiative of the National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia (National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia 2020a). The project, which is centred around competence-based education, is designed to ensure that all students acquire the skills, knowledge and competences required to participate in real-world and work-related situations (National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia 2020a). School 2030 includes various components such as educational resource repositories, self-learning e-courses for teachers and curricula adapted to the needs of the modern world (School2030 2022). The programme supports student growth and promotes sustainable education (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2021).

Beginning in 2022, an introduction of the modular vocational education programme started (National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia 2022). The programme is designed to provide flexible and customised learning opportunities that would equip the learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the job well (National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia 2020b). These programmes include various modules, such as entrepreneurship, language and cultural awareness, and social skills. Each module is designed to facilitate the development of a specific competence that is demanded in a certain job (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2020).

Several important advances have been made in the implementation of a competence-based curriculum in Latvia so far:

- *Curriculum development*: the Ministry of Education and Science, together with teachers and learners, has developed the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of modern-day students (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2019b).
- *Teacher competence development*: teachers are offered competence development courses to facilitate a competence-based education implementation (Pedagogs 2020).
- *Changing role of teachers*: the role of teachers in the learning process has changed, with an emphasis on guiding learning and engaging students rather than simply sharing knowledge (Smiltene Secondary School 2021).
- *Sustainable development of education systems*: efforts are being made to manage the sustainable education system to ensure that education is effective and relevant to the work and real-life needs of the modern world (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia 2021).

Method

40 randomly selected foreign language educators participated in the study. 25 respondents were schoolteachers from six Latvian schools, and 15 participants were university teachers representing two universities. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Latvian. The interview survey method was selected to obtain deeper and more in-depth replies.

MAXQDA, a software developed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods analysis, was used to analyse the collected data.

The first part of the interview was aimed at understanding what CBE is, the purpose of the second part was to establish the perceived reason for the introduction of CBE in Latvia, the third part was devoted to the teaching methods and assessment methods the surveyed educators apply, the final part aimed to find out whether there is a need for further training regarding CBE and competence-based curriculum development.

Results and Discussion

The first question aimed to establish the educators' understanding of CBE. Three schoolteachers claimed that they do not know what it is and do not know what competences are; twelve provided definitions, which, for the most part, referred to the fact that in CBE, the emphasis is put on skills and knowledge which can be applied in the real-life, CBE is a blending of theoretical and practical knowledge, skills-oriented education; one teacher defined CBE as "the educational process where a student is learning how to think, work in a team, look for the answers individually, and receive an ability to apply knowledge", another provided the following definition: "the specific competences which a student should develop throughout his/her learning. A shift in focus, horizontal relationships". Three teachers referred to the expression "learn by doing" when answering this question. The other replies were: "independent work", "the work teachers have been completing for some time already, which now has been termed as CBE", "I still have not understood what these competences are the government is referring to", and "proficiency". Some of the surveyed schoolteachers expressed dissatisfaction with the new system in their definitions by claiming that it is a "nightmare", "will lead education to swamp", "creating chaos in the heads of students, and in addition, a huge amount of work in grading the tests or, due to lack of time, buying them from more diligent fellow teachers", and "reducing knowledge and requirements to engage students in learning through playing and games".

As regards the answers provided by the university instructors to the same question, those are, for the most part, quite detailed definitions, listing the main aspects referring to the term. For example, some of the definitions provided were: "The type of education where the main focus is put on students' ability to demonstrate gained knowledge via the creation of their own practical tasks"; "It is a framework for teaching and assessment of

learning. It is also described as a type of education based on predetermined 'competences', which focuses on outcomes and real-world performance.”; and “An educational system based on the learners demonstrating what they have learned through the knowledge, attitudes, motivations, and skills expected of them at various stages of their learning.” There was even quite an extensive description of the CBC with examples and the personal opinion of the interviewee:

I would define this as an approach to teaching with a focus on teaching certain competences rather than information. I also see competences as skills, so instead of teaching the theory of a subject (information), we (teachers) should focus on skills/ competences that could be later applied in various fields. For example, we could teach communication skills, media literacy, presentation skills, writing skills, etc. Later, students can apply these skills/competences in the fields they specialise in. I think such an approach would ensure that most graduates are competent in general valuable skills.

Overall, most definitions referred to the focus on competences, the fact that CBC is a teaching and assessment system, the promotion of lifelong learning, and the ability to perform real-life tasks. One respondent referred to CBC as solely an assessment system; the other suggested it is a “complex problem-solving” system.

The second question concerned the three characteristic features that the interviewees could mention about CBE. The features mentioned by the schoolteachers were as follows: *applicability, flexibility, lifelong learning, cooperation, creativity, research, skills, values, applying knowledge in real-life, noticing interrelations, self-directed learning, learning to learn, self-initiative, critical thinking, flexible thinking, educator taking an assistant's/consultant's role, the environment serves as the third participant in education, focusing on the practical application of knowledge, learning the theory through practical examples, and the learning process is adapted to the student's interests and needs.* The other comments pointed to the apparent dissatisfaction of some teachers with the system introduced: “chaos, laziness”; “modernity without history, cosmopolitanism without nationalism, skills without depth”; “learning material arranged without a specific system; an abundance of practical work without a theoretical base in the hope of turning every student into the creator of the Pythagorean theory”; “cluttering of the curriculum with wisdom, which is not appropriate

for the age of 11–15, and reduces the time for acquiring the basic knowledge”; “skill-based, but the skills have been acquired somewhere else and school has nothing to do with it. Educational institutions do not teach anything but expect that the skills are already there. The theory and knowledge should come first, then comes practice and skills; in CBE, it is the other way around”. Two surveyed could not name any characteristic features of CBE, and one stated that they “would not name one, let alone all three”.

The features mentioned by the university educators are – *communication, critical thinking, self-efficacy, flexibility, creativity, relevancy, learner-centric, differentiation, focusing on learning outcomes, skills, and competences, teamwork, lifelong learning, promoting equity, based on intrinsic motivation, allowing learners to learn at their own pace, and giving them more power over their learning*. One of the respondents even provided some recommendations on how to introduce CBE better:

1. The students must be informed about the benefits of this approach.
2. The educators must also be informed about the available competences. They must know which competences are the most important.
3. Maybe the approach to teaching competences could be different. I do not know precisely how to make it different, but it must be different from the classroom setting. Since we are changing the approach to education, we might as well put it in a different setting.

The following question aimed to establish why CBE was introduced in Latvia, as perceived by the educators surveyed. Most of the schoolteachers, or 11 respondents suggested that it happened as a result of external influence and keeping up with the global trends. About a quarter of those surveyed believed that it was the need to adapt to the changes in the modern world that made Latvia introduce CBE, as well as it happened as a result of the previous model being too theoretical (six and seven teachers, respectively). Four and three interviewees suggested that the reason was the fact that the previous model focused on academic achievements, not students' needs, as well as students' poor academic performance. The other answers were: “taking experience from other countries without considering whether the circumstances are right”; “the ambitions of certain people”; “the model which has already been recognised as unsuccessful was borrowed from other countries”.

The majority of the university educators viewed the need to adapt to the changes in the modern world and the previous model as being too theoretical main reasons (selected by 12 and 10 participants, respectively). One-fifth of the respondents, or three people, selected keeping up with the modern trends and the previous model focusing on academic achievements rather than students' needs as the major reasons. Poor academic performance and external influences were chosen by two respondents each (see Figure 1 for results).

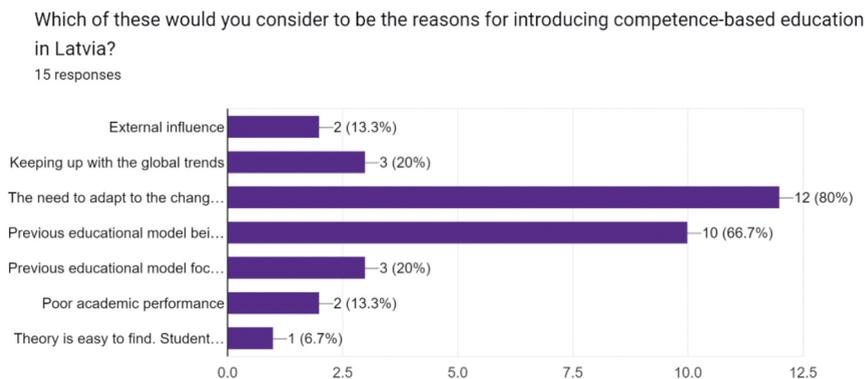


Figure 1. **The reasons for introducing CBE in Latvia**

The explicit view on the situation provided by one respondent is as follows:

The theory is easy to find. Students no longer need people teaching them theory. Well, to some capacity it [teaching theory] will probably remain. However, ensuring that everybody has a set of skills that they can apply in the future must be the main reason for competence-based education. Imagine a thousand people graduate, and they are all competent in writing, speaking, critical thinking, etc. That would be highly beneficial not only for them but also for the economy. It also seems that theory might not be for everyone.

The following question asked the respondents to evaluate the statements on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. When comparing the replies of schoolteachers and university educators, it becomes evident that the surveyed university educators are more confident when it concerns their awareness of the principles of competence-based curriculum design and development (MEAN = 4; SD = 3.54) in contrast to schoolteachers (MEAN = 3.08; SD = 2.83). Regarding the teaching methods, tasks

and activities, assessment methods applied, and lesson plan designed, the results show that the university educators are inclined to agree more that those designed by them are consistent with the principles of CBE than the schoolteachers. Concerning the barriers not allowing the two groups of educators to design CBC, the schoolteachers appeared undecided regarding the fact that a large number of students in a group or the lack of knowledge and skills do not allow them to design and develop competence-based curriculum (MEAN = 3.2; SD = 2.9 and MEAN = 2.76; SD = 2.47), while the university educators rather disagreed with the statements (MEAN = 2.33; SD = 1.97 and MEAN = 2.27; SD = 2.03). The schoolteachers somewhat agreed with the fact that the number of other duties impedes them from designing and developing a competence-based curriculum (MEAN = 3.68, SD = 3.32), while the university educators were uncertain about this statement (MEAN = 3.27; SD = 3.12). The university educators agreed that they would benefit from training in competence-based education (MEAN = 4.27; SD = 3.83), as well as if the colleagues offered some help with CBC curriculum design and development (MEAN = 4.07; SD = 3.68); the schoolteachers were rather doubtful regarding these statements (MEAN = 3.2; SD = 2.93 and MEAN = 2.96; SD = 2.61 respectively) (See Table 2 for results).

The educators were asked to select the assessment methods they use to evaluate their students' progress in the following question. Most surveyed schoolteachers selected written texts and exercises, self-reflection tasks, peer-assessment tasks or assignments, and presentations (19, 18, 18, and 17 respondents, respectively) as the teaching methods they applied in the classroom. About half of the schoolteachers chose oral questions, research papers, and project-based assessments (14, 14, and 12 participants, respectively). The other replies were debates (marked by 10 teachers), essays (chosen by nine surveyees), and portfolios (selected by seven subjects). One participant claimed that they use "analysis works using approved structures".

A major part of university educators, or 13 respondents, selected presentation and written tests and exercises as the assessment methods they use with their students. Debates were selected by 12 participants; 11 educators chose project-based assessments, oral questions, and essays; and portfolios, research papers, self-reflection, and peer-assessment tasks and assignments were chosen by 10 surveyees.

Table 2.

The statements about CBC

Statements	Schoolteachers		University educators	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I am aware of the principles of competence-based curriculum design and development	3.08	2.83	4	3.54
The teaching methods I apply are consistent with the competence-based model of education	3.68	3.24	3.93	3.52
The lesson plans I design are aimed at developing the competences required by the students	3.48	3.05	4.13	3.65
The tasks and activities I apply are designed to develop the required competences	3.68	3.21	4.13	3.65
The assessment methods I use are meant to assess the required competences	3.44	3.03	4	3.52
Because of the large number of students in a class, I find it hard to apply a competence-based curriculum	3.2	2.9	2.33	1.97
Because of the significant number of other duties at work, I find it hard to design and develop a competence-based curriculum	3.68	3.32	3.27	3.12
Because of my lack of knowledge and skills, I find it hard to design a competence-based curriculum	2.76	2.47	2.27	2.03
I would greatly benefit from training in the competence-based education	3.2	2.93	4.27	3.83
I would greatly benefit if my colleague offered me some help with the competence-based curriculum design and development	2.96	2.61	4.07	3.65

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Two groups of educators were asked to evaluate their proficiency in certain skills on a scale from one to five in the following question. It was established that both schoolteachers and university educators evaluated their self-motivation and result orientation rather highly (schoolteachers: MEAN = 4.2; SD = 3.73 and MEAN = 4.28; SD = 3.78; university educators: MEAN = 4.2; SD = 3.74 and MEAN = 4.2; SD = 3.76). Proficiency in various teaching methods and time management and self-organisation skills were both at approximately the same level, which is somewhat high (schoolteachers: MEAN = 4.16; SD = 3.68 and MEAN = 4.16; SD = 3.7; university educators: MEAN = 4.07; SD = 3.65 and MEAN = 4; SD = 3.61). Regarding identifying the learners' needs and flexibility in adapting to changes, the university educators turned out to be slightly more certain in regard to their proficiency in these skills (MEAN = 4.2; SD = 3.72 and MEAN = 4.27; SD = 3.83 respectively) in comparison with the schoolteachers (MEAN = 3.84; SD = 3.37 and MEAN = 3.96; SD = 3.5). When it comes to following the requirements, the schoolteachers assessed their proficiency slightly better (MEAN = 4.24; SD = 3.75) than the university educators (MEAN = 4.07; SD = 3.65). Both groups

of educators evaluated their stress resistance as comparatively low (schoolteachers: MEAN = 3.92; SD = 3.46 and university educators: MEAN = 3.8; SD = 3.5) (See Table 3 for the results).

The purpose of the following question was to establish how many of the surveyed educators have had some training in CBC design and development. The results show that the majority, or 60 % of schoolteachers, have had some training – 14 respondents selected the answer 'yes' (*in red*) to this question, and one claimed that they had “meaningless seminars which did not give any understanding of what this approach is”. The answer 'no' (*in blue*) was selected by 10 participants. Regarding the university educators, the answers were divided almost equally between those who had had the training and those who did not. Seven out of 15 surveyees stated that they had some training, and one person specifically indicated that it happened during their master's studies. Seven respondents chose 'no', and one pointed out that they could not even try (See Figure 2 for results).

The next question was intended to understand whether the surveyed felt the need for additional training in CBE in Latvia. The results revealed that while the majority, or 11 out of 15, of the university educators agreed with this statement (*'yes' is in blue*), about a quarter, or four interviewees, selected 'rather yes' (*in red*), nine schoolteachers suggested that the additional training is required, and nine selected 'rather yes'. 24 % of the surveyed schoolteachers, or six participants, chose 'rather no' (*in yellow*), and one of the respondents fully disagreed with the fact that there is a need for training by selecting 'no' (*in green*) (see Figure 3 for results).

For the following question, those of the respondents who suggested that there is a need for training were required to select the aspects of CBE which should be paid attention to in training. Most university educators (86 %) and schoolteachers (80 %) believed that the most attention should be paid to curriculum development and design. More than half of the surveyed schoolteachers proposed that the focus should be put on selecting teaching materials (60 %), assessment methods (55 %), and teaching approaches (55 %). 60 % of the surveyed university educators chose assessment methods, and less than half, or 40 %, viewed teaching methods and approaches and selecting the teaching materials as worth paying attention to in training. As regards mentoring, it was chosen by a quarter of schoolteachers and 20 % of university educators.

Table 3.

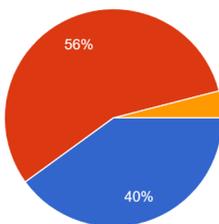
The evaluation of educators' skills

Skills	Schoolteachers		University educators	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Identifying the learners' needs	3.84	3.37	4.2	3.72
Proficiency in various teaching methods and approaches	4.16	3.68	4.07	3.65
Stress resistance	3.92	3.46	3.8	3.5
Time management and self-organisation skills	4.16	3.7	4	3.61
Flexibility in adapting to changes	3.96	3.5	4.27	3.83
Self-motivation	4.2	3.73	4.2	3.74
Result-orientation	4.28	3.78	4.2	3.76
Following the requirements	4.24	3.75	4.07	3.65

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Schoolteachers



University educators

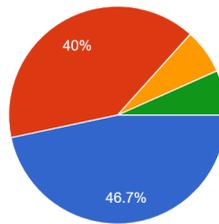
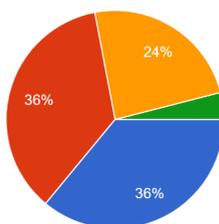
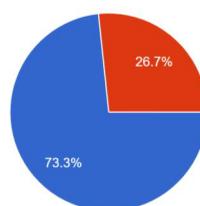


Figure 2. Previous training in CBC design and development

Schoolteachers



University educators



● Yes
● Rather yes
● Rather no
● No

Figure 3. The need for additional training in CBE

The last question was optional and was meant for the respondents' comments and recommendations. Only one university educator used this section to emphasise the need for training in CBE. One schoolteacher claimed that they did not see any differences between CBE and content-based education, as they believe that competences are the same skills, and students are supposed to "count, multiply, write and express themselves grammatically correctly, read and understand what they read". The other schoolteacher expressed the need for experts to be involved in the development of the CBE pilot study. One comment provided by a schoolteacher showed dissatisfaction with the method of implementation selected by the Ministry of Education and Science. They claimed that it is essential that the new methods are first analysed and tested, and only then is the implementation considered. They suggest that the government relies more on theoretical experience rather than practical. Another comment was made about the assessment system: "By evaluating only a couple of tests per semester with a grade, but all other laboratory works and assignments with percentages corresponding to tested and not tested, it is impossible to make students perceive these works as important". The other comment made referred to the issues in CBE: "The CBE does not emphasise knowledge, but skills and abilities cannot be developed without knowledge".

Conclusions

The theoretical research showed that CBE (competence-based education) might be defined as a system of teaching, evaluation, assessment, and reporting with the students throughout their learning, showing what they have learned in terms of knowledge, skills, and behaviours, which are then compared to the ones they should possess at different stages of the learning. CBE aims to promote lifelong learning and develop the skills, competences and behaviour required to participate in real-world and work-related situations.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia has been attempting to introduce CBE in Latvian educational institutions since 2016 by holding seminars with teachers, representatives from educational institutions, and headmasters, designing the framework of CBC, the educational programmes, as well as instructing the mentioned parties on the principles of CBE.

The conclusions made on the results of the survey on the perceptions, understanding and experience of the Latvian educators with the introduction of the competence-based education in the Latvian educational system are as follows: (1) some educators are still reluctant to introduce CBE; (2) some of the educators expressed great dissatisfaction with the teaching methods, curriculum, as well as assessment methods; (3) it cannot be claimed that all teachers have had some training or assistance regarding CBE; (4) some of the educators do not believe that there is some need in training; (5) the understanding of what CBE is still lacking, incomplete, or false when it comes to some educators. The suggestion is that some of the teachers still have not had access to training or assistance from mentors because they do not receive enough incentives from the administration of the educational institution and the government. Moreover, some teachers are unfortunately unwilling to accept the changes due to being used to the old system too much. It is therefore believed that the shift would take much more time than was initially planned as the whole generation should change before dramatic changes in the country can be made.

Limitations

Due to a very low number of respondents, the present data cannot be generalised to the whole population; however, it should be noted that hundreds of teachers were invited to participate in the research, and most of the invited educators criticised CBE and expressed their unwillingness to participate.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to my scientific adviser, Dr. Tatjana Smirnova, for her invaluable comments and advice regarding my doctoral dissertation, specifically this paper. I would like to thank my colleague, Jekaterina Raka, for her continuous support throughout this research.